FORTHCOMING FUNCTIONS AT THE SYDNEY INSTITUTE

SPEAKER: BRAD NORINGTON (Author of Jennie George [Allen & Unwin, 1998])
TOPIC: Writing Jennie George
DATE: Tuesday 13 April 1999
VENUE: 41 Phillip St, Sydney
TIME: 5.30 for 6.00pm
LIGHT REFRESHMENTS
THIS TALK COINCIDES WITH THE LAUNCH OF THE NEW (PAPERBACK) EDITION

SPEAKER: TANYA PLIBERSEK (Member for Sydney)
& THE HON ALAN CADMAN (Member for Mitchell)
TOPIC: Censorship, Lolita and a Modern Society
DATE: Tuesday 20 April 1999
VENUE: The Chifley Conference Room (Rm 102), Level 1, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney
TIME: 5.30 for 6.00pm

SPEAKER: DR BRENDAN NELSON (Member for Bradfield)
TOPIC: Drugs - The Doctor's Dilemma
DATE: Tuesday 27 April 1999
VENUE: The Chifley Conference Room (Rm 101), Level 1, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney
TIME: 5.30 for 6.00pm
LIGHT REFRESHMENTS
(NOTE ROOM)

SPEAKER: LINDSAY TANNER MP (Shadow Minister for Finance)
TOPIC: Open Australia
DATE: Tuesday 4 May 1999
VENUE: The Chifley Conference Room (Rm 102), Level 1, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney
TIME: 5.30 for 6.00pm

SPEAKER: THE HON JUSTICE M.J. BEAZLEY (Judge of Appeal, NSW Supreme Court)
TOPIC: Making Judgements
DATE: Tuesday 11 May 1999
VENUE: 41 Phillip St, Sydney
TIME: 5.30 for 6.00pm
LIGHT REFRESHMENTS

SPEAKER: THE HON SUSAN RYAN AO (Former Senator & Author of Catching The Waves [HarperCollins])
TOPIC: Australia's Immigration and Population - What Need for Control?
DATE: Tuesday 15 June 1999 (NOTE TIME)
VENUE: The Chifley Conference Room (Rm 102), Level 1, 2 Chifley Square, Sydney
TIME: 5.00 for 5.30pm

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PADDY AND THE DEAD

William Gladstone's advice to "let the dead bury the dead" never made much sense. Not when discussing (as Gladstone was) Home Rule for Ireland. If only because the past is part of the present. Most commentators and activists understand that it makes sense to draw a line when discussing the recently departed. It is legitimate to critically assess an individual's strengths and weaknesses in such areas as policy and character. But there can be little justification in scoring points against the dead by assertions which would probably not have been made if the individual were extant.

Jim McClelland died on Saturday 18 January 1999. His memorial service was held at the Sydney Town Hall on Wednesday 3 February 1999. On 28 January 1999 P.P. McGuinness' column "Diamond Jim's Judas kiss" appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald. The piece was strong on bile but deficient on analysis. McGuinness alleged that McClelland was an "opportunist of the NSW Labor machine who acquired wealth and status through exploiting his union connections". However Laurie Short has maintained that, as a solicitor, McClelland charged reasonable fees and made no attempt to rip-off the union movement. Short was in a position to know.

Then it got really personal. McGuinness quoted (unnamed) "former lovers" of McClelland as having "told of his overweening vanity". Not to let the case for the prosecution drop, the columnist alleged that McClelland's "role in helping to defeat the corrupt communist leadership of the Ironworkers' Union has been greatly exaggerated". According to McGuinness, "the real moving spirits were the Cecil O'Dea and Frank McGrath". The only source for this claim is The Forging of Votes written by Amy McGrath (Frank McGrath's widow).

There followed the allegation that in the mid 1980s McClelland "was playing a Deep Throat with a small number of Sydney journalists - including David Marr and Wendy Bacon - publicly defending [Justice Lionel] Murphy and privately urging on his persecutors and convincing them of Murphy's guilt while pretending to be Murphy's friend?" McGuinness' expression was confused. But his meaning is clear - namely "McClelland was an expert in the Judas kiss". McGuinness went so far as to allege that McClelland had interfered "with the course of justice by being 'economical with the truth' concerning Murphy". But there is scant evidence for so serious an allegation. McClelland was a witness when Murphy went on trial for attempting to pervert the course of justice. He appears to have responded truthfully to the questions he was asked. A witness is required to do no more.

In a sense, Jim McClelland never got over his Catholic youth. As a boy he suffered from scruples. McClelland abandoned religious belief at a young age. But he seems never to have vanquished scruple-induced guilt. McClelland spoke about Lionel Murphy to Robin Hughes (on the understanding that this discussion would not be released until after his death). P. P. McGuinness believes, without having viewed the film, that McClelland confessed to "his own shabby role in interfering with the course of justice" in relation to the Murphy case. This seems too harsh a judgment by far. But, of course, it's easy - and lazy - journalism to make unproven allegations about the dead. They can neither sue nor make corrections. To distort Gladstone, the dead remain buried.
On 3 February 1999, Helen Coonan addressed The Sydney Institute and made a radical proposal to reform the electoral rules for the Senate. Central to Senator Coonan’s model of reform would be the introduction of a threshold for the number of votes below which a candidate could not win a seat or have preferences distributed to them. This she argued was necessary if either major party is to regain a majority in the Senate. Minority government in the Senate frustrates the passing of important legislation and disrupts government. The discussion below is taken from the question and answer session that followed Senator Coonan’s address.

Dick Klugman: The Prime Minister has been critical of the changes to the Senate by the Labor Government in 1984, which I was connected with, whereby the number of senators for each state was increased from 10 to 12. His argument is that this has lowered the quota needed to elect senators and thus made it easier for minor parties to win seats. However, based on the vote for the major parties in the 1998 election, neither party would control the numbers in the Senate under the pre 1984 legislation. The fact is that the vote for the major parties has slipped and minor parties win seats as a result.

Helen Coonan: No doubt with the benefit of hindsight people can really be critical whereas at the time it may have looked a sensible thing to do. Today it is true that politicians are so unpopular voters really don’t know what to expect from political parties. And it is true that even if you went back to the 1984 Senate numbers, you probably still wouldn’t get a majority in the Senate for a major party. So I think it is very difficult to second guess.

Q: Do you need a referendum to bring in a threshold for the distribution of preferences as you have suggested?

HC: No, you can do it by normal legislation. But of course you can’t get normal legislation through a hostile Senate. So it’s a very circuitous process.

Q: As you would know in the Senate, in spite of not having the numbers, the government does get most of its legislation passed. Most voting sees Labor and Coalition voting on the same side. It’s only controversial legislation that is held up. Do you think that by proposing reform as you have done, there is an opportunity for the major parties to vote together to make reform possible?

HC: Well that’s certainly what I hoped kicking off this debate will do. That it will get some bi-partisan support. While we, the Coalition, are in the box seat now, we won’t be forever. And it’s in the long term interests of both parties that we restore some balance to the Senate. And it’s not only in the long term interests of the parties, it’s in the national interest. It’s very important that the government of the day, whoever it is, can actually get on with governing. At present you could never have a reformist government. If you look, for instance, at the United Kingdom, Tony Blair has a reform program. If the voters don’t like it, they can vote him out. The House of Lords really doesn’t have to be there.

Q: I would just like to make this comment. The minor parties have power and no responsibility. That’s one of the major problems. But, to me, the essence of the whole issue is that if the government is going to be held responsible and accountable - and if the government or a party is to go to the electorate for a mandate at an election - then they have to have control of the parliament. But they don’t have control of the parliament. How can they say to the electorate: “This is our policy, this is what we want to implement.” It means practically nothing. It’s a question of the power of government. And if you believe in weak government perhaps you’ll prefer the present system.

HC: You’re quite right. The principles of responsible government really do require somebody there to be in charge, to implement policy, to get on with governing and voters are quite entitled to judge that government according to how it went. But if you can’t get reforming legislation through, it is extremely difficult to judge a government. When I was researching for this paper, I came across a wonderful quote from somewhere that says that one of the problems of course with minority government and coalitions is that you end up with a wonderful debating chamber but not a very good legislative chamber.

Antony Green: I’m interested in the whole subject because much of the blame which is laid at the foot of the minor parties involves Tasmania and the Upper Houses. There’s been good and bad things there. What’s really occurring is the contest between the major parties has reached the Senate. The Senate has become the chamber for opposition...
to government, especially since 1993. What happened in 1984 was that the changes actually introduced a system which ensured a Labor government never faced opposition control in the Senate again. And this is the danger that you talked about which is one of two scenarios. Ending up with either a government controlled Senate - in which case what’s the point in having a Senate if it’s government controlled? Or an opposition controlled Senate - which is even worse than the current position.

“For the Senate to have a minor role, while in it’s current condition, really doesn’t hurt”.

**HC:** I think that’s really all to do with electoral cycles. What I’m suggesting is that there ought to be at least the prospect of a government, particularly a reformist government, controlling both houses so that you can get your legislation through. If the voters don’t like it, out you go. But you can get on with it. If you can’t do that, you’re always going to have a reactionary Senate. Now if you have an opposition that just opposes maybe you have to have another election because you just can’t break the impasse. It’s a better outcome than having a hinge coalition, which is what we have now, where you can absolutely be certain that for the foreseeable future, neither party will have government in the Senate or be able to control the Senate.

Whether or not major parties will continue to let the minor parties do that is another good point that you’ve raised. Of course, it may just be possible if we get this debate going that people might look at their long term interests.

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**Q:** Moving on from when you have managed to effectively eliminate the proportionate power of minor parties and you wind up with a situation where you have one party in government in the House of Representatives but the opposition holds power in the Senate - what then?

**HC:** Well that was the point that Antony Green made. I think you probably have to have another election. If you literally can’t get anything through, I think you can muse that the government can’t govern and you’ve really got to go to the people.

The other interesting thing is that the current independents in the Senate have really allowed most of the government’s legislation go through. If you talk to Brian Harradine, while he puts you through the hoops well and truly, he does ultimately respect the government’s mandate. And he’ll tell you that. That’s ultimately the reason why the Howard administration has been able to get through most of it's reform agenda.

**Q:** Can you draw any conclusions from the fact that in Victoria the Premier has control of both houses. In New South Wales no. In Queensland they have a single legislative house. What is better? And is the objective of electoral reform to have the government of the day control the Senate as well as the House of Reps? If so what’s the point of having a Senate?

