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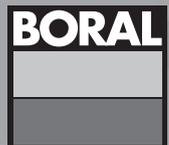
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Kathy Bail



John Bell



Gerard Henderson

Australia's relations with Britain carry a special bond from a century and a half of British settlement. But while the president of the Philippines or the USA or Nigeria can stand beside the Queen of the United Kingdom as head of state for their respective nations, no Australian can do this - Australia does not have an Australian head of state. Australia's head of state remains the Queen of the United Kingdom - as the Queen of Australia. To argue the case for having an Australian head of state, The Sydney Institute held a launch for the inaugural Mate for Head of State Day on Wednesday 18 January 2006. At the Museum of Sydney, John Bell, artistic director of the Bell Shakespeare Company, Kathy Bail, editor of *The Bulletin*, and Gerard Henderson, Executive Director of The Sydney Institute, put their arguments on the issue.

A MATE FOR HEAD OF STATE – WHY AUSTRALIA NEEDS ONE

Gerard Henderson

It is almost 218 years since the First Fleet came ashore at Sydney Cove and soon made this piece of ground the site of Government House. This place was the office and home of the first nine governors of what became the Colony of New South Wales – Arthur Phillip, John Hunter, Philip Gidney King, William Bligh, Lachlan Macquarie, Thomas Brisbane, Ralph Darling, Richard Bourke and George Gipps. It was here that Australia's only uprising against legitimate authority occurred – the Rum Rebellion of 26 January 1808. The only extant visual representation of the interior of Government House depicts three members of the Rum Corps securing the (illegal) arrest of Governor Bligh from the bed under which he was (allegedly) hiding. The scene is reproduced in colour in the edited collection *Australia's First Government House* (Allen & Unwin, 1991). And it was on this First Government House site that initial negotiations took place concerning the one substantial stain on what became Australia's proud history – namely, the interaction between the modern Western settlers and the traditional indigenous population.

It has become accepted for the events of 26 January 1788 to be described as the creation of a British society in what came to be called Australia. And certainly this site became the centre of British authority in New South Wales – with governors from Arthur Phillip on reporting to the Colonial Office in London. Yet Australia was never just a British society, since those who sailed on the First Fleet were a mixed and multicultural lot. A governor, the military and convicts – who were essentially British and Protestant but also Irish and Catholic, and more besides.

In an article which was published in for *The Bulletin* on 26 January 1993, to co-incide with Australia Day that year, I condemned what I termed the left-wing interpretation of Australian history. This article was published some months *before* Geoffrey Blainey's critique of what he termed the black armband view of Australian history. It is a matter of public record that Professor Blainey and I disagree with some issues. However, what we share in common is an irritation that so

much commentary on Australia – by intellectuals and journalists alike – has an alienated tinge. In my January 1993 *Bulletin* article I focused on the published work of Robert Hughes, Manning Clark and John Pilger. I could have added many more names then – and I could add fresh names to the list now.

Like all individuals, all nations make mistakes. After all, this is an inevitable consequence of The Fall. However, there is ample evidence to indicate that – in just over two centuries – Australia has become one of the freest, fairest and most successful nations in the world. That’s why I believe it’s time that Australia has an Australian head of state. Australia’s very success is cause enough to dismiss the notion that, for some reason or other, Australia is not ready to have an Australian head of state and – in order to ensure the continuation of Australia’s democracy – Australians must continue to rely on a British citizen and British resident to fulfill this role.

I have considerable respect for Queen Elizabeth II who, on any analysis, has been a hard working and dutiful monarch for over half a century. Moreover, I understand why – in line with British historical traditions – a clear majority of British citizens want the monarch to remain their nation’s head of state. Britain is a valued ally of Australia – as is the United States. But Australia is different to both Britain and the US. That’s why it makes sense for Australia to have one of us as head of state. In the traditional Australian parlance, a mate for head of state.

The constitutional monarchists understand that the weakest link in their belief that the Queen of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (who also happens to be Queen of Australia) should remain Australia’s head of state turns on the implied assertion, in their case, that it is not proper for an Australian to be Australia’s head of state. That’s why, in recent years, the constitutional monarchists have run the line that the Queen is *not* really Australia’s head of state after all – and that, rather, this position is held by the Governor-General.

