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at the ABC

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and Julian Burnside

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Be warned!
Off-the-record is off
the menu, now

with Gerard Henderson's

MEDIA WATCH

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JAM FOR TANKS

What's good enough for John Howard's Coalition government is good enough for Kevin Rudd's Labor government – at least when it comes to spending taxpayers' money on think tanks.

In May 2006 it was announced that the Commonwealth Government would contribute \$25 million towards the establishment of a United States Study Centre. It's difficult to keep a university away from a pot of taxpayers' money. So it came as no surprise when there was considerable competition over which university would host the Centre. In the end, the University of Sydney won the bid and the New South Wales government promised additional financial support. The Liberal Party has a habit of financing its critics – along with the critics of its friends. It was only a matter of time before the Centre began to bag the conservative side of American politics. This was evident before, during and after the US presidential election. The Centre even boasted on its website that its "Election Day Spectacular" at Sydney University had become a celebration for the Democrats' victory and that "shots of the crowd's jubilant reaction to Obama's win have appeared around the world". Geoffrey Garrett, the Centre's chief executive, wrote an article in the *Herald-Sun* on 6 November 2008 which commenced: "Australians and people around the world in recent years have grown by steps tired, disappointed and angry about the United States and its excesses at home and abroad". This is the type of partisanship which taxpayers were promised would not be found at the taxpayer subsidised Centre. Garrett should know that while Senator Obama scored an impressive 52.5 per cent of the total vote, Senator John McCain scored a respectable 46 per cent.

It seems that Melbourne University was disappointed on losing the bid for the US Studies Centre. No worries. In April 2008 it was announced that the Rudd Government and the Victorian Labor Government would provide \$15 million each to establish what was termed "a new international public policy institute" be established at the University of Melbourne. This has since been named the Grattan Institute – after the street where the Institute is located. When the deal was initially announced, the Grattan Institute's chairman, Allan Myers Q.C., declared that Australia lacks think tanks with first-class capabilities and bemoaned what he termed the dearth of good policy debate in Australia. This is the familiar Australian bless-us-for-we-are-hopeless lament. In November it was announced that the "brilliant and creative thinker" Dr John Daley would be the inaugural chief executive. Asked by *The Age* (18 November 2008) what he would focus on, Daley confessed that it was difficult to pin down the Grattan Institute's policy agenda and added: "Clearly the country faces significant issues in energy policy...in water policy...in education policy; and with the financial situation the way it is, clearly we face a number of issues on that front, too." How brilliantly creative can you get? And all for the bargain price of \$30 million.

Government funded think tanks invariably become as over-staffed and as inefficient as the bureaucracies which oversee them. Governments should desist from spending money on creating publicly funded institutes and spend the money saved on, say, the homeless. Throwing taxpayers funds at think tanks is money for jam.

DINING OUT WITH THE ABC – A WARNING

Here is some (gratuitous) advice for any Labor or Coalition politician who is invited to an “off-the-record” or “on-background” dinner with an ABC presenter, producer or journalist. Don’t go. Just say no.

The fact is that it is now official ABC policy that ABC employees can report conversations which they willingly engaged in on an off-the-record or on-background only basis. The established criteria are as follows:

- Off-the-record should mean precisely what it says – i.e. confidential.
- On-background should mean precisely what it says – i.e. the details of a conversation may be disclosed as background to a story but they are not to be attributed to the source from which they came.

However, to the ABC, neither term really means anything at all any more – since ABC producers, presenters and journalists are officially allowed to break promises and assurances which they make to others. This breach of trust has now been sanctioned by the ABC Board itself. And now for some background.

AT WATERS EDGE

On Thursday 2 June 2005, the (then) Federal Treasurer Peter Costello and his media adviser David Alexander had a private dinner at the Waters Edge Restaurant in Canberra with three members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery. Namely, Michael Brissenden (then and now the political editor of the ABC TV *7.30 Report*), Paul Daley (then of *The Bulletin* magazine, now a columnist for Fairfax Media’s Sunday newspapers) and Tony Wright (then of *The Bulletin*, now a journalist with Fairfax Media’s *The Age*).

Costello and Alexander have consistently maintained that the understanding reached at the dinner was that it was off-the-record. Meaning that all parties agreed that any information attained at the dinner was not to be disclosed under any circumstances – with or without attribution – to anyone. Brissenden, Daley and Wright have maintained that any information gained at the dinner was on-background only. Meaning that the information attained at the dinner could be disclosed but that the source for such material could not be mentioned. It is matter of

record that, at the very least, all three journalists broke their word by subsequently attributing to Costello comments which he allegedly made at the dinner. This disclosure breached both off-the-record and on-background guidelines.

The weight of the evidence indicates that the Costello/Alexander understanding of the dinner was correct – namely that it was to be off-the-record. The fact is that neither Brissenden, nor Daley nor Wright reported the function on a background basis in the short term. Clearly one or more would have done so if he had regarded the dinner conversation as being on-background, especially since they all subsequently claimed that at the dinner Costello discussed his intention to challenge John Howard for the leadership of the Liberal Party and the prime ministership. In other words, this was a big story.

PAUL DALEY’S MEDIA-GAME-ON

In fact, more than a year passed before Daley broke the story in *The Bulletin*. Soon after it was media-game-on as Brissenden and Wright joined in. And so it came to pass that what was an off-the-record or on-background only dinner became very much an on-the-record discussion.

In the issue of *The Bulletin* dated 12 July 2006, Daley wrote an article entitled “Fighting Talk”. In it he commented: “Sources maintain that a year ago Costello had resolved to challenge Howard, lose and move to the backbench while the PM and a new deputy and Treasurer – most likely the former leader Alexander Downer – ran the government”. Daley maintained that Costello had purportedly told confidants: “He can’t win, I can. We can, but he can’t.” This article attracted little attention at the time.

Daley returned to the topic around a year later in an article titled “Shadow PM” which appeared in the issue of *The Bulletin* dated 7 August 2007. This time Daley quoted Costello as having told supporters in “early 2005” that he would challenge Howard in April 2006. Daley claimed that Costello had made his “He can’t win, I can” comment in “March 2005”.

Peter Costello turned 50 on Tuesday 14 August 2007. He did two interviews that day – one with the Channel 9 *Today* show, the other with *Sky News*. Both interviewers used the Daley article (in *The Bulletin* of 7 August 2007) as background to ask Costello whether, in early 2005, he had said: “He can’t win, I can” concerning John Howard’s prospects of leading the Coalition to the election which was due around the end of 2007. On both *Today* and *Sky News*, Costello denied he had said this.

ENTER MICHAEL BRISSENDEN

On the evening of Tuesday 14 August 2007 Michael Brissenden broke what became known as the

Costello Dinner story on the 7.30 Report. Kerry O'Brien, the 7.30 Report presenter, introduced the topic at the top of the program.

Kerry O'Brien: Tonight, more insights into the sometimes fractured relationship between John Howard and his Liberal Deputy Leader and Treasurer Peter Costello. Mr Costello started his 50th birthday morning with a breakfast television interview on the Nine Network. He was asked directly about some comments he'd reportedly made to supporters back in 2005 declaring that he could win the next election but Mr Howard couldn't. He denied the quote today, point blank. In another television interview later today, the question was repeated – this time with an assertion that several people had been present when Mr Costello had declared that Mr Howard couldn't win the next election and again Mr Costello denied it categorically.

In fact, there was a dinner back in early 2005 in Canberra with Mr Costello and three senior Gallery journalists, one of whom was our political editor Michael Brissenden. The notes of that dinner conversation record Mr Costello saying he would destroy Mr Howard's leadership if he wasn't prepared to step aside for Mr Costello within a year. Here's Michael Brissenden's account of what was discussed.

At this stage O'Brien handed over the story to Brissenden – despite the fact that Brissenden was a participant in the events he was about to report. And so it came to pass that Brissenden reported one of the big political stories of the year even though he was directly involved in the events concerned. This was quite unprofessional behaviour. Paul Chadwick, the ABC's Director of Editorial Policies, subsequently confirmed that the decision to allow Brissenden to report his own involvement in this story was made by Brissenden himself, O'Brien and the program's executive producer Ben Hawke.

Brissenden commenced his report by challenging Costello's veracity and continued:

Much of the background for that [Bulletin] story was given willingly by the Treasurer himself at a dinner here at Waters Edge, at the time one of Canberra's finest restaurants. Paul Daley was there, of course. So was I, as it happens – as was veteran political reporter Tony Wright then also a Bulletin writer now working with the

Melbourne Age. So was the Treasurer's press secretary [David Alexander]. It was March 5th 2005, the leadership question had been swirling its way through yet another eddy. The Treasurer was in an expansive mood. We all still have notes of that discussion. Here's mine.

Peter Costello told us he had set next April 2006 as the absolute deadline "that is, mid-term," for Howard to stand aside. If not, he would challenge him. He said a challenge "will happen then" if "Howard is still there". "I'll do it," he said. He said he was "prepared to go the backbench". He said he'd "carp" at Howard's leadership "from the backbench" and "destroy it" until he "won" the leadership. And why would he do that? "Because he (Howard) would lose the election," he said. He said, Costello could beat Beazley but that Howard can't win "without me". April is the deadline "then it's on". "He can't win, I can. We (the Government) can, but he can't."

WHAT DAY IS IT?

Towards the end of his piece, Brissenden declared that "the strength of Mr Costello's denials today go to the matters of credibility for the man who still holds hopes of one day leading the nation". Well, maybe. But what about Brissenden's own credibility? Note that Brissenden revealed details of a dinner which Costello maintained was off-the-record and which even Brissenden acknowledged was on-background. Journalists understand that a discussion which takes place on-background cannot be attributed to the person who (allegedly) made the comments. Yet this is what Brissenden did on the 7.30 Report – with the full approval of Kerry O'Brien and Ben Hawke.

And then there is the issue of integrity. Brissenden told 7.30 Report viewers that the dinner at Waters Edge had taken place on 5 March 2005. He also claimed that he and Daley and Wright had "notes" of the dinner and flashed a copy of what he claimed were his notes at the camera. Brissenden's statement was misleading in two respects. In short, he got the date of the dinner wrong and he falsely implied that he had his own notes of the Costello Dinner when, in fact, this was not the case.

As Peter Costello was quick to point out, he did not attend a dinner at Waters Edge with the three journalists on Saturday 5 March 2005. In fact, the dinner took place three months later – on Thursday 2 June 2005.

This is a significant point. Barrie Cassidy, the presenter of the ABC TV *Insiders* program, put it well

when interviewed by Jon Faine on ABC Radio 774 on 16 August 2007 – just after it was revealed that all of Brissenden, Daley and Wright had got the date of the dinner wrong.

Barrie Cassidy: I have a bit of sympathy for him [Peter Costello] because you imagine if the boot was on the other foot and Peter Costello had a document out there that as a record of his notes that were taken at the time and it was headed “March” when the meeting in fact took place in June. Now, believe me, I have lived in Canberra; there is a big difference between March and June in Canberra. And no matter how many glasses of wine you have, you don’t get confused about this. Wouldn’t the questions then be put to Peter Costello: “How is it that you confuse March with June and how should we give any credibility to the rest of your notes?” and “doesn’t it raise the question whether your notes...were taken at the time or were they taken maybe this week?; otherwise how could you confuse something as fundamental as the month?”

Barrie Cassidy’s point was an astute one. The question is what would the likes of Brissenden have said about the veracity of a document compiled by, say, Costello when the date given for the meeting was out by three months? And, in such a situation, would not the likes of Brissenden become suspicious about whether the note may have been written well after the event and backdated? It seems that there is one rule for journalists and another for everyone else.

On Wednesday 15 August 2007 Brissenden had again reported on the Costello Dinner on the *7.30 Report*. This was all the more unprofessional since by then Brissenden was in dispute with Costello about the nature and time of the function. In his report Brissenden acknowledged that Costello “correctly took issue with the date the dinner took place” but did not say what the actual date was. Neither Brissenden nor O’Brien ever told *7.30 Report* viewers that the dinner had occurred on 2 June 2005.

Earlier that morning Brissenden was in considerable confusion when he discussed the date of the dinner with Geoff Hutchinson on ABC Radio 720 in Perth.

Michael Brissenden: Well he [Peter Costello] believes we got the date wrong. We believe it was – we did get the date wrong in terms of the 5th of March. I think it might have been the 3rd of March. He’s [i.e. Costello] now saying it was a dinner in June. In fact that was probably a

subsequent dinner. We’re all trying to check the exact date, but I think it’s probably the 3rd March. Anyway I think the date is pretty irrelevant. In the end he hasn’t denied that he had the dinner, or that we had the conversation.

In fact, Costello had denied aspects of the conversation initially reported by Daley. Also, as previously mentioned, the correct date was 2 June 2005. Moreover, there was only one dinner – not two. If a minister had made such howlers, Brissenden would have been calling for his or her resignation on the basis of dishonesty or manifest incompetence. But Brissenden was not even reprimanded by ABC management for his quite unprofessional handling of this issue.

TONY WRIGHT’S VERY OWN CONFUSION

Brissenden was not the only member of the Waters Edge gang-of-three who became engulfed in a fog of confusion about when the dinner had actually taken place. Writing in *The Age* on 15 August 2007, Tony Wright said that the dinner took place in “March 2005”. That morning he put in a woeful performance when interviewed by Ross Stevenson on Radio 3AW in Melbourne. Let’s go to the transcript – commencing at the part where Stevenson put it to Wright that Costello was entitled to deny the Paul Daley report because it resulted from an off-the-record conversation.

Stevenson: So was it Tony, was it Tony, on the record or off the record?

Wright: Well it was, it was just, it was just a discussion – quite a long discussion – and we were asked later on by his press secretary: “Look this was all off-the-record”. And you sort of assume that those sort of things are off-the-record or background and of course it was really background. These sorts of stories were, ah, were appearing around the newspapers over the next few months. *The Age*, in fact, had a, had a, ah, headline, ah: “Costello Backers Set Deadline” laying out, ah, this, this sort of thing and suggesting that, ah, supporters of Peter Costello were putting about, putting it about. When he decided that’s the way things, ah, that’s the way things work, we’ve been asked to keep it off-the-record and we’d keep it off-the-record until yesterday when, um, he [Costello] was actually asked about these comments and not only flatly denied them but suggested that journalists make them up.

Stevenson: But aren't you entitled, if something is off-the-record and it occurs off-the-record, are you then not entitled to deny that you ever said it because it essentially was off-the-record?

Wright: Well I think people will be arguing the ethics of this for quite some time. It's an unusual event in journalism, ah, but the point was that, that, ah, this sort of thing had leaked out over the years anyway. It was, it was, it was out there and, ah, it wasn't as if, you know, it was just a throw away line, ah....

So that's all clear, then. Wright was so confused that he cited an *Age* article titled "Costello Backers Set Deadline" as a justification for the decision taken by Brissenden, Daley and himself to break the story. Wright's argument was that the story about Costello's views became evident after the Costello Dinner but before it was first revealed by Paul Daley. In fact the *Age* article, which was published in May 2005, appeared well before the Costello Dinner actually took place.

YES, WE HAVE NO INDIVIDUAL NOTES

And then there is the question of what Brissenden told *7.30 Report* viewers were the "notes" taken after the dinner. It turned out that there was no such "notes" – only one collective note. Gerard Henderson discovered this when he sent an email to Brissenden, Daley and Wright on 17 August 2007, while fact-checking for his column in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The West Australian* which was to be published the following Tuesday. Paul Daley replied to Gerard Henderson, on behalf of himself and Brissenden, on 20 August 2007. Henderson's questions and the Daley/Brissenden replies are set out below:

1. GH: Did you write your own notes about the dinner?

PD: See 2.

2. GH: If so, when did you write your notes about the dinner? – i.e. immediately after the dinner or sometime after the dinner? Did you check any such notes, prior to finalising them, with your two colleagues who were also present at the dinner?

PD: Immediately after the Treasurer left the restaurant, I made a collective note at the table, yes.

3. GH: Will you provide me with a copy of any notes you may have made about the Peter Costello dinner?

PD: No.

4. GH: Were your notes dated – and, if so, what was the date on your notes?

PD: No.

5. GH: How do you explain the fact that you – and your two colleagues – said that the Dinner was held in March when – apparently – it was held in June?

PD: This was a regrettable mistake.

On 17 August 2007 Wright had replied to Henderson but declined to answer any of his questions. Wright's response is set out below:

Dear Gerard

Thanks for your inquiry. I don't intend to add anything to what I have published or said to date. So far as I am concerned, this chapter is closed. I apologise if this is unsatisfactory, but I made this decision yesterday and it has nothing to do with your specific request.

Sincerely

Tony Wright

Later that day Henderson emailed Wright:

Dear Tony

Thanks for going to the trouble to reply. There is an interesting double standard here. Journalists are invariably demanding that politicians answer questions and provide information. However, journalists themselves frequently refuse to answer questions or provide information. Your good self included. I guess I can only draw conclusions from the available evidence.

Best wishes

Gerard Henderson

Soon after Wright wrote to Henderson and defended his decision not to answer specific questions, viz:

Dear Gerard

Double standard? Not at all. All the information I have was on the front page of *The Age* on the morning after the *7.30 Report* going to air, and in a great rush of interviews I undertook the following day on radio and TV. I am not trying to avoid anything. It is simply that I have nothing further to add. And of course you may draw whatever conclusions you wish, for the available evidence is all that I have given. I accept there will be attacks from all sides. I am offering no defence.

I accept responsibility for the mix-up on dates, however. It was a plain cock-up in transposing hand-written notes on to a computer long ago, and I have no idea how it happened - I am as surprised as anyone....

The fact is that – when Henderson wrote to Brissenden, Daley and Wright – there were many unresolved issues to the reportage of the Costello Dinner. At least Daley/Brissenden clarified the point that the three journalists had one collective note – not three individual notes. But Wright quickly went into no-comment mode.

Clearly Brissenden misled *7.30 Report* viewers when he implied that he had his own notes of the dinner. In fact, there was one collective note. Since Brissenden and his colleagues have refused to release details of the note – in spite of their declared advocacy of the right to know – it is not possible to check their own recollection of the event against Peter Costello's claims. As recently as November 2007, all three journalists declined to even acknowledge emails from Gerard Henderson requesting that they release the collective note of the Costello Dinner.

MARK SCOTT SAYS LITTLE

The Costello Dinner story – and, in particular, the role played by the *7.30 Report* and Michael Brissenden in the news event – was the biggest media story for 2007. Even so, it was ignored by the ABC *Media Watch* program, which clearly did not want to criticise the behaviour of ABC colleagues Kerry O'Brien and Michael Brissenden in this instance. At the time, *Media Watch* was presented by Monica Attard and produced by Peter McEvoy.

Moreover, Mark Scott, the ABC managing director and editor-in-chief, played little role in the controversy. It was not until 23 August 2007 that Mark Scott made a statement on the issue. He said very little – beyond pointing out that “tonight the *7.30 Report* has posted a dedicated page on its website” concerning the issue and mentioning that he had asked Paul Chadwick, the Director of Editorial Policies, to review existing ABC policies concerning two contentious issues, viz:

- **“off-the-record” and background conversations, and balancing the commitment to confidentiality against the public interest in disclosure of information; and**
- **appropriate practice when an ABC staff member becomes a participant in a story, rather than purely an observer.**

ALAN SUNDERLAND SAYS SOMETHING

The material placed on the *7.30 Report* website by the ABC was titled “The Costello Dinner Saga”. It consisted of a lengthy statement by Alan Sunderland – Head of National Programs, ABC News – which also said very little. However, Sunderland did acknowledge that Brissenden had got the date of the Costello Dinner wrong and that viewers “may have been left with the impression that each of the reporters took separate notes and that Mr Brissenden was showing his own individual notes from the evening” when this was not the case. But Sunderland did not state that Brissenden had been reprimanded or even counselled for his behaviour. Sunderland's statement concluded with the implication that the biggest media story for 2007 – which involved the ABC – was not in any sense the ABC's responsibility. He wrote:

In opening up the *7.30 Report* website to comment from the public, and in laying out the reasoning behind the story, the ABC is acknowledging that this story has quite rightly created much controversy and comment. There was criticism of the original report, and also criticism of the program's decision to have Mr Brissenden continue reporting the issue on the following day. Some of the issues raised go to the heart of journalistic practice, and the proper relationship between the media, those about whom the media reports, and the public. This is an opportunity for all of our viewers to have their say too.

It was as if Mark Scott, the ABC's editor-in-chief, has no opinion on what constitutes professional behaviour by the ABC staff. And so the matter was passed on to Paul Chadwick and the Editorial Policies department. Chadwick released a consultation draft of his report in November 2007. The final report, released in July 2008, is titled *Sources and Conflicts: Review of the adequacy of ABC Editorial Policies relating to source protection and to the reporting by journalists of events in which they are participants*. The end product is as bureaucratic as its title suggests.

CONFLICTS – WHAT CONFLICTS?

To cut a (very) long story short, Chadwick made recommendations as to how the ABC should deal with sources and how it should handle conflicts of interest. On this latter matter Chadwick does not suggest that participants should be prevented from

reporting events in which they are involved. Instead he proposed the following wishy-washy guidelines which, in fact, mean nothing:

Participant in newsworthy event: This section relates to the type of conflict of interest that arises when a staff member's participation – by action or inaction, alone or in combination with other participants in the events – is integral to what makes a matter newsworthy. Circumstances will vary from case to case, but the needs of audiences and the independence and integrity of the ABC are prime considerations in every case.

There followed some vague guidelines about the circumstances in which ABC journalists might be able to report events in which they are participants.

Chadwick's report overlooked the central point – namely, that a reporter like Brissenden should not be able to cover a story involving Costello when he (Brissenden) was being criticised by Costello at the time.

Barrie Cassidy put it well when he spoke to Jon Faine on 774 on 16 August 2007. Cassidy focused not on Brissenden's first report of the Costello Dinner but, rather, on the fact that he was allowed to return to the story on the following night. Cassidy said that by Wednesday 15 August:

....the story had moved on and the story was about a conflict between the Treasurer and three reporters including himself and yet he [Brissenden] got to do the story. Now, you would have thought in that situation he was compromised.

Quite so. Clearly Brissenden was compromised in reporting his own involvement in the Costello Dinner. However, neither the ABC Board nor Mark Scott nor Paul Chadwick has acknowledged this central fact.

PROMISES – (ABC) WORTHLESS PROMISES

The most disturbing recommendation of Paul Chadwick's *Sources and Conflicts Report* turns on his proposal as to how ABC staff should regard private conversations of the kind involved in the Costello Dinner. The key section is at Section 4.7.14 of the *Sources and Conflicts* document, viz:

Where circumstances arise in which a decision needs to be made about whether to maintain a commitment to a source –

- (a) it is mandatory to refer upwards to the Division's Director;**
- (b) consult Legal;**
- (c) consider whether a release from some or all of the commitment can be negotiated with the source in light of circumstances that have developed since the original commitment was made;**
- (d) gather and verify the facts needed to make the decision;**
- (e) identify the competing values;**
- (f) analyse the impact of the various options and how to minimise foreseeable harm.**

Having taken these steps, decide whether, in the circumstances, substantial advancement of the public interest or the risk of substantial harm to people justifies overriding promise-keeping in order to serve another basic value.

In other words, any commitment by ABC staff to have an off-the-record or on-background conversation is now meaningless. According to the Director of Editorial Policies, it should be "mandatory" to refer a decision "upwards" to the director of the relevant ABC division when considering "whether to maintain a commitment to a source". In other words, a promise by an ABC staffer to conduct a conversation off-the-record or on-background means nothing. Absolutely nothing. In short, promises by ABC staff about confidentiality are worthless. Absolutely worthless – since staff are now required to refer the details of an off-the-record or on-background conversation to a manager who will inform the ABC journalist whether he or she is allowed to keep the confidentiality of a promise which he or she has entered into.

The you-can't-trust-an-ABC-journalist's-word is now official ABC policy. The ABC Board accepted Paul Chadwick's recommendations for amendments to the public broadcaster's Editorial Policies – and the changes took effect from 1 July 2008.

In other words, Michael Brissenden is free – under the ABC's Editorial Policies – to advise a politician that he will attend a dinner on an off-the-record or on-background basis and subsequently reveal all about their conversation on national television. The only proviso is that such a decision must be endorsed by a senior ABC manager, who was not present when the commitment to confidentiality was made.