**HC:** Good question. It depends on whether you like Jeff Kennett in Victoria or hate him. And some of the time it’s obviously better to have the party of government controlling the houses of parliament. But if you can tell me how one would seriously look at constitutional reform that’s going to get rid of the

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**SENATOR HELEN COONAN’S PROPOSAL TO REFORM THE SENATE**

1. Proportional representation, used to elect Senators, requires a quota of votes (14.28 per cent). Minor parties rarely get a full quota, relying on surplus votes or preferences or surplus votes from other candidates.

2. Some Western democracies who use proportional representations require parties or independent candidates to secure a minimum of primary votes (a threshold) to qualify for election.

3. A threshold system used for the Australian Senate would ensure fewer minor party or independent candidates would be elected - and hence a majority for one of the major parties.

Senators as opposed to making minor changes to Senate power, I’d like to hear it.

Q: Under the republican model, the Senate has no role in the dismissal and appointment of the president. Do you think this is fair given the review function of the Senate?

HC: Well it’s very difficult to talk about republican models and what sort of role the Senate ought to have. At the risk of looking like I might be in Peter Reith’s [direct election] camp, I must say I’m a bit keen on the popular model. It’s very difficult to second guess what the people want to do, and how they want to elect their head of state. But I think that for the Senate to have a minor role, while in its current, condition really doesn’t hurt.

Q: The Australian population instinctively feels frustrated by the Senate at the moment and you touched on the reasons. But if we adopt the German threshold system, I’ve heard that we’d still have the status quo. Is that true?

HC: It depends on what percentage you have. If you had a five per cent threshold, it wouldn’t make any difference at all on the 1993, 1996 and 1998 results. You have to get to a threshold of 7.5 per cent to make any difference.

Q: What’s the next step to implement your ideas?

HC: Well it’s a bit premature to be implementing anything. My real motivation is as follows. Politicians are often accused of short-termism because they’re always looking at the next election. And it’s a very short electoral cycle, only three years or even less. In the Senate, you have the luxury of being there a bit longer. And that’s one of the things you can do there. You can step back and look at what’s working and what’s not working and try and promote a debate.

My proposal is that there should be public debate. It should be well beyond the politicians. It shouldn’t be a divisive debate. I don’t want it to be controversial. I would like to see a constructive debate that goes broader than just politicians sniping at each other - and where the electors are heard. This is our voting system and we should look at it.

Q: You did some modeling on the thresholds, and from the figures at the last election my understanding is that the proposed new system would still result in a hung Senate. Is that correct?

HC: Yes. I’m not saying that you necessarily will get there. I just simply did some modeling to show some
Aussies in Dubai come from a wide spectrum of professions, ranging from bankers to government employees, business persons, educators, even the odd entertainer and journalist. Jim Dowling, Regional Head of Markets, Middle East, ANZ Grindlays Bank says: “I was asked to consider a move to the UAE by my employer. I agreed to come due to a general interest in this part of the world from both a personal and professional viewpoint, after having previously worked in Singapore and Los Angeles.”

Elaine Ellwood, Operations Manager, Icon Group Services which deals in aviation, travel, transport and trading, followed her husband: “At the time we didn’t really know anything about the region, but as we were ‘commitment free’, it was a good opportunity. We decided to come and give it a go.”

A thread running through the Aussie expat experience in Dubai is the denial of a cultural shock. Some of them, like Perth-sider Consul-General John Yeudall, do admit, “there’s nothing like home”. But most of the Antipodeans only rue the fact that they did not “come to Dubai earlier”.

For instance, the Hartrees. Hailing from Melville in Perth, Graham is a co-pilot with Emirates Airlines, the national carrier of the UAE. After a longish stint in Europe, he feels that his family has finally found its niche in Dubai. “It rained all day long in Europe,” recalls Graham, “and the children were moping inside the house all the time. But in the UAE, we have a climate similar to that of Australia. There is bright sunshine and the children can run around in the outdoors.” This also gives Lorraine, his wife, a break. She deals in financial markets Down Under. “The thing that struck me,” says Lorraine Graham, “is the ‘maid culture’ in the UAE. It is possible to have a maid on a short contract here, a thing unthinkable at home.” Though she has not employed one, the knowledge that help is a short hand away is a relief.

The Aussie expats tick off the many plusses of life in the Emirates. Appealing business infrastructure, good weather for most of the year for sporting activities and BBQs, Arabic food, wadi-bashing and travelling to the mountains are some of them. Says Yvette Aubusson-Foley, originally from NSW and now journalist with the daily English newspaper Gulf News: “The standard of living is much higher compared to home. We (my husband and myself) don’t officially pay tax, although that is changing. We pay none or very little tax and we have more money to spend. Travelling to other countries is a breeze because we’re so close to everything. From Australia to just about anywhere is a major journey. Family and
friends in Australia have alarms in their houses, keep guard dogs and lock their cars. Here there is so little crime. It took a long time to get used to.”

Expat anxieties, however, include lack of schooling opportunities. They have to make do with British or American education systems. Though the community is 2000-strong, Consul-General Yeudall fears the education on offer doesn’t have the “resources” (meaning children) to go in for elementary and primary educational networks.

Rash driving and the lack of lane discipline merit the next big NO. Says Elaine Ellwood, “My primary dislike here is the disgusting driving. I know this is a strong word for it, but unfortunately it is appalling.”

The Australia and New Zealand Association (ANZA) based in Dubai is a loose-knit, informal group of people with a flexible agenda which encourages gatherings of expat Australians and New Zealanders in the UAE to take part in social and cultural events it organises. It’s a place to make the first friends.

“It can be a very lonely experience when you first arrive here from the Antipodes,” says Beverley Curtis, co-chairperson of ANZA, herself having to come to Dubai three years ago. “You cannot be much farther away from Australia or New Zealand if you are in Dubai. It is 17 hours flying time from Melbourne (Emirates Airlines flies daily from Dubai to Melbourne), including stopovers either at Hong Kong or Singapore.

ANZA organises cultural and social events and advertises them through its newsletter. The highlights of the ANZA calendar are the Melbourne Cup Breakfast (MCB), Australia Day and Waitangi Day celebrations. The MCB is held during the live telecast of the Melbourne Cup race at the Hyatt Regency hotel in Dubai at 7am local time. ANZA also organises events like desert camps, BBQs, dune bashing outings, sand skiing and cricket matches. Says Curtis: “When you get together with your countrymen, you tell jokes and interact in a way which is different from socialising with people from other countries. You once again share your common features.”

ANZAities are avid users of e-mail, faxes, phones and the letterbox to keep in touch with Australia and New Zealand. They also remain in contact with home through newspapers and magazines, brought to them by obliging friends on visits. ANZA also does a spot of charity, surplus funds often going to a local special needs organisation. “It’s just that we wanted to give something back to the community and the country we are living in,” says Curtis.

Sue-Sharyn Ward, Sydney-sider and Manager/Facilities of Iridium Middle East, a satellite communications company, has been in the region for 25 years. Recalls Ward: “When I came to the Gulf there weren’t many women in business. It was harder for a woman to do business then. It is a lot easier now. A working woman used to be treated like a secretary, no matter what her position.” Ward has discovered that doing business in the UAE is different from doing it in Australia. “For one, it takes a longer time to get matters done here,” she says. “There are the cultural factors to consider.” The attitude to making money is different. “In the UAE, people seem to live to work!”

Ward founded the “Cooee Corner” in 1982, now largely taken over by ANZA. As a long-term expatriate in the Gulf and a licenced Dubai tour guide, many newcomers seek her advice and assistance in dealing with their business and cultural environments. “My message to them is to have sabr (Arabic for ‘patience”), she says. “That’s the best advice I can give. Though it’s taken me 25 years to learn it.”

Ward frequently “presents” her experiences for organisations like the Dubai Businesswomen’s Group. Comparing the deserts of the Middle East with those in Australia, she says, “the Australian desert is a lonely place. In the Middle East, a whole cultured people has grown up and a complete way of
life has been built around the desert.” Her favourite travelling vehicle (it is high on her recommendation list) is the Nissan Patrol. Ward also offers tips for would-be travellers in the Middle East. “Try not to offend either in dress or manner and always keep the mood light-hearted,” she advises. “Losing your cool in the Middle East only makes the situation more difficult to handle.”

Trying to make situations easier to handle are businesspersons Kerry Maloney and Nanette Fairley, thirty-somethings from Brisbane. They are directors of Innovate, a human resources company based in Dubai. Fairley, who has an MBA, was a management leader in the field. She relocated to the Gulf in 1994 to take up a key role in the human resources department within the Emirates Group. Maloney is a qualified psychologist and began her career with Shell Australia before moving into consultancy. Until recently, she had a recruitment management role in Emirates Airlines.

Says Maloney: “Europe is more progressive in terms of exposure to advanced human resources practice. It is a fuller market. But the market in the UAE is hungry for better human resources practice. It is also an energetic market where people at all levels of management are beginning to support progressive human resources techniques.” Adds Fairley: “Within the UAE, more and more organisations are spending time and effort in the human resources area. The market is fresh here, and this adds to the enjoyment we get from working with our clients. Talking and getting to know what makes people tick is the essence of our job.”

It may surprise some Sydney-siders that the University of Wollongong (UoW) has a campus in the Arab Emirates. Rather unorthodoxly, the campus is situated on two floors of a building in Dubai. “We did not want to set ourselves up on a landscaped site and then discover we didn’t have students,” says its director Martin van Run. Van Run was sent to Dubai by his parent organisation in Illawarra with a brief to set up and develop an offshore teaching campus.

UoW, Dubai campus, offers five courses, from the under-graduate to the post-graduate levels and has 350 students on its rolls. “The UAE is a much smaller country than Australia and tertiary education is in its infancy here,” says van Run. He points out that the Emirates University in Al Ain (Abu Dhabi) is only 16 years old, and the Higher Colleges of Technology, which corresponds to TAFE colleges, are only a decade old. “It will take more time to develop higher education here,” he says. Meanwhile, van Run is liaising with the Ministry of Higher Education regarding a new campus.

Cathy Darnell sings at the Hotel Inter-Continental in Dubai. This small-built Aussie has a diploma in Jazz Studies from the NSW Conservatorium of Music, Sydney. She has figured in the Top Ten of the Australian Yamaha Awards. She calls her style “adult contemporary” while her fans say her musical style is a melting pot of soul, pop, blues and jazz. She had a band in Australia called “Gypsy Logic”. Her gypsy spirit is open to new influences: “There are so many (musical) influences here in the Emirates that you may not get in other parts of the world. In Australia, for instance, you may get them on TV screens, but not with the same immediacy as here.”