I can understand, although I do not agree with, the case for constitutional monarchy in Australia. The most credible position was put by John Howard in the newsletter which he forwarded to the constituents of Bennelong on 27 October 1999, in the lead-up to the referendum on the republic which was held on 6 November 1999. The Prime Minister said that “we should not lightly put aside something which has worked so well and helped give us such stability”. John Howard argued unashamedly for the maintenance of the system in which “the Queen is Queen of Australia”. In short, the Prime Minister is an unapologetic constitutional monarchist.

During the referendum campaign, however, quite a few monarchists went into “Don’t-Talk-About-The-Queen” mode. The Australians for a Constitutional Monarchy temporarily junked its

name and called itself “No Republic-ACM”. What’s more, the official “No” case – which was prepared by a majority of those members of Parliament who were against the proposed changes to the Constitution and which, in accordance with constitutional requirements, was distributed by the Australian Electoral Commission – did not contain even one reference to the Queen.

Many constitutional monarchists are arguing that the Governor-General, not the Queen, is Australia’s head of state. This case is spelt out at some length by Sir David Smith in Chapter 3 of his recently released book *Head of State* (Macleay Press). Now, I like much of Sir David’s work and he has addressed The Sydney Institute. Yet I profoundly disagree with his current position that the Queen is not Australia’s head of state. Rather, I support the view which Sir David expressed in *Quadrant* in May 1991, where he wrote:

...we have a monarchical system of government, in which the powers and functions of the Head of State reside in an hereditary Monarch who rules only by the consent of those who are ruled over, and who acts on the advice of their elected representatives. In our particular case, as with the sixteen other monarchical countries within the Commonwealth, the absent monarch is represented by a Governor-General who performs all the duties of the Head of State.

Since then, however, Sir David has changed his position – and now runs the line proclaimed by Australians for Constitutional Monarchy’s chairman David Flint and many other monarchists that the Governor-General is really and truly Australia’s head of state.

There are three good reasons to dismiss the current claim of the constitutional monarchists that the Governor-General is Australia’s head of state. It is not what the Constitution officially decrees. It is not what Buckingham Palace really believes. And it is not what the Howard Government actually says.

Section 2 of the Australian Constitution reads as follows:

A Governor-General appointed by the Queen shall be Her Majesty’s representative in the Commonwealth, and shall have and may exercise in the Commonwealth during the Queen’s pleasure, but subject to this Constitution, such powers and functions of the Queen as Her Majesty may be pleased to assign to him.

In other words, Section 2 of the Constitution makes it emphatically clear that the Governor-General is the Monarch’s “representative in the Commonwealth”. There are similar references to the Governor-General as the Monarch’s “representative” in Section 61 and Section 68. As Professor George Winterton has argued (*Quadrant*, Sept 2004):

A person who is another’s “representative” cannot properly be described as occupying an office at the apex of the state. If the representative fulfils head-of-state functions, the representative can be described as de

facto or effective head of state, while the officer represented is de jure or formal head of state.

As a young man I admired Sir Zelman Cowen, who was Dean of the Law Faculty when I commenced my LL.B. degree at Melbourne University in the mid 1960s. In middle age I came to know Sir Paul Hasluck, when I interviewed him for my book *Menzies Child: The Liberal Party of Australia*. Sir Zelman and the late Sir Paul were among the best Australian governors-general. It is a matter of record that both believed that the Queen is Australia's head of state. In his article titled "The Office of Governor-General", which was published in the Winter 1985 issue of *Daedalus*, Sir Zelman commented that "the Queen is unquestionably head of state and the governor-general her representative". In his 1972 William Queale Memorial Lecture, also titled "The Office of Governor-General", Sir Paul wrote that "we in Australia have a hereditary monarch as head of state". In summing up the section of his Lecture titled "The Head of State", Paul Hasluck commented:

The Australian nation has to have a head of state. Because of our history and tradition we have a constitutional monarch as head of state. The Queen of Australia as head of state fits in with both the principles and practices of our form of government and any change in our method of having a Queen as head of state would also require us to make basic changes in our form of government, as well as major amendments of the Commonwealth Constitution.

Sir Zelman's article was republished in Stephen R. Graubard (ed): *Australia: The Daedalus Symposium* (Angus & Robertson, 1985) and Sir Paul's lecture was republished in book form as *The Office of the Governor-General* (Melbourne University Press, 1979).