Julia Gillard or Wayne Swan or Malcolm Turnbull or Julie Bishop would be crazy to go to dinner with

Michael Brissenden or anyone from the ABC. Not only are the likes of Brissenden allowed by the ABC to break promises as to confidentiality. More seriously, the breach of faith, when such occurs, will take place with the full sanction of ABC management and the ultimate sanction of the ABC Board.

Once upon a time, journalists' promises as to the confidentiality of their sources were honoured. Such commitments are no longer sanctioned by the ABC. From now on, it's a matter of ABC dinner guest beware.

DID BRISSENDEN BAG O'BRIEN?

Finally, there is the prospect of retaliation. If it is okay for the likes of Brissenden, Daley and Wright to report off-the-record and on-background conversations with politicians – will they regard it as okay if politicians report what journalists said at the very same functions?

Peter Costello raised this matter when interviewed by Paul Bongiorno on the Channel 10 *Meet the Press* program on 19 August 2007.

Paul Bongiorno: You'll be wary of talking to journalists at dinners in future?

Peter Costello: Oh no. I'll speak to journalists as I have, on the same basis I have, for the last 17 years – as you and I have, Paul. You and I have had a lot of dinners over the years and you know that out of those dinners you don't report what I say and I don't report what you say. I make this point to journalists – if they're going to start reporting these dinners, the much more interesting part of these dinners is what the journalists say about their bosses and their channels.

Good grief. Could it really be possible that, at the famous/infamous Costello Dinner, Michael Brissenden sounded off about the ABC *7.30 Report* in general and its long-time presenter Kerry O'Brien.

Brissenden refuses to release the collective note from that dinner and has declined to respond to questions as to whether he criticised the *7.30 Report* and/or Kerry O'Brien at the Costello Dinner. Pity really. Especially since Michael Brissenden works for an employer which is a member of the Right to Know Coalition and which advocates full disclosure – but apparently only from others, alas.



LIBERALS AND HISTORY - ROBERT MENZIES & ENID LYONS

Anne Henderson

We are witnessing politics at a time of rare disorder. With all sorts of historical echoes. And a time for political parties to reconnect with their "narratives" - the word of the moment in politics.

Liberal Party leader Malcolm Turnbull and deputy leader Julie Bishop have offered bi-partisan co-operation with the Rudd government, in the face of a global credit crisis and looming recession. IMF head Dominique Strauss-Kahn, speaking to the G20 meeting in Washington in October, warned that the global financial system was near to meltdown but also threw his hope behind government bailouts of billions to stock markets, a measure he says should start banks lending again.

Australia's Labor government has assured Australians its banks are sound, and not facing anything like the tremors of their US counterparts. All true. However, every new development from a cut in official interest rates by a sharp one per cent, news of fast falling returns of older Australians' superannuation investments and the Australian government's guarantee of bank deposits (what's a "bank"?) are all shaking ordinary Australians' confidence in the future.

If the divisive climate of the recent US election can offer a clue, electors are seeking solutions, as well as reparations. Best mind co-operation seems to make sense in the battle to ensure lives and livelihoods are protected. This is not a first in Australian experience. The history of Joe and Enid Lyons and Robert Menzies offers some guidance.

The 1929 financial meltdown brought the Lyons and Menzies families (Labor and non Labor) into political allegiance – and went on to forge a unique outcome in the history of Australia's non-Labor parties.

It's a history that both sides of politics - Labor and Liberal - have chosen to ignore for too long. And, if Australia's political history is to be fully

acknowledged, it is a history that should be adequately documented by both parties - and accepted.

The financial crisis of 1929-31 came at a time of Labor rule in Canberra. After the Wall Street crash, the newly installed Scullin government faced the repayment of an £28 million loan with British banks. Radical Labor voices in caucus – including John Curtin - argued the loan repayment should be delayed, in other words the loan agreement be repudiated, or not paid when due. Acting Labor treasurer Joe Lyons argued that such an action would be financially reprehensible – and global suicide for a small trading nation like Australia.

What followed was – for Australia at the time – something almost as dramatic as the Washington bailout of Wall Street financial institutions in 2008. But, unlike the taxpayers of the USA today, the financial backing for the move came from private investors large and small.

In a move that was as bold as it was unique, Labor's acting treasurer Joe Lyons, in collaboration with a young Robert Menzies – then a Nationalist member of the Victorian parliament – and Staniforth Ricketson of the stockbroking firm JB Were, over some weeks, raised some £30 million from citizens and investors in a government scheme to re-finance that overseas loan.

Credit confidence in Australia was renewed – and with the combined efforts by Labor and non-Labor operatives. It made Joe Lyons a national figure. Even, as time would prove, an international figure.

In the months that followed the loan conversion, divisions in the Labor caucus continued. In late January 1931, Scullin reappointed Ted Theodore to the Treasury position.

Lyons became further disenchanted with Labor's inflationary moves and, with a handful of five other disenchanted Labor MPs, on 13 March he resigned from the government to sit on the crossbenches. Joe Lyons continued his contact with his non-Labor associates, namely those who had helped bring about the loan conversion. Meanwhile the pressure was on him to consider joining the conservatives in parliament.

ENID LYONS

But there was one other figure of utmost importance in all this - Joe's wife Enid Lyons.

At crucial moments, both with the loan conversion and as he made his decision to leave Labor, Lyons would look to Enid for back-up. The tensions in the Labor caucus over the loan repayment reached a zenith that year as Joe Lyons found himself defying Labor's radicals in caucus. The sounds of caucus

uproar could be heard through padded doors. Enid Lyons remarked to a journalist at the time, "If he [Joe] had done anything else I should have been ashamed of him."

Enid Burnell had married Joe Lyons at seventeen and by 1931 they had a family of nine children. But Enid was no housefrau. She had just missed winning a state seat for Labor in 1925 when Joe was Tasmanian premier. She was an integral part of his campaigns over years. Joe and Enid Lyons were a power couple long before the term became fashionable.

Joe Lyons had realised early in his career how women voters could be a political plus for him. When married, he used Enid on stage to draw out the issues women wanted to hear in an otherwise male dominated process. Enid loved the stage.

While often recalling that her legs would be like jelly as she approached the platform, Enid became a most entertaining and accomplished figure once she began a speech. Her years of elocution practice with her ambitious mother stood her in good stead. And she became a natural at repartee – having watched Joe, a master at it, over years in political campaigns.

In 1931, while Joe Lyons contemplated joining the conservative side of politics, Enid met Robert Menzies at the Menzies home. She was immediately attracted to Pattie Menzies but came away with a less than satisfactory impression of Robert Menzies whom she found to be of the dominant male type, as she would write in her memoirs.

This was hardly surprising. Joe Lyons had always encouraged Enid into the world of men – or public life - as an equal. And her mother Eliza was a woman who took an active part in public affairs. Eliza's activities in Labor politics in Tasmania had been the reason Joe and Enid had met.

Enid Lyons had had a very modern introduction to adult life as a woman. After her marriage, her role was at all times to support her husband – domestically and politically. But she had also been encouraged both at home and by her husband to take a stand as a public figure.

Enid quite astutely gauged in her first meeting with Robert Menzies that he preferred wives to take a back seat. Echoing this, Pattie Menzies once spoke of how there would be unhappiness in a marriage if both husband and wife were both "political at the prime ministerial level". No doubt this was true in the Menzies marriage, but Joe Lyons was very different. Today he would be tagged a Sensitive New Age Guy. Judging by the way wives have become so much a part of US political podiums, Joe Lyons was a SNAG well ahead of his time.

JOINING THE CONSERVATIVES

In April 1931, Joe and Enid Lyons became a national phenomenon. They were the focus of citizens groups across the eastern seaboard. These groups, seemingly politically unaligned but often backed by leading figures in conservative ranks, wanted change in Canberra. They were made up of tens of thousands of ordinary citizens who saw opposition to radical Labor as weak at a federal level.

They were closely aligned with the conservative side of politics – Staniforth Ricketson, for example, helped to set up the Victorian Citizens League in February 1931 and within three months it had 80,000 members. Keith Murdoch, the wealthy media magnate of the day, was also interested in publicising the protest of such groups in his newspapers.

With Joe Lyons now somewhere between the major political parties and the national figure who had spearheaded the non-partisan loans conversion, it was not long before he became seen as the man to take the politics of the citizens movements to another level.

Backers for a series of addresses that April by Joe and Enid Lyons in Town Halls from Adelaide to Melbourne and then to Sydney – with stops at regional towns along the way – included Ricketson, Murdoch and Robert Menzies. The meetings were widely reported in the press and a groundswell of citizen opposition to the handling of the economic downturn by Labor was underway. Joe Lyons and Enid Lyons were cheered again and again as heroes – Enid, as well as Joe, spoke at the podium.

Her presence was so popular Robert Menzies began to fear Enid would take some of the limelight from Joe. In Melbourne, Menzies asked Enid to merely give the vote of thanks. She was cheered loudly nonetheless – with some calling out that she was “Queen of Australia”.

On 7 May 1931, a new conservative party was declared – the United Australia Party. Its name captured the aspirations of the troubled citizens leagues. Joe Lyons became leader as John Latham stepped aside. The UAP was a party that crossed political divides; a non-Labor party with a Catholic at its helm – an historic first.

In Joe Lyons’ move away from Labor, Enid Lyons was quite an influence. Her own political persuasion had been Labor, developed out of a Labor family. As the Lyons couple became disenchanted with the extremes of the left of federal Labor, it was Enid who most readily accepted a move to the conservative opposition.

Enid Lyons was something of a Fabian – what one might call a small “l” Liberal. Her allegiance was

more with policy. The only organisation which would completely hold her allegiance throughout her life was the Catholic Church. Raised a Methodist, Enid had studied the Catholic faith before her marriage to Joe Lyons and converted. Enid could see things more pragmatically. Joe's jump from Labor had a lot to do with Enid's common sense and her belief in Joe rather than the tribe they were leaving.

This relative independence of mind has, however, left the Lyons political couple, especially Joe Lyons, without champions as the decades have passed. Labor has failed to acknowledge Joe Lyons as a Labor man ahead of his time with his pragmatic sense of economic responsibility and readiness to stand strong against the potential disaster of radical ideas from some in the Labor caucus.

For Liberals, Joe Lyons was left to disappear in the shadow of Liberal Party founder Robert Menzies, in spite of Enid Lyons’ great contribution to the party’s early years. It had been Joe Lyons who had encouraged Robert Menzies to move to federal politics in 1934 and for almost half a decade Menzies worked closely with Joe Lyons as Attorney-General in the UAP governments.

THAT WOMAN

In the 1930s, for a professional man of Menzies’ capabilities, Enid Lyons defied the norm and challenged comfort zones. But so long as Joe and Enid Lyons were the power couple in the Lodge, Menzies had to acknowledge their genius for winning elections.

In so many ways Enid Lyons and Robert Menzies were like chalk and cheese. She had the instinctive ability to move thousands with a few words; he was what Enid described fondly on the day of his death in May 1978 as “such a well furnished lawyer”.

Enid Lyons also remains a conundrum for feminists. Robert Menzies might have warned them. So often today, young women are told they cannot have it all, that parenting and a public life are too difficult to manage at the one time. But Enid Lyons did just this, marrying at seventeen, having 12 children add rearing eleven to adulthood and, after 1939, as a single parent. Among many achievements:

- She would stand for parliament at the age of 27, while the mother of seven.
- As the spouse of a Tasmanian Labor premier and later a conservative prime minister she would become known as an important public speaker in her own right.
- As the single mother of eleven, still educating five of her children, she would become the first woman to win a seat in the House of Representatives, and this in

spite of a landslide loss federally for her party at that election.

And if you are exhausted by all this, Enid Lyons would go on to

- become the first woman in an Australian Cabinet, in 1949,
- sit on the ABC Board for over a decade, and
- rally a huge fan club as a radio broadcaster and syndicated twice-weekly columnist for some three years.

But this was also an ordinary woman in many aspects of her life; as a mother, she could not imagine being without a baby; she became a good little housewife, enjoying her kitchen, covering chairs and sofas, sewing her children's clothes. She was a tireless supporter of her husband and allowed him to go after his ambitions, however much it gave her own life new burdens. Yet, in all of this, Enid Lyons would somehow become extraordinary.

Enid Lyons is the antithesis of the modern and independent woman that writers and feminists like Jill Ker Conway would have women strive to be – in summary

- one not acted upon by outside forces and conventions;
- who charts her own course in life in spite of many hurdles
- who acts against the tide of patriarchal expectations surrounding women.

In so many areas of her life story, Enid Lyons did not set out to chart the course her life took. She was instinctive rather than strategic, and surrounded by action not of her making – challenges that came to her in out-of-the ordinary circumstances and which she rose to meet.

There is also something of a Sarah Palin in her. A woman who defies many conventional leftist stereotypes for a “feminist”, but a woman pioneering women's ability to take a senior role on the public and political stage.

For Robert Menzies this was a puzzle. When Joe and Enid Lyons made their first trip abroad in 1935, Menzies joined the prime ministerial team - a happy group at sea. Enid had been asked by Keith Murdoch to write regular columns for his newspapers of her impressions while abroad. When Menzies heard of this he offered his secretary Mr Stirling to help her write the columns; Menzies used the lawyers' phrase “devilling”. Enid declined. She had faith in her writing. What's more, her writing style was what readers liked.

Enid wrote with emotion and personality – something the well furnished lawyer could not quite appreciate

at the time. This was also true of her speaking – and that of Joe Lyons. They could tug the emotions and empathies of enormous crowds of ordinary people. Enid Lyons once wrote that if only the young Bob Menzies had inserted a couple of platitudes into his speeches he would have been far better at winning over voters. This lack of warmth and empathy in Menzies' public utterances was one very strong reason his colleagues feared he was not ready for leadership in 1938.

MENZIES - LYONS RIFT

Joe Lyons' death on 7 April 1939, while prime minister, shocked the nation. It came after months of party division and global tension up to and following the Munich Agreement with Hitler in September 1938. Joe Lyons was under extreme pressure and his heart weak. But the lead-up to his death saw fracture in conservative ranks.

Robert Menzies' speech to the Constitutional Club in Sydney in October 1938 was reported as being an attack on Joe Lyons' weak leadership. In his speech, Menzies had held up Mussolini and Hitler as examples of strong leadership in contrast to leadership in Australia. Enid, reading the morning newspapers at the Lodge, urged Joe to take it up with Menzies. Joe reacted more benignly; he did not believe Menzies was making an attack on him. Then, in March 1939, Menzies resigned from Cabinet, the day Germany invaded Czechoslovakia, and threw the Lyons Government into semi-meltdown.

Lyons, ever the conciliator, took Menzies' resignation hard but eventually recognised that Menzies was acting out of principle. Menzies undoubtedly believed he could do a better job as leader – and with echoes of Liberal leadership struggles decades later, Menzies had been encouraged to believe that Lyons wanted him as his successor when Lyons encouraged Menzies to enter federal politics in 1934.

Years later Enid Lyons would record a balanced account of her feelings surrounding her husband's death and the events leading up to it. She was angry over the Constitutional Club speech but never directly blamed Robert Menzies for Joe Lyons' death. In fact, Enid sent a warm, congratulatory telegram to Menzies when he was eventually elected leader by just one vote against the aging Billy Hughes after Joe's death.

In public and private recordings, Enid Lyons was exemplary – as was Robert Menzies. But she did admit in her memoirs to never having voted for Menzies as leader – owing to the emotions she felt at the circumstances leading to Joe's death.

Among the Lyons children, naturally, there was much ill feeling at the loss of their father. Peter Lyons – born in 1931 - remembers a visit Robert Menzies

made to the family home in Devonport when Menzies was prime minister and Peter was a young adult. Peter would not go up to the house because he still believed Robert Menzies had killed his father. He does not hold that view today.

THE MP

Enid Lyons defied all expectations at the federal election in 1943. It was an election when John Curtin and Labor won a landslide victory. But, in northern Tasmania, Enid Lyons scraped home on preferences to win the seat of Darwin for the UAP – in spite of standing against two men from her own party, two Labor candidates, a Communist and an independent. Her temerity and willingness to have a go were Enid Lyons' lifelong gifts. And by the time she stood for federal parliament she had long years of experience of campaigning.

Ironically, after all that had passed between them, Enid Lyons became the bright light on Menzies' horizon at the 1943 election. Her move to parliament, the House where the PM sat, captured national media attention for the conservative side of politics. It was a landmark occasion.

It was only after the 1943 election that Menzies seemed ready to assume the leadership again after years of ambivalence. At a time of deep set back for the non-Labor parties, the federal election of 1943 seemed to mark the beginning of a comeback. Within two years, the Liberal Party of Australia would take shape. Enid Lyons would serve notably as a member of Menzies' party for some eight years and be appointed to cabinet after the 1949 election.

MEMOIRS

The Menzies-Lyons relationship was always one of respect more so than affection. Joe Lyons certainly had a warm regard for Robert Menzies and recognised his potential from the first. He did believe Menzies had the capacity to take the leadership. But, by the late 1930s, the UAP was a nest of competing egos. In addition, Robert Menzies and Country Party leader Earle Page distrusted one another. As early as 1931, Menzies had confided to Keith Murdoch that he would not stand for Page being deputy leader at the time the UAP was being formed and there was hope the Country Party would join it.

As the UAP moved to install a new leader after Joe Lyons' death, Earle Page made a speech against Menzies in the House where he accused Menzies of cowardice in not enlisting to fight in the First World War.

This was a bitter and unfair attack, as Bob Menzies' two brothers had enlisted and a family agreement was that he stay at home for the sake of the family. It

wasn't easy for Menzies. Pattie Menzies never spoke another word to Page from then on. Earle Page, meanwhile, remained a close friend of Enid Lyons during her years as a federal MP.

After Joe Lyons' death there was baggage both Menzies and Enid Lyons would paper over in their exchanges. They were accomplished politicians both, but feelings were brittle between them. And as Menzies became more and more the accepted father of conservative politics, Joe Lyons' legacy became diminished.

THE WRITTEN RECORD

Enid Lyons was a great believer in the written record. Wisely so. The written legacy is something the modern Liberal Party and its followers have been slow to recognise as important. The Menzies Research Centre is to be complimented for its role here.

It is also worth noting Enid Lyons' Labor roots in this – coming from a party originally that values the printed word and history. Books on Labor heroes – however large or small – sell well and are read by Labor supporters. Labor keeps the faith – at times far too strictly – and knows its history. It's hard to get a book published if it won't sell. To have books, you need readers. Liberal stories are being lost for lack of Liberal readers, Peter Costello has made an important contribution with the recent publication of his memoirs. But there is much more to do.

In her two volumes of memoir, *So We Take Comfort* and *Among the Carrion Crows*, Enid Lyons left her story. The latter volume is a record of her years as an MP and it lets a lot of air into what had passed between Menzies, Enid Lyons and Joe Lyons in the months before Joe's death.

Enid Lyons wrote of her reaction to the Constitutional Club speech in 1938 and how she had been furious at what she saw as disloyalty from Menzies. She intended her book to set the record straight as to Joe Lyons' strengths as a leader – for too long she believed his memory had been clouded by the views of his rivals, men who had no understanding of his conciliatory approach to politics and his ability to keep a team united in tough times. Such qualities are only better understood decades later.

Well ahead of her book's publication, word leaked out that Enid Lyons was writing her views of controversial moments in the Menzies-Lyons relationship. Enid had written her thanks to Menzies a few years earlier when he had published *Afternoon Light* which included fulsome words of praise for Joe.

In March 1972, as the press came sniffing for advance warning of her book's contents, Enid contacted Menzies who was recovering from a stroke

in the Mercy Hospital in Melbourne. What followed was an exchange between the two stalwarts of 1940s politics. Enid had attached a draft of her chapter on Lyons and Menzies - and Menzies replied giving reasons for his actions.

Menzies explained how he had disagreed with the dumping of the national insurance legislation which he had promised his electorate would be passed when he had come within an ace of losing Kooyong in 1937; and his speech to the Constitutional Club had been a generic cry to all leaders in Australia, himself included, and not an attack on Joe Lyons.

In her book *Among The Carrion Crows*, Enid Lyons included their correspondence in an afterword. And there the matter rested.

LEGACY

Had Joe Lyons not died in April 1939, who knows how the history of conservative politics might have played out. Joe Lyons, unlike John Howard, wanted to retire. He had told Menzies that in a letter as early as 1936. But Lyons had no ready alternative income to support a large family and, unlike today, there were few safe positions offering for him to move sideways. Moreover, the UAP and its close ally the Country Party, headed by Earle Page, could not agree on Menzies as the fresh face to lead the Coalition.

Robert Menzies did assume the leadership of the UAP in April 1939 - in spite of Earle Page's attempts to spoil his chances. Menzies led the UAP when it narrowly regained office in 1940 but never looked settled as Prime Minister. He did indeed appear to be unready for leadership, handing over the prime ministership to Arty Fadden of the Country Party in August 1941. John Curtin became Prime Minister in October 1941 after the conservative coalition lost the numbers in the House. These were dark days for Australian conservatives.

So in many ways, when you look at it, Enid Lyons' triumph in the 1943 federal election - just two years later and against the odds - restored a sense of conservative pride in their chances. In the Lyons way, she seems to have shown her leaders something of a way back. By 1945, a new conservative force had been reshaped as the Liberal Party and in December 1949, with the Country Party, it won government.

Bob Menzies and Enid Lyons, despite their differences, remained a team. Their story has much to offer the modern party.

Anne Henderson is Deputy Director of The Sydney Institute and author of Enid Lyons - Leading Lady to a Nation (Pluto Press, 2008). This was a paper presented to The Menzies Research Centre in Parliament House, Canberra on 15 October 2008.

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION - AGAIN

Colin Tatz

Reports and inquiries on Aboriginal issues are usually polite, sometimes plaintive, often euphemistic to avoid sensitivities, frequently a set of bullet points to show how far Aborigines fall below the Australian norms. Bluntness is uncommon, and so it is both refreshing and grim to have such a brutal analysis from Helen Hughes on the failings of *Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory* (Hughes 2008).

How, she asks, can there be such appalling educational deprivation "in a compassionate country with one of the world's most effective democracies"? (Hughes 2008: 2). Failure is to be found in inequitable school facilities and teacher housing, in sub-standard teachers and teaching, in inappropriate curriculums, massive shortcomings in electricity, ablution blocks, equipment (even down to the absence of pencils and paper), and in a succession of "pretend" vocational courses. Children who have been at school for ten years cannot read above year 1 primary level (Hughes 2008: 3).

Her remedy? Look at Aboriginal children "in the open society attending mainstream schools" and see how well they manage in comparison with those in remote and separate Homelands education systems. Invest in real teachers, qualified teachers, she writes, insist on school attendance registers, do something drastic about CDEP (work-for-social-service-benefits) teacher aides, get rid of the teacher fly-in and drive-in regimen, abandon the vocational courses that lead no-one anywhere and, whatever else, teach children English and mathematics, the very foundations for real work, for artisan or professional careers.

Public inquiries into Aboriginal education have been going on for over 30 years, she states (incorrectly), but her axe falls most heavily on the Northern Territory government which, Hughes insists, has known for a decade that Aboriginal schools are turning out children with the numeracy and literacy rates of five-year-olds (Hughes 2008: 1-12).

Professor Hughes is frank about her opposition to those who insist that Aboriginal culture can only be

kept alive by sensitive bi- or mono-cultural programs; she is a steadfast mainstreamer, a believer in a free-market, individual-achieving society.

There is not much to contest in this vivisection of entrenched and embedded failure of Territory policy and its administration. One could resort to old-fashioned victim-blaming, arguing that parental values and influences are grossly disruptive and therefore the long-held assimilationist and separating theories should come back, with distant boarding schools, yet again and yet another flavour of the year. Or one could return openly, again, to a Social Darwinian postulate that “these people” really are beyond our pales and that Governor Macquarie was probably right in setting up the first Native Institution in 1815, the forerunner of many more, in which the boys could be trained “for agricultural employ” and the girls for domestic service.

There can be no return to that kind of racist philosophy and anthropology, and despite a federal initiative of \$20 million in scholarships, thousands of children cannot be transported from Milingimbi, Cape York and Kalamburu to board at St Josephs (Joey’s) in Sydney. The (yet again) relocation theme is now a major focus of philanthropists, business corporations and well-intentioned governments. We can no longer push the “overwhelming primitivism” explanation — given that there are enough successful programs, here and abroad, to show just what can be done. We could also learn to admit that the problems we can’t resolve doesn’t mean they are unresolvable.