Gabrielle Amies opened the “Elements of Australia” (EoA) beauty salon in Dubai three years ago. Amies is from Brisbane. She first came up with the idea of an Aussie beauty shop because there were no Australian beauty salons in the Emirates. “I thought I would give it a go as the climate in Brisbane and Dubai is very similar.” EoA beauty products, whether oils or creams, are made from Australian herbs, plants, flowers and bush extracts. Chemicals are not used. Even the wax is sourced directly from Oz (Teatree Wax) and flown here. Amies averages 400 clients each month.

On a recent visit to the UAE, Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer put things in perspective. Though his focus was on trade, he presented the growing ties between the UAE and Australia impressively. “Pretty soon,” he said, “here in the UAE it will be possible to go from your room in a Rydges hotel, take an Australian-built Camry taxi to see a movie at a Greater Union Cinema, followed by a coffee in a Dome Café.”

(Muhammad Yusuf is a journalist with The Gulf Today)
Germaine Greer has thrown what she calls a boulder into the puddle of male female relationships with her book *The Whole Woman*. It’s all very timely, and disturbing. And very germane.

For Greer, the settings are still masculinist, equality a great sell out, women forced to adopt male norms with the divvy up of workplace spoils, promotions, careers and what might be possible in the private domain of home and family.

Feminists will disagree and quibble over the Greer thesis. Beatrice Faust told *ABC Lateline’s* Catherine Job that Greer has issued “one of the worst insults” to the women’s movement she’d heard in a long time. Faust emphasises the positives over 30 years; equal pay, role choices, equal opportunity, anti-discrimination commissions and a “new respect and new goals”. It’s a question of perspective.

Professor Judy Wajcman, however, in *Managing Like a Man* (Allen & Unwin 1998) agrees with much of what Greer is saying. Wajcman’s recent study made in Britain of managers in high-technology multinational companies boasting sophisticated equal opportunity policies concludes that “management is ... seen as intrinsically masculine, something only men (can) do. The very language of management is resolutely masculine. Organisations are then a crucial site for the ordering of gender, and for the establishment and preservation of male power.”

Fresh into the bookshops, Greer’s new tome on women’s continued oppression will ironically share shelf space with another volume raising shackles in the male-female debate. The autobiography of Margaret Cook, former wife of Britain’s Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, has the tongue-in-cheek title *A Slight and Delicate Creature*. There was nothing slight nor delicate about Margaret Cook’s life with her former husband. It confirms much of Greer.

Lend an ear to the message from the average modern politician and it’s one of family values, community
caring and shared responsibility. Meanwhile, women MPs are growing in number, the all-male culture of parliament and politics is assumed to be gradually slipping away. The truth, however, is more in line with Judy Wajcman’s discovery that management is as male as ever. In the Westminster system of government as in high tech industry. Just read Margaret Cook and find out why.

Margaret Cook’s autobiography is not so much a book of revenge, as claimed, but more an insider’s charting of how the parliamentary system rides roughshod over the private world of its participants. Private lives are expected to bend before parliamentary rituals more in keeping with a gentlemen’s club than a modern profession.

A newcomer to the writing game, Cook records her life like a naïf painter. She takes herself and her experiences seriously, whether studying for exams or buying horses or being splashed across the pages of newspapers as the “ex” of the Foreign Secretary. She’s an ordinary person in the spotlight. Details of her former husband, family holidays, riding competitions, working as a medical consultant, are sketched with equal interest.

Cook opens up on the chasm between the cosy parliamentary club and the private world behind. Former Conservative MP Edwina Currie is outraged by Cook’s going public. Currie, turned writer, prefers the parliamentary experience as juicy material for titillating and scandal fringed novels, her first titled A Parliamentary Affair.

Cook, on the other hand, is the shadowy figure of the MP’s other half, back in suburbia, among voters without which the member could not enjoy the freedom of Westminster. In 1997 Cook, married for some 30 years to Robin Cook and with two sons, was summarily informed her marriage was over. All this in an airport lounge as the Cooks were about to embark on their summer holidays.

They had had their rocky patches but Margaret Cook believed her marriage was into a positive phase after a post election reconciliation and a trip together to watch the handover of Hong Kong.

But, as they waited in the airport lounge, Robin Cook’s affair with his staffer Gayner Regan was about to hit The News of The World. The Foreign Secretary was instructed to clean up his messy private life. Tony Blair’s bright and shining new government could not afford scandals like the Cecil Parkinson affair where the mistress Sarah Keays was left abandoned. Robin Cook opted to leave Margaret. The saga of Margaret taking stock in the airport and finding her own way home to break the news to her family is about as crude as modern day politics gets.

Not that there has been much sympathy for Margaret Cook. The response to her autobiography has often exhibited a distaste for hearing the gory details. Regardless of how much they shed light on politicians’ indifference to practising what they preach - like family values and community caring - safe in their parliamentary ivory tower that cannot last. For Margaret Cook, so summarily dumped, had been an electoral asset for her husband. Her medical work in West Lothian in Edinburgh had “smoothed the way for him” giving him a safe seat that “would be his stepping stone to high office in future years”.

Margaret Cook provided the backstop an aspiring politician needed but she could never accept the role of appendage demanded of political wives. She avoided going to party conference with her husband where as she puts it “he was constantly engaged with speaking, contriving, scheming, so I would have been de trop”. But she did maintain her husband’s profile in the electorate. Even so, on successive election nights Cook never thanked his wife.

The publication of Margaret Cook’s auto-biography is a small milestone regardless of criticism from status quo supporters like Edwina Currie. Reviewing the book for The Sunday Times, Currie revealed herself firmly entrenched in the political ethos she once followed, with no time for a political spouse who let her husband roam. This in spite of the fact that Margaret Cook has her own career 400 miles from Westminster. For Currie, the wife must choose. She can’t have a career and a husband in London. Politics comes first, family and personal life a poor second.
“You can’t have both,” wrote Currie. “When after losing a debate or an election an exhausted MP returns to his weary bed, he needs an uncritical head on the pillow to talk to. If the spouse refuses point-blank to provide it, he will find somebody else.”

In other words, Margaret Cook had to cop political life as she found it. No room for change, no room for reform, no case for family friendly politics. Masculinist work order the only way to do it. All the more poignant for the fact that throughout the years as keeper of home and electorate fronts, Margaret Cook arranged the nannies as if she were a single parent, paid most of the bills and was pressured into mortgaging the family home so her husband could buy a London flat to which she never was given a key. Politics made no concessions. Echoes of Greer at every turn. Though, in answer to Greer, it isn’t only women who are beginning to question the ways of doing business parliamentary style.

Take Parliament House Canberra. Michelle Grattan, writing in The House on The Hill, records, “The parliamentarian can arrive to a hearty tax-subsidised breakfast; exercise in the well equipped gym, with a quick swim before his or her first committee meeting; book a room to entertain a visiting electorate group ... host a private function in one of the private dining rooms.” The same Parliament House does not have childcare facilities or hours that are family friendly. It’s a culture as remote as any London club to the nanny or the nursery.

A mood against parliament as club is growing. And not only with women MPs. In 1996 John Howard returned parliament to late night sittings. It’s macho to work long hours, hours generally regarded as family unfriendly. Politicians have little time to make contact with life outside parliament, to catch time with spouse or children, whatever. And the practice means MPs leave parliament close to midnight in sitting weeks leaving a worn beast to return to electorate and family for a weekend’s brief contact.

Liberal backbencher Petro Georgiou, no slouch, says, “On most nights during a parliamentary sitting week the house does not rise before 11 pm. When you consider that the day starts at 8 am it makes for a long and demanding day during which the member is required to be in the parliament almost all of the time.”

On day one 1999, new Labor MP Kelly Hoare put up a Private Members motion for the House of Representatives to consider returning to sittings more in tune with regular office hour; ie sittings until 8pm on Mondays and Tuesdays as on Wednesdays.

Hoare’s motion was supported by Labor’s Craig Emerson, Kirsten Livermore and Bob Horne and the Liberals’ Barry Wakelin. They noted that among the reasons often argued for late night sittings is that members would miss the camaraderie of the parliamentary dinner hour in the members dining room.

There’s still no word from the prime minister on what action might follow Hoare’s motion. But the growing numbers of younger MPs, especially women, and those with a more modern approach to family lifestyles mean traditional perspectives can’t last.

John Howard may have just installed chesterfield club style lounges in his office. But they look out of place against its modern décor. They won’t last. They’ll be replaced. Likewise, with a little more anger from the likes of Germaine Greer, out-of-date parliamentary cultures must surely be also replaced. Just ask Margaret Cook.

(Anne Henderson is Deputy Director of The Sydney Institute)

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SOCIAL POLICY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
JUSTICE AND RESPONSIBILITY
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UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES
John McConnell

INTIMATE UNION: SHARING A REVOLUTIONARY LIFE
An autobiography by Tom and Audrey McDonald
Pluto Press, pb, 1998, rrp $24.95
ISBN 1 86403 058 5

Intimate Union: Sharing a Revolutionary Life is the story of two people whose lives derived meaning from their common faith in Marxism. Still do. The book’s title says it all. Tom and Audrey McDonald reflect on their working and family lives and how they were anchored in a common commitment to communism, and the labour movement. The book contains a foreword by Jennie George, and two dozen pages of photographs. Intimate Union: Sharing a Revolutionary Life is divided into eight chronological parts. Tom and Audrey McDonald both make a personal contribution to each part. This adds interest to the retelling. There is a pronounced gender distinction apparent to observations and emphases. Continuity is aided by the chosen sequence. Whoever writes second in one part begins the subsequent section. This is a structure that succeeds.

Tom and Audrey McDonald initially recount their childhood years. Tom McDonald grew up in working class Glebe. Audrey’s family struggled to survive on a farm near Tenterfield. Both Tom and Audrey enjoyed very close relationships with their fathers. Both had a degree of involvement in the Catholic Church in their early years. However, Catholicism played a very minor role in their lives. Communism captured their commitment. The Communist Party channeled their undoubted energies.

It was a dedicated lifestyle, notes Audrey McDonald. The party, she says, was the common thread in their relationship. It was a relationship that received frequent ideological reinforcement - via party courses and campaigns, fellow comrades/friends, trips to communist countries and to socialist conferences, as well as training courses in Marxist philosophy in the Soviet Union.