Vernon Bogdanor's study *The Monarchy and the Constitution* (Clarendon Press, 1995) is the most authoritative work of its kind. The author was given access by the Queen to the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle. In 1995 Vernon Bogdanor was in no doubt whatsoever that the Queen is Australia's head of state. He listed Australia among 16 members of the Commonwealth (including Britain) which "recognise the sovereign as their head of state" – maintaining that:

The sovereign is head of state in all of these countries, but in all of them except Britain executive authority lies in the hands of a governor-general who is the sovereign's representative.

With respect to Australia, Vernon Bogdanor wrote:

In Australia...the governor-general performs nearly all the functions of a head of state but is not himself or herself a head of state.

As recently as 1997 the Buckingham Palace website contained the following comment – under the heading “The Queen and the Commonwealth”:

A Commonwealth realm is a country where The Queen is the Head of State. The Queen is Queen not only of Britain and its dependent territories, but also of the following realms: Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Canada, Granada, Jamaica, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, St Christopher and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu...

When the Queen visits one of her Commonwealth realms, she speaks and acts as Queen of the country, and not as Queen of the United Kingdom. As a constitutional monarch, the Queen acts on the advice of the ministers of the realm concerned. In each of the realms, the Queen is represented by a Governor-General. He or she is appointed by the Queen on the advice of the ministers of the country concerned and is completely independent of the British Government, the Queen maintains direct contact with the Governors-General although she delegates executive powers to them in virtually every respect.

As is proper, the Palace scrupulously avoids involvement in the domestic politics of Britain and the other members of the Commonwealth. Once the republic debate got under way in Australia, the constitutional monarchists put pressure on Buckingham Palace to alter its website. I was told by Philip Benwell, the head of the Australian Monarchist League, that he (among other monarchists) approached the Palace and requested that the website be changed. Not wanting to involve itself in the Australian political debate, the Buckingham Palace website was altered and the reference to the Queen as Australia’s head of state was dropped.

In the lead-up to the 1999 constitutional referendum in Australia, the Palace’s website now focused only on the Queen’s role in the Commonwealth and made no reference to the Queen’s role as head of state in Britain or the other Commonwealth nations. But the alteration to the Palace website did not change the fact that the Queen, not the Governor-General, is Australia’s head of state. This, after all, is the position of the Howard Government itself. In his statement to the Bennelong electorate in October 1999 John Howard wrote:

The Queen is Queen of Australia. However, under our present constitution, the Governor-General is effectively Australia’s head of state. The only constitutional duty performed by the Queen relates to the appointment of the Governor-General which must be done on the recommendation of the Prime Minister of the day.

At the launch of Conservatives for an Australian Head of State in Melbourne on 27 October 1999, Peter Costello initially praised the Prime Minister’s formal intervention in the referendum debate

referring to his “well-reasoned piece”. It is worth recalling that around this time some monarchists were denying the Queen’s role in the Australian Constitution. Still other monarchists were engaging in similar exaggerations against their opponents as that used today by some critics of the Howard Government’s national security agenda – i.e. they were alleging that the decision to replace the Queen with an Australian head of state would result in Australia going down the road of Nazism/fascism or Stalinist communism. I criticised this hyperbole in my *Sydney Morning Herald* column on 19 October 1999. Just as John Howard did not deny the Queen in the referendum campaign nor did he allege that the success of the “Yes” campaign would lead to some kind of fascist or communist dictatorship Down Under. But not all monarchists were as intellectually honest as the Prime Minister.

At the Conservatives for an Australian Head of State function, Peter Costello distanced himself from Mr Howard’s claim that the Monarchy is able to unite society – pointing to the obvious fact that, in Australia at least, the “monarchy doesn’t unite”. When asked to “comment on the statement that the Governor-General is effectively the head of state”, the Deputy Liberal Party leader replied:

Well I think the key word there is “effectively”, isn’t it? Once you see a word like “effectively” interposed, it tells you he is not the Head of State...Now, the truth of the matter is that the Head of State is the Queen and we shouldn’t shy away from that. And a “No” vote means keeping it that way.

So it did. The Queen *is* Australia’s head of state. Not even the Prime Minister argues that the Governor-General *is* the head of state – but only that he is *effectively* the head of state. It’s not the same thing.