Herein lies the major weakness of the Hughes report: the absence of history — contextual history and institutional history — as an explanation of much of the above. That lack of context, and memory, is also, of course, what bedevils most of Aboriginal policy-making

The Coalition government’s emergency “intervention” in 2007, recently renewed by the Labor government for at least another year, is possibly the most gauche, visible and noisy replication of past practices that have come unglued, turned messy, and then been unabashedly consigned to the amnesia bin. What follows is a brief excursion into Aboriginal education, not in the sense of excuse for the present disaster but as an explanation of it. It also allows some projections into the future.

Education for Territory Aborigines began over a century later than for other Australians. Before 1950 there was no provision whatever. Concerns and reports began over 60, not 30, years ago. In the 1940s, there were plans and negotiations, as well as talk, about “an army-type education” (along the lines of the

Army units presently teaching carpentry, road-making and the like in northern Australia). In 1950 the (then) Commonwealth Office of Education (COE), based in Sydney and specialising in migrant education and teaching English as a foreign language, agreed to begin a program.

This was but one of so many (foredoomed) programs that conceived of Aborigines as a subset of the migrant population. COE teachers were to be three-year trained, with one year at a teachers’ college and the subsequent years “heavily laden with anthropology”, the Elkin-doctrine material at Sydney University (Tatz 1964a: 162–171). That, of course, was always part of the problem: an anthropology suffused with all manner of “scientific” curiosity, good intention but, essentially, with much disdain for Aboriginal society. Professor Baldwin Spencer — whose works became the veritable Old Testament on Aboriginal tribes, lives and times — was to write:

The aboriginal is, indeed, a very curious mixture; mentally, about the level of a child who has little control over his feelings and is liable to give way to violent fits of temper, during which he may very likely behave with great cruelty. He has no sense of responsibility and, except in rare cases, no initiative (Spencer 1913).

Much of the anthropology that followed, at least until the land rights era of the mid-1970s, was “reconstructionist”, that is, field workers came into government-run settlements and Christian-run missions, totally ignored the geographic and legal fences that cocooned and incarcerated hunter-gatherers, and pretended that they could reconstruct the days in the lives of the tribes, people ostensibly in “pristine condition”. No one looked at the legal and administrative frameworks, essentially based on protection by means of segregation; no one looked at, let alone recognised, the “asylum-like” confinement of people in often inaccessible domains

While anthropologists disregarded these legal and geographic constraints, officials were busy pretending that these domains were “normal”, places where the three Rs could be instilled and where children could be taught to eat spaghetti with a knife and fork.

The great self-deception was that the COE or any mission agency could transplant essentially urban-constructed programs in a “normal” environment. Some pathetic concessions to “reality” were made: “Bush Books” told the story of Nari and Jangala who went up the hill to fetch a pail of water, despite the absence of buckets and water in Central Australia; “t” is for “train” and “s” is for “sea” were other jewels in the primers for those who would most likely never

see either. Two supervisory staff were located at COE headquarters in Darwin.

In 1950, COE established four schools; by 1955 there were eleven on government settlements, with enrolments of 594 children. It came as no surprise that the newly-created Welfare Branch of the Northern Territory Administration wanted to take control from COE. The *Welfare Ordinance* of 1953 replaced the long-standing *Aboriginals Ordinance* of 1911–18. While the allegedly new laws “emancipated” the “half-castes”, the statutes made sure that every restriction from 1911 onwards — which banned alcohol, free movement in and out of reserves, trade union membership, intermarriage with non-Aborigines except by official permission, sex across the colour line, a federal and Territory vote, social service payments, which prescribed payments well below the basic wage and most often issued rations in lieu of wages — was retained and applied to all “full-blood” Aborigines. *All*, irrespective of age, were made wards of the state, subject to the legal guardianship of the Director of Welfare (Tatz 1964a: 20–28; Tatz 1964b).

The Director, unwittingly perhaps, created a model that had failed so dismally in Britain in the nineteenth century, namely the Board of Guardians for the administration of the Poor Laws. The Board insisted on an octopus framework whereby all functions and services for the Poor, as a specialised clientele, were to be provided by them. Only they understood the Poor. The Welfare Branch made it clear it wanted control of Aboriginal education and COE succumbed, with muted whimper, from 1956 (Tatz 1964a: 171–191).

The Branch had several subdivisions, including health, hygiene, catering, capital and mission subsidies, housing, and a staff of three senior educators, a Superintendent of Special Schools (SSS) and two inspectors, responsible only to the director. (I know all this because I took six months off my PhD — on Aboriginal administration in the Territory — to act as SSS while the incumbent was on leave.)

A number of factors made failure inevitable. First, three senior education staff were located in a non-professional administrative unit. Second, they attempted to operate programs across fourteen settlements and thirteen missions in a domain larger than France and Germany together. Third, they delegated education to missionaries who “serviced” one-third of the Aboriginal population and they exercised almost no supervision or control over education on cattle stations which “administered” the remaining third of the population.

Fourth, there was no recourse to an internal network of ideas from fellow professionals (other State

Aboriginal administrations were almost as bad in their education programs). Fifth, the teachers who served on settlements and missions did not have their Territory experience acknowledged or recognised by state authorities. Sixth, there were no in-service courses, workshops, updates of any kind.

Seventh, most teachers were one-year primary-certificated, and could (and did) rise to positions within the Branch that they could never hope to reach in a normal authority. Eighth, there was no direct link between teachers and the head office trio, with teachers having to submit to the whims of mostly untrained, under-educated and non-professional superintendents of missions and settlements.

Ninth, induction courses for new teachers lasted a day, if they occurred at all. Tenth, living quarters for teachers were abysmal. Eleventh, there was either ambivalence or antipathy to the few mission teachers who spoke a vernacular and wanted to teach in that medium. Twelfth, there was, with one exception, never an attempt to explain to Aboriginal parents what was going on in a fenced-off brick building for up to six hours a day. Nor was any explanation given to teachers as to what the “assimilation policy” was or was meant to achieve. And so on, and on.

Professor Hughes refers positively to the older generations having been taught literacy by missionaries. This was true — but only of a minority of missions. The school at Roper River Mission produced a cohort of Aboriginal leaders, such as Dexter Daniels and his clan, prominent in trade unions and activist politics. There was strong bilingual literacy in Methodist enclaves in Arnhem Land, and at Umbakumba on Groote Eylandt (when it was a private mission run by Fred Gray in the 1940s). Much of mission endeavour, especially at places like Oenpelli, was as bad, if not worse in quality, than settlement programs.

The most abysmal aspects were the “aide” and the “vocational” programs. Hygiene and education “aides” were sent for short courses, usually of between two weeks and six-months duration. The presumption, an old colonial one, was that they would work only among their own people — and hence a lowered standard would be acceptable as “normal”. Usually the same “aides” were sent back, year after year, for repeats of the same courses, with little or no graduation to higher levels of skill. “Butchers”, “bricklayers”, “carpenters”, and “bakers” were sent for two-week courses and given certificates of attainment, paper of no possible validity anywhere (Tatz 1964a: 58–78).

Wittingly or not, there was a significant element of false pretence in all of this. Expectations were offered

that could never be attained; hopes were held for promotions that were never there; job prospects were held out for jobs that could never be there. Professor Hughes uses a good term, “pretend”, about much of this; phoney, and deep down, knowingly phoney, is another. There was simply nothing to assimilate into. Nor, frankly, is there very much available today — unless, to use Professor Jon Altman’s comment to me (20 September 2008) about Hughes’ philosophy, we empty the Aboriginal estate (*terra vacua*) and move everyone to the charms and chances offered by Alice, Darwin, Tennant and Katherine.

The Welfare Branch has long gone and wardship has been abolished. But legacies remain, and they constrain both the present and the future. From some of the current

Aboriginal leadership, whom I once taught at places like Yuendumu and Papunya, one sees and hears the bitterness of past incarceration, the rigid rules, empty promises, false hopes and general purposelessness.

Aboriginal antagonism, from grandparents to parents to today’s children, is evident. Resistance to White “largesse”, innovation, “inputs”, constant if not incessant new brooms, is not merely passive but very active. One is always amazed at what many of these children can read while they formally refuse to read, or fail yet another battery of White-inspired (and universally applied) tests.

One can also watch an innovator like Ann Morrice. She has demonstrated the efficacy of her language development technique in over 300 Australian schools. Speaking, listening, reading and writing are linked in meaningful contexts. The program builds on the positives which exist for the children in their environments.

The Ernabella community in South Australia has shown remarkable results from Morrice’s quick, inexpensive literacy program, one that Morrice’s claims can be used to train teachers in half a day. Schools don’t have to be the vehicles or venues (Tatz 2001: 215–216). There are also, of course, language-acquisition programs of considerable success in South Africa, in parts of Asia, and in the Americas. We also have an acute summary from the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research at ANU on Education, *Training and Indigenous Futures (2008)*, albeit one that visits all of the above issues, again.

Several precepts need consideration. The first is that Aborigines are yet to be seen as *legitimate* participants in any life-improvement activities. They remain *recipients* of what is deemed in their better interests. Second, we have yet to try a middle path between total separatism and total assimilation, namely, accommodation.

The true meaning of assimilation is not that a larger group swallows a smaller one, to the point of the latter’s distinctive disappearance. Rather, assimilation has an ideological base: it is a process of generalisation, inwardly and ethnocentrically oriented, one which seeks to incorporate indigenous or foreign situations into White frameworks of thought and action. It involves generalising the strategies developed in essentially White or Western metropolitan institutions — London, Madrid, Lisbon, Paris, Sydney, Canberra — and duplicating them in essentially Black rural (colonial) contexts.

To be successful, these “others” need to abandon their traditional behaviour, culture, manner of thinking and doing, and accommodate to “our” models.

Accommodation should be about specification, not generalisation, outwardly oriented toward the “different ones”. It may often mean adopting strategies that depart, often radically, from pre-existing metropolitan norms and values. That is what Ann Morrice has done. And this, of course, is what bureaucrats of any kind, including educationists, deplore: universality is so much easier than dealing with difference, especially regional difference, let alone local difference. Professor Hughes sees Australia as an effective democracy, but to be so requires that it addresses the needs of the unequals, the different ones, the inept and the unable, and which doesn’t try to “homogenise” them into middle-class “aspirationists”.

What Professor Hughes omits is any mention of the “outcomes” of her mainstream philosophy. Precisely where do these Aboriginal mainstream-educated children go to, or get to? We know where the university-trained people find careers, but what of the majority — those who can’t finish, or don’t want to finish, or simply don’t want to leave what they consider home and country? It will be interesting to see what happens to all the Joey’s boarders over time.

There is one final thought about Professor Hughes’ essay. She does the Northern Territory the honour of treating that entity as normal, as having a functioning government supporting the wants and needs of people who aspire to statehood. There are, at present, some 217,000 people living in 1.4 million square km, or 0.16 persons per square km. Just over 30 per cent of the people are Aborigines, the majority living in remote communities, the once-were settlements and missions, places which were not always domains of natural habitat but selected by government or missions as secluded enough to protect Aborigines from predators who, in no particular order, wanted to kill them, take their women, or sell them opium.

In a cruel sense, perhaps, there is something faintly ludicrous about a frontier such as this one trying to

run systems and institutions on some kind of par with the much older, vastly more populated States or the ACT. That *they* don't keep school-attendance registers is one thing. That they don't keep records of chronic malformation births and stillbirths is another. That their school populations are a fair way last in the national literacy and numeracy tests is another. Why? In many fields, they simply don't want to. In others, they simply can't.

A state's motive for investment in education is to produce a return, namely, a regular cohort of labouring, artisan and professional classes. The "spin" to the public is that "education is good for you". Aboriginal education has had different premises, ranging from preparedness for cleanliness, Christianity and "civilization" to demonstrating that the state doesn't discriminate, and does provide equal, or separate but equal, facilities, or at least quite good facilities, considering ...

In close on 50 years of watching all this, I have yet to see anyone sit down, seriously, for a month, or a fortnight at least, and allow local people, in language or through interpreters, to express what *they* expect or want from this "school business". Until then, we go on gilding our endeavours, and lamenting the results.

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LOOKING BACK FROM OPPOSITION

Christopher Pyne

When former Prime Minister John Howard was Leader of the Opposition, he once described himself as the most conservative leader the Liberal Party had ever had. He was right.

For most of the Liberal Party's history the federal party had been led by variously more pragmatic or more liberal leaders. Some, like Malcolm Fraser and Robert Menzies, were personally conservative but more pragmatic. Others, like John Gorton and Andrew Peacock, were less personally conservative and more liberal. But none were as conservative as John Howard. Something John Howard wore as a badge of honour.

In the last year, since the Liberals' defeat on 24 November 2007, the Liberal Party has been led by Brendan Nelson and Malcolm Turnbull. They have both moved the party from some of the touchstones of the previous government's agenda.

While the previous government had major achievements in the areas of the environment, outcomes for indigenous Australians and in creating employment and reforming the workplace, the new leadership team has chosen to make some subtle shifts.

The Liberal Party has joined with the Labor government in ratifying the Kyoto Protocol (the international instrument that governs attempts by the world to address climate change) and expressing an apology by the Australian parliament for the mistreatment of indigenous Australians.

It has also re-affirmed its support for the right of workers to contract individually with their employer but has rejected the central aspect of the previous government's industrial relations agenda that was unpopular with the people – contracts between employee and employer that did not have as their foundation a "no-disadvantage" test. In other words, the Liberal Party as reformed in 2008 is more pragmatic and more in the political centre than the one that faced the voters on 24 November 2007.

This by no means implies a criticism of the Coalition government between 1996 and 2007. That the



Howard era was a period worth celebrating and praising was shown by the fact that, to win the electorate's trust, Kevin Rudd had to overturn many cornerstone Labor beliefs and adopt many Liberal policies: from our tax plan to voluntary student unionism, from support for parents' schooling choices to the private health insurance rebate.

THREE KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

For me, three key achievements of the previous government stand out.

Obviously the Howard Government's record of economic management has left the country in a strong position for years to come. Strong business investment, low unemployment, a competitive tax system and surplus budgets were all unthinkable in 1995. These Howard Government achievements delivered a prosperity not seen for generations.

Australia's strong domestic position was matched by an improved position in the world. By the end of the Howard era, Australia had become one of the economic and foreign policy powerhouses of Asia, as seen by its lead role following the tsunami crisis, as well as the political crises in the Solomon Islands, Afghanistan, East Timor, Papua New Guinea and many others. Consecutive visits within days of the presidents of China and the United States to address the Australian parliament pointed to strong relations with these two world leaders and Australia's ability to manage what some regard as two mutually exclusive relationships. John Howard showed that Australia was a country worth taking seriously again.

Thirdly, the black armband view of Australian history was consigned to the past. At the end of 2007 we were a proud nation again – positive about our future and comfortable about our place in the world.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Twelve months on, the Liberal Party must embrace a forward agenda, underpinned by a modern philosophy. The Liberal Party of Australia was founded in 1944 by Robert Menzies as a party of progress. As he famously wrote in *Afternoon Light*:

We took the name "Liberal" because we were determined to be a progressive party, willing to make experiments, in no sense reactionary but believing in the individual, his rights, and his enterprise, and rejecting the socialist panacea.

The Liberal Party must again be a force for change.

The Liberal Party's founders were men and women of vision. They came from all walks of life. They held to varying philosophies – some were the inheritors of the Deakinite legacy, others were representative of business, still others from the land, while others were

strong willed women who saw a role for women in public life and intended to claim that role. It was a collection of individuals that would dominate politics for the next generation and beyond. Their approach had the Liberal Party in power for more than two thirds of the more than 60 years which followed. Their legacy was a nation at the forefront of the great first world democracies.

Today the Liberal Party cannot afford to hope that the wheel of fortune will turn with any inevitability. But like Sir Robert Menzies, Sir Richard Casey, Sir Percy Spender, Dame Enid Lyons and their confreres, we must, with our own hands, make the wheel turn. If our Party founders were alive today, would they embrace change? As they did in 1944, I believe they would. And, now is a good time to do so.

In 1996, in every State, Territory and the Commonwealth, the Liberal Party held around 250 lower house seats. In 2008, we hold around 160. In twelve years, our reach has declined by 40 per cent! On the other hand, recent electoral contests in 2008 have shown the Liberal Party can still "pack a punch". We have won the state election in Western Australia, taken the Northern Territory Labor government "to the wire" (trebling our representation), won the federal by-election in the seat of Mayo and improved our standing in the Australian Capital Territory.

Our prospects for success at the next federal election are high. We need to propose a positive agenda and not just rely on the failings of our opponents – a superficial Labor agenda, a weak Labor ministry and an incompetent response to a world - and Australian - financial and economic crisis.

It is important that the public know that the Liberal Party has listened – that we have recognised the need for change in our party and the need to embrace an agenda for the future of Australia that is modern and forward looking. The Liberal Party certainly has the personnel and the ideas; it simply needs the will for that to be achieved.

Liberal philosophy asserts that by the force of our own will and the work of our own hands we can each, individually, determine our own fate. In this way, it represents a set of beliefs very much in keeping with the majority of the Australian population. Liberals believe that government has a role to play in shaping the condition of society so as to maximise the real freedom of the individual within that society. As Sir Robert Menzies said, government is more than being just a "keeper of the ring".

Within the so called post-ideological world of Kevin Rudd and his government it is too easy to lose sight of the importance of philosophy in shaping how politics works in practice.

The Liberal Party must recognise that it is a force for change that has a purpose – to maximise the citizen's liberty (both economically and socially). In reaffirming our connection with our philosophical underpinnings we are more likely to present a coherent policy platform to the public that has at its base a view of the world that is fresh and optimistic.

Philosophically, the party must genuinely embrace the two strands of philosophical thought that we represent. The Liberal Party is the custodian of both the liberal and conservative philosophy of Western politics. Both emphasise the importance of the individual. In 2008, this means creating the environment where a person's choices are maximised and respecting the choices they make whether they are socially progressive or conservative ones.

Liberals stand for economic responsibility, small government and maximising individual freedom. Liberals see a role for government in acting to correct ills and assisting people but not as the first port of call for each person's needs. The first port of call should be ourselves. Liberals seek to give the individual the economic and social freedom to choose the direction he or she wishes to take in life, empowered by a good education, a job, good health and a secure upbringing. Such an upbringing is best achieved in the environment of a secure family. While that is everyone's aim, we must recognise that it is not always so for all.

Liberals respect the bedrock institutions of our society – the parliament, the Constitution, the rule of law and the family unit as the best deliverers of social security for our young, our elderly and our infirm.

GOING GREEN – THE FORCE FOR CHANGE

Earlier I wrote that I believed that if Sir Robert Menzies and the other party founders were alive today they would be part of a force for change in the modern Liberal Party. Let me explain. In the 1950s and 1960s, one of the great debates in Australia raged around state aid (government funding) for independent (in many people's minds, specifically Catholic) schools. It was a divisive issue. It was a sectarian issue, as well as being about the role of the state in the education of children.

In Goulburn, in NSW in 1962, Catholic schools closed their doors for a week and sent their pupils to local State schools in protest over the lack of government funding for their students. In 1963, the Menzies Cabinet broke with almost 100 years of precedent to introduce state aid for independent schools. It was a seminal moment in Australia's history. It marked the beginning of the end for religious sectarianism in this country. It was also a political masterstroke.

Sir Robert Menzies had already been a force for change in non-Labor politics. He had led the reformation of non-Labor political parties in 1944 when the non-Labor side of politics was seemingly at its nadir. So in both an organisational and policy sense, the Liberals of the Menzies era were prepared to change. Today's Liberals must be prepared to look to the future in an equally unblinkered way if we wish to survive and flourish.

A similarly marked shift that is necessary for the contemporary Liberal Party is in our approach and rhetoric on the issue of climate change. The view that the activity of the human race has added to changes to the climate and the warming of the earth, is not a view with which one will get any argument from younger generations and which is increasingly accepted by all generations.

There is a demonstrable need to address the release of carbon dioxide and other gases into the atmosphere. That this must be done in a way that maintains our standard of living and is economically sustainable is also beyond question.

The Liberal Party must place itself at the forefront of this debate. The previous government had a sound record of action in this area. As a direct result of the policies of the Howard Government, it is estimated that Australia will save 87 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions by 2010. Such a result would be commensurate with removing fourteen million cars, trucks and buses from our roads and ending all domestic rail, air and shipping movements.

We cannot now vacate the field to our political opponents. Instead, we need to be on the side of politics that provides the solutions. We have the economic credibility to carry the argument for the environment. Let's use that capital to help individuals and society.

The Opposition is committed to setting medium and long term targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The previous government had already begun the work to establish the framework for an emissions trading scheme by 2011-12. We had a commitment to sustaining the great forests of the developing world and extending our own and the current government should reaffirm this commitment – not just because it is the right thing to do but because of the positive impact it has on reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

The central thesis of *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital* (1995) is that involvement in community, sporting, political and service organisations has declined over the last 100 years. The book's author, Robert Putnam, found that the only case where this was not so was in people joining and becoming active in green causes:

The traditional forms of civic organisation whose decay we have been tracing have been replaced by vibrant new organisations. For example, national environmental organisations and feminist groups grew rapidly during the 1970s and 1980s and now count hundreds of thousands of dues-paying members.

Interest in environmental causes has only grown since the early 1970s. The popularity of GetUp!, the continued support for the Australian Greens and Australian Democrats before them and my own experience as a local MP, should tell us that interest in the environment and, in particular, in climate change is not about to abate.

In the same way that the Liberal Party's founders grasped hold of new opportunities for change and an extension of the Liberal Party's reach, we are uniquely placed as a party to do the same now. We have the economic credibility earned through years of outstanding economic outcomes over the period of the Howard Government to argue that we can deliver practical environmental outcomes that marry a desire to stop the damage that climate change will do with a sustainable economy that delivers a standard of living to the people we represent that they expect.

Both liberals and conservatives will want this outcome. The fundamental principle of both is that it is not enough to simply "hold the ring" - society expects more from the great to protect the less great. But for the great majority of society, who need neither handouts nor a hand-up, government should leave a very small footprint on their lives. We can rebuild the Liberal Party platform based on principles such as these.

The Liberal Party's founders were prepared to embrace change both structurally and in policy. They reformed the non-Labor side of politics and by granting state aid to independent schools overturned a century of precedent. Similarly today, the new generation of Liberals must work for change - both structurally and in policy. By leading on solutions to the issue of climate change the new generation of Liberals can demonstrate that they believe progress is in the interests of the party and the country.

By tacking to the centre of the political spectrum the Liberal Party can highlight to the people that it truly is the custodian of both the liberal and conservative strains of non-Labor philosophy. In both ways, the message from the Liberal Party should be clear - we are serious about being back in government in Australia and delivering good government to the people as we have before for two thirds of the time since the founding of the Party in 1944.

Hon Christopher Pyne MP is the Shadow Minister for Education, Apprenticeships and Training and Member for Sturt in the Australian Parliament

CORRESPONDENCE

GERARD HENDERSON AND STUART MACINTYRE

Gerard Henderson was invited to participate in the Australian History Summit which met in Canberra on 17 August 2006. Other participants included Geoffrey Blainey, Geoffrey Bolton, Bob Carr, Inge Clendinnen, John Hirst, Jackie Huggins, Paul Kelly and Peter Stanley. Subsequently Gerard Henderson was invited to be part of the Australian History External Reference Group - along with Geoffrey Blainey, Nicholas Brown and Elizabeth Ward - which continued the work of the Summit. The AHERG produced the *Guide to the Teaching of Australian History in Years 9 and 10* which was released on 11 October 2007 by (then) Prime Minister John Howard.

On 14 April 2008 Julia Gillard, the Minister for Education, announced the membership of the National Curriculum Board. Professor Stuart Macintyre headed the History Advisory Group which drew up a draft national history curriculum for the National Curriculum Board - it was released on 13 October 2008.

Professor Macintyre commented on the work of the Australian History External Reference Group and Dr Henderson commented on the work at the History Advisory Group. The following correspondence took place between them in late 2007, following Stuart Macintyre's criticism of the AHERG's *Guide to the Teaching of Australian History*.