Not much detail is provided about the nature of the Soviet-based training. It was usual, Audrey McDonald comments, for Australians en route to Moscow to pay for their fare to Singapore; the Soviets took care of the rest. Comrades and colleagues appear throughout the book’s pages, as key industrial and political issues and campaigns are recalled. Audrey McDonald devoted her working life to the Union of Australian Women (UAW). For 41 years, Tom McDonald worked for the Building Workers Industrial Union (BWIU), rising to National Secretary. He also became a Vice President of the ACTU.

Pat Clancy was one who exerted a profound influence on the couple, but particularly on Tom McDonald. Later, Clancy, both McDonalds and others were to found the Socialist Party of Australia. Jack Mundey - of CPA and “green bans” fame - portrayed Tom McDonald as a Clancy “yes man”. This appears to have some foundation. Clearly, respect shaded into submission at times.

However, both McDonalds express uneasiness over Clancy’s authoritarian way of doing things. Perhaps Tom McDonald is susceptible to friends expressing strong convictions. When Bill Kelly spoke critically to him on one occasion, McDonald recounts that it was as if Mike Tyson had smacked him on the jaw.

The book provides extensive coverage of the ugly
clash with Norm Gallagher’s BLF. Tom McDonald also expresses distaste for tactics employed by opponents on the right. He refers to their “bastardry”, and how they voted like “puppets”. But he freely acknowledges that Communist Party discipline enabled comrades to achieve results far in excess of what could be imagined based on membership. And when the Party arranges for his election to leadership of a delegation where he is not well known, he defers to the party’s “wisdom” – and reports glowingly that the party certainly knew how to organise. Tom McDonald now regrets the centralisation of power and command characteristically exercised by ruling cliques within communist parties.

Tom and Audrey reached the closing chapter of their official working lives around the time that the Soviet Union was disintegrating. Events have forced them to question their beliefs. Where do these reflections lead? The answer is to an undiminished faith in Marxism. The Marxist interpretation continues to represent their vision of their ideal society. To Audrey McDonald, the Communist Manifesto is as relevant today as it was 150 years ago. This despite the flaws in the Marxist view of human nature, and the abuses that occurred in the Soviet Union and elsewhere in the name of communism. But they do regret Stalinism.

Has the left anything to apologise for? The left, says Tom McDonald, should apologise for defending Stalinism and for defending Soviet nuclear power. He regrets that he did not condemn Stalinism earlier than he did. Both admit that loyalty to the former Soviet Union led them into a too ready acceptance of Moscow’s line. They gave excessive loyalty to the Soviet Union and to the interpretation of events generated by the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

It is clear that for much of his working life, Tom McDonald had failed to resolve in his own mind precisely where his primary loyalty should lie. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the absence of a united communist movement represent massive blows to them both. They express admiration for Mikhail Gorbachev, and regret that he did not arrive earlier on the Soviet scene. In the final analysis, they both conclude that the communist movement enriched their lives. They are delighted that their son, Daren, has followed in the same general direction as themselves, with his commitment to the labour movement.

The Communist Party, Tom McDonald says, “was a church of true believers who held the view that socialism could create a near perfect world.” And the party was the “heart” of the left. Such is the nature of the vision shared in the McDonald family. Truly, for the McDonalds, it was a way of life.

Heroes In Our Eyes
By Les Carlyon
Information Australia, pb, 1998, rrp $24.95
ISBN 1 86350 246 7

Heroes In Our Eyes is a short collection (just over 100 pages) of newspaper articles by Les Carlyon. Les Carlyon wrote for The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age for more than 30 years. He is a winner of the Walkley Award, the Graham Perkin Australian journalist-of-the-year Award and the Carlton and United Best Australian Sports Writing Award. The articles in Heroes In Our Eyes were published in the press during the 1990s. The collection includes pieces on Don Bradman, Bart Cummings, Patrick White, Geoffrey Blainey, Muhammad Ali, Bob Santamaria, Ted Whitten, T.J.Smith and Princess Diana. It is an interesting grouping. The initial chapter addresses the nature of modern fame. Les Carlyon is prodding at the distinction between hero and celebrity. Many journalists are quick to bestow a “hero” label, particularly where sport or rescues are involved. Sometimes, the recipients are more notable for what they lack.

Maturity comes to mind. Sometimes, those so labelled are the real thing. Les Carlyon enjoys writing about people that admires, and teasing out their
values. And yet, true heroes, he believes, are hostile to analysis.

Mostly, his portraits in *Heroes In Our Eyes* are sympathetic. One article captures the essence of Ted Whitten - “the larriken hero”. Ted Whitten – an Australian football legend known for being fearless and ruthless on the field - died a few years ago from prostate problems. While undergoing treatment in hospital, Whitten was asked by the man in the next bed: “W-w-w-what are you in h-h-h-here for?” “Because I pee like you talk,” Whitten replied.

The article on Bob Santamaria - “The prince of lost causes” - was written in a cab following the funeral. Les Carlyon had just left the gothic splendor of Melbourne’s St. Patrick’s Cathedral, a cardinal and a dozen bishops, close to two hundred priests, the prime minister, the premier, the state governor, the lord mayor, a former PM, a former governor-general, and 2000 mourners. “What would Bob Santamaria,” he asks, “have made of all this?”

In another article, the author reflects on an Anzac dawn service. Anzac Day, he says, is an affair of the Australian heart. It is special. Unlike Australia Day. Australia Day fails to capture the public imagination. Perhaps, he says, we are trying to work out who we are as we celebrate a day that marks the arrival of the first fleet. While Anzac Day is different. We know the answer on Anzac Day - and feel happy about it.

The focus shifts to Gallipoli in the following article. “Dead Men Do Tell Tales: A Walk Around Gallipoli” is very moving. “Did the British”, Les Carlyon asks, “think all they had to do was land and watch the Turks flee?” Noting that the Australians were all volunteers, he writes: “It may be that on Gallipoli and in France we lost the most generous spirits of a generation.” Elsewhere, the author calls Australia a quirky country. Think of our heroes he says - Les Darcy, Ned Kelly, Phar Lap, Gallipoli and so on. We like gritty failures and folk heroes, he suggests. Bradman is a possible exception. *Heroes In Our Eyes* is easy to read. But don’t be surprised if one or two - or more - of the articles move you into reflective mode sometime later.

(John McConnell is the co-author of several senior textbooks)
aficionados of factional brawling in the branch meeting aisles.

Sadly none of them are great political biographies to rival the likes of Robert Caro on Lyndon Baines Johnson or Ben Pimlott on Hugh Dalton and Harold Wilson.

Nor can they be. Lives of the living, men and women whose papers are not yet open to archival research, whose behaviour is fresh in the memory, whose careers are still open to partisan interpretation, are not the stuff of reflective scholarship. And often the test of time they do not stand is very brief indeed. David Leser's perfectly well written biography of Bronwyn Bishop was barely published before the ridiculous touting of its subject as Liberal leader-in-waiting collapsed under the weight of its own absurdity.

Perhaps all can be forgiven for politicians who are at the end of their career but for those still on the public stage, any life is at best a work in progress or at worst an over-blown magazine feature taking 100,000 words to cover material which merited one twentieth the space.

The mid career biography has great questions to answer if it is to be anything other than a colour supplement piece tricked out as a $40 hardback. Will fortune smile on the subject, at least long enough for the first edition to sell out? Is the subject just too ordinary to interest even the 5000 or so tragics who will buy absolutely anything published on politics? Will the subject's mates and hopefully their enemies recount droll tales and reveal long hidden Kirribilli conversations? How tough will the author be with somebody they have come to know and like and who in turn perhaps trusts them to be kind?

Two recent biographies of Labor leaders demonstrate the perils of the journalist as biographer of mid career public figures, Brad Norington's Jennie George (Allen and Unwin) and Peter FitzSimons' Beazley (Harper Collins).

Norington's is not one of the greatest biographies of our time. Whether this is due to his subject's life not making for riveting reading or because he is unable to capture in prose the self-sacrificing commitment of a great political thinker and activist is for George's hundreds of thousands rusted on admirers to judge.

Certainly she does not emerge from the book as anything other than an entirely admirable union leader with occasional parliamentary aspirations.

Norington had a difficult task. Jennie George's life as
the child of postwar migrants, the evolution of her fascination with popular music into a devotion to the most profound works of Helen Reddy and her union career does not engross. Norington is no Boswell but then again George is probably no Johnson.

It is not for want of trying. There is much in the book on Jennie George's unremarkable if complex personal life ranging from the desperately sad tale of her husband's early death to her difficulties with partners not consistently sympathetic to her life style and temperament.

Certainly Norington does his best to place Jennie George in the context of her times and this may well be the book's lasting achievement. Social historians in generations to come may turn to Norington for an insight into the milieu of feminism and leftwing activism of that unhappy generation which reached the peak of its influence on political thought in the 1970s.

Norington also charts George's rise through the union movement, summarising a career which appears consistently successful. Yet the book seems thin on the details of the fights in which Jennie George played important roles. It is too early for Norington to write the complete story of the 1998 MUA dispute. However, the coverage of more distant battles, against Terry Metherell, Martin Ferguson and Kim Carr, does little more than provide a summary of events and a judgement, which is generally supportive of George but equally eager to be fair to her opponents.

Only rarely does Norington fail to find a generous interpretation of George's behaviour. To his credit, on the rare occasions when he does state a critical case, such as on Jennie George's interest in entering federal parliament, his commentary is not partisan. But the overall sense of the book is that Norington does not want to burn his subject, at least not too badly. Thus his treatment of the infamous 1996 parliament riot focuses on the personal burden it imposed on George rather than the political impact and implications of one of the union movement's greatest public relations catastrophes.

There may be elements of the book which make Jennie George uncomfortable, all the more so because Norington works hard to be balanced in his judgements. If anything, he errs on the side of generosity. His critical judgements are generally tempered by references to the stresses of George's busy life and her innate insecurity.

The book's greatest failing is the lack of an intellectual dimension. Jennie George is a member of the left's triumphant generation. She is one of those who opposed Vietnam and whose anti-market values seized the populist high ground in Australian politics, commanding heights they have yet to relinquish. Yet there is no sense of George's intellectual progress, what she read, what she wrote, how the bankruptcy of Marxism re-shaped the paradigm by which she lived her life in politics.

On balance, Norington, in trying to create a biography from an admirable, if far from remarkable, career not yet fully lived, has fallen unhappily between two stools. The book is too early to be a complete endorsed life but too sympathetic and too closely engaged with its subject to be an absolutely dispassionate judgement on a career with years yet to run.