In my capacity as a columnist and a commentator, I maintain a lively correspondence with people whom I respect – even if I do not happen to agree with them on one or more issues. I have had such an exchange of letters with Sir David Smith concerning who is Australia’s head of state. On 16 February 2005 Sir David wrote to me criticising my view that the Queen was Australia’s head of state. In subsequent correspondence, I replied that Sir David was criticising me for holding the view which he once held. Later on, Sir David referred to letters written by two Howard Government Attorneys-General who maintain that the Queen is Australia’s head of state but he indicated that he disagreed with this position. I asked Sir David for a copy of this correspondence.

In a letter dated 27 April 2005, Sir David was kind enough to forward me a copy of a letter written by the then Attorney General Daryl Williams on 21 May 2002 – along with a copy of a letter written by the current Attorney-General Philip Ruddock on 13 April 2005.

This was the correspondence which contained the advice with which Sir David disagreed. Well, what did the Howard Government's Attorneys-General say? According to Daryl Williams QC:

...the expression "head of state" does not appear in the Australian Constitution – in relation to either the Queen or the Governor-General. Nevertheless, the Queen is Australia's monarch, a constituent part of the Commonwealth Parliament and the formal repository of Commonwealth executive power. The Constitution assigns a role to the Queen that makes it proper to regard her as head of state. Under the Constitution, the Governor-General is the Queen's representative in the Commonwealth.

In his letter dated 13 April 2005, Mr Ruddock wrote that "the Constitution itself assigns a role to the Queen that makes it appropriate to regard the Queen as the head of state". The Howard Government's current Attorney-General reminded his correspondent that this is the "position taken on this matter over many years by the Attorney-General's Department and successive Attorneys-General".

The Attorney-General is the first law officer of the Commonwealth of Australia. As I advised Sir David, my position is straight forward. I am prepared to accept the advice of the ministers appointed by the Prime Minister to be the first law offer – and who state that it is proper and appropriate to regard the Queen as Australia's head of state. Those monarchists who maintain that the Governor-General is Australia's head of state simply reject the opinion of the Howard Government's Attorney-General in preference for a proposition for which there is no legal authority. It's called denial.

In conclusion, it is understandable why the British are committed to the continuation of a hereditary monarchy. But it is not clear why democratic, mature, successful Australia has to have, as its head of state, a hereditary monarch who is a British citizen who resides in Britain.

Australia has no say whatsoever as to who may, or may not, become its head of state. Australia has to accept British law and custom in this regard. This entails that males take precedence over females in determining who can become Australia's head of state and that, due to the Act of Settlement 1701, the Queen or King of Great Britain cannot be – or marry – a Catholic.

Ironically, this means that Prince William – who is in line to become Australia's head of state – could marry the daughter of the non-Catholic republican Peter Costello but could not marry the daughter of the Catholic monarchist Tony Abbott. It's as bizarre as that.

As Peter Costello commented on 27 October 1999, he does not believe that "positions should be settled on bloodlines" or that "people should hold public office because of heredity". Writing in the

September 1999 issue of *Options*, the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party argued that Australians “are not comfortable with monarchy as the symbol of our nation”. This explains why so many monarchists like to pretend that the Queen is not Australia’s head of state.

Then there is the matter of Prince Charles himself, the next in line to become Australia’s head of state. No doubt Elizabeth II has views on many issues. However, conscious of her position as head of state, she has not engaged in the political debate in public. Not so Prince Charles. Take just one issue, for example. As recently as July 2005, Australia’s future head of state praised what he termed “inefficient” French farmers and “the inefficiencies of so-called peasant farming life” (*Weekly Telegraph*, 27 July 2005). Prince Charles’ much favoured inefficient French farmers remain as farmers per courtesy of massive taxpayer subsidies funnelled through the European Union’s Commonwealth Agriculture Policy (CAP). The CAP is opposed not only by the British government but by all the mainstream political parties in Australia – the Liberals, the Nationals and Labor.

Yet the next in line to become Australia’s head of state publicly supports inefficient French farmers to the disadvantage of Australian farmers and to the disadvantage of the world’s less developed nations. As Deputy Prime Minister Mark Vaile pointed out at The Sydney Institute on 24 October 2005, “a typical cow in the European Union receives a government subsidy of US \$2.20 per day” and that such a cow earns more each day “than 1.2 billion of the world’s poorest people”. It would be of little moment if Australia’s next head of state supported such mammoth cow subsidies in private – but, in fact, he proclaims his support in public.