Email from Gerard Henderson to Stuart Macintyre - 15 October 2007

Dear Stuart

I refer to your article, which was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 13-14 October 2007, concerning the release of the *Guide to the Teaching of Australian History in Years 9 and 10*.

In your criticism of the *Guide*, you made the following comment about the composition of the reference group - which made recommendations about its final format, viz:

It is not that the "external reference group" charged with reworking the guide lacks historical expertise. No one could dispute the eminence of Geoffrey Blainey. I've worked with Nicholas Brown and Elizabeth Ward, and have great respect for them. My friendship with Gerard Henderson began when we were both first year history students at the University of Melbourne. If

he sometimes gives the impression that a historian needs no more than strong views and a good filing system, his enthusiasm for the study of the past is genuine. [Emphasis added]

I can accept criticism – even when it comes with bucket loads of condescension. However, I do resent dishonesty.

This is not the first occasion on which you have used your (alleged) friendship with me as a means to give weight to your criticism of me. I recall that you did so on a radio program around the time of the History Summit in mid 2006 and you revamped this tactic in last Saturday's *Sydney Morning Herald*.

The fact is that you and I have never been friends and there is no current friendship.

It is correct for you to recall that we met during the British History Honours class at Melbourne University in the mid-1960s. I did a combined Arts Honours-Law Course. As I recall, you did Arts Honours alone. Our academic paths did not cross after British History Honours and we did not do the same subject at the same time during any other part of our student careers. It is true that I was aware of you when you were a member of the left-wing Labor Club and I was a member of the DLP Club. But we rarely, if ever, spoke beyond extending pleasantries.

The fact is that I know almost nothing about your personal life. We have never shared a cup of tea or coffee, a drink at a bar or a meal together. I know nothing about your parents or your friends or your relationships. I do not know this information now – and I never did at any time over the past four decades. If we were ever friends, I would know something about you beyond your professional life. I note that in your book *The History Wars* (MUP, 2003) you alleged that my January 1993 essay in *The Bulletin* – which effectively commenced the history debate in Australia – had “the ring of a Stalinist ideologue”. I doubt that it is customary for you to depict your long-term friends as Stalinist ideologues.

The fact is that we have had only one detailed conversation ever. Just one. In November 1994 you visited me at The Sydney Institute to seek my advice about a report which you had been commissioned to write by the Keating Labor Government. You held the position of Chair of the Civic Experts Group and you sought advice from me about how to advance the study of civics in schools and elsewhere.

I gave generously of my time to meet you and your delegation. As I recall, you were highly complimentary about me at the time. I doubt that you would have approached me for advice about a history related matter if you really believed that my history

abilities turned merely on “strong views and a good filing system”. However, it is possible that you were just doing the hypocrisies.

There were also a couple of brief conversations between us in the lead-up to, and during, your address to The Sydney Institute on 16 September 2003. That's it.

I do not mind being criticised by you. In fact, I expect it. However, I would appreciate it if you junked your false claim and desisted from referring to your (alleged) long term “friendship” with me. In my view, those who choose to lecture others on the role of history should tell the truth.

By the way, if we ever were close friends, I would have advised you not to join the Communist Party.

Yours sincerely

Gerard Henderson

PS: I should make one comment about point the point scoring in your SMH article.

As Page 9 of the *Guide* makes clear:

The Milestones represent the essential content of the Year 9 and 10 programme of study. They are not exclusive and the list is not exhaustive. Other Milestone Events may be included in particular Topics. Each Topic and series of Milestones should be approached with reference to the nine historical perspectives summarised at the end of this Guide. Again these perspectives are not exhaustive: they are intended to prompt a full consideration of the significance of issues covered. To indicate the range of such resources, particularly as increasingly available in digitised forms, each Topic includes a selection of representative historical figures who will illuminate relevant themes from a biographical perspective and most of whom can be readily studied through the Australian Dictionary of Biography Online and the internet. Teachers may seek to include other figures according to specific interest and approaches. [Emphasis added]

I was against the naming of any names because I knew that critics like you would take easy shots at who was included and who was excluded. As you did in your *SMH* article. It is false for you to maintain that “John and Elizabeth Macarthur fail to make the cut” – because there was no such “cut”. In any event, the Milestone Events cover the sheep industry. Likewise it is disingenuous to imply that Gough Whitlam was excluded – since the dismissal of the Whitlam Government was specifically mentioned. It

would be somewhat difficult to discuss Mr Whitlam's dismissal without discussing the man himself – don't you think?

Email from Stuart Macintyre to Gerard Henderson – 16 October 2007

Dear Gerard

I'm disappointed that you feel so strongly that we do not share a friendship — and appreciative that you have contacted me to say so.

I have always felt that we are friends, using that term in its generic sense to mean two people who have known each other for a substantial period and share a mutual regard. Of course we disagree on many things, but we have also done so in a civil manner; as you put it, we have continued to exchange pleasantries. I don't take issue with your account of our dealings with each other (though I was also a combined Honours student when we met, and abandoned the Law after two years) and I did appreciate your advice on civics when I asked for it - for surely it is possible to disagree with someone and yet benefit from their views.

Furthermore, I've valued this principle of disagreement while preserving mutual regard. From time to time, when acquaintances have criticised some statement of yours on a personal basis — not that it has happened with any regularity — I have insisted that I do not share that hostility. Of course I will follow your wishes and not describe you as a friend; but I shall certainly not regard you differently.

Regards

Stuart



Email from Gerard Henderson to Stuart Macintyre – 17 October 2007

Dear Stuart

Thanks for your prompt reply. I do not mind long-term acquaintances presenting themselves as long-term friends – provided they do not use the alleged friendship as something which gives unjustified weight to their criticisms of me. Yet this is precisely what you did when you wrote in last Saturday's *Sydney Morning Herald*:

My friendship with Gerard Henderson began when we were both first-year history students at the University of Melbourne. If he “sometimes gives the impression” that a historian needs no more than strong views and a good filing system, his enthusiasm for the study of the past is genuine.

Clearly, you were using an alleged friendship to give authority to your view that my capacity as a historian is merely based on “strong views and a good filing system”. This was a put-down. And it was intended to be a put-down. If I ever choose to criticise your role as a historian, I will do so without concocting a friendship which never existed. Since you have publicly attacked my professional reputation, I should make the following comment.

Since ceasing to be a student, I have always been engaged in full-time employment. I never sought – or received – scholarships and I have never been the recipient of sabbatical leave. My Ph.D thesis was written when I was in full-time employment outside of the academy. It was submitted at La Trobe University and widely praised by the three external examiners – viz Professor Patrick O'Farrell, Fr. Edmund Campion and Professor Rufus Davis. The thesis was subsequently published in book form as *Mr Santamaria and the Bishops* – in hardback by Studies in the Christian Movement (which Ed Campion ran) and in paperback by Allen & Unwin. As you would be aware if you have done the relevant research, *Mr Santamaria and the Bishops* was very well reviewed – both in newspapers and in professional journals. I should also point out that my book *Menzies Child: The Liberal Party of Australia* was well reviewed – including in *The Economist* and the *Times Literary Supplement*.

It is a matter of record that none of my examiners or my reviewers shared your view that my ability as a historian turns merely on the combination of “strong views” and “a good filing system”.

Yours sincerely

Gerard Henderson



Email from Stuart Macintyre to Gerard Henderson – 18 October 2007

Dear Gerard,

Thanks for this. I don't think I intended to use a claim of friendship to add weight to criticism but rather to soften it. I know and respect your books on Santamaria and the Bishops and The Liberal Party, and recognise their scholarship. My wording “sometimes gives the impression” was meant to indicate that I was not impugning your integrity as a historian, and the criticism I made was meant to apply to some of the shorter pieces that draw on the past to make a polemical point in the press and the newsletter of the Institute.

I'm not a regular reader of the newsletter, but do find the lengthy argument over who said what when to be a distraction from the Institute's important work in

providing a forum for discussion of major issues. Of course you are entitled to conduct such argument (and I am sure that I am by no means free of polemicising myself), but it was that I had in mind. But I appreciate that you do not want me to claim a friendship with you and will avoid doing so.

Regards,
Stuart



Email from Gerard Henderson to Stuart Macintyre – 18 October 2007

Dear Stuart

Thanks for your response.

I believe that anyone who read the *SMH* last Saturday would have understood that you were impugning my integrity as a historian. I note, however, that you deny this. You now maintain that you were not criticising my work as a historian but, rather, my newspaper columns and my occasional articles in *The Sydney Institute Quarterly*.

One final point. As you will recall, in your book *The History Wars* you depicted me as a “Stalinist ideologue”. In view of this, I am genuinely surprised that you are now lecturing me about polemics. As far as I am concerned, this correspondence is concluded. Best wishes for the remainder of your term at Harvard.

Gerard Henderson



TOM HYLAND AND GERARD HENDERSON

Writing in *Crikey* on 1 September 2008, Jonathan Green criticised the quality of *The Sunday Age* of 31 August 2008. Fairfax Media journalists were on strike at the time and Green maintained that the edition which was put together by management lacked news sense. Gerard Henderson wrote to *Crikey* on 2 September 2008 and argued that the issue of *The Sunday Age* produced by management was more news-worthy than some recent editions produced by journalist staff. He highlighted a Page One article by Tom Hyland on Garrie Hutchinson (17 August 2008) along with a Page One article by Michael Bachelard which argued that Australia spends too much money on sport (24 August 2008). Blanchard let the issue rest. However, Hyland wrote to *Crikey* on 4 September 2008. He also wrote to Henderson – as the following correspondence documents



Email from Tom Hyland to Gerard Henderson – 3 September 2008

Dear Gerard

I refer to your September 2 note to *Crikey* in which you criticise recent story selection by *The Sunday Age*. You refer to my August 17 story in the paper, regarding Garrie Hutchinson. Minor detail, I know, but the story was not the page one lead.

Another minor detail, I suppose, but on any reading the story was not about the “fact”, as you put it, that Sasha Uzunov had objected to Garrie Hutchinson's involvement in Vietnam Veterans Day. No one I spoke to stated any such objection, nor am I aware of any planned involvement by Hutchinson in the day. Instead, the story was about how veterans' representatives objected to Hutchinson's work in the veterans unit of the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development.

As to whether the Hutchinson issue was newsworthy, I'd have thought you of all people would be aware that positions people took during the Vietnam War - and the Cold War - continue to resonate, decades on. Come to think of it, I think it's a theme you've laboured more than twice.

Final point, but I spent no time on the picket line this weekend. There was no picket line. Fancy that. Sorry if I quibble, but perhaps your propensity for pedantry is infectious.

Regards,
Tom Hyland



Email from Gerard Henderson to Tom Hyland – 3 September 2008

Tom

Thanks for your note. I was expecting a response – since I know just how sensitive to criticism some journalists are. For the record, I don't mind being called an intellectual pedant. My wife has used the term for eons. She even paid for an autographed copy of *First Dog on the Moon's* recent cartoon of me as pedant – it hangs on the kitchen wall. Believe it or not, I have been subjected to greater criticism in my life.

In response, I make the following points – in the order of your complaints:

1. Okay. The “Truth still a casualty long after Vietnam War” story was not the Page One lead but the second main article on Page One. It also scored an editorial. So clearly, the *Sunday Age* regarded it as a big deal.
2. Yes, this is a minor detail. Unless you are suggesting that Garrie Hutchinson and the Victorian Department of Planning and Community

Development had no involvement whatsoever in Vietnam Veterans Day. Sasha Uzunov has not corrected my claim that he objected to Hutchinson's role in Vietnam Veteran's Day.

3. My criticism of the Hutchinson story was not that it appeared in the *Sunday Age* – but, rather, that it received Page One treatment. On 17 August Russia's invasion of Georgia was genuine news. But readers of the *Sunday age* would not see this covered until, from memory, Page 13. Or was it Page 12?

4. The reference to a picket line was meant to be ironic. I will be more pedantic in dealing with *Sunday Age* types in the future.

5. Finally, if you have time I would like to see your reasoning why Hutchinson's dispute with Uzunov was more newsworthy on 17 August than Russia's conflict with Georgia. And I would like to hear your point of view about what is surprising about the RSL/Uzunov position in this instance – especially in view of the fact that circa 1968 Hutchinson supported communist forces who were attempting to kill Australians on the battlefield in Vietnam. Over to you.

In conclusion I would suggest that there is so little diversity in *The Age* that journalists like yourself seem to continually engage in discussion with like-minded types. That's why, no doubt, you are upset when I criticise the *Sunday Age* for regarding old lefties like Garrie Hutchinson as worthy of Page One coverage.

Best wishes

Gerard Henderson



**Email from Tom Hyland to Gerard Henderson
– 9 September 2008**

Dear Gerard

A belated thanks for your response. Thanks also for the vignette of your domestic arrangements. I'm sure your kitchen is very nice, what with the cartoon and all. I would never call you an *intellectual* pedant, Gerard, even though I grew up in an era when "intellectual" had pejorative overtones.

Now I won't detain you, as I'm sure your employers, whoever they are, would like you to focus on your thinktankery, but it seems we agree on a couple of things. They're minor points, we agree, but I know how important these details are to you, when it suits you.

We agree the Hutchinson story was not, contrary to your assertion in your note to *Crikey*, the page one lead in *The Sunday Age* on August 17, nor was the story based on "the fact" that Uzunov (or anyone else) had objected about Hutchinson's involvement in Vietnam Veterans Day. Whether Uzunov has corrected your

claim that he had made such an objection is entirely a matter between you and him. I'm sure you can engage in long and possibly coherent correspondence with him on the matter but you'll understand if I request that you spare me the details.

I don't decide what goes on page one of *The Sunday Age* - and you'll understand my reluctance to publicly criticise the decisions of my bosses, even if I wanted to – but you may have misread the paper's coverage of Russia's invasion of Georgia. From memory, and I'm sure you'll correct me if I'm wrong, the invasion happened sometime on Friday (Australian time) August 8 and was first reported in the Australian press on Saturday, August 9. On August 10, the invasion was covered by *The Sunday Age* in a joint page one lead story, with picture, alongside the Olympics. There were two further items on Georgia in the foreign pages on that day. In the week between then and August 17, our sister paper *The Age* published many items on the invasion, some of them on page one. I'm sure you know all this, being such a close reader of the paper.

On August 16, the main news out of Georgia was the signing of a ceasefire, an event that had been previewed in the press that day. *The Sunday Age* reported the ceasefire as the lead story on the foreign pages on August 17. Again, I'm making no comment about the paper's story selection. I'm just pointing out that the Georgia story was hardly buried by *The Age* and *The Sunday Age*.

You ask what is "surprising" about the "RSL/Uzunov position" on Hutchinson. I made no mention of any Uzunov "position", whatever that may be, beyond his role in publishing the objections of unnamed veterans to Hutchinson's role. I also referred to Uzunov's interest in questioning men of a certain age about what they did during the Vietnam War. (Just out of curiosity, has he put the question to you?) As for the RSL position, I was not surprised by the statements made by the ex-service leaders who were quoted in my story. They illustrated, as I said in the piece, that the Hutchinson story involves unresolved issues from Vietnam. Those issues include the limits of dissent - limits that the ex-servicemen quoted believe Hutchinson crossed.

I'm not sure I understand your reference to journalists such as myself who "seem to continually engage in discussion with like-minded types". You don't know me, Gerard, nor do you know who I talk to. Come to think of it, I guess I'm sort of talking to you right now. Does that mean we are like-minded types? You'd be surprised, Gerard, but maybe we have some things in common. Scary, eh?

Regards

Tom Hyland

**Email from Gerard Henderson to Tom Hyland
– 11 September 2008**

Dear Tom

I refer to your email of 9 September 2008. Believe it or not, I expected to hear from you again – despite the fact that you had already obtained a right of reply in *Crikey* on 4 September.

Your note is a case study in self-justification. You and your colleagues at *The Age* spend many of your working hours criticising others – and then you get so upset when a scribbler, like myself, criticises you. I make the following responses:

1. This disagreement commenced when I criticised you and one other in *Crikey* – and you sought, and obtained, a right of reply. Fair enough. Compare and contrast how your paper, *The Age*, handles controversy. In January this year inaccurate comments were made about my involvement in the history debate by Jewel Topsfield (in a news report) and Professor Tony Taylor (in an opinion piece). I wrote a brief letter to correct Ms Topsfield – but *The Age* cut my letter in half, effectively censoring my views. Then I wrote a 800 word opinion piece in response to Professor Taylor. *The Age* refused to run this in its print edition and then cut/censored a key point in its on-line edition, despite the obvious fact that there was no space problem involved.

2. You write that you do not understand my reference to journalists such as yourself who seem to continually engage with like-minded types. And you assert that I do not know who you talk to. For the record, I was assuming that you talk to your colleagues at *The Age*. How about that?

You only have to read your own paper to know that *The Age* does not print even one conservative columnist – while the left-wing infantilism of Catherine Deveny is run bi-weekly and Ken Davidson, who criticises both Labor and the Coalition from the left, appears weekly – to understand what I am getting at. If senior staff at *The Age* had any understanding about diversity they would recognise that your paper – unlike such other Fairfax Media publications as *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Australian Financial Review* – exhibits a lack of pluralism. This may improve following the recent sacking of *The Age*'s editor-in-chief Andrew Jaspán. Time will tell.

3. I note that in your email you adopted a sneering tone about both myself and The Sydney Institute – referring, for example, to my “thinktankery”. If you bothered to check out the Institute’s website, you would notice that a much greater diversity of views can be heard at the Institute than can be found in the pages of *The Age* under its recent and current editorship.

4. I am well aware of the coverage of Georgia in *The Sunday Age* and *The Age*. My point in *Crikey* was that,

on 17 August, *The Sunday Age* ran your long article on the (continuing) leftist Garrie Hutchinson commencing on Page One – while readers had to proceed to Page 13 before finding anything whatsoever about Russia’s (continuing) invasion of Georgia. You still defend this – which says much about your own news-sense.

5. I was at Melbourne University with Garrie Hutchinson in the late 1960s. Had you bothered to interview me for your *Sunday Age* piece, I would have advised that – like many of his fellow leftists at the time – Mr Hutchinson supported the Viet Cong forces which were engaging the Australian Defence Force at the time on the battlefield. It’s just that I would not have expected my views of matters of four decades ago to appear on Page One of the *Sunday Age*. I do not believe that Garrie Hutchinson’s views are so newsworthy. As you are aware, your story addressed Mr Hutchinson’s “unresolved issues from Vietnam” in his capacity as an officer in the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development. It was hardly “Hold the Front Page” story – except, of course, for *The Sunday Age*.

Keep morale high. Let’s meet for breakfast someday, say, in my kitchen.

Best wishes

Gerard



**Email from Tom Hyland to Gerard Henderson
– 12 September 2008**

Dear Gerard

This is all a bit strange. I cast an email net and end up with a basket of eels and red herrings. I'm not upset, not a bit, by anything you've written, either to *Crikey* or to me. I am, however, mildly perplexed by the cul-de-sacs into which you've now wandered. All I sought to do was to correct factual errors in your original note to *Crikey* - errors which you've conceded.

Now, in your latest email, you've rambled into a general critique of *The Age*. Forgive me if I drift into psycho-babble here, but do I detect a deep and unresolved sense of grievance on your part over how you believe you've been treated by the paper? It's just that I don't recall you making such criticisms while you were on the payroll. Your grievance extends to the fact that I didn't bother to contact you for comment on the Hutchinson piece. Dear, oh dear.

Thanks for the breakfast invitation. It's one I'd like to accept, honest, even if sour grapes are on the menu.

Regards

Tom Hyland

**Email from Gerard Henderson to Tom Hyland
– 26 September 2008**

Dear Tom

Your latest missive reached me when I was in India – inter alia, attending a conference with your colleague Tim Colebatch.

It's good to hear that you are not a bit upset concerning anything I have written about you – despite the fact that you chose to write both to *Crikey* and to me about this matter. Which raises the question as to how you respond when you are a bit upset. I should correct the record concerning what you (falsely) assert is my “sense of grievance” about *The Age*.

1. You claim that I did not make criticisms of *The Age* while I was “on the payroll”. If you had bothered to do any research whatsoever, you would have discovered that I was never on *The Age's* payroll – and that I never received a dollar from *The Age*. Between 1993 and 2005, *The Age* took my column from the *Sydney Morning Herald* - but I received no payment whatsoever for this. Consequently, when Andrew Jaspan (whom I have never met and to whom I have never spoken) dropped my column in 2005, I suffered no financial disadvantage of any kind. You should check the facts before you come to (false) conclusions. It's called research.

2. I have no grievance whatsoever about the fact that you did not contact me concerning my views on the one-time Ho Chi Minh groupie Garrie Hutchinson – and his contemporary life as a tax-payer funded bureaucrat in the Victorian Public Service.

In all the on-going correspondence, I still have not heard your justification about why *The Sunday Age* regarded your story about Mr Hutchinson as worthy of Page One coverage – while Russia's contemporary invasion of Georgia was not covered until Page 13.

Best wishes

Gerard Henderson



**Email from Tom Hyland to Gerard Henderson
– 30 September 2008**

Dear Gerard

Welcome back from your travels. As I said, and I'm mystified why you find this so hard to accept, I'm not upset by anything you've written.

My initial email to you, and to *Crikey*, simply sought to correct a couple of basic factual errors made in your original note to *Crikey*. After that, I've regarded our correspondence as a bit of sport, played with a level of sophistry on your part that I'm unable to match.

I accept your word that you were never on the payroll of *The Age*. Still, when your column did appear in the paper, I don't recall you making the kind of criticisms that you now make about *The Age*.

As for *The Sunday Age's* coverage of the Russian invasion of Georgia, I refer you to my email of September 9.

Regards

Tom Hyland



**Email from Gerard Henderson to Tom Hyland
– 30 September 2008**

Dear Tom

I refer to your latest email. I note your recognition that I was never on *The Age's* payroll and that – consequently – my criticisms of the contemporary *Age* cannot be motivated any sense of financial loss following Andrew Jaspan's decision to discontinue my column in 2005.

The answer to your query about why I am critical of *The Age* in its current mode should be pretty obvious. Under the likes of such editors as Alan Kohler, Bruce Guthrie and Michael Gawenda, *The Age* presented a plurality of views – even if most of its journalists were leftists or social democrats.

The pluralism disappeared with the appointment of Andrew Jaspan as editor. He purged conservative commentators from the Opinion Page and turned *The Age* into what I have termed “The Guardian on the Yarra”. It's difficult to imagine Kohler or Guthrie or Gawenda engaging the stand-up comedian Catherine Deveny to become a sit-down comedian in *The Age* twice a week – as a columnist and television critic. This self-declared leftist delights in sneering at and mocking Melburnians who live in the suburbs – many of them are, or perhaps used to be, *Age* readers.

If Paul Ramage can return *The Age* to a newspaper which covers all views and is not the creature of a Michael Leunig or a Catherine Deveny – then my criticisms will diminish. I assume that such a paper would not over-estimate the news value of such ageing leftists as Garrie Hutchinson. Our recent correspondence refers.

Best wishes

Gerard Henderson



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE DISMISSAL

Dear Editor

The Sydney Institute Quarterly (Issue 33, August 2008) under the heading “History Corner – The Dismissal”, carried a reminder of an interview of Sir Edward Woodward on the *7.30 Report* on 11 October 2005. Sir Edward was quoted as having said that Governor-General Sir John Kerr had “acted too soon” in dismissing the Whitlam Government on 11 November 1975. Sir Edward gave as his reason for saying this his belief that a number of Liberals in the Senate, led by Senator Alan Missen, were very close to defecting and voting to provide supply to the Whitlam government.

Your article goes on to refer to the widely-held theory that, had Sir John delayed his decision for a week or so, the Coalition’s determination to block supply might have crumbled. Your article also describes this theory as “absolute bunk” and provides evidence that, in the lead-up to 11 November 1975, Missen himself had realised that what was crumbling was support for blocking supply among Liberal senators and that no-one else was prepared to cross the floor.

The view that the Governor-General acted too soon and should have waited for a week or so in order to give Whitlam more time to resolve the deadlock is one of the biggest canards to have come out of the dismissal mythology. But the Governor-General did not choose the date for Whitlam’s dismissal – Whitlam himself chose the date and left the Governor-General with no choice to wait.