The reviewers were ambivalent in their treatment of Norington but most commendably focused on the book rather than its subject. Simon Hughes (Australian Financial Review Magazine 29 January) was an exception:

You have to wonder though, whether someone who draws inspiration from Elton John and Helen Reddy is really the kind of subject the reader of biographies can relish.

There were of course the usual writers who confuse reviewing a book with summarising it. Mary Philip, (Courier Mail, 19 December) used most of her space to do just that. Given the breathless judgements she did offer, this was probably for the best: "The reader never feels bogged down in union history and issues because running alongside these is the living breathing George."

Running is easier when you breathe.

Anne Summers (The Age, 16 January) incidentally discussed Norington's book while happily prattling about George's achievements and how tough it must have been for her. In fact the emphasis on achievement rather than personality is the only failing which Summers pointed to in Norington's book:

I would have liked a little more insight into how hard it has been for George at a personal level, she is often the only woman at the table and becomes the scapegoat when things go wrong.

In contrast, Christine Wallace focused on what Norington wrote. As an accomplished biographer, Wallace knows how difficult it is to write the life of a tough minded woman (Sydney Morning Herald, 23
January) and it showed in an excellent review. Wallace argued that George's was a tale worth telling and that Norington had done a credible job:

This is an ample rationale for the book, and Norington charts George's systematic rise without holding back on the inconvenient details and episodes which could detract from the gloss.

In a remark which may allude to her own experience with a biographical subject, Wallace commended both Norington for including details on George's private life and George for talking to him:

George is to be commended for co-operating with this unauthorised biography rather than constraining it, since flawless marble statues are useless role models for those coming in her wake.

Nicholas Way was less generous and argued that at best Norington had paved the way for, "a more definitive" work, (The Australian 2 January). It was a tough judgement given that while George continues to be active in politics nothing written about her will be definitive. It was also a curious judgement in that Way acknowledged that Norington could not be final:

...this is the price he pays for writing while George is still in office as ACTU president when too few colleagues (and enemies for that matter) have been prepared to really explain what makes this woman tick.

Way's demand that Norington achieve the impossible was far less interesting than his criticism that the book never explained how a woman whose family were refugees from Stalin ever ended up on the Communist inspired left.

It was left to Michael Easson (Australian Financial Review, 20 November) to elaborate on the other reviewers' criticisms and then add a few of his own in a definitive bucket job. Norington has expressed the view that Easson dislikes him (Australian Financial Review, 24 November). In an unpublished reply to the AFR (26 November), Easson stated that "he holds no animosity against Mr Norington" and that his review was "objective and fair". Certainly it was a tough, in parts mean spirited, review, with a lead which said it all: "Norington's inelegant and frequently dull rendition of Jennie George's life cannot obscure her overall achievements."

There was much more of the same: "readers interested in a deep discussion of ideas and issues will be disappointed in this book." And "the author fails to assimilate this material in an interesting or thoughtful way."

But among the sniping, Easson made the only credible hostile case against the biography. He argued that Norington ignored the intellectual context and motivations that shaped his subject's politics and claimed that the book's treatment of George's key union battles, against Terry Metherell and CRA Rio Tinto, was inadequate.

However he also suggested there was too much on George's private life which bordered on the "salacious". To argue that a biography should not discuss the whole person requires a stronger case than this Easson jibe.

Most importantly, Easson suggested that Norington strove to be comprehensive but failed analytically and in consequence the book did not explain Jenny George at all:

Primarily because so much is regurgitated and not explored, the overall picture is of an enigma. ... Just how good is she? Does George entertain radical ideas? Has she become too conservative in defending union orthodoxy? ... This is not a book where we'll find the answers.

A harsh review, but one with an entirely defensible argument.
Peter FitzSimons' life of Kim Beazley suffers from the same problems that confront Norington; a subject whose career is far from over and the need to be both critical and sympathetic. The challenge for FitzSimons was probably the more daunting. Norington maintains some detachment from his subject but FitzSimons obviously thinks that Kim Beazley is a pretty good bloke. In these circumstances, to create a book which does not degenerate into blind praise was a hard task. It was one that FitzSimons completed admirably. The book works so well because its subject tells a good yarn and its author has the knack of catching much of the meaning behind the story.

It is certainly an engaging and entertaining book, which tells the tale of Beazley and his family like characters in a Tim Winton novel where the ordinary only thinly covers the fabulous. The book presents the life of one ordinary bloke by an ordinary bloke written for ordinary blokes of both genders naturally. The fact that author and subject are both such high achievers says a lot about them as individuals and hopefully about the culture that shaped them.

But critical it is not. It tells the tale of Beazley's life pretty much from his own view and those who love and admire him. Given that Kim Christian Beazley is a remarkably well liked man - an extraordinarily well liked man for somebody who has spent his working life in the political bear pit - this is probably understandable. FitzSimons kept his nerve and did not search out critics for the sake of it.

But there is no analysis of Beazley's character and the forces that have shaped him. In this sense, the book is a mere chronicle of a pilgrim's progress. It speaks for FitzSimons' engaging style and the sheer good nature of the subject that readers can suspend their critical faculties in reading about some of Beazley's more extraordinary doings.

A young man completes school and goes off to India as part of a Moral Rearmament (don't look to the biography for anything more than the sketchiest background on this now obscure sect) evangelical song and dance troop in the middle 1960s. In the swinging 1960s! What this says about Beazley, apart from his undoubted Christian charity, is not explored by FitzSimons.

It is as if FitzSimons decided to put off-limits the way Beazley's values and personality have shaped painful aspects of his life. There is very little on the reasons that caused his first marriage to fail, the way he interacts with women, and the price the brutality of politics, particularly the Keating challenges, must impose on an individual who can be described without irony as a Christian gentleman.

There is a great deal about the decisions Kim Beazley has made and the reasons for them but not enough about the spiritual struggles making them must entail. How a card-carrying pessimist masters the sheer psychological energy to fight on and on is one of the many obvious questions which FitzSimons does not convincingly answer.

This is not an authorised biography and undoubtedly includes material which Beazley may not enjoy seeing in print. But the absence of a critical analysis of his character and the way it shapes the bad, as well as positive decisions he has made, limits it from being the absolutely extraordinary book it could have been.

The same problem applies to Beazley's intellectual life. FitzSimons' subject is one of the few policy wonks, one of a handful of intellectuals in the Labor governments, that transformed the Australian economy and the way the country interacts with the world. But you don't learn much about his thinking here.

Certainly some of the major policy fights of Beazley's career are covered in detail. Some, such as
the MX missile debacle of 1985, in greater detail than necessary. But overall there is no comprehensive discussion of Beazley as policy thinker. For a biography of a one-time academic, the books and thinkers that Beazley draws on do not rate much of a mention.

In one of the few overt statements of his political philosophy Beazley is quoted as saying that proper policies are those that maximise Australia's strengths in a hostile world (p 439). As a Realpolitik homily this is as good as any other, but does rather avoid the question of what sort of Australia he wants to defend. FitzSimons' Beazley appears as yet another of the great Labor pragmatists, not overly interested in the vision thing. For a biography of one of the few accepted intellectuals in politics, this level of discussion is inadequate.

That the book is so entertaining, even with such a major limitation, demonstrates what an engaging writer FitzSimons is. Sadly many of the reviewers were less concerned with the book than with their own opinions and produced a mediocre collection of notices.

Wayne Crawford (Sunday Tasmanian, 8 September) gutted the book for anecdotes and examples of points he wished to make without offering anything approaching a coherent judgement on FitzSimons' writing.

Nick Richardson's (Herald Sun, 22 August) brief notice took 350 words of general chat about Beazley to decide that the biography was a "a solid and well researched piece of journalism". Perhaps calling it journalism was not meant as a compliment.

In a joint review with John Button's memoirs, Andrew Clark (The Age, 8 August) spent far more time summarising the book than he did analysing its strengths and weaknesses and offered a judgement on Beazley, not the book:

The impression gained from FitzSimons' book is of a man who is extremely intelligent, widely read, eccentric, decent, a shrewd judge of character and most important, someone who has grown in all the jobs he has held.

Of the more analytically substantial treatments, Joe Rich (Australian Book Review, November 1998) was full of teacherly if patronising praise, "his innate qualities are sensitively explored", his "political career is lucidly outlined", "effective use is also made..." Rich made some tough points. In particular,
he argued that FitzSimons did not critically focus on Beazley's more gung ho defence policy stances:

I was particularly disappointed with the lack of dispassionate analytical discussion of the uneasiness felt by some Labor colleagues with aspects of Beazley's defence policy. ... Beazley's rejoinders are given but no objective effort is made to evaluate the charges.

But buried among all the unremarkable praise and criticism Rich included a very curious statement indeed:

The account benefits from FitzSimons' flair for evoking ambience by picking out the ordinary, commonplace detail, comprising the background of the action - the physical surroundings, the posturing as tensions mounted in various power struggles, the body language of participants (such as Beazley slumping back on learning of the start of the Gulf War) and their idiosyncrasies. However, this can also be a weakness, plausibility being undermined by the author's penchant for quoting verbatim, inconsequential conversations that are unlikely to have been recorded at the time.

Whose memory does Rich doubt? If he had any evidence to support this unexplained change it would have been best for him to explain it, and very carefully.

It was left to two senior political reporters, Christine Wallace (Sydney Morning Herald, 15 August) and Mike Steketee (Australian, 15 August) to provide the only compelling analyses of FitzSimons but which, certainly in Wallace's case, demonstrated just how transitory are the judgements of even the best journalists.

Wallace began by suggesting that FitzSimons demonstrated a rare judgement in selecting a subject who was surprisingly close to becoming prime minister. Six months down the track and this suggestion is far more unlikely than she could have ever guessed.

But one bad judgement does not make a poor review and Wallace went on to make some acute points. Not least was her rueful admission that it took sportswriter FitzSimons to understand what the tactics-focused political writers had missed:

Beazley is so much part of the furniture of Australian politics that it is easy to take him for granted. ...Herald journalist Peter FitzSimons had the wit to take a close look and rewards readers with a surprisingly good yarn, well paced and satisfying to the end. Unfortunately, it has taken a sports commentator like him to remind all of us professional political observers that shedding light on the subject is as important as looking for the hidden nasties when turning over the rocks of a politician's life.