Prince Charles is known to have told some Australian diplomats that he both understands, and is sympathetic to, the view in Australia that Australia should have an Australian head of state. No doubt this is a genuinely held position. But it is also likely that Prince Charles wants to avoid controversy when he becomes a monarch. For Charles, to be King of Britain may be a sufficient enough job. He does not need the controversy which would arise from being King of Australia as well – especially since 45 per cent of Australians voted “Yes” for an Australian head of state in November 1999 (in spite of the fact that the model on offer was opposed by some republicans) and current opinion polls indicate that support for an Australian head of state is running at around or just over 50 per cent with support for the constitutional status quo running at around or just over 33 per cent. Support for an Australian head of states rises if those polled are asked about Prince Charles becoming Australia’s next head of state.

The case for an Australian head of state simply reflects the fact that democratic, successful Australia is mature enough to have one of us as head of state.

A MATE FOR HEAD OF

STATE

Kathy Bail

These days the republic isn't exactly a barbeque stopper. Or perhaps it is - mention it and suddenly everyone will realise they need to head to the kitchen for another beer or go home and count their socks. But it doesn't have to be this way. When talking with a small gathering of your fellow Australians, it's best to drop the "r" word and start with the one thing about which we all have an opinion, houses.

One house in particular, a large property that despite the attractions of a formal driveway and lake views, changes owner regularly. See, now you're all interested. Yes, I'm talking about Yarralumla. A grand residence in dire need of a makeover. It's got one of those old style kitchens that you can't see into from the living area, rooms full of antique furniture in various shades of dark brown and, despite the great prices you can get on plasma screens today, no home theatre. Some people say detonate; I say renovate. Once everyone's cooing over your proposal for new decking with floating glass balustrades, you might also propose changes to an aspect of the place needing more than a scrub and a lick of paint. The job of the current resident, the Governor General, the English Queen's local rep. We've been grappling with this franchise arrangement for the past 125 years but often getting the emphasis wrong.

In 1891, J F Archibald, founding editor of the *Bulletin* and maverick republican, said in the magazine that Federation under the crown meant "tinsel-titles for the vulgar and the vain and irritating surveillance by a distant and foreign official who never saw, nor wished to see, the great southern land". One hundred years later, cartoonist Red Lynch drew a Queen Elizabeth stamp for the cover of the *Independent Monthly*, another publication with a republican bent, and across the image he wrote "Return to Sender". Both Archibald in the nineteenth century and the republicans in the twentieth century eventually realised there was no mileage in attacking the Queen.

In fact, the best thing may well be to enlist her as she may already be on our side. It's highly likely, as Gerard pointed out, the royals are wondering why we're dragging the chain. I'm told a couple of

keen observers who talk to them occasionally claim the Queen, and especially Charles, are amazed that Australia isn't already a republic. Anyway, the Queen is not really the issue. This time the campaign pitch can't leave out those people who aren't yet convinced. We have to stop the wishful thinking and stop talking only to the converted.

During the summer break I did go to a few barbeques. I tried to find out what people thought of the issue of a republic and realised that the "it's time" argument isn't enough. Australians need to be persuaded that a change in the head of state would make a practical difference. That it's not just a formality in a bit of legislation that they'll never read. The 1999 referendum proved that Australians would reject a model imposed from above. We need to focus on giving people a vote, letting them, not politicians, determine who gets to be chauffeured down that leafy drive in the old vice-regal roller, recently reupholstered of course.

That healthy scepticism about politicians in this country is fertile ground. Australians generally think they've got a pretty good system of government but ask them if they're well governed and you get a different response. Remember back in 1991 when Kerry Packer had most of the country punching the air after he told a bunch of Senators that they weren't doing such a good job; that we should be donating extra in tax. The change to an Australian head of state must be a change to a representative of the people. People must feel they have a say in the outcome. They also need to be involved in the process by which we arrive at this change. A Mate for a Head of State movement has the potential to shift perceptions of the republican movement. This new push can't be so easily dismissed if it provides those communities and individuals who become active and involved with an opportunity to make politicians answerable to them.

One of the main problems with the 1999 republican campaign was that it seemed to split broadly along party lines. This is less likely if we give it another go given that the future of the Liberal party lies with the likes of Peter Costello and that shy new boy in Canberra, Malcolm Turnbull. However, one specific suggestion for the legislators: we'll tell politicians they can apply for the job only when they've been out of parliament for at least ten years. No jobs for the boys when it comes to this significant appointment.