Whitlam chose 11 November 1975 to call on the Governor-General to advise a half Senate election to be held on 13 December. Such a possibility had already been canvassed in the media, after Fraser had called a meeting in Melbourne on 2 November 1975 of non-Labor leaders. However, writs for Senate elections are issued by state governors, following a request from the Governor-General, and there had been much speculation in the media that the premiers of Queensland, New South Wales, Western Australia and Victoria would be likely to advise their respective state governors to ignore any request from the Governor-General,

and to refuse to issue the necessary writs for the election of senators for their states – senators who would not have taken their seats in the Senate for another seven months.

The Governor-General had advance notice of the advice that Whitlam was to bring to Government House that day, and the two impossible alternatives that it would present him with troubled him greatly. In the event, the Governor-General decided not to give Whitlam the opportunity to tender his advice on 11 November, and for very good reason. Had the Governor-General refused to accept his Prime Minister’s advice, that would have precipitated another constitutional crisis, right in the middle of the one we already had. On the other hand, had the Governor-General accepted his Prime Minister’s advice and gone on to ask all state governors to issue writs for the election of senators for their respective states, a refusal by even one state governor to do so, let alone three or four, would have precipitated yet another serious and damaging constitutional crisis.

So the best advice that Whitlam could give to the Governor-General in the midst of the country’s greatest constitutional crisis ever – a crisis which, if allowed to continue, could have led this country into economic turmoil and could have resulted in the collapse of good government – was to present the Governor-General with the impossible task of choosing between two more unprecedented, and potentially more disastrous, constitutional crises

Had Whitlam not decided to go to Government House on that day to ask the Governor-General for a half-Senate election, the events of 11 November simply would not have occurred. If Whitlam really believed that he needed more time, he could have had it. Instead, he chose to present the wrong advice at the wrong time. Sir John Kerr did not act too soon – it was Whitlam who did that. Whitlam was the architect of his own misfortune; he chose the date for his dismissal; he was hoist with his own petard.

David Smith
Mawson
Australian Capital Territory
(Sir David Smith was official secretary to five governors general from 1973 until 1990)



ROBERT MANNE AND JAMES MCAULEY

Dear Editor

Having read the correspondence between yourself and Robert Manne regarding Mr

Manne's allegations that anti-communists discredited themselves for failing to condemn the massacre of Indonesian communists after the failure of the PKI coup in 1965, I am puzzled by Mr Manne's lack of consistency.

Would he similarly condemn anti-Nazis who expressed relief and rejoicing at the downfall of Hitler while failing to condemn the fact there were still hundreds of thousands of German prisoners-of-war perishing in Russian camps (I understand only 5 per cent of the 100,000-odd taken prisoner at Stalingrad ever returned), as well as many being treated very badly in French camps and others being retained as forced labour in England? Or the fact that hundreds of thousands of German civilians were being raped and massacred by the Red Army, or that some Poles and liberated concentration camp inmates etc. were revenging themselves on Germans and collaborators? I hope that, had I been alive at that time, I would have spoken out, but does Mr Manne actually condemn those who did not as being morally discredited? I have not seen any of his writing to that effect.

Further, I do not understand why Mr Manne apparently regards opposing the Vietnam War as an honourable or credible position.

I must say, however, that Mr Manne's attack on James McAuley does appear to give him a full house. Is there now a single past or present editor of *Quadrant* other than himself who he has not maligned or abused?

Hal G. P. Colebach
Nedlands
Western Australia



CLARIFICATION

The review of Tibor Meray's *On Burchett* in issue 34 should have said that the book was written in 1987 but not published until 2008.



BOOK REVIEWS

John McConnell

Politics in the Blood: The Anthonys of Richmond

By Paul Davey

UNSW Press

h/b, 2008, rrp \$49.95

ISBN 9781 921410 23 9

Which well-known family fulfils all of the following political criteria?

- Three consecutive generations elected to the House of Representatives?
- All three politicians appointed ministers?
- Each politician represented the same electorate—the electorate of Richmond in northern New South Wales?

Yes, it is the Anthony family. Hubert (Larry), Doug and Larry Anthony all represented Richmond in the House of Representatives in Canberra and served as ministers in Coalition governments.

Paul Davey writes about the three generations of Country Party/National Party politicians in *Politics in the Blood: The Anthonys of Richmond*. Hubert Lawrence Anthony (Larry) sat in the House of Representatives from 1937 until his death in 1957. Doug Anthony – Hubert's son – was elected to parliament following the death of his father and represented the Richmond electorate until 1984. Doug Anthony's son, Larry, entered parliament at the 1996 federal election as Member for Richmond. He was defeated at the 2004 federal election.

Remarkably, in light of his subsequent ministerial portfolio, Hubert Anthony began work as a telegram messenger boy at 14 years of age. At the outbreak of the First World War, he enlisted in the AIF at 17 years of age. Assigned to the 2nd Signal Troop attached to the 2nd Light Horse Brigade, Hubert Anthony served as a wireless operator in the Gallipoli campaign. By the mid-1930s, he had become the largest banana grower in Australia.

Hubert Anthony was elected to parliament in 1937. He had been in parliament only a few years when his wife Jessie, Doug's mother, died in 1941. Doug Anthony then became a boarder at the Kings School in Sydney. During World War II, Hubert Anthony donated his parliamentary salary to the Australian

Red Cross to assist POWs from the Richmond electorate. In 1946, he married Lyndall Thornton. That same year, Doug Anthony left school and moved to the Queensland Agricultural College at Gatton where he obtained a diploma of agriculture.

Known widely in Canberra as Larry, Paul Davey chooses the name Hubert Anthony to avoid confusion with Doug's son, Larry. Hubert Anthony became Postmaster-General in the Menzies Government. As Postmaster-General, he announced the introduction of commercial television broadcasting licences in 1955. He also served as Minister for Civil Aviation, overseeing restructuring of Australia's domestic airline policy as well as the re-equipping of its international airline and the extension of the airline's international air links.

Hubert Anthony died of a cerebral haemorrhage in 1957. Doug Anthony was elected to the House of Representatives representing the Richmond electorate following the death of his father. Doug Anthony and Margot Budd had married only a short time before Doug went into parliament.

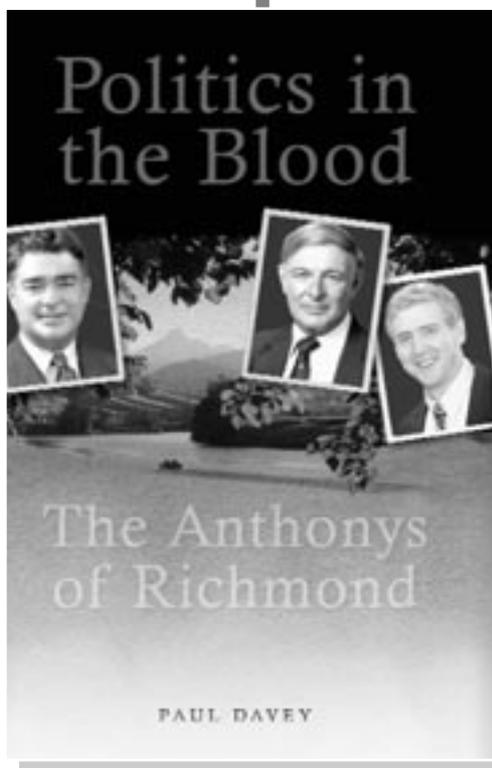
Readers may be surprised to learn that Doug Anthony initially found parliament boring. Indeed, by 1962, he felt he was wasting his life. But a ministerial reshuffle in 1964, due to the appointment of Garfield Barwick to the High Court, resulted in his appointment as Minister for the Interior.

Responsibility for a portfolio transformed Doug Anthony's appreciation of parliamentary life. From then on, he thoroughly enjoyed it. Ultimately, Doug Anthony became leader of the Country/National Party, a position he was to hold for almost 13 years. He also served as Deputy Prime Minister in Coalition governments and was acting Prime Minister on occasions. He held various portfolios over the years such as Minister for the Interior, Primary Industry and Minister for Overseas Trade.

Paul Davey recounts how Doug Anthony visited John Gorton at the request of John McEwan (as leader of the Country Party) the day that Harold Holt disappeared while swimming at Cheviot Beach in Victoria. Anthony informed Gorton that he would have the support of McEwan and the Country Party should he decide to run for the leadership of the

Liberal Party and the Coalition Government. Doug Anthony believes that until that moment, Gorton had not considered the possibility of nominating for the top job.

Davey revisits the tumultuous events of 1974-5 in chapter 11 – the appointment of Vince Gair as Ambassador to Ireland, the double dissolutions of 1974 and 1975, Gough Whitlam's allegation that America's CIA was financing Doug Anthony, the appointment of Lionel Murphy to the High Court bench, Malcolm Fraser's elevation to the leadership of the Liberal Party, the Khemlani loans affair, deferral of supply, the dismissal of the Whitlam Government and the way members of the Canberra Press Gallery despised the Liberal and National Country parties.



Doug Anthony's most frightening political experience occurred during the reading of the proclamation on the front steps of Parliament House on 11 November 1975. Given the emotions gripping many in the crowd that day, anything could have happened. A riot involving injuries and possibly deaths could have changed the nature of Australian politics. Fortunately, good sense prevailed.

When Doug Anthony retired from parliament in 1984 at the age of 54, he had been in parliament over 26 years, 16 years as a minister and almost 13 years as party leader. Only Earl Page led the party for a longer period. Under Doug Anthony's leadership, the party had changed its name, first to the National Country Party in 1975,

later to the National Party in 1982. Doug Anthony now believes in amalgamating the Liberal and National parties. There is no longer any need to organise a separate voice for the country, he believes. Doug Anthony also supports a republic. He also would have been happy to see complete political union between Australian and New Zealand.

Doug Anthony has never forgiven the British for the misleading way they conducted negotiations to join the European Common Market. Repeated assurances from Britain that it would look after Australia's trade interests counted for nought. Europe's Common Agricultural Policy remains Doug Anthony's *bête noir*.

During his eight years representing Richmond, Larry Anthony experienced the electoral impact of Pauline

Hanson's One Nation party, the GST, the mutual obligation policy on welfare recipients and the Howard Government's stand on asylum seekers.

At first, Larry Anthony served as Community Services Minister in the Howard Coalition Government. Later, he became Children and Youth Affairs Minister. In the latter capacity, he became passionate about early intervention to help children.

Paul Davey relates how modern communications such as mobile phones have added to the difficulties of parliamentary and ministerial life. It is clear that technology placed more time demands on Larry and Jenny Anthony and their young family than had been the case one generation earlier.

Although Paul Davey makes Doug Anthony's attitudes towards Gough Whitlam and Bill McMahon clear, the book does not dwell on personalities as such. Paul Davey highlights Doug Anthony's traits - loyalty, integrity, belief in family, a stubborn nature and a mischievous sense of humour. Larry Anthony is said to be a practical joker too.

The book contains five appendices setting out particulars relating to dates of name changes for the National Party, Richmond division election results, and details, the ministerial and parliamentary party service of family members and international trade agreements involving Doug Anthony.

PHNOM PENH: A cultural and literal history
By Milton Osborne
Signal Books, Oxford
Pb, 2008, rrp \$29.95
ISBN 978-1-904955-40-5

Milton Osborne knew little about the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh when he was posted there as a junior Australian diplomat in 1959. Could the out-of-the-way posting, he wondered in a moment of flippancy, be linked to his dropped catch in a social cricket match off the bowling of the then Secretary of the Department of External Affairs (Arthur Tange)?

But Phnom Penh was to seize Milton Osborne's imagination. He has returned there regularly in the intervening years. Milton Osborne is Adjunct Professor in the Faculty of Asian Studies at the Australian National University.

PHNOM PENH: A cultural and literal history is Milton Osborne's tenth book on the history and politics of South East Asia. It provides scholarly insights into the city that has been Cambodia's capital since the 1860s in addition to relatively brief periods in earlier times.

On arrival in Phnom Penh in 1959, Milton Osborne encountered a city presided over by Norodom Sihanouk. Norodom Sihanouk played various roles in Cambodia. He was king, prime minister, chief of state and ally of the Khmer Rouge. It is the "extraordinary human aspect" of Phnom Penh's short modern history that Osborne finds fascinating. It is a city in which the interplay of personalities and passions produce both tragedy and hope. Milton Osborne discusses the influence of the Spanish and Portuguese empires in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

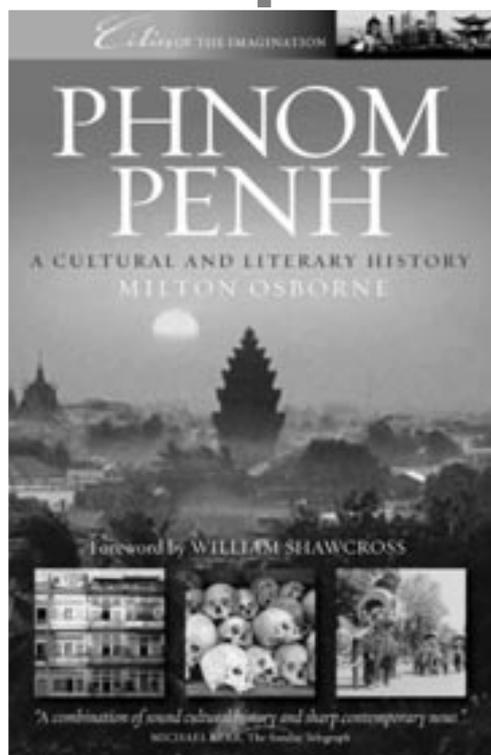
Christian missionaries, Osborne notes, achieved little success among Cambodia's Buddhist population. There followed Iberian adventurers, probably from the Philippines, Dutch traders, rivalry between Siam and Vietnam over the territory between them, and a French "protectorate" or colony that survived from 1863 to 1953.

Milton Osborne is critical of the French administration for allowing its interests to override all other considerations. The years of World War II and their aftermath up to 1953, he observes, were a prelude to five decades of change, drama and tragedy.

Phnom Penh, in the 1950s, comprised three main groups, roughly equal in size. Cambodians were the civil servants, teachers and bonzes (Buddhist monks). The Chinese were concentrated in commerce. The Vietnamese filled the lower ranks of administrators, clerks, and small-scale merchants. There was a strong French

cultural influence and "a large, free-spending American community".

Civil war, communist tyranny and Vietnamese occupation were all to follow before modern Cambodia and Phnom Penh were to emerge. The civil war chaos of 1970 to 1975 was followed by the relatively brief but tragic rule of the communist Khmer Rouge forces led by Pol Pot (Saloth Sar). A dark age enveloped Phnom Penh and Cambodia (Kampuchea). Close to two million deaths occurred.



Incredibly and tragically, the Khmer Rouge expelled the city's population, herding its inhabitants into "giant agrarian work camps" in the countryside. Pol Pot's forces reduced the population of Phnom Penh to around 50,000 people as they brought a reign of terror to Cambodia.

The Khmer Rouge destroyed historical, archaeological and cultural studies records, books, houses, offices, cars, shops, medical laboratories. They destroyed Catholic churches including the Catholic Cathedral. They outlawed Buddhism. Yet some buildings such as the Royal Palace, the National Museum and the National Library were left untouched.

The Khmer Rouge established the torture and extermination centre of Tuol Sleng in Phnom Penh. Some 14,000 to 17,000 unfortunates were incarcerated there. Barely a dozen came out alive. In less than four years, the rest were tortured forced to "confess" and executed. In the country side, the "Killing Fields" at Choeung Ek and elsewhere were accumulating lines and lines of battered skulls.

Milton Osborne notes that during that dreadful period, visiting delegations of leftists "allowed their political sympathies to override any capacity for critical thought". The author admits it is not easy to fathom what drove such senseless brutality and murder, or why some buildings were destroyed while others were left untouched.

Vietnamese forces defeated the Khmer Rouge in 1979. It is Osborne's view that the subsequent Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia occurred due mainly to international opposition and the collapse of the Soviet Union. He includes extensive discussion in his book of the architecture of significant buildings, art and literary traditions, including novels written about Phnom Penh and Cambodia.

Many of Phnom Penh's traditions now are gone. So many people who would have been able to contribute skills and expertise to building modern Cambodia died during the Khmer Rouge's reign of terror. Osborne argues that the prevailing values of contemporary Phnom Penh are power and impunity. Powerful elites continue to act with impunity.

Milton Osborne's conclusion? Tragedy and hope both continue to be part of contemporary Phnom Penh.

John McConnell is the author of several senior textbooks



REVIEW OF THE REVIEWERS

Stephen Matchett

John Howard's prime ministership ended as it began, in a huge, humiliating defeat for the incumbent, a defeat that signalled the end of a political era. But while the events were epochal there was nothing especially interesting about the way he arrived or departed. Perhaps this has something to do with the reassuringly mundane way power changes hands in Australia. With the exceptions of Robert Menzies in 1941 and Gough Whitlam in 1975 there is rarely any drama in the way our leaders lose office.

Maybe the beginning and especially the end of his prime ministership had more to do with Howard's own understated nature – not even his enemies would ever argue that he was a bloke given to grandiosity in his public persona. Unless it was because nobody had any expectations of a titanic struggle in last year's campaign.

In the end, the election was an epilogue that told everybody what they already knew – that the Australian people were entirely over Howard years before he lost office, and that it was Labor's last two leaders who lost the 2001 and 2004 elections as much as Mr Howard won them. Anybody who paid attention to politics had a fair idea that the government was gone perhaps a year, certainly six months, prior to polling day thanks to Work Choices – a political suicide note enshrined as an act of parliament.

This is the main problem for people writing books about the 2007 election – not only do we know what happened even the insider detail is not all that interesting. At least when compared to real and imaginary American presidential elections, against which all political theatre is judged. Ever since Theodore H White founded the genre of the campaign as heroic journey, with *The Making of the President* in 1960, all election histories in any democracy have laboured under enormous expectations. The credible, compelling story of Matt Santos's White House campaign on TV's *The West Wing* hasn't helped, creating expectations even among politically literate leaders that every campaign consists of conspiracies and

confrontations, stand-offs and sell-outs, when the reality is that almost all of them are just grind where logistics and luck matter more than brilliance and bravery.

And then there was that extraordinary example of life imitating art, the election of Barack Obama, which followed the *West Wing* script in the way the candidate came from obscurity to win on the basis of his integrity and initiative, ability and endurance. And reality went on to excel fiction in Obama's election night victory speech in downtown Chicago's Grant Park. As with the 1968 anti-war riots there, the whole world was indeed watching Obama's address, the most impressive exercise of American oratory in 50 years since Kennedy offered the country optimism.

This absence of great drama made it hard to write anything other than pedestrian campaign studies – what we got in the first wave of 2007 election books (discussed in *SIQ* August 2008) and which were all eminently forgettable.

But the considered studies in this second set demonstrate that even while there is nothing especially exciting about the 2007 campaign the great romance of democracy exists in all elections, especially when long serving incumbents surrender power on the electors' orders.

JACKMAN

Christine Jackman understood the challenge in her reporter's case study of the campaign, *Inside Kevin 07: The People. The Plan. The Prize* (Melbourne University Press). Anyone, including this writer, who knows Jackman is aware of her fascination with the perpetual pursuit of power that is Australian politics especially in the Labor Party. Her interest is infectious in this book; at least to the extent that she manages to make a comprehensive chronicle of average apparatchiks conducting a careful campaign appear interesting.

Of course it helps that her story is written solely from the Labor perspective and that important party players trusted her to the extent that they were prepared to talk to her, at length. Her explanation of the standing of NSW senator John Faulkner, the role of researcher Tony Mitchelmore and the way the party hard heads took notes as English operator Alan Milburn explained the obvious demonstrates that she

either has a deep understanding of Labor lore or was very well briefed, probably both.

However, access to people or information is not a sure sign of success. The weight of evidence overwhelms authors or they struggle with their structure, but Jackman makes the most of her advantages. She balances insider anecdotes with a campaign chronicle that puts everything in the context of Work Choices, the issue that won Labor the election.

If Kevin Rudd's political skills and policy grasp do not impress Jackman, she does a very good job of disguising her doubts. There is a great deal in this book that will please the Prime Minister. But Jackman also makes it clear that the election winner was the conservatives' abjectly inept industrial relations plan. Her analysis of the political impact of the issue from 2005 (pp119-120) is all anybody not obsessed with political history will ever need to

understand how, if not why, John Howard allowed the inept Kevin Andrews to lose an election with his handling of labour market reform.

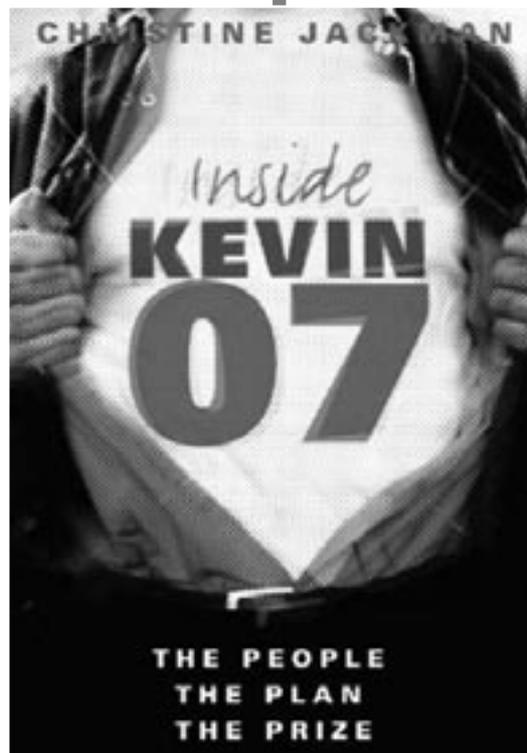
Certainly the book has its limitations and the occasional ambiguity. There is not enough on the way Rudd and Julia Gillard reached an agreement on the leadership. It seems as if NSW union leader, and now MP, John Robertson used the book to send a signal that there is no undying devotion to the Prime Minister. The story of leaked Liberal research merits more attention. "Outside the bubble of the beltway" is a metaphor that works in Washington, but not here.

Like all election narratives this is inevitably a book for a season and, a year on, it already is

dated. But, as with Pamela Williams's history of the 1996 campaign, it is a model of the genre. Jackman's study is never going to be the book of a musical (it is hard to imagine who would sing the role of Rudd), but aspiring apparatchiks will read it before they fight elections to come.

VAN ONSELEN AND SENIOR

The blurb for Peter van Onselen and Philip Senior's study of the election, *Howard's End: The Unravelling of a Government*, (MUP) bravely announces it "is in the tradition of Pamela Williams's *The Victory*" and so



it is, insofar as they are both books about Australian politics.

But that's as far as the comparison goes. Where Williams's book was full of insight, this pair do not offer anything that will surprise people obsessively interested in elections, (who are the only people likely to read their work). Although the authors interviewed people involved in the campaign, the book reads like a summary of press coverage of the poll. It dutifully, and dully, records all the key events in the Liberals' last year, as everything the government did went wrong. And it sets out one of the great truths of politics that is generally ignored by academics – once the electoral gods withdraw their favour the only thing a politician can do is accept defeat with dignity.

While the authors obviously understand the details of the election, the book adds nothing essential to our understanding of it. In the end this is a competent book that serves no essential purpose and demonstrates there is nothing as dull as past politics. But there is a single strength to this story which may not appeal to people who think politics is about psephology not personality. It tells a sad, if understated story, about the way politics eats its own.

Beneath the careful prose and succinct summaries of a year's politics, there is the tragedy of a prime minister who knew every plot in *The Prince* but discovered that nothing in Machiavelli could save him. In the end the defeat was not drastic, the authors point out that the election was not the widely anticipated massacre, and that Howard was only ten seats short of a fifth term. And they speculate that in the end Howard was still a vote winner for the Coalition, that Peter Costello would not have necessarily done any better.

This ignores the obvious outcome; the Member for Higgins held his seat and the Member for Bennelong did not. But Van Onselen and Senior's core conclusion seems sound. Howard was gone from the moment Labor rolled Kim Beazley, that enough voters wanted a change of government and accordingly would forgive Kevin Rudd everything and John Howard nothing.

From the Murray Darling buy-back to the Northern Territory indigenous intervention the electorate was

not interested in anything the coalition came up with. And while the voters marked the conservatives down for every error, they forgave the Labor leader and his frontbench theirs.