Curiously, she then went on to contradict herself by pointing to FitzSimons' one deficiency, "he is not of politics or political journalism" before concluding that this probably was a good thing, as, "derailment due to insider obsessions is an inherent danger in political biography".

The last third of the review, written in the advancing shadow of an election, sought to answer Wallace's own rhetorical question, was Beazley wasn't tough enough:

One does not have to accept FitzSimons' judgement to conclude that the answer is a resounding no. The character that emerges from the rich lode of Beazley letters and diary entries quoted at length is iron-clad in its resolve, deep in its passions and thoroughly strategic in method.

Which all goes to make Wallace's point that for political writers there is nothing much else worth writing about.

Mike Stekete (Australian 15 August) made many of the same points in an excellent review, which also demonstrated that insider's obsession with politics as the only game in town which Wallace could not resist. Thus Stekete decided that it was a good thing that a leader of the opposition merited a biography, particularly that its author was a sportswriter not a political journalist:

This is all for the good, particularly when so much of Australians' knowledge of the people they vote for or against is scant and superficial. The field of writers has broadened, too, beyond historians, political scientists and political journalists. FitzSimons ... has tackled his new field with relish and considerable skill.

What Stekete admired was FitzSimons' ability to humanise his subject:
The great value of his biography is its insights into the Beazley personality. ...this the book serves as an antidote to the relentlessly negative portrayal of politicians in the media which is threatening to make the political process dysfunctional.

But Stekete could not escape the shadow of the gallery and joined Wallace in criticising FitzSimons for his lack of tradecraft:

He misses some of the political nuances and is not sceptical enough about the stories spun to him by politicians. ... Neither does FitzSimons always master the policy detail. This may come as a relief to many readers but it detracts from a comprehensive analysis of Beazley’s ministerial record and a judgement of how good a prime minister he would make.

Stekete was more fortunate with his political pronouncements than Wallace. Six months after the review appeared, what may be muffled murmurings in the corridors of opposition about the quality of Beazley's leadership validate the review's conclusion:

His colleagues are quoted testifying to his toughness but enough doubts have been raised by his chronic pessimism, his lesser-than-driven ambition, his shirking from confrontation and his tendency towards cautious decision-making to leave the question open. Not that every Labor leader has to be like Paul Keating. But don’t expect a prime minister Beazley to be a firebrand Labor reformer.

A judgement which had everything to do with day-to-day politics and very little with the long view of a biographer.

Which, as Norington and FitzSimons probably already knew, is an occupational hazard for those whose finely crafted judgements on people in public life can be rendered irrelevant or obsolete by tomorrow's headlines.

LABOR'S OPEN AUSTRALIA

Timing is everything in politics and Lindsay Tanner's new policy polemic, Open Australia (Pluto Press), is very much the right boom at the right time. As the ALP begins to demonstrate it understands that it is not enough to distinguish itself from John...
Howard and Paul Keating, Tanner has produced a carefully constructed argument that, whatever the left may think, Australia cannot turn its back on the global economy.

Mark Latham argued much the same case, albeit in a far more cumbersome and didactic form, last winter in his *Civilising Global Capitalism*. It was a book the media elite adored but the party, with an election to fight and the black shadow of Hansonism looming large, was in no mood for calls for detailed policy debates.

“A Tanner believes that a wise and caring public sector is the surest way to provide for equity ... [he] argues that the left must work for a social contract between the individual and society.”

A year on and the mood in the ALP is for something new. While the dread name of Keating is still only mentioned in hushed tones, the reformist tradition in Labor thinking he did so much to foster is gradually being reasserted. Lindsay Tanner's book will do a great deal to continue the process.

Despite the Bourbon-left critics who still can't understand why Labor should not nationalise the banks and who abhor most of what he argues for, Tanner remains a man of the left, emotionally if not analytically.

Thus Tanner nails his tribal colours to the mask of ancient ideology to explain why the ALP should remain true to the sacred text of the old socialist objective:

*(it is) an important part of Labor's soul, its commitment to timeless values of social equity and community ... Our task is to write the New Testament, not destroy the old. (p 99)*

But having got that out of the way Tanner focuses on the main task; of demonstrating to the old Whitlamite coalition of public sector unions, the academy and a handful of ageing journalist defenders of middle class welfare, that there is no alternative for both nation and party to continuing down the path of economic reform.

Tanner has much to say about the need for political change in all sorts of policy areas, employment, information technology, the environment and social welfare and, in his most important argument, a new role for government in the information age global economy.

According to Tanner, the traditional choice between instrumentalist big government and an untrammelled market, "gangster capitalism like that now engulfing Russia" (p 96) cannot produce just society.

The role for Labor governments now is to find new ways of pursing social justice goals:

*Rapidly increasing economic sophistication and diversity have undermined the efficacy of public ownership as a mean of achieving social equity and economic efficiency objectives. (p 101)*

But as Tanner believes that a wise and caring public sector is the surest way to provide for equity he has to find a role for a large, well-resourced public sector. The answer he offers is not the much vaunted third way, which Tanner dismisses as "vacuous pragmatism". (p 52) In the strongest piece of ideological writing in the book, Tanner argues that the day of seizing bits of both old left and right agendas and dressing it up as a centrist philosophy is nothing more than a hybrid of two failed ideologies.

In its place Tanner argues that the left must work for a social contract between the individual and society that requires us all to participate in the life of our communities to the best of our ability. The job of government is to provide individuals with the resources they need to make the best practical contribution to society they can.

It is the only section of the book where Tanner is heavier on convoluted rhetoric than he is on ideas addressing specific problems:

*Labour requires a new community philosophy which is universal rather than class-based, and is both collective, incorporating social frameworks of equity, security and community, as well as individual, providing for personal freedom, opportunity and prosperity. (p98)*

This idea of an obligation on both individual and government to make participation possible dominates much of Tanner's thinking and he explores much of the contemporary policy agenda, tax, welfare, education in this context. While his
writing is not as prescriptive as Latham’s and there is much in the policy detail they disagree on, their broad direction is much the same.

What is particularly interesting is their shared social conservatism. Both emphasise family responsibility and Tanner, in particular, specifically rejects the "sixties revolution" with its emphasis on individual freedom to which he attributes a putative unravelling of the social fabric. Not least of the problems caused by rock 'n' roll, the decline in family values, etc are low self esteem and "the increasing prevalence of random massacres by lone gunmen". (p44)

Tanner is far too clever to argue that all the problems of the world can be addressed by the state. However he certainly argues that there is a role for government as facilitator, "negotiating and persuading, rather than instructing and forbidding". (p 103)

It is an attractive idea for the left, particularly anybody who grew up in the shadow of Whitlam where the impact for good of a tertiary educated policy elite shaping the nation via the public service was unchallenged writ.

But for everybody who has watched the fallible, fumbling, Byzantine bureaucracies forced on us by our federal system, the prospect of state and national public services combining to run innovative programs requires a great leap of optimism.

The Tanner vision focuses on the end for social justice, the problem is that it relies on the social service equivalents of the industry assistance plans of the early 1980s when it was assumed that government policy expertise would save industries the private sector could not. Many Labor loyalists will wish it was possible while knowing in their hearts that it is probably not.

Despite its conceptual flaws, Tanner has made an enormously important contribution to the debate the Labor Party must have on its own and the nation's future. That Tanner focuses on practical problems and politically possible solutions demonstrates the intellectual resilience of the ALP, at least that part of it that rejects the immutable dogmas of the unbending left.

When Albert Metin wrote Socialisme Sans Doctrines a century ago, he marvelled at an Australian labour movement focused on providing a better standard of living for its members that did not have much recourse to universal theoretical structures. Lindsay Tanner continues to do exactly that in a book written by a genuine public intellectual.

The government took great delight in making fun of Mark Latham and Lindsay Tanner when their books appeared, which probably says more about the men and women on the Treasury benches than it does about the two authors.

And it certainly gives Lindsay Tanner a free kick for his extravagant claim that only Labor does the thinking in Australian politics: "Labor is the positive force in Australian politics. Almost always the task of initiating, leading debate, of confronting challenges falls to the Labor Party." (p 9)

It wasn’t true in the last term but, with the intellectual leadership of Tanner and Mark Latham showing the way, perhaps it will be in this one.
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Kim Beazley

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LA MANNE – MANY COLUMNS, FEW TOPICS

It’s just over a year since B. A. (call me Bob) Santamaria died. For more than two decades he wrote a weekly column for *The Weekend Australian*. Initially it contained some spark. However, during the last decade of his life, Bob Santamaria really had only one topic. Week after week BAS bemoaned the condition of Western economies and predicted decline, recession, even depression. And, occasionally, he would point to the (alleged) deterioration of family life as a further manifestation of the DECLINE AND FALL OF THE WEST.

To objective analysts, BAS earned the status of a failed prophet. Yet extant members of the Santamaria Fan Club know that BAS was so far ahead of his time that, even a year after his death, many Santamaria prophecies have yet to be fulfilled. In this view, there is no such thing as a failed prophecy; it’s just a matter of being patient.

For a while, no one stepped forward to pull on a social conservative guernsey for *The Weekend Australian*. Then on 4 July 1998 Anne Manne appeared. In the days when she contributed to *Quadrant*, La Manne was described as a Melbourne based writer. So far, this writer has not written any books. But according to reports, Anne Manne’s long-promised opus magnum (or, perhaps, magnum opus) will be published. Soon. Perhaps sometime. Maybe next century.

As it turned out, La Manne fitted a gap left in *The Weekend Australian’s* Focus pages by B.A. Santamaria’s death. Except that she wrote fortnightly rather than weekly. Like BAS, Anne Manne really has only one topic. She (fortnightly) bemoans the plight of one-income traditional families as a manifestation of the DECLINE AND FALL OF THE WEST. And, occasionally, she points to the (alleged) deterioration of Western economies.

- **4 July 1998.** Anne Manne regrets the division emerging between "stay-at-home" and "working" mothers. However she adds that "a cool headed but respectful discussion – by those such as me who have raised tough questions about the experience of institutional care for children, and those who disagree – is essential". This was a confident start. The message to the editor of *The Weekend Australian* was clear – i.e. "I'm here and it's essential to keep me on". Or something like that.

- **18 July 1998.** The whole column is directed to analysing the ABC TV soapie *Seachange* – and its implications for family life. It ends with the question "Why?". Why?

- **1 August 1998.** Anne Manne discovers an "unexpected division between elites and ordinary people". As someone who's "outside the particular fast lane that is the dual-career couple", she is not one of the elite. Apparently. Moreover La Manne declares that "elites sometimes display a patronising, even coercive, attitude to those who do not conform to the elite pattern".