I know Australians tend to avoid lengthy and formal discussion of political issues but we do talk easily and confidently about Australian values. Wave an Australian flag in front of us and we'll say it symbolises an egalitarian nation and a fair go for all; ask us to stage the Olympics and in the opening ceremony we'll present a confident and distinctive image of contemporary multicultural Australia. On a global, political stage we expect the Prime Minister to act independently and in our interests, not the Queen's.

Of course it makes sense to start imagining an Australian head of state, one who embodies these shared values, yet the republican movement in the 1990s made the mistake of assuming that because the country had changed, it was logically time for the symbols of government to catch up. Later it became clear that some Australians don't perceive a contradiction between a defiant nationalism and continuance of imperial symbols like the monarch or the Union Jack. This may be because there is some comfort in the traditions they reflect. Decades of change in contemporary culture provoked not a desire for more change but an emotional attachment to the established symbols of the past.

Never mind that we fought under the Union Jack at Gallipoli. For those waving the Australian flag today, it has come to symbolise the sentiment associated with Aussies on that dusty foreshore. There's nothing to be gained by attacking any of this. Far better, I think, to propose a mate for head of state as not so much a change to something new as a link with tradition, the egalitarianism we like to think of as Australian. This campaign embodies the idea of giving everyone an opportunity to have a crack at it, the chance to be their country's head of state. If you find this sort of talk has everyone at the barbie fiddling with their plastic wine glass, you can just drop the political terminology and say, this is the chance for any of us to be the celebrity riding in the limo and getting out on the red carpet, then watch their eyes light up.

If we're going to succeed with a campaign for an Australian head of state we have to get past the arguments we've been making for the past decade. What we have to face is that politics today is primarily about the economy and not society. To get a social issue, such as the republic, back on the agenda, we need to inspire Australians with a new position that reflects contemporary views and reinforces shared values. So here's our slogan - renovate, don't detonate.

LET'S HAVE ONE OF US

- A MATE FOR HEAD OF STATE

John Bell

For as long as I can remember Australian writers and artists have been struggling to find an “Australian Identity”.

From time to time individual voices have sounded out and the elusive “identity” seemed within reach: the bush ballads of Banjo Patterson, the larrikin stirring of Henry Lawson, the grasp of country expressed by Mary Gilmore, Miles Franklin, Judith Wright; the searing images of Sid Nolan and Arthur Boyd; the outrageous laughter of Roy Rene and Barry Humphries – all of these are recognisable components of what we might dub “the Australian character” – things that are uniquely ours, that no other country can emulate or take away from us.

Republican sentiments are nothing new in Australia; they have been brewing a long time. One of our favourite sons, Henry Lawson, was stirring the possum way back in 1887:

Sons of the South, make choice between
 (Sons of the South, choose true)
 The old dead tree and the young tree green –
 The land belongs to the lord and queen
 And the land that belongs to you.

Yet the Australian “identity” is always in a state of flux, especially as newcomers from various parts of Asia, Europe, the Middle East and elsewhere add new strands to the rich tapestry of our nation.

Despite a few extremists on the ratbag right and the moronic thuggery on display in recent months in South Sydney, the policy of multiculturalism in Australia has been and continues to be a triumph, a shining example to the rest of the world.

Anybody who can remember the boring, narrow-minded and monochromatic Australia of the 1950s will rejoice at the burgeoning of multicultural Australia with its colourful mix of languages, cuisine, cultural festivals, music, dance and visual arts. In sport European athletes have brought new dimensions of skill to this country and academically Asian students have kept raising the bar – gaining top places and demonstrating hard work, focus and determination.

Multiculturalism has made us truly cosmopolitan, a more interesting, vibrant, intelligent and competitive society, no longer a colonial backwater.

Past generations of Australians had a nostalgia for the British Empire and its royal family. This was understandable in that so many of us were descended from British emigrants. We felt an affinity with the British based on our comradeship in two world wars, the poems we learned at school and the relentless propaganda of the *Women's Weekly*.

New generations of Anglo-Australians feel no such affinity or nostalgia. To them, as to young Australians from Asian, European or Middle-Eastern backgrounds, Britain is a cold little island a long way away and its royals no more than visitors who drop in occasionally to cut a ribbon or watch a horse-race. Britain, its way of life, its royal family are of little interest to the great majority of Australians. For myself, being one of that generation who learned Keats and Shelley at school and grew up with the forelock-tugging cringe of the *Women's Weekly*, I remain something of an anglophile with a degree of respect for those royals who