The authors do not discount the strength of Labor's campaign strategy and the way Rudd challenged Howard on his own issues. By presenting himself as an economic conservative and agreeing with the government as often as he could, Rudd made it easier for cautious voters to consider change. But, as with Jackman, Van Onselen and Senior's inescapable emphasis is on the way Work Choices damaged, rather than destroyed, Howard's hopes.

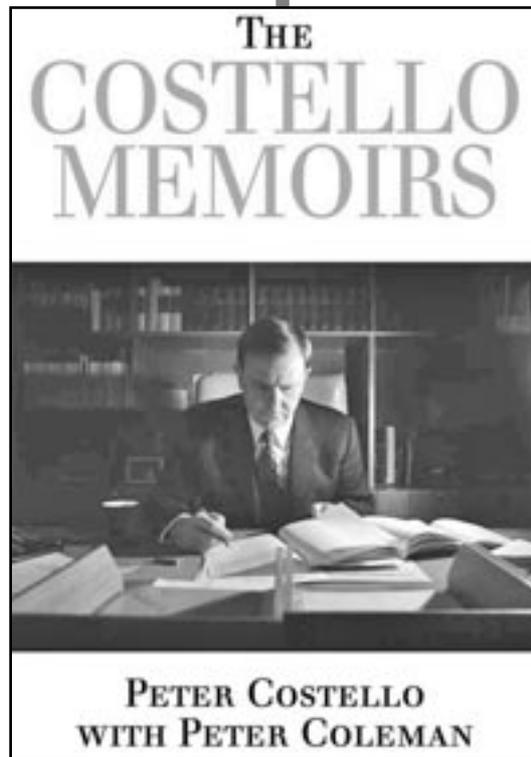
While the authors do not present the point, there is ample evidence in this book that in the end Howard lost the election by acting on his beliefs. The irony is that for all the accusations of electoral opportunism that have dogged Howard's career – that he pandered to Pauline Hanson, that he appealed to prejudice against refugees, that he took Australia to war in Iraq for no real reason – what destroyed him was his commitment to his principals. Howard stuck to Work Choices because he believed it was right. Perhaps he thought that he could push through an unpopular policy, as he had done on the guns buy-back and the GST, on the

strengths of his argument.

But in the end it was a forlorn hope. Labor won the 2007 election less because it was time for change than because Rudd promised that the more things changed the more they would stay the same, that it would not cut the Coalition's vast welfare spending and only abolish the sole radical reform of the Howard years.

COSTELLO

In the end, John Howard unravelled when the voters decided that despite his track record Work Choices demonstrated his political judgement was gone. A year before the election they decided he had to go, and so he ignominiously went. It's a cruel business politics. As Peter Costello makes clear in *The Costello Memoirs* (MUP), co-authored with his father-in-law, commentator and former Liberal NSW opposition leader Peter Coleman.



While the gods of politics waited until the last 12 months of Howard's term as prime minister to humiliate him, they sported with Costello for all of the 11-plus years he served as treasurer. Costello's every action was interpreted in the context of his ambition to be prime minister. That he managed the economy through a decade of unparalleled prosperity was always seen as secondary to if, or when, he would succeed John Howard and whether he would fight for the leadership if he had to.

This was a problem of Costello's creation. Once he admitted to his ambition, he made it less an unavoidable news story as a spectator sport for everybody interested in politics. Short of Howard either giving up the office, or Costello taking it from him or leaving politics, there was nothing that could take the issue off the agenda.

And because Peter Costello chose to hold on and hope his time would come, he set himself up for continual criticism - that he did not have the energy or ambition to challenge, that he expected the top job by right as a recognition of his brilliance or as a reward for loyal service, that he did not understand that the most important qualification for being prime minister was a willingness to fight all comers, including the incumbent, for the office.

The bear baiting continued after the election when Costello went to the backbench, with politics writers and watchers assuming, imagining, that he was still waiting for the Liberals to call him to lead. And it shaped the response to his memoirs, which disappointed many because Costello does not denounce Howard in detail in his book.

But in all the examinations of Costello's character and the way it shaped his behaviour over the leadership, there is one idea that rarely got a run - that he considered it in the context of the best interests of the party. As he describes his position in July 2006:

I could have sought a party room ballot, but my assessment was that Howard had a majority. If I challenged him and lost, I would have to go to the backbench, which would weaken the Government. Some counselled that I *should* weaken the Government because eventually that would lead to a second spill and a leadership change. But I did not want to weaken the Government eighteen months out from the election. I wanted our party to retain Government (sic). After 12 years of loyal service to the party as its longest serving Deputy Leader it was not my intention to try to tear it down. Some called it a weakness; I saw it as loyalty.

During the period in which I was Deputy Leader we had not lost an election. I always believed the best hope of renewing the Liberal Party would be a sensible mature transition - like the one I organised for Howard in 1994 which set up the party for the 1996 election. Ten years later I wanted to do the same again. (245)

The fatal flaw in this argument is obvious. If Costello thought he was the best man to win the next election, then loyalty to the party dictated that he challenge. If he did not believe he could convince either the party room, or the people, that he should be prime minister, or did not have the stomach for the fight, then he should have abandoned his ambitions without public mention.

But Costello could respond that for almost all of his term as treasurer and deputy Liberal leader he was publicly loyal and that if anyone should not have put their own interests before the party's interests it was the prime minister. Costello makes this case in what is about the strongest criticism of John Howard in the book:

Leadership is not only about winning; it is also about departing. The only Liberal leader who understood that he had to settle the time of his departure, for the sake of the party, was Sir Robert Menzies. He was not just the leader of the party, he was its founder. He had every right to stay around. By standing down, he showed extraordinary leadership. When he did it he set up the party for a win at the next election and the next after that. Unlike Menzies, Howard never managed a transition. He did not accomplish generational change. ... We lost because we failed to renew. We mismanaged generational change. We did not arrange the leadership transition. The electorate did it for us. (257)

For an issue that consumed so much time and attention for so long it is a remarkably mild judgement that presents Costello as either a man sufficiently sane to avoid being consumed by the leadership issue or sufficiently sensible to know that raging in retrospect would do him no good, that it was time to cop it sweet and move on.

This understated treatment of his relationship with John Howard sets the overall tone of the memoir, which is remarkably free of rancour. Certainly there is some score settling. He is no fan of Jackie Kelly, suggesting the distribution of bogus leaflets linking Labor to a non-existent Muslim organisation in her

electorate last year “added several seats” to Labor’s majority and arguing that she was less a Liberal, having no long time links to the party, than a Howard loyalist. (2)

And there are relatively gentle jibes at people in politics. He has a go at unnamed but easily identified politicians who claim they rose from Lincoln-like poverty, on the basis of having slept in a car for few nights. “Memory can also play tricks, particularly when there is a hungry press to feed”, (10) he writes without needing to name names. Now, who could he be referring to?

But mainly he pokes fun at people on his own side. He effectively dismisses Tony Abbot as an economic illiterate. (55). He reports being unjustly ticked off by John Hewson and makes a point of putting the incident in context, “it was late at night and he had been out for dinner” (56). In case if anybody missed the point he follows his judgement up with, “I once asked Ian McLachlan: ‘Do you think we have an obligation to tell the Australian people our Leader (sic) is a maniac?’ He said: ‘No, the Australian people will work it out for themselves’”(57).

Costello also makes it plain that the most likely explanation of the leaking of the famous Shane Stone “mean and tricky” memo was that it came from the Prime Minister’s office. (158) And on the other famous leak, of the McLachlan aide memoir detailing the Howard-Costello leadership conversation in 1994, he suggests that journalist Glen Milne got the information from “a business man in whom McLachlan had confided. Milne has never disclosed his source. One of the people who knew was the prominent businessman Robert Champion de Crepigny”. (241)

Far from savage stuff. And typical of the memoir’s measured, even modest, tone which reads like a reminiscence written in a rancour-free retirement.

It is certainly a style quite different from the combative Costello of Question Time. There is little sense of the high drama of politics. The formulation of the GST, and push to pass it, are covered too briefly for such major achievements, (although Costello’s praise for Democrat leader Meg Lees’s action in the national, if not her own, interest is generous and justified). His discussion of the decision to establish the Reserve Bank’s independence on interest rates, perhaps the most important policy decision of his tenure as treasurer, also merits much more attention. And while Costello covers the Dollar Sweets case, which made his reputation as an industrial relations reformer, there is nowhere near enough on the need for structural economic change and his role in implementing it. Perhaps Costello had hopes for a

second volume which emphasised economics, if so the time for such a text probably passed when the global economy collapsed.

But if this book is all we will get from Costello, to understand the man it needs to be read with two biographies, written when he was widely seen as prime minister in waiting. Tracey Aubin’s, *Peter Costello: A Biography* (1999) and Shaun Carney’s *Peter Costello: The New Liberal* (2001) reveal more about the man than he chose to provide himself. But, for all its caution, this memoir confirms his biographers’ judgement of what Costello stands for. Writing a decade back, Aubin described Costello as a “new Liberal”, which meant;

... he holds the old-style Liberal ways of privilege and patronage in contempt and believes in preferment through ability. Their origins are suburban middle-class, their backgrounds neither wealthy nor privileged. ... They are new-wave rationalist on economics and post-60s socially progressive. (292)

Costello’s subsequent career, as described in his memoir, confirmed the late Tracey Aubin’s judgement. The irony is that, despite all expectations, the new Liberal leading the party is not Peter Costello.

REVIEWS

In contrast to their treatment of the first rush of election books, published immediately after the Rudd Government’s election, the reviewers were not especially generous to Jackman, Van Onselen or Senior’s effort. Perhaps, with politics back to normal, the reviewers had lost their sense that something remarkable had happened, the record of which they did not want to bag. Perhaps they simply assumed, as so many reviewers do, that as their ideas are more interesting than those of the authors they would focus on telling us what they thought. Whatever the reason, most of the reviewers did not spend sufficient space on the work they were charged with discussing and some went looking, often unfairly, for faults.

THE VICTORY

Robert MacDonald’s judgement of Jackman (*Courier Mail*, 30 August 2008) focused on what the reviewer reckoned about the election, rather than on what the author, wrote about it:

Jackman largely avoids analysis, letting Kevin 07 team members talk for themselves, both on and off the record. The result is a story told by victors, none of whom come out of it looking bad, at

least presumably in their own eyes. This is a story of winning against the odds, but that does not make it inspiring but rather instructive. It gives us some idea what politicians and their strategists do to win our votes and that is the bit readers might find depressing.

Ben Butler criticised Jackman for writing on her subject, the Labor campaign, rather than “what has actually happened to the ideology of the Australian people during the latter part of the Howard years”. (*Herald Sun*, 16 August 2008) And Margot Saville, author of an ephemeral and idiosyncratic book on Maxine McKew’s campaign in Bennelong, produced an equally self-indulgent review in which she questioned Jackman’s ability to be objective because of her access to Labor operators. This is a little unfair given that the author was explicitly writing about Labor’s campaign. (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 August 2008)

Bernard Keane made a smarter, if similar, point in suggesting that there is very little about the real Rudd in the book: “Rudd himself floats above the narrative, somehow detached, offering a different persona depending on the context, but the real individual is never really tangible.” (*Crikey*, 28 July 2008). True, but hardly fair given that the book is much more about the way party secretary Tim Gartrell ran the campaign than the leader.

Paul Strangio (*The Age*, 30 August 2008) took a great deal of space to say not much about Jackman’s book, his basic argument being that the Labor team may have impressed her, but they were not that smart:

Preoccupied with what Labor strategists said and thought, and the internal ALP research, Jackman seldom leavens her account with outside voices. The result is a shortage of context and excess of apparatchik braggadocio. Viewed in retrospect some of the campaign master strokes can also appear banally self-evident.

Which is more than can be said for Strangio’s own incoherent assessment of the book - “The

inexorability of election year 2007 is problematic for Jackman’s belief credulity that the ALP campaign represented a new high watermark of strategic wizardry.”

David Burchell, who some remember for his piece on Van Onselen’s Howard biography in the *Weekend Australian* in 2007 and consider a better essayist than reviewer, used Jackman’s text as a foundation for a reflective piece on the Labor Party’s immediate past and future. But what he wrote about the book was approving:

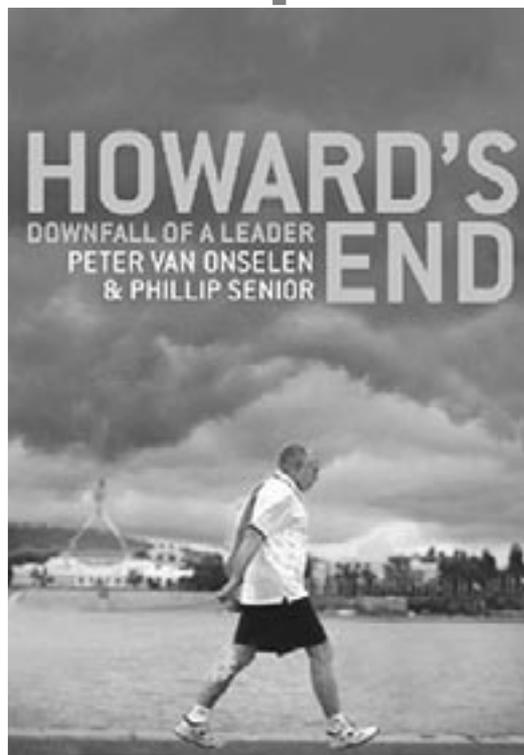
Mostly Jackman is happy to allow the key figures in her account to recite their own versions of history in their own terms, with all the usual human propensities for self-vindication and self-celebration that this method allows. And mostly she’s right to take this approach, I think. Far better for us to receive the story from the horse’s mouth rather than try to decipher how much are the participants’ own views and how much is the gloss placed upon them by the author. (*Weekend Australian*, 9 August 2008)

Stephen Loosley was also far more focused on explaining what he thought rather than what Jackman wrote, in a long review essay (*Australian Literary Review*, 3 September 2008). While there is a sense of general approval in the piece, there is no analysis of her book and the only criticism of Jackman reminds us of Loosley’s

long time membership of the NSW right in the days when it was a force in the Labor Party - “she retails malicious and anonymous observations of Beazley, who held the party together twice in very difficult periods”.

HOWARD’S END

While Jackman’s book did not get the detailed coverage it deserved, van Onselen and Senior fared worse, sharing space with her in three joint reviews. Saville included only a few lines on their “readable chronology of the election year”. Her conclusion did not encourage sales - “if you like your political books straight up and down, with ‘just the facts’, then read *Howard’s End*” (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 August



2008). And Strangio nailed its fatal flaw - that a great deal of what it dealt with did not matter:

Van Onselen and Senior sustain their narrative with media reportage and insider information. The book sometimes reads as a trawl through back copies of last year's newspapers, but the effect illustrates how frenzied was the 2007 political media cycle. From momentous (the Northern Territory intervention) to trivial (Rudd's New York strip club escapade) flowed a torrent of stories each slipping into the wake of the next - and none substantially altering the electorate's mood. (*The Age*, 30 August 2008)

Loosley made the same point:

Peter Van Onselen and Philip Senior rely less on insiders than on published accounts of the campaign. This means that *Howard's End* is an engaging distillation of the last months of Coalition rule, but a deeper and more forensic analysis of the respective campaigns would have added another dimension to the book. When the authors focus on the late murmurings over Howard's leadership, the role of Alexander Downer and others is examined with some perception. But too often otherwise the authors refer to television interviews and press accounts. This is less satisfying than Jackman's approach. (*Australian Literary Review*, 3 September 2008).

THE COSTELLO MEMOIRS

While the two campaign chronicles got less detailed coverage than they deserved some of the reviews of Costello's memoir were first rate. This was to be expected given that this was a book senior political journalists were inevitably interested in, especially given the carefully cultivated speculation about what it would reveal. And even when it turned out to include close to nothing new the better reviewers still took it seriously.

Inevitably there were pro-forma pieces, which did little more than note the book had arrived. Like Lisa Power's brief, which suggested that it was in large part "outdated" and not what it was claimed to be: "Adequate, it lacks" (the) "firepower and intimacy expected of a genuine political memoir." - *Daily Telegraph*, 4 October 2008. Cheryl Critchely demonstrated she had read the book right through by summarising its key points. But, apart from pointing to Costello's absence of regrets, she offered neither analysis or judgement. (*Herald Sun*, 4 October 2008)

In contrast, there was nothing brief about David Barnett's review, although a great deal in it was only obliquely connected to Costello's book (*The Canberra Times*, 9 October 2008). Certainly Barnett welcomed the memoir as an important addition to the few books by conservative politicians (as a biographer of John Howard he would know), but he chose a curious comparison to indicate his approval:

It's quite a while since my duties required me to score a title fight (Lionel Rose v Fighting Harada in Tokyo 40 years ago) but I give Costello 14 out of 15, acknowledging that Chapter 14, describing how painful were the events running up to, and including, the 2007 election, when the government was floundering and when Howard had lost the mandate of heaven, as the Chinese put it, is nevertheless up to literary standard.

And while he did not call it a criticism he managed to make it clear that Costello's cut was not the complete story:

Costello does tell the story as if he did it all himself, that John Howard was often merely there to be worked around, rather than worked with. That's fine: what we want is the world as Costello saw it and lived it, not the bird's-eye view of someone trying to tell the well-rounded story. Howard saw it like that when he was Malcolm Fraser's treasurer. It is said that Howard is working on his own memoirs, and he can tell his story then.

Barnett went on to devote a great deal of his space to explaining how it was not Costello's work, but the ideas of Prue Goward (the reviewer's wife) when she was sex discrimination commissioner that led to the recent "tick up" in the birth rate. He also criticised Costello's commitment to the Republic, "Why is it so important to him to pursue a goal quite unlike any other of those he pursued as treasurer, all of which made Australia a better place to live in, and more enviable for other countries in the world."

And he saved the nastiest for last - "One must wonder whether, as prime minister, Costello would have been another Paul Keating, with a mistaken confidence that he knew best what was good for Australia."

Shaun Carney produced a subtle analysis of Costello's character and demonstrated how it shaped his book, (*The Age*, 20 September 2008) in a review, which merits careful reading. He is critical of Costello's self-serving approach:

It is a rare political memoir that finds the author admitting to serious mistakes,

misjudgements or profound regrets and in this respect *The Costello Memoirs* conforms to the usual pattern: Costello does not confess to any cock-ups or oversights.

But Carney thought that overall the authors did a good job:

In a perfect world, Costello could have taken the time to reflect more thoroughly and produced a series of works on his experiences. But the real world is messy, there are worries about the attention span of the public, and the big splash often trumps the considered and the nuanced. Given how quickly this book has been put together by Costello and his father-in-law, man of letters and former Liberal politician Peter Coleman - less than 10 months after the election - it holds together pretty well.

It was left to Mike Steketee and Paul Kelly, two of the most senior political commentators in the country, to provide the most considered assessments. The book did not impress the tough-minded Steketee (*Weekend Australian*, 27 September 2008). He cited “howlers” and “distortions”, which only the most “hanging judges” would convict on and did not think there was all that much to the book:

He does not unload all his accumulated slights and gripes in the self-indulgent manner of Mark Latham. There is the feel of the once-over-lightly, with much recital of events and achievements but only an occasional insight into life inside the government. There are dashes of humour but little passion, and the personal reflections are sparse ”

Steketee considered Costello, not unreasonably, as a still practising politician arguing, “he is constrained by ongoing ambition”. And while the book was written in the context of the leadership, he argued that Costello ignored the obvious – that he may not have won an election in his own right with the way his public persona never appealed to the electors:

Costello is one of those contradictions that emerge in politics. He is a winning and entertaining personality in private and a compelling speaker, but voters see only the smirk that conveys arrogance to them.

Just as Costello was perpetually polite in his memoir, but still managed to make his opinion people plain, so did Steketee – it seems assured that he has had enough of Costello as politician and writer both.

Kelly less reviewed the book than used it as a text for a lecture on the Liberals' past and present (*Weekend Australian*, 20 September 2008). And he considered the book for what was argued in it, not what people wanted it to be:

***The Costello Memoirs* are the exact opposite of what has been presented by the media. They tell of a unified Coalition government, of astonishing professional concord between its two senior figures, Howard and Costello, on strategy, economic policy, social issues, the GST, the Tampa asylum-seeker stand-off, national security, Iraq and federalism. It is because Costello documents each of his disagreements with Howard that the broad picture is obvious: their differences are the exception to the rule.**

For all the arguments over the leadership, the Liberals lost when the prime minister and his senior ministers, Costello included, failed to grasp that with Work Choices they had gone too far:

In the end the Howard model was exhausted and the party failed to devise any means of renewal. But this problem transcends Costello's list of republic, Kyoto and apology. His book is conspicuously weak in confronting the Howard government's final-term policy failures. Having made much of his early feats on industrial reform, Costello has nothing of substance or insight to offer on Work Choices. What responsibility does he accept? Was this a failure of policy or tactics? Costello says little about management of the post-2003 terms of trade boom and strangulation of the government by relentless interest-rate increases. How much of this was his own miscalculation?

It is a hard judgement to dispute – if Howard was out of ideas, with the exception of indigenous affairs minister Mal Brough, so was the rest of the government. Was this to be expected after a decade in office? Probably yes. Is it tough on Costello? Undoubtedly. Would he have been energised by the financial crisis either in the Treasury or at the Lodge? It's a fair bet that he would. The gods of politics have been especially cruel to Peter Costello.

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KEVIN '08 - A STAR

Stephen Matchett reviews the remarkable consensus among the Rat Pack over the success of the Rudd Government's first year.

THE commentariat came over all cautious in considering the Rudd Government's first year in office, as if the opinionators did not want to spook the prime minister as he dealt with the global financial meltdown. The praise was careful, and tempered by warnings of troubled times to come. But there was barely any criticism at all.

Except for Piers Akerman, who wrote what his admirers will consider a fighting piece and his critics could consider an intemperate exercise in bombast and bias:

The budget surplus that the Howard government left Australians will have been squandered in thoughtless government hand-outs by Christmas. ... When the turkey is finished, as unemployment swells, kindergartens close and the health system continues to collapse, voters should be in no doubt about who to blame. (Sunday Telegraph, 23 November)

But virtually everybody else acknowledged that the crisis was not of the government's making. The good news for the government is that the prime minister is considered to be doing about as good a job as possible. The bad news is the way the commentators consider the economy the only issue that matters, thus taking the rest of the government's policies off the agenda.

Thus Akerman's judgement was ignored by the leader writer at the *Sunday Tele*'s stable mate.

In many ways it is too soon to tell how Mr Rudd and his government are performing. Mr Rudd's speed in deciding on a surplus-delivered pre-Christmas spending spree was commendable and demonstrated an impressive ability to rapidly grasp the extent of a problem and form an effective response. While withholding more precise judgment due to the obscuring nature of financial developments, the government must be considered a net positive. (Daily Telegraph, 24 November)

Michelle Grattan also argued the economy was the key issue, in an assessment which emphasised the obvious, and broke the news that there will be another election:

The government has been abruptly confronted with the unexpected and has

coped, but it has yet to feel the full consequences of these extraordinary times. Those will come next year, and then 2010 will see the voters make their judgment. (*Sun Herald*, 23 November)

Laurie Oakes made the same point, but reminded everybody that:

It is hard to recall any other new government that has been presented with such dramatically changing circumstances or such a daunting set of challenges. Yet, a team dismissed by the Coalition and sections of the media as light-weight before the election has handled the pressure with remarkable calm. The Rudd ministry so far has been scandal-free. And front-bench performances overall have been strong. If Rudd wants his good run to continue, he should trust his ministers enough to allow them to contest his views. The attitude that the PM and his office always know best is fraught with peril." (Courier Mail, 22 November)

In contrast, Lenore Taylor argued there was a downside for the government in the crisis: "The financial crisis is playing absolute havoc with Rudd's methodically laid reform plans and the government has a big task explaining why it won't be able to do all that it promised back in 2007." But she also thought:

...there's no real reason to assume that the crisis will eat into the government's political capital on the same scale that it eats into its surplus. Handled competently, it could bolster Labor's economic management credentials and Rudd's image as a leader with mettle rather than a former bureaucrat who doesn't need much sleep.

Or perhaps she didn't, invoking a not especially elegant metaphor to explain her refusal to predict the government's future:

Now there's unlikely to be a big enough pair of underpants in the land to cover the flesh that would be left exposed by an absolute prediction about the outcome of a federal election still probably two years away.