- **15 August 1998.** *The Weekend Australian’s* fortnightly anti-elitist columnist goes on (and on) about her problem doing the banking as part of a non dual-career couple. There are two references to what a person described only as "my other half" thinks about this. Anne Manne then reports two phone conversations with a "Sydney telephone operative, Rachel". The Melbourne based Anne Manne cites Rachel as referring to "youse people down there". In case the reader missed the point, it is repeated. Rachel is quoted as declaring: "Youse people are just going to have to use trial and error". Can this be the same Anne Manne who is opposed to elitist and patronising gestures. As the columnist herself records: "It was all getting decidedly Kafkaesque".

- **29 August 1998.** You’ve guessed it. Anne Manne returns to an already well-worn topic. She claims that "to suggest that mothers at home do not have a life is, of course, deeply offensive". Quite so. She adds that "the real explanation for the stigma against women at home is the reality of consumer capitalism". Shades of BAS in his anti-capitalist mode.

- **12 September 1998.** Same writer. Same topic. La Manne rails against those who insist that "the direction of women’s history is an uncomplicated story of the long march out of the home into the paid workforce" and accept the "assumption" that "this inexorably means for infants a long toddle out of home and into the creche".

- **26 September 1998.** It’s (even) more of the same. Only this fortnight around, AM feels confident...
enough to declare that "Australian women are a diverse group". Good point, to be sure. There "are traditional women such as Janette Howard". And "there are postmodern women, more like Cheryl Kernot...". Really. Ms Kernot receives special praise for "posing in frock and feathers for the Women's Weekly...". Apparently, such behaviour is an assertion of post-modernism in practice. Really.

- 10 October 1998. The Weekend Australian's writer observes how children "flourish in and are nourished by the gentle amble of time". This leads to a reflection that: "In a world where increasingly both parents work, rather than work practices adapting to the needs of children, children must also ‘work’ a 10 hour day." The writer expresses regret "that some children's schedules are so busy as to abolish time to play or potter". This suggests that the lights are shining on sand-pits all over Australia. Shucks.


- 7 November 1998. It's back to familiar territory – as in parenting and the fate of mothers who care for their children at home. The "child who does not exist for its parents becomes the adult for whom others do not exist!". Get it? It's as simple as that.

- 21 November 1998. AM opines: "Among many highly educated elite women, strong incentives to maximise market work and minimise unpaid domestic work have seen the emergence of 'collaborative marriage', based not on different sex roles but on the expectation that both parents will work and share domestic labour". However men are reluctant "to do more than pay lip service to this idea". So as "well-educated women do better economically, they partner less". Then the reader is told that this is "not news". Alas. The reader is also advised that "life is too short to convert true believers". Pity about that.

- 5 December 1998. La Manne reflects at length after spending some hours at a fitness centre. She has two thoughts to pass on to Weekend Australian readers. First, "marriage is fragile and relationships have a permanent temporariness, cancelled at a moment's notice!". Second, "the breast is no longer a symbol...of fertility but eros". Oh for the days when men and women alike admired Josephine Baker's fertility symbols.

- 2 January 1998. La Manne reports: "My irritation crystallised as I drove for Christmas to my childhood country town". It turns out that her home town is now more "diverse, tolerant and sophisticated". But that's not good enough. There are drugs, unemployment and family breakdown. Moreover "sophisticated acceptance of sexual freedom is as much connected to the coolness of indifference as the warmth of inclusion". Apparently all was different in Anne Manne's day.

- 16 January 1998. It's back to motherhood. Again. La Manne speaks out against the "career caesarian: where a woman is unzipped, then bounces back to work". There is a suggestion that African village women have a happier introduction into parenthood than their Western counterparts. Tell that to African village women.

- 30 January 1998. La Manne struggles to find a theme in a generalised discourse on, yes, parenting.

- 13 February 1998. The pace has not picked up from last time. Anne Manne asks: "Are adults to get progress while children, who cannot speak for themselves, get backsliding into the past?" The Weekend Australian advises: "Anne Manne's column will appear monthly whole she completes her forthcoming book on motherhood and childcare."

- 13 March 1998. A month has passed. And, lo and behold, our columnist has got a new topic. Almost. Rather than draw conclusions about "economic rationalism" from motherhood, she critiques economic reform before making some comments about motherhood. Initially there is a whinge about the "dehumanisation of everyday life" due to fast food outlets, self-serve petrol stations and university academics being "assessed not on the quality but the number of their publications". God only knows how all this is related. Then it's on to motherhood and all that:

Most deeply, there is the McDonaldisation of love. Extracting maximum output from both parents in downsized industries requires the speeding up of family life. No more inefficient, wasteful tracts of "quantity" time spent just "being there". Instead, upbeat American parenting manuals assure anxious, harried parents that love may be squeezed into magic bullets of "quality time" scheduled like business appointments or, better still, accomplished while doing something else, like racing to a bus stop.

In other words, La Manne is against Love With The Lot. There is something to be said for B.A. Santamaria-type columns. It didn't matter all that much if you missed the previous Santamaria column in say, 1997, provided you had read one of his pieces in, say, 1987.

It's much the same with Anne Manne. Miss one of
her columns on motherhood, parenting and the DECLINE AND FALL OF THE WEST and you can pick it up next fortnight or month. This frees up more quantity and quality time for such key tasks as, er, motherhood/parenting. And, of course, writing.

PIERS AKERMAN: BACK TO THE SECTARIAN 1920S

There’s no target like a soft target. Not to Sydney based Daily Telegraph and Sunday Telegraph columnist Piers Akerman.

So it was not surprising that Akerman greeted the arrival of Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams in Australia last February with a flashback to the anti-Catholic sectarianism which was so prevalent in the 1920s and 1930s. After all Australian Catholics of Irish background were the most readily available soft target before the advent of the (alleged) Aboriginal "industry", multicultural "industry", welfare "industry", and other familiar Akerman (soft) targets.

• On 14 January 1999 Piers attacked both Gerry Adams and those Australians who (following the lead of Tony Blair and Bill Clinton) had agreed to meet with him in Australia.

No doubt many of the usual Irish-Australian faces who find their way into the faux [sic] Irish saloons each St Patrick's Day will be pressed into service to celebrate Adams’ eight-day visit next month...

It is more likely, however, that most of those who pay to hear this creature will throw back a few jars and sing a few verses of "Danny Boy" or "Kevin Barry"... Let’s hope his sympathisers temper their adoration with a dose of reality along with the obligatory Jamiesons [sic] and Guinness.

So there you have it. A 1990s restatement of the 1920s stereotype – Australians of Irish background are garrulous drunks who sing maudlin ballads.

• On 23 February 1999 Piers Akerman returned to the topic – and to the stereotypes. He wrote that:

Mr Adams is no doubt hoping to capitalise on the residual patriotism that, as the American experience has shown, can be invoked by a few choruses of “Kevin Barry”, and a good whack at the Jamesons.

It’s as simple as that. There are thoughtful people like Piers Akerman. And then there are Australians
of Irish background who exhibit "residual patriotism" which can be "invoked by a few choruses of Kevin Barry and a good whack at the Jamesons".

Kevin Barry was the first Irish nationalist to be executed by the British during the Irish War of Independence. In view of his age (Kevin Barry was just 18 when put to death) it is not surprising that a number of ballads were written about him. Nor that, on occasions, they were sung by Australians (and others) of Irish or part Irish background. So what?

But for Piers Akerman to suggest that those Australians of Irish background who retain an interest in Ireland do so only because of alcohol and song is nothing but a return to sectarian stereotyping. And soft targets.

**CHRISTOPHER AND THE "TOTALLY GORGEOUS" LES**

Is the poet Les Murray "totally gorgeous"? Was he "on-side" with the former Keating Labor government? The answer to both questions is in the affirmative – according to *Adelaide Review* editor Christopher Pearson. Which may come as some surprise to Prime Minister John Howard who has described Les Murray as "Australia’s most eminent poet". So much so that he asked out Les to help draft the preamble to the Australian Constitution.

Christopher Pearson’s comment appeared in a story written by Richard McGregor (*The Weekend Australian*, 21-22 November 1998). McGregor quoted Federal Arts Minister Peter McGauran as saying that the Coalition would not repeat its October 1998 attack on the arts at the next election. Not if he had "anything to do with it". In October 1998 the Liberal Party ran electronic and print advertising claiming that, if elected, Labour would give $61 million to "elite arts".

Christopher Pearson told Richard McGregor that Cabinet now agreed that the ads were "retrograde". During his discussion with McGregor, Pearson commented on arts policy under Paul Keating’s Labor government. He was reported as claiming that the only qualification to get a "Keating" grant was to be "on-side [with Labor] and a totally gorgeous person".

The annual reports of the Australia Council reveal that Les Murray received the Australian Artists Creative Fellowship award (commonly known as the Keatings) over four years. In 1989-90 he was granted a one year "Keating". The following year John Howard’s favourite poet won a three year "Keating". From 1989-90 to 1992-93 Les Murray won Keatings to the value of $218,098 (not adjusted for inflation). This is part of a total of $448,510 (not inflation adjusted) which Les Murray received in taxpayer subsidised grants between 1973-74 and 1992-93.

Then, circa 1993, Murray suddenly discovered that the Australia Council was "there to fund neo-Marxism" and "the clients of the left wing of the Australian Labor Party…to fund political correctness and to punish deviation". Thereupon Murray denounced the Australia Council’s literary grants. But, so far at least, he has not seen fit to return any of the taxpayer subsidies he received before he was born again (so to speak) and stepped forward to make a statement against literary subsidies.

Now Les Murray’s mate Christopher Pearson maintains that only "totally gorgeous" ALP supporters could win "Keatings" during the time of the Labor government. Which suggests that Les Murray was regarded as totally gorgeous by Paul Keating and the Labor Party – for no fewer than four years.

Bob Ellis is another mate of Les Murray. Both appeared in Bob Ellis’ ridiculously self-indulgent film *Bastards From The Bush* which was shown on ABC TV in August 1998. Les reckoned that Bob was great. And Bob reckoned that Les should be made Australia’s poet laureate – for a small taxpayer subsidised annual honorarium. That’s all. In Christopher Pearson’s terminology, it was all very gorgeous.