But, in the end, predict she did - suggesting the government would survive:

But at this stage there really is little evidence to support the oncer theory in respect of the government led by Kevin Rudd. It has been a government marked by remarkable discipline and few fumbles." (The Australian, 22 November)

Peter Hartcher was not so sure that the government's future was secure, suggesting that the worsening economy could grow beyond the government's

capacity - "the financial crisis has turned into an economic crisis that will dominate Rudd's first term. It could yet consume him". (*Sydney Morning Herald*, November 22)

But Alan Mitchell argued that, even before the economy crunched, the government had created a problem for itself by reviewing rather than acting in its first year:

A new government's first year is a unique opportunity to make painful decisions. The government has a high level of public support. It is clear to the public that the problems with which it is grappling have been inherited from its opponents who are in disarray. And there are two non-election years for the pain to be forgotten. But now, as the government enters its second year, the tough decisions needed to secure its long-term future suddenly have been made more difficult by the change in economic conditions." (Australian Financial Review, 26 November)

Shaun Carney was less interested in the real world than in the shadow realm of caucus, suggesting that there were internal problems to come:

Backbenchers complain about the haughtiness of some ministers, condemning them for a lack of responsiveness and failure to consult. Inevitably, as with every Labor government, there will eventually be a showdown between the leader and the caucus, but it won't come for a little while yet. Hawke had his over the MX missile crisis early in his second term.

But for the moment everything was okay, if only because the government had not made a muck of anything:

For now, the government draws comfort from its status as an administration that managed to avoid a major blunder in its first 12 months. In democratic politics, the bar is set pretty low." (The Age, 22 November)

A case of praise with faint damns.

So much for the various Rudd revolutions and wars on everything from petrol prices to plutocrats pay – it's the economy that matters now and it is a fair bet that it will be still be when the commentators write the governments second report card.

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



ROBERT MANNE ON ROBERT MANNE

The article "Robert Manne: This Is Your (Academic) Life" appeared in Issue 32 of *The Sydney Institute Quarterly*, which was published in March 2008. The *SIQ* has a policy of publishing letters or articles by anyone who feels that the magazine has published inaccurate comments about them. On 5 June 2008 Henderson specifically offered Manne a right-of-reply of 1500 words but he did not take up the offer until 15 July and did not submit a copy until 11 September.

Professor Manne is chairman of *The Monthly's* editorial board. *The Monthly* refuses to publish letters-to-the-editor in its print edition. Consequently no one (Henderson included) has access to a right-of-reply in the same format in which they were criticised in Manne's magazine. The *SIQ* has both a print and an on-line edition. Professor Manne specifically requested publication in the *SIQ's* print edition – despite the fact that he does not allow such favours in *The Monthly*. Robert Manne's response is set out below – it has only been edited to fit-in with the *SIQ's* editorial style.



I am writing in response to an article by Gerard Henderson which appeared in *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* (Issue 32, 2008), "Robert Manne - This Is Your (Academic) Life." The article is full of inaccurate claims. However because I have been granted only 1500 words to respond, I must restrict myself to his fictional account of my undergraduate years concerning which Henderson has a bizarre interest.

Henderson's most serious claim, a claim first made in *The Australian* on 31 October 2007, is that in 1967 I supported giving aid to the enemy at time of war. As Henderson points out, in July 1967 the Labour Club at Melbourne University decided to collect funds in support of the National Liberation Front. Henderson claims falsely that I was at that time a member of the Labour Club and that I am lying when I deny I was.

The only evidence he presents is the following comment made by Henry Rosenbloom of Scribe Publications in 1994:

Manne is biting about Frank Hardy's passing infatuation with Stalin. As it happens, Hardy later recanted his position with care and thoughtfulness. Lots of people have at some time said silly things and adopted positions they would rather forget. What if Robert Manne himself, as an undergraduate, once supported sending aid to the NLF? Would we be right to remind him of this every time he referred to Vietnam?" (The Age, 12 September 1994)

This is not the first time that Henderson has used this quote. Last time Rosenbloom responded thus:

I've got no idea why Gerard Henderson wants to drag me into his argument with Robert Manne, but he's doing so on totally spurious grounds. Despite Henderson's assertion, I never belonged to the Labor Club...when I was at Melbourne University... As it happens, I never had any idea of most who did belong to it (and didn't care), and I certainly had no idea then or afterwards whether Robert Manne had ever been a member.

Astoundingly, Henderson has now falsely attributed my membership of the club to provide me with credentials for an allegation I didn't make about Manne having "supported sending aid to the NLF". The quote comes from a piece I wrote in The Age almost thirty years later, in 1994, but Henderson misses the point I was making. I wasn't alleging anything of the sort (as I've explained, I had no grounds for doing so). I was instead making the rhetorical point—against Manne's own argument at the time—that it's not right in political argument to hold people to account for youthful statements or positions that they recant in later years." (Crikey, 2 November 2007)

Despite the fact that Rosenbloom has shown that Henderson had based his claim about my support for aid to the NLF on a characteristically clumsy misreading, Henderson, again characteristically, refuses to concede that he was wrong:

[It] is not clear why Rosenbloom consciously chose to make such a "rhetorical point" in the first instance—unless of course, it was not mere rhetoric and Rosenbloom actually believed that Manne was a member of the Labor Club when it advocated sending aid to the NLF." (SIQ, Issue 32)

Not only, then, am I a liar. So is Henry Rosenbloom.

Henderson's misreading of Rosenbloom is the only evidence provided for his allegation about my treachery. However to support his case he claims: "On arriving at Melbourne University Robert Manne joined the Labor Club".

This is another Henderson invention. I began university in 1966. In 1966 and 1967 I became involved in the activities of the Democratic Socialists, a moderate pro-ALP club. One of the leading members of the Democratic Socialist Club was Gabriel Lafitte, the longtime supporter of Tibetan independence. Here is his recollection of that time:

In 1967 there was, at Melbourne University campus a moderate alternative to the militantly pro-war Liberals and the extremism of the Labor Club chants of "One side right, one side wrong, victory to the Viet Cong". The middle ground was occupied by the Democratic Socialist Club... In 1967 Robert Manne was also involved with the Democratic Socialists. My recollection is that he leant further to the right than me." (Email dated 30 August 2008)

Perhaps Henderson will claim that Lafitte is also lying. If so, there is further evidence that I was not a member of the Labour Club in 1967. In July 1967, the month the Labour Club voted to send aid to the NLF, the Democratic Socialist Club, to which I belonged, arranged a meeting on the issue of film censorship. I distributed cyclostyled leaflets. By accident, I still have copies in my possession. (*Leaflet*, July 1967).

Lafitte is right about my moderation. In 1967, I published an article on anti-Semitism during the Crusades in a Jewish student magazine. The author's note described me as a student who "teaches Sunday school for a liberal congregation." (*Venture* '67, p.44) This is hardly the self-description of a member of the pro-communist extreme left.

I was, then, not a member of the Labour Club in July 1967 when it voted to give aid to the NLF. I had nothing to do with this decision. Henderson's allegation is certainly false and almost certainly defamatory. 1968 was a radical year. The Democratic Socialist Club collapsed. Either in late 1968 or early 1969, I joined the Labour Club. As soon as I joined, I was voted onto its Committee. Some weeks after, another member of the Labour Club put up an ironical poster featuring a portrait of Stalin. As I was by now convinced that Stalin was a criminal on the scale of Hitler, I was angry. I quit the Labour Club. (Email, Raimond Gaita 10 September 2008)

In what I have said about this incident, Henderson claims once again that I have lied.

Manne may have resigned from the Labor Club within a few weeks of joining it (as he claimed in October 2007). Or he may have resigned when he was on the Club's committee (as he claimed in July 2005). But both statements cannot be true. (SIQ, Issue 32)

Why not? By the time I joined the Labour Club I was quite well-known on campus. There was no absolutely no reason why a new member of the Labour Club could not be voted straight onto its committee. I was. While Henderson grudgingly concedes that I was by 1968-1969 a firm "anti-Stalinist", he claims that this was not incompatible with my remaining a fashionable member of the university Left:

The fact is that by late 1968/early 1969 there was little support for the Soviet Union among the left intelligentsia in Australia...So it was hardly unfashionable to be opposed to Stalinism at universities in the late 1960s and early 1970s."

Henderson once said the opposite:

I well recall quoting The Great Terror at a campus meeting in the late 1960s and reporting Conquest's conservatively-based estimate that around 20 million Soviet citizens had been killed as a direct result of Stalin's terror, only to be howled down by a group of student radicals who apparently regarded any factual historical analysis of communism as quite out of place on a university campus. (SMH, 29/5/90)

Here it is indeed the case that both statements cannot be true.

Henderson argues (against himself) that at this time the only unfashionable political belief about communism was opposition to Ho Chi Minh or to Mao. He suggests that I was opposed to neither regime. This is yet another falsehood. By 1968 I regarded Maoist China as a ferocious totalitarian regime. In early 1969, I argued in a university debate against both the NLF and North Vietnam on standard anti-totalitarian grounds. Henderson knows this to be true. In his *Sydney Institute Quarterly* article he quotes from a letter to *Farrago* by Jennifer Walsh. In this letter I am explicitly criticized, as Henderson is aware, as a rightist in part because of my anti-NLF remarks in that debate earlier that year. (*Farrago*, 25 October) (When I argued on *Crikey* 31 October 2007 that I had quit the Labour Club before the aid to the NLF question was decided, it was this debate, the only one on the NLF I remember, that I had in mind.)

Henderson's thinking is so crude that he considers it impossible to oppose both a regime and a war waged against it. He claims that I have invented the memory that, when marching against the Vietnam War in May 1970, both I and Raimond Gaita, another anti-war anticommunist, gravitated towards a nearby banner we spotted which read: "Neither Washington Nor Hanoi". He claims there is no "extant" evidence that such a banner ever existed. Even by Windschuttlean evidentiary expectations this is absurd. Does Henderson believe that "extant" evidence of every banner in the history of Australian political demonstrations exists and is known to him? Gaita confirms that what I have written is true. (Email, Raimond Gaita, 10 September 2008)

In conclusion: I was a member of the moderate Democratic Socialist Club when the Labour Club voted in 1967 to provide aid to the enemy at time of war. I joined the Labour Club about eighteen months later. Shortly after, I left it on anti-totalitarian grounds. By 1969 I was an anticommunist who had broken with the mainstream student Left. Henderson's version of my undergraduate political life and my treachery is a malicious fiction. I believe an apology is due.

(Note: The evidence referred to in this article was posted to Gerard Henderson on 11 September 2008)

- *Robert Manne is a Professor of Politics at La Trobe University*

GERARD HENDERSON COMMENTS

I am pleased that Robert Manne chose to write to *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* to state his case. However, it is regrettable that – on several occasions – I have been denied a right-of-reply in the print issue of *The Monthly* by Professor Manne and his colleagues. The Sydney Institute genuinely believes in debate and discussion – as distinct from many left-wing organisations and journals.

It has become a tactic in political debate to maintain that those who query someone's position are accusing the individual in question of lying. As a tenured academic, Professor Manne should be able to do better. On no fewer than four occasions in his article, Manne asserts that I accused him or his friends of "lying", being a "liar, or having "lied". The fact is that I have never accused Manne, or any of his colleagues, of lying. I do not use such terminology – even if Manne himself does. Nor, contrary to his claim, have I ever alleged that Manne was ever involved in "treachery".

For the record, I accept Manne's assurance that he was not a member of the Labor Club (which was sometime termed the Labour Club) at Melbourne

University in July 1967 when it attempted to give aid to the National Liberation Front in Vietnam. The NLF was the political arm of the Viet Cong, which was engaging members of the Australian Defence Force in the battlefield at the time. Manne now says that he joined the Labor Club after July 1967. However, writing in *Crikey* on 31 October 2007, he said that he quit the Labor Club before July 1967. No wonder there is confusion – but I accept that Professor Manne’s latest position is the correct one.

According to Manne’s article, he joined the Labor Club in “either late 1968 or early 1969” or about eighteen months after July 1967, i.e. in late 1969. Either way, Manne decided to join the Labor Club after it had attempted to provide aid to the NLF and when it still had a policy of supporting the Viet Cong. It is a reasonable question why Manne would choose to join a political club which openly supported the NLF/Viet Cong and which wanted the communists to win in Vietnam – unless, of course, he was a member of the fashionable left at the time.

This is an important point because the controversy commenced in the Letters Page of *The Australian* last year when I challenged Manne’s claim (made in *The Australian* on 30 October 2007) that he “was an anti-communist at a time when, among the intelligentsia, there was a social cost to pay”. I argued that early in his academic career “Manne was on the Left and paid no social cost for his political views” (*The Australian*, 31 October 2007). The evidence for this proposition in that part of Gabrielle Lafitte’s email to Manne of 30 August 2008 which is not quoted in Manne’s article. In the statement which Lafitte sent to Manne, he made the following point:

By 1968, a year of extremism, there was no middle ground and the Democratic Socialist Club collapsed. As I recall, Robert [Manne] and I also drifted left, but neither of us to the authoritarianism of the Communist Party. I flirted with anarchism, and Robert may have turned to the Labor Club that year.

In other words, Lafitte believes that his close friend Manne had drifted to the left by 1968.

As Paul Ham documents in Chapter 39 of his book *Vietnam: The Australian War* (HarperCollins, 2007), the Vietnam Moratorium Campaign was dominated by the left. Its aims included the “immediate withdrawal of Australian and all other foreign troops from Vietnam”. The Moratorium did not call for the withdrawal of North Vietnamese troops from South Vietnam. At the time, intelligent young men like Robert Manne and Raimond Gaita knew that the immediate withdrawal of Allied forces from Vietnam would lead to an immediate victory by the Communist Party regime in North Vietnam and its Viet Cong puppet.

In his article Manne repeats his claim that, during the Moratorium protest march in Melbourne on 8 May 1970, he and Raimond Gaita “gravitated towards a nearby banner we spotted which read: ‘Neither Washington Nor Hanoi’”. In his article in *Crikey* on 31 October 2007, Manne said that he actually “marched in the anti-Vietnam Moratorium under the banner ‘Neither Washington Nor Hanoi’”. (Emphasis added). There is a difference.

Once again, Manne does not fully quote from the evidence which he has collected from his friends. In a part of Gaita’s email dated 10 September 2008 which Manne does not quote, Gaita describes what actually happened during the Moratorium march. Gaita wrote to Manne as follows:

....we were relieved to find a banner that expressed what we believed: that neither Washington nor Hanoi were deserving of support. Though the many people between us and the banner prevented us from getting close [to] it, you were right to say the [that] we “gravitated” towards it and took ourselves effectively to be marching under it. I do not understand why Gerard Henderson should wish [to] deny this.

In other words, according to Gaita’s account, Gaita and Manne did not even get “close” to the banner. Yet, in spite of this, they took themselves “effectively to be marching under it”. How convenient. In view of the degree of rationalisation and self-delusion at work here, is it so improper to query whether the “Neither Washington Nor Hanoi” banner ever existed? Especially since Manne first made his claim about gravitating towards such a banner in 2001 – i.e. some three decades after the event. To query a person’s memory concerning an event about which there is no independent evidence does not amount to an allegation of consciously lying. Some people have unreliable memories; others sub-consciously drift into rationalisation.

It is true that in the late 1960s some student radicals were still admirers of Josef Stalin. But they did not award scholarships or make academic appointments – and, consequently, did not impose social costs on students or young academics who disagreed with their views. By the late 1960s, the test of a person’s left wing credentials turned on his or her attitude to the Vietnam War. Robert Manne marched, along with members of the Communist Party, in the Vietnam Moratorium. Genuine anti-communists at the time, such as Frank Knopfelmacher, did not join the left on Vietnam and did pay a social cost on university campuses for their unfashionable views.

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*.

FACTS, MYTHS AND ELDERS

The text for the issue is facts, myths and legends. The idea comes from *The A-Z of Australian Facts, Myths & Legends* which was first published by New Holland Publishers (Australia) Ltd in 2005 and has recently been reprinted. *Sydney Morning Herald* journalist Bruce Elder is the author and Fiona Schultz is the publisher.

Elder does short book reviews for the “Spectrum” section of the *Herald* each week. Many an author and publisher wakes-in-hope on a Saturday morning in the expectation that their tome might just make it to your man Elder's “Pick of the Week” selection. Unfortunately *Media Watch* cannot award *The A-Z* with a pick of the week, or the month or even the year gig – since it was first published some time ago. But *The A-Z* is certainly in the running for *Media Watch's* very own “Pick of the Decade” award.

In the introduction to *The A-Z*, Bruce Elder proudly declares:

This book is a celebration of the uniqueness of Australian life and culture. It is designed to amuse the locals and inform the visitors. Dip in anywhere and you'll discover a little about the Great Southern Land – its people, its customs, its idiosyncrasies and, most importantly, those elements of its daily life which makes it special and different.

Sounds promising. Until you read the (very) fine print on the opposite page, where the following disclaimer is made:

The authors and publishers have made every effort to ensure the information in this book was correct at the time of going to press and accept no responsibility for any errors that may have occurred.

How about that? Here is a book on facts where neither author Bruce Elder nor publisher Fiona Schultz accepts any responsibility for errors in the publication.

This suggests that someone else must be responsible for any errors of fact in *The A-Z of Australian Facts, Myths and Legends*. Who could that be? Alternatively, it is possible that what at first glance appears to be a fact is, in fact, merely a myth – or, perhaps, even a legend. Let the reader be the judge as *Media Watch* takes up Mr Elder's invitation to “dip in anywhere” and discover something or other about the Great Southern Land – in alphabetical order, or course.

Cazaly, Roy – of “Up There Cazaly” fame. According to Elder, Roy Cazaly (1893-1963) first played Australian Rules Football in Melbourne for a team called “South Kilda”. Presumably this suburban entity is located somewhere south of St Kilda. That's a fact. Elder also claims that Cazaly was “the best high mark who ever played the game”. That's a myth. What about John Coleman (1928-1973) who played for Essendon? In fact, Cazaly was known for his leap off the ground rather than his ability to take high marks. But he was a legend.

Keating, Paul – much loved of the leftist luvvies in his latter years. Like many of the fashionable left, Elder just adores the former Labor prime minister. Readers dipping into *The A-Z* will learn that Keating “believed that Australia's future lay in its engagement with Asia – this was a radical departure from the previous stance of a submissive colonial country tied either to Britain or the United States of America...”.

In fact, Australia has been engaged with Asia for eons. The Coalition government, led by Robert Menzies, introduced the Colombo Plan in 1950 and signed the Australia-Japan Commerce Agreement in 1957. Harold Holt, Menzies' successor, actively sought to engage with Asian leaders and began to unwind the White Australia Policy. Labor prime minister Gough Whitlam commenced the Australia-China relationship in the early 1970s. The Coalition's Malcolm Fraser oversaw the first large intake of Asians (primarily Indo-Chinese) to settle in Australia as citizens. And Labor's Bob Hawke played a key role in the creation of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation group. And so on. But why query the legends that surround a real Elder-endorsed LEGEND?

Kerr, Sir John – as in “Kerr's a bastard”, to the left of course. First up, Elder advises his readers that “it is still impossible to write dispassionately about Sir John Kerr”, the Governor-General who dismissed Gough Whitlam's Labor Government on 11 November 1975. This is soon very obvious. Elder claims that

Kerr “did not have constitutional power or authority” to dismiss the Whitlam Government. This is a myth. Sure, some critics of Kerr maintained that he should not have dismissed Whitlam on 11 November 1975 and should have waited longer. However, no one has ever established the case that Kerr did not have the constitutional power or authority to do what he did. If Kerr did not have the constitutional power to dismiss Whitlam, he could not have done so.

Elder goes on to claim that Kerr “established a dangerous precedent” for “all countries with a governor-general”. And what’s his authority for this assertion? Well, it is the opinion of “the BBC in England”. All of it? Some of it? Which part of it? Alas, *The A-Z* does not say. In any event, why should Elder be bothered with the alleged opinion of an anonymous BBC hack? Such an obsession seems to be a throw back to the stance of a “submissive colonial country”. Re which see: Keating, Paul.

Lang, Jack – otherwise known as Paul Keating’s hero. Elder declares that “‘The Big Fella’, Thomas ‘Jack’ Lang, was a truly legendary figure in the Australian Labor movement” and comments that “it has often been argued” that the one-time premier of New South Wales “was defeated by the establishment who hated his clear socialist policies”. What a legend. Elder concludes his entry with the reflection that, when Lang died in 1975, he “was eulogised by the Labor Party as a great man of principle and socialist vision”. What a myth.

Here are the facts. In November 1931 Lang’s supporters in the Federal Labor Party crossed the floor in the House of Representatives and brought down Jim Scullin’s Labor Government. By December 1931 what was termed Lang Labor had broken away from the Federal Australian Labor Party. Lang was dismissed by the New South Wales Governor in May 1932 for breaching a law of the Commonwealth Government and Lang Labor lost the subsequent election – i.e. he was defeated by the voters, not the establishment.

Jack Lang re-joined official Labor but, after much turmoil, was expelled by the ALP in 1943. In 1949 Lang campaigned against the Federal Labor government, led by the ALP hero Ben Chifley, and played a part in Chifley’s defeat by Robert Menzies in December 1949. Lang was re-admitted to the ALP shortly before his death – following a campaign by Paul Keating and Tony Luchetti. However, Lang was never eulogised by the overwhelming majority of Labor Party members. In fact, Lang was at best paranoid and at worst barking mad. Throughout the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s Lang was hated by members of the official Labor Party and regarded as a wrecker.

Pentridge Gaol. Those dipping into *The A-Z* learn that Pentridge Prison, in Coburg in suburban Melbourne, “holds a special place in Australian iconography because it was here that Ned Kelly was hanged”. What a myth. The bushranger Ned Kelly was hanged in 1880 in Melbourne Gaol, close to the Melbourne CBD. To this day, the site of Kelly’s hanging is one of

Melbourne’s best known tourist attractions – the condemned man’s cell is still there along with the trapdoors at the hanging site. Mr Elder lives in Sydney.

Still, it’s no problem really – since, according to Fiona Schultz, neither New Holland nor Bruce Elder accepts responsibility for any errors in *The A-Z of Australian, Facts, Myths, Legends*. In spite of the fact that, according to the book’s blurb, this is an “essential reference for every Australian home”.

DR GREER’S RAGE

Certainly Germaine Greer could do with such an I’m-not-responsible-for-the-facts excuse following the publication of her essay *On Rage* (MUP, 2008). The learned doctor commenced her 10,000 word tome by recalling that she had heard an angry Bob Katter, the former National Party MP, and now Independent MP for Kennedy, speaking in the House of Representatives on 13 February 2008. The occasion was the debate on the Appropriation (Drought and Equine Influenza Assistance) Bill – no less. And Katter was in a rage – as diagnosed by Greer:

The speaker might have wanted to roar, but his voice remained snagged in his throat, alternating between a snarl and a sob, sometimes quavering towards the hyena laugh of pure despair.

It was not long before Greer was able to turn the topic around to one of her favourite subjects – namely, HERSELF. Greer happens to know all about rage, you see, because she got into a bit of a tiz on the occasion of her 50th birthday in 1989. Let’s turn to Pages 4-5:

I know what it is like to be suffocating with rage. At my fiftieth birthday party, one of the guests, a relative of the host, decided to amuse himself by a little light mockery of us both for being concerned about the rights of indigenous peoples. Our tormentor was a television presenter from another country, cool, laid-back and witty. We shall call him Guy. What Guy said about aboriginal communities in his own country and in Australia was undeniable, but it was also callous, partial and cynically misleading. I began trying to explain why hunter-gatherer peoples had no interest in integrating with their oppressors or adopting the work ethic, but the ideas were too complex for dinner-table chat. As Guy entertained the company by caricaturing everything I said, I felt my heart rate increasing and my breath coming faster. The muscles of my throat began to ache and my mouth turned dry as ash. Then my voice went funny as if someone else was speaking through me. My eyes were stinging with unshed tears of scalding rage, but I wouldn’t, couldn’t give up until this smug bastard heard me out. He never did.

Clearly, this was not a pretty sight. Even so, the idea of Dr Greer speechless must have been a wonder to behold. Anyrate, almost two decades after the occasion, she identified a similar rage in Bob Katter. It seems that the MP's projected rage so affected Greer that she promoted Katter, retrospectively, when at Page 14 she got around to telling her readers about Bob Katter's background:

For almost seven years, from 1983 to 1989, Katter served in the Howard government, first as minister for Aboriginal and Islander Development [sic], then as minister for Ethnic Affairs.

This is a bit like claiming that, er, Ned Kelly was hanged at Pentridge Gaol. There was no government led by John Howard in 1983 and Katter has never been a minister in a Commonwealth government. He was, however, a minister in the Queensland National Party government in the 1980s. These kinds of howlers are enough to send a factoid into a real rage.

A LEGEND IN HER (MONKEY) MIND

While on the topic of rage, it seems that *The Age's* bi-weekly columnist Catherine Deveny just cannot get over her contempt for the other half (or is it the other three-quarters?), who live in the suburbs. Deveny herself lives in inner-city Brunswick.

On 6 August 2008 *The Age's* star columnist, who was appointed by Andrew Jaspan, returned to her favourite topic – HERSELF. It sure beats having to do any real work before sending a piece off to "The Guardian On The Yarra". You don't have to read newspapers, journals or books, monitor electronic media or check out the web. Rather, you only have to remember what you thought about yesterday – perhaps even this morning. This time round Ms Deveny gave readers an exclusive insight into the functioning of her brain:

Who would you rather sit next to on a long-haul flight, Brendan Nelson or Simon Crean? That was my first thought when I woke up yesterday. Let me tell you, it's exhausting having my brain. Every morning it's like waking up and finding there's been a dinner party going on all night and I've nodded off in the middle of it.

I live with one tangled, distracted monkey mind. A mind that feels as if it's a lift filled with a circus, a noisy Irish family, a bunch of drunk second-year philosophy students, a 60 year old brothel owner with a smart mouth and filthy mind, a couple of 16-year-old emos and a dancing ballerina in a music box. Someone once said that having a conversation with me was like standing under a waterfall while being pelted with a hundred random objects thrown by a hundred different people. It's no wonder I drink.

What a mind. There are many deep philosophical matters to ask deep philosophical questions about. But only Catherine Deveny has the mind to ask the really big question – namely whether Brendan Nelson is more boring than Simon Crean or vice versa. What a brain. Deveny's perception is such that she may well have up to three dancing ballerinas in music boxes jumping around in her grey matter.

It turned out that Deveny's self-analysis of her mental condition was just another excuse for yet another lazy put-down of middle class types who live in the suburbs - including readers or potential readers of the *The Age*. This was soon evident when Deveny used her self-declared stress condition to reflect how easy life would be if only she lived in suburban Melbourne where – you've guessed it – her senses would be sedated by the hum-drum of everyday life. Here is how – from Brunswick – Deveny sees life in the suburbs:

I can't tell you how often I seriously wish I were living in some outer suburb content with signed and framed football jumpers on the wall, no book-shelves and a coffee table covered in remote controls, happy to read romance novels over my Cup-a-Soup. At least I'd have some peace.

So there you have it. The Guardian-On-The-Yarra's sneering columnist really believes that those who reside in the suburbs only read romance novels and drink instant soup. By the way, what's wrong with romance novels and Cup-a-Soup?

SEX IN THE SUBURBS

Perhaps Catherine Deveny should check out the real (suburban) world with the gorgeous, pouting Fiona Patten who is – shall we say – a sex activist in Canberra and the founder of not only the Eros Foundation but also of the brand spanking new Australian Sex Party.

Believe it or not, Ms Patten managed to convince *Radio National Breakfast* that the forthcoming formation of the Australian Sex Party was worth coverage before the 8 am ABC News. This despite the fact that Ms Patten's party has neither an organisational structure nor candidates. In introducing this talent, presenter Fran Kelly predicted that the ASP might just get somewhere:

Well, if the Rudd Labor Government thinks it has trouble dealing with Independents and their special pleadings in the Senate now – things could get much tougher. Later this week a new political party is being launched. Its goal is to win at least one seat in the Federal Senate. It's the Australian Sex Party and its slogan is "We're serious about sex". Its platform includes getting rid of censorship, contesting the government's promised internet filter, supporting gay marriage and paid maternity leave. The party aims to run candidates for the upper house

contests of State and Federal parliaments and it plans to register as a political party and those plans will be announced at the Melbourne Sexpo exhibition on Thursday.

Soon Fiona Patten was telling Fran Kelly that there is much more to the suburbs than framed football jumpers and instant soup. In fact, according to Patten, the suburbs are replete with pornography. This was evident in the final exchange where the presenter asked the Australia Sex Party's convenor precisely what chance the party had of, er, getting up in the next election.

Fran Kelly: Well, I think you're hoping...you might win a seat in the Senate. How are you planning to mobilise support? What do you think your chances are of getting up at the next election?

Fiona Patten: Well we've got over a thousand outlets in Australia so that would be a thousand branches in Australia. There are over four million Australians who currently view adult films and that's not even considering the people who are viewing this material online....

Who knows? Fiona Patten may be correct in her belief that enough viewers of adult films, and visitors to SexPo, will line up and vote to the Australia Sex Party at the Federal election. And Fran Kelly may be correct in her implied suggestion that Ms Patten's friends at least have a chance of getting up next time around. But you wonder. Why would potential supporters of the Australian Sex Party really want to spend all their spare time door-knocking, letter-boxing, sign-planting, and distributing how-to-vote cards when they could be curled up home with their remote control – or something else?

Media Watch will be monitoring Radio National Breakfast to see how it reports the growth of the Australian Sex Party. As the (B&B) saying goes: "We'll keep you posted."

MYTHOLOGY AND BENNELONG

Still, in politics, you don't always have to succeed to claim that in fact you have succeeded. Especially when you get the ABC1 *Australian Story* program on side. Viewers who saw the *Australian Story* episode on 18 August 2008 could well have come away with the impression that former prime minister John Howard lost his seat of Bennelong at the November 2007 Federal election due to the one-man campaign of Bill McHarg. Bill who?

Channel 9 *Sixty Minutes* presenter Tracey Curro introduced the program with considerable gush about saving the planet and all that:

Hello, I'm Tracey Curro and I'm pleased to be able to introduce tonight's *Australian Story*. It's about Bill McHarg, a respected

businessman who radically changed his life's direction to embark on a mission to save the planet. I share his passion and was chosen as a climate change ambassador by Al Gore to help educate Australians about the global warming issues raised in his award winning documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*. When Bill McHarg met the former American vice-president Al Gore last year, it triggered a chain of events that can only be described as outrageous. Now, nine months on, Bill McHarg is still paying a very high price for his radical efforts to save the planet. This is his story.

Australian Story runs for 30 minutes. But, in fact, Bill McHarg's story should not have taken long to tell. A Melbourne based founding director of the property services company Colliers International, at age 62 Bill McHarg decided to head up to Sydney for a week or two and campaign against John Howard in Bennelong. Mr McHarg did not run for Bennelong in an attempt to defeat Howard by winning the seat himself or passing on preferences to the Labor candidate Maxine McKew. No – McHarg decided to campaign in the media against the Member for Bennelong.

There is not much doubt about why McKew defeated Howard in Bennelong. The incumbent had a marginal seat and McKew ran a very good campaign which managed to pick up a swing of 5.5 per cent. This was about the same as the anti-Coalition swing in New South Wales of 5.6 per cent. In other words, McKew would have won Bennelong without McHarg. But this would not have made much of a story for *Australian Story*.

As Tracey Curro mentioned at the start of the program, Bill McHarg became a convert to the climate-change-will-destroy-the-planet-soon belief after he heard Al Gore's sermon at a function in Melbourne. So he resigned his job at Colliers, packed his bag, purchased a van which he called Doink and headed for Bennelong in north west Sydney. It was not long before McHarg appeared on *Sky News* telling everyone listening about his (self-induced) financial sacrifice:

I'm spending part of my kids' inheritance to try and address this issue and protect the environment and to protect their future. But I'm also protecting everybody else's children's future and their planet.

Thanks for that. McHarg returned to his look-at-my-financial-sacrifice theme at the end of *Australian Story*:

Being confronted, at age 62, with no more pay cheques and no more income and having to reinvent myself and create a business in a market that is clearly declining, yeah, that's been challenging.

We're weeping. Still McHarg has had his moment of fame and he is not quite yet in the homeless category. And he has appeared on *Australian Story* which gave the (false) impression that McHarg played a significant role in Howard's defeat. Here's what happened.

On Friday 16 November 2007 a full page advertisement headed: "For 11 years Howard has fiddled. Now Australia Burns." – with a cartoon of a grinning Howard fiddling while a map of Australia burns – appeared in both the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*. This was the commencement of McHarg's week-long campaign to have the Prime Minister defeated in his own seat. McHarg's stated aim was: "Planet First – Howard Last". The attribution at the bottom of the advertisement read: "Written, authorised and funded by Bill McHarg, 13 Oxford Street, Malvern – a seriously concerned Australian parent and businessman. Meet Bill on YouTube.com – search 'Bill McHarg Climate Change'."

It turned out that McHarg's YouTube entry did not work for days. However, sections of the media were interested in McHarg and he was interviewed at some length on the morning of 16 November by Virginia Trioli on ABC Metropolitan Radio 702. He also scored a couple of interviews on *Sky News*. The permanently bow-tied McHarg also received most publicity from his campaign truck which was fitted with a loud howler and which emitted continued kookaburra noises – along with heaps of carbon.

McHarg told *Australian Story* that his kookaburra van had a "huge impact" on the campaign in Bennelong. Really. He also claimed that "just about everybody in Sydney claimed to have heard the kookaburra van and to have heard the message". Really. There are some five million people in Sydney and McHarg drove his van around Bennelong for just over a week.

Come election night, McHarg had nowhere to go. So he gate-crashed Maxine McKew's celebration party. No one seemed to notice him there and McKew made no mention of him in her victory speech. What an Australian story.

FACTLESS IN BENNELONG

You would never know this from watching *Australian Story*. The authoritative comment on the program about Bennelong was made by Margaret Saville, author of *The Battle for Bennelong: The Adventures of Maxine McKew aged 50something* (MUP, 2007). Ms Saville told *Australian Story* that Bill McHarg had played a key role in Howard's defeat and McKew's victory:

Bill had a huge impact on the campaign. There were fewer than 3,000 votes as a margin, and I think, you know, possibly Bill could have swung a very large proportion of those votes.

That's pretty clear, then. Or is it? If Bill McHarg had such a huge impact on the Bennelong campaign, you might have thought that his contribution would have been analysed at some length in *The Battle for Bennelong*. But no. McHarg does not even rate a mention in Saville's book. Not one. Much of *The Battle for Bennelong* consists of an analysis of the campaign week by week. Yet there is no mention of the arrival of McHarg and his Doink at the end of the Chapter titled

"Week Five". And there is no mention of McHarg's campaigning in the chapter titled "Week Six".

The attraction of *Australian Story* is that you can spin a story and they will run it on the program. Margot Saville would never have got to appear on *Australian Story* if she had fessed up that McHarg did not get a mention in her book because he played no significant role in Howard's defeat. That would not have fitted in with the program's message. Namely, that Bill McHarg gave up some fortune so he could play a part in (i) defeating John Howard and (ii) saving the planet – in that order.

Those reading *The Battle for Bennelong* for any reference to Bill McHarg's alleged "huge impact" on the 2007 Federal election campaign will be disappointed. However the book is a great read – especially for the amount of absolute gush.

It's Week Five of the campaign and John Howard has just presided over the Liberal Party's official election campaign launch. It was not one of Howard's best performances – he went for too long and he was off message. But overseeing the launch from Bennelong, Saville was quick to pick up that the Coalition was in big trouble:

The worst part of the launch is Tanya Costello's empire-line frock. Only someone who hates her would dress her like that – could it have been Janette [Howard]? Tanya clearly needs the rules for What to Wear When You Haven't Got a Clue. Go to Max Mara and buy six suits. Wear till fall apart. Repeat.

What utter drivel. Only to be matched by Saville's comment about Maxine McKew and her partner Bob Hogg as presented in the Epilogue:

One of the things that has attracted Maxine to public office is, of course, power. It's hard to write about issues of women and power without sounding negative; ambitious women are often condemned. But Maxine does like power; this was pointed out to me by someone else, but it's evident Bob Hogg is a very powerful person, a former National Secretary of the ALP with huge standing in the party, and there is a reasonable age gap. Her former partner is a very senior diplomat. Women who aren't attracted to power go out with kindergarten teachers.

Interesting theory, to be sure. But what about Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard, whose partner is a hair dresser? And what about Margaret Thatcher who was married to Denis Thatcher? And what's wrong with male kindergarten teachers? And so on.

It seems that Saville is not only an expert on how-to-dress and why women choose certain men. She also knows a bit about love – of the long enduring kind. Hence Saville's concluding paragraph that Ms McKew has lost her heart in Bennelong:

I think Maxine originally stood for Bennelong because she wanted political office and to make a difference. But somewhere along the way, she has fallen in love with her electorate....I don't think any 54-year-old expects to have one more major passion. Life is fleeting and, as you age, there is a sense that new loves are for young people. But Maxine has found that inside the 58 square kilometres that make up Bennelong.

What utter tripe. Next up Margot Saville should audition for a writing gig with Mills & Boon. Or perhaps she deserves her very own gig on the myth-making *Australian Story*.

HARD (MELBOURNE GRAMMAR) TIMES

Let's return to the topic of legends – like Melbourne barrister Julian Burnside. Once upon a time Mr Burnside was a Melbourne Grammar and Monash University educated lawyer who voted Liberal and worked for top-end-of-town folk like Alan Bond and Rose Porteous. Then when the Maritime Union of Australia got into a scrap with the Howard Government over rorts-on-the-ports, the MUA decided that it needed an Establishment type to argue its case and decided on Burnside QC. It was like a conversion experience for your man Burnside and he soon became much loved by the leftist luvvies in our midst.

Such a status invariably leads to media profiles, invitations to write about the self in books, offers to publish collected essays and speeches – and so on. So it came as no surprise when, on 31 March 2008, Julian Burnside was interviewed by Peter Thompson on the ABC1 program *Talking Heads*. Soon the interviewer asked the interviewee about when he first thought about the concept of fairness. It was hard for a tear not to come to the eye when Burnside recounted his experience of life's hardships at – wait for it – the well endowed private school Melbourne Grammar. Let's go to the DVD:

...when I matriculated, I got some prizes and scholarships – which was a big surprise to me. And I also got colours for swimming and diving and rugby. I had represented the school in all of those sports for years. I'd been very good at them but I got second-class colours, because they were second-class sports. I'm not complaining about getting second colours and the whole thing amuses me now in retrospect. But it's easy as you grow up, to lose the sense of "unfairness" – especially when you see it happening to other people. Most people are fairly quick to respond to "unfairness" directed to themselves. But if you stop noticing injustice that happens to

other people, well then I think you're heading in the wrong direction.

Peter Thompson quickly realised that Burnside's sense of injustice was of little moment and immediately diverted the subject to Julian's father – the well-known surgeon, Kennedy Byron Burnside. Perhaps the presenter already knew the tale. For Burnside had already told his story in the 2006 collection edited by John Kinsella titled *School Days*. Moreover, Burnside reprinted this chapter – in an edited form and without acknowledgement – in his book of essays titled *Watching Brief* (2007). For decades after he experienced injustice at Melbourne Grammar, Julian Burnside's pain was still evident – as the following extract demonstrates:

My relationship with sport had always been uneasy. The school held some sports in high esteem. In those days at Melbourne Grammar three sports ruled: football, cricket and rowing. To be good in any of those sports was a passport to popularity, to excel at them was to achieve the status of an Olympian god. I was, however, always attracted to the "lesser sports". A born contrarian perhaps, but not wilful. I was a strong swimmer and an accomplished diver. I had been a school champion in both sports for years, and played rugby in the First Fifteen.

On my last day at school, when the glittering prizes were being strewn among the chosen, I was awarded colours in each of my sports. But I was awarded only second colours because they were only second colour sports. I still remember the stinging injustice of it. If I were to speculate on the origin of my concern about justice, I would settle for that day.

Gee wiz. In the 1950s and 1960s some schoolboys and schoolgirls were focused on the civil rights campaigns in the United States, the debate over the White Australia Policy and Aboriginal rights in Australia, and the oppression which existed within communist regimes – including the Soviet Union and China. Yet when young Julian Burnside looked at injustice he merely saw that a chap who played Australian Rules Football for Grammar received first colours while chaps like Burnside who swam received only second colours. And he is still aggrieved about this today.

Here's the solution. Melbourne Grammar should issue Burnside full colours for swimming, diving, rugby and anything else. Now. Moreover, the Melbourne Grammar principal should make a public apology to Burnside in the school's Great Hall. Tissues available on entry.

BURNSIDE AS LEGEND

Still it seems that Julian Burnside's experience of injustice at school has encouraged others to go easy on him in middle age. This was evident when *The Age* arranged to review his book *Watching Brief* on the same day as it reviewed Cardinal George Pell's book *God and Caesar*. Turn to *The Age's* book review section on 5 January 2008.

Both books consisted of essays and articles which had been published previously. But *The Age* gave *Watching Brief* a full review – which was written by Glyn Davis, the vice-chancellor of Melbourne University. The review suggests that Professor Davis is something of an admirer of Burnside.

Fair enough – except in comparison to the Pell review. *God and Caesar* received only a brief review, which commenced: “The essays present the appearance of argument.” You get the picture. The reviewer, Owen Richardson, presented himself as a gay man and banded on about the Cardinal's attitude to homosexuality – despite the fact that this issue was not the focus of any essays in *God and Caesar*.

Commissioning Richardson to review *God and Caesar* would be a bit like getting Piers Akerman to review *Watching Brief*. An unlikely scenario, to be sure. It sure helps to be a legend, of leftist luvvie kind. Especially if you can trace your current fashionable leftist opinion to an episode of stinging injustice in your school days some four decades ago.

HISTORY CORNER

Australian National University academic Norman Abjorensen has managed to present himself in the media as an expert on the Liberal Party. So much so that virtually no one bothers to remember his (false) prophesy of just a year ago that the Liberal Party would not survive defeat at the 2007 Federal election.

Once upon a time Abjorensen was a big supporter of once upon a time Liberal leader Dr John Hewson. He even wrote an uncritical account of the learned doctor in a book titled *John Hewson: A Biography*. Now that the Liberals are in Opposition, Abjorensen has been quick to criticise former treasurer Peter Costello. He was reported as debunking Costello in *The Australian* on 15 August 2008 and wrote an article bagging him in the *Canberra Times* on 30 July 2008 headed “Costello past his use-by date”:

The real issue at the polls last year was industrial relations policy. Howard might have been the public face of the policy, but Costello was the real ideologue. He took a much harder line than Howard on labour market deregulation, but this was seldom commented on.

Had he been leader, however, his views would have been exposed to much greater

searching scrutiny and, had he articulated them, the already unpopular policies might have become even more unpopular. It would have been a handicap in government, but it would not be any less of a handicap now in opposition.

As the saying goes, winners are grinners and losers can please themselves. The fact is that when Costello was treasurer, Abjorensen thought he was the Liberal Party's future. On 8 December 2005 Abjorensen proclaimed Costello's ability in an article in *The Australian*. This comment was published after the introduction of the Howard Government's industrial relations reform package tilted Work Choices. Abjorensen's article was headed “Costello has really done little wrong” and he praised Costello in spades:

There is an edginess to Costello, the politician, that generates a frisson in marked contrast to the “relaxed and comfortable” style of John Howard who, after almost a decade in charge, is as familiar as an old pair of slippers. Yet Costello's edginess has been constrained by his dual role as Treasurer and Deputy Leader, and is more apparent in perception than in any significant departure from the orthodoxy espoused by the Prime Minister. His attempts to delineate differences have been cautious, as his support for a republic and his more proactive stance on indigenous reconciliation.

Abjorensen went on to praise Peter Costello's approach to industrial relations and presented him a Harold Holt figure ready for Liberal Party leadership. Holt replaced Robert Menzies in January 1966 and went on to win a record vote in the 1966 Federal election. Wrote Abjorensen:

Holt eventually succeeded in 1966 and the world did not end. He brought a breeze of jaunty freshness into government, began dismantling White Australia and turned the nation's face to Asia. Freed from the drudgery of economic management, Costello is also likely to effect a similar generational change. His “demographics is destiny” line that accompanied the release of the intergenerational report a few years back hints at an edginess that we have yet to see.

So there you have it. In December 2005 Norman Abjorensen depicted Peter Costello as the future of the Liberal Party. However, less than three years later he claimed that Costello favoured “unpopular policies” and he would have been a handicap to the Coalition if he had become prime minister before the 2007 election.

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TOPIC: *The Netherlands, Australia and the World*
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VENUE: to be advised 1.45 pm [NOTE EARLY AFTERNOON FUNCTION]
- SPEAKERS:** MARK JOHNSON (Former Deputy Chairman, Macquarie Bank);
 DR JOHN EDWARDS (Chief Economist, HSBC) &
 DR TIMO HENCKEL (Research Fellow Centre for Applied Macroeconomic Analysis, ANU)
TOPIC: *The World Financial Crisis: How Did It Happen?*
DATE: Wednesday 28 January 2009 **Bookings from 14 January only** **TIME:** 5 for 5.30 pm
VENUE: to be advised [NOTE EARLY START]
- SPEAKER:** MARGOT O'NEILL (ABC journalist; Author, *Blind Conscience* [UNSW Press, 2008])
TOPIC: *Beyond the Wire – Refugee Advocacy in Australia*
DATE: Tuesday 3 February 2009 **Bookings from 20 January only**
TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm LIGHT REFRESHMENTS
VENUE: 41 Phillip Street, Sydney
- SPEAKERS:** PROFESSOR MARCIA LANGTON (Australian Indigenous Studies Program,
 University of Melbourne) & WARREN MUNDINE AO (Chief Executive Officer,
 Native Title Services Corporation)
TOPIC: *Indigenous Affairs - A New Conversation*
DATE: Tuesday 10 February 2009 **Bookings from 29 January only** **TIME:** 5.30 for 6 pm
VENUE: Clayton Utz Seminar Room, Level 30, 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney
- SPEAKER:** THE HON. JULIA GILLARD MP (Deputy Prime Minister; Minister for Employment
 and Workplace Relations; Minister for Education; Minister for Social Inclusion.)
DATE: Thursday 19 February 2009 **Bookings from 5 February only** **TIME:** to be advised
VENUE: to be advised
- SPEAKER:** GREG GROWDEN (SMH Sports writer & Author, *Jack Fingleton:
 The Man Who Stood Up To Bradman* [Allen & Unwin 2008])
TOPIC: *Remembering Jack Fingleton*
DATE: Tuesday 24 February 2009 **Bookings from 10 February only** **TIME:** to be advised
VENUE: 41 Phillip Street, Sydney LIGHT REFRESHMENTS
- SPEAKER:** THE HON. JULIE BISHOP MP (Deputy Opposition Leader & Shadow Treasurer)
DATE: Monday 2 March 2009 **Bookings from 16 February** **TIME:** to be advised
VENUE: to be advised
- SPEAKERS:** DAI LE (Community Relations Co-ordinator, NSW Liberal Party; former
 producer/broadcaster, ABC Radio National) &
 QUANG LUU A.O. (Board Director, Austcare; former Head SBS Radio)
TOPIC: *Journeys from Vietnam*
DATE: Tuesday 3 March 2009 **Bookings from 22 February only** **TIME:** to be advised
VENUE: 41 Phillip Street, Sydney LIGHT REFRESHMENTS
- SPEAKER:** JUDITH PUGH (Author, *Unstill Life: Art Politics and Living with Clifton Pugh* [Allen & Unwin 2008])
TOPIC: *Clifton Pugh – A Retrospective*
DATE: Tuesday 10 March 2009 **Bookings from 26 February only**
VENUE: 41 Phillip Street, Sydney LIGHT REFRESHMENTS
- SPEAKER:** THE HON. WAYNE SWAN MP (Federal Treasurer)
DATE: Monday 23 March 2009 **TIME:** to be advised
VENUE: to be advised
- SPEAKERS:** MARK LOPEZ (Author, *The Little Black School Book* [Connor Court, 2008]) &
 ANNA CLARK (Author, *History's Children: History wars in the classroom* [UNSW Press, 2008])
TOPIC: *Teaching History – Two Views*
DATE: Tuesday 24 March 2009 **Bookings from 10 March only** **TIME:** to be advised
VENUE: to be advised

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