It is well known that Bob’s mate Les helped the Prime Minister to draft a preamble for the Australian Constitution. Not so well know is Bob Ellis’ very own effort which appeared in the *Sunday Age* on 7 March 1999:

> We, the Australian people, hereby acknowledge that like many others our nation was built on theft, murder, unequal conquest, miscegenation, environmental atrocity, the slaughter of harmless animals and the rape, enslavement and brutalisation by forced adoption of indigenous people and that, uniquely, it was founded on a prison population, many of whom were transported for trivial offences and some of whom, once here, were hanged for lesser ones. We acknowledge therefore that our civilisation derives from tyranny, error, human folly and abominable superstition, and we ask what ghosts remain of our ancestors’ ignorance and the shocking pressures they were under.

> We vow henceforth to do better, to strive in a world that may be elsewhere insane to...
school our youth and tend our sick and comfort our old and praise our gifted and sow what seems of happiness we can in our less than gifted, to do justly, walk proudly and be a beacon of decent kindness and ordinary commonsense in a darkling world that is more and more in need of good example. Let that example be ours.

Which demonstrates that Bob Ellis is still tops for alienation. But not necessarily for pomposity. That mantle still resides with former ABCTV Foreign Correspondent presenter George Negus.

CLICHÉ GEORGE'S CLICHÉ-RIDDEN THOUGHTS

In The Australian on Remembrance Day 1998 journalist Amanda Meade posed the question whether George Negus is:

- a "proud everyman with a strong intellectual streak" or
- a "shallow populist"

Ms Meade reached no conclusion. However a hint was given as to what the proper response might be when she quoted George Negus as saying that he regarded Australian politics as "a bit of a joke". How intellectual can you get?

Similar insights (of a Negus kind) were revealed in Meaghan Shaw’s profile which was published in The Age’s "Green Guide" on 12 November 1998. She quoted the following profound thoughts from our man George:

The fundamental reason for the existence of current affairs television is to answer the question why...Whether that’s "Why do the Serbs want to take over Kosovo?" or "Why does Peter Costello smirk all the time?...".

So there you have it. According to our George, that is. Peter Costello’s facial expression is one of the really big issues confronting the world today. Fair dinkum.

But that was not all. Our man George also rejected the idea that people are disillusioned with politics (as reported by him and his media mates):

That’s a lazy cop-out by the media who don’t want to get in there and stir the possum on serious issues. It’s the media’s fault as much as it is the people’s fault.

Here, surely, is a man who speaks in clichés. If you cannot think of a suitable verb, "stir the possum" is a ready substitute for thought. And this from a journalist who presents himself as an internationalist in a world where few possums exist. Outside of Australia, that is.

Then our George went on to explain why he regards Australia (wait for it, here comes another cliché) as a "bit of a joke".

I’ve found it difficult to take it [politics] seriously since 1975, quite frankly...because there was a coup in this country and nobody ever described it that way. We don’t have any ideological maturity in this country. People are scared to yell at each other about political differences. So we went through a decade where all politicians wanted to prove was how much alike [sic] each other they were. I mean, in the rest of the world, they try to prove how different they are. But politicians in this country, and most of the media, aren’t game to argue and debate the differences.

Our cliché-ridden George did not explain how there was a coup in November 1975 - or how it is that what he terms "coup" are followed by democratic elections. Nor did he attempt to justify, or qualify, his assorted generalisations – for example, "we don’t have any ideological maturity in this country", "all politicians" want to prove how much like each other they are.

And then came George’s Big Day. On 27 November 1998, The Daily Telegraph hoarding read: "Why I’m leaving Australia: Negus Writes". Turn to Page 11 – and there was our George at his cliché-ridden best. Or worst. The first paragraph gave us a glimpse of what was to come:

Why shoot through, even for a limited period, from the proverbial Lucky Country, from God’s own Down Under paradise, from - if you believe most Australians – the greatest place on the planet? If you must leave at all - why Europe? And, particularly for a political journalist, why Italy, widely acclaimed as one of the world’s more accomplished shambles?

There you have it. Clichés aplenty – "Lucky Country" and "God’s own Down Under". Along with generalisations – "most Australians" believe that Australia is "the greatest place on the planet". And Italy is "widely acclaimed as one of the world’s more accomplished shambles". Is it really? By whom?

Then, believe it or not, George Negus’s piece got worse. Our George:
reflected on the thoughts of "the world’s five-billion plus community of well-meaning idiots trying to make sense out of the nonsense we laughingly call life and society". (But what does George call "life"?)

asserted that "the horrible fact is that, politically, we are probably nowhere as sophisticated and mature as many of the far less developed countries we would rate below our class (But which nations does he have in mind?)

opined that "no matter who you vote for a politician always wins (Apparently Negus believes this is an original thought).

Stand by for more cliché-ridden hyperbolic thoughts when George Negus returns from Italy in late 1999.

AND NOW FOR A NEWS FLASH

The Daily Telegraph, 3 March 1999

Some MPs are underpaid, says Howard
By Malcolm Farr
John Howard said yesterday some MPs are underpaid and "deserve every farthing they get" when compared to executives in private industry.

The Australian, 3 March 1999

Some politicians lazy and overpaid, says PM
By George Megalogenis
Some MPs did not deserve their $100,000-plus a year wages because they were incompetent or lazy, John Howard said yesterday.

Same report. Same day. Same Prime Minister. Different story.

GREAT U TURNS OF OUR TIME CONTINUED – THE STRANGE CASE OF JONATHAN KING

Step forward social historian Jonathan King – now in his fashionable politically conservative mode. In 1998 Mr King accompanied the 1914-1918 Diggers who visited France to receive the Legion of Honour from the French Government. In 1999 Jonathan King's film documentary on the Australians in World War I to be titled Last Anzacs will be completed.

Late last year in the Sunday Age (8 November 1998) and Courier Mail (11 November 1998), Jonathan King wrote at length about the First Australian Imperial Force on the Western Front in 1918. The Sunday Age headline got King's message pretty right: "How This Man [General John Monash] And 333,000 Other Australians Won World War I".

Jonathan King's essential point was that the AIF, under the leadership of General Monash, had played a decisive role in the Allied victories over Germany in the northern autumn of 1918. Wrote King:

But those glorious and decisive victories have not lived forever in the homeland, as the achievements have not been taught in schools nor handed down from generation to generation...This is partly because the British from the start claimed credit for winning the war, camouflaging Australians' efforts in their official reports and history books, which dominated Australian markets for decades and wiped out the Australian contribution...

But it has also failed to re-echo throughout the homeland because in 1919 many Australians, ambivalent about the war, greeted returning diggers who had volunteered to fight for "King and Country" with a disdain that undermined their great achievements rather than celebrated them. The tragic defeat at Gallipoli became legend but those "glorious and decisive" victories in France were lost to history...

Fair enough. But who should we blame for treating the 1914-1918 Diggers "with a disdain that undermined their great achievements rather than celebrated them"?

What about, er, Jonathan King.

In 1978 Jonathan King – in his (then) fashionable leftist mode – wrote the quite appalling Waltzing Materialism (Harper & Row). Chapter 7 of King's tome is ironically titled "Our Glorious Anzacs". It contains the following gem:

Australians have shown themselves to be an extremely pugnacious nation. In our short history we have joined in eleven major skirmishes and lost nearly a hundred thousand lives before stopping to ask why. The fact that involvement was rarely needed or justified and that the campaigns were often catastrophic was apparently inconsequential. This predisposition to military adventure has been so important that a collection of myths has developed around the catastrophes turning them into victories in such a way that it rarely occurs to admiring audiences to enquire into the reasons why so many Australians should die in the first place.

In 1978 Jonathan King named World War I as one of the "eleven major skirmishes" in which Australia
had become involved without need or justification. He maintained that "the Anzac tradition was founded on an act of murderous folly" at Gallipoli. King continued:

Eleven times our boys have sailed off for this ideal. From the viewpoint of Australia’s defence, many of the skirmishes have been unnecessary. In most of them we have fought not for ourselves but for a greater power. In short the record shows that we usually rushed to fight in wars that were either largely irrelevant to our own interests or were being conducted to defend outmoded attitudes.

Jonathan King circa 1998-99 wishes to nail those who are responsible for the fact that Australia’s "glorious and decisive victories [of 1918] have not lived forever in the homeland". In which case he should criticise Jonathan King circa 1978 who declared that the First AIF fought "other nations’ battles". But, alas, Mr King in the late 1990s makes no reference to the views of the very same Mr King in the late 1970s.

HOW WE FORGET

This is how the Vice Regal notes in the Canberra Times on 16 February 1999 reported those who attended the Governor General's state dinner held on the previous evening. Guests included Ms Blanche Hawke and her husband:

Vice-Regal

The Governor General, Sir William Deane, and Lady Deane officially welcomed the President of Hungary, Dr Arpad Goncz and Mrs Szusanna Goncz at RAAF Base Fairbairn yesterday and later received them, and thousands of their party, as house guests at Government House.

In the evening, Sir William and Lady Deane gave a state dinner in honour of Mr and Mrs Goncz. Guests were: Senator Margaret Reid; Mr J. Tongan; Mr Neil Andrew; Mr K. Kontra; Mr G. Busuttil and Mrs Busuttil; Mr J. Foner; Mr Ian Fischer; Mr K. Sunnynghof; Mr Alexander Downer; Mr D. Toovey; Mr Alexander Sommazy, Mr U. Varga; Mr Kim Beazley and Mrs S. Anuus, Mr A. Glynn; Mr Bob Hawke and Mrs G. Albanoff; Mr A. Farage; Dr M. Higgle and Mrs Hipple; Mr B. Beres, Admiral C. Barrie and Mrs Barrie; Mr B. Kalmer; Mr Andrew Rogers and Senator Helen Coonan; Mr Nick Greiner; Mr B. Lems, the Most Reverend Francis Carroll; Mr L. Illitch; Ms E. Scott; Dr I. Szartka; General John Baker and Mrs Baker; Mr D. Clark and Dr A. Clark; Mr C. Keves; and Mr K. Bagley and Mrs Bagley.

THE LAW, JUDGMENT AND OBJECTIVITY

How are judgments made? Is the appeal system overused? Can the plaintive be assured justice is always done? Is the legal process all or are judges as prone to human frailty as any professional? Justice Margaret Beazley, a judge with the NSW Court of Appeal in the Supreme Court of NSW, will explore these questions and more at The Sydney Institute.

SPEAKER: THE HON JUSTICE M.J. BEAZLEY (Judge of Appeal, NSW Supreme Court)

TOPIC: Making Judgments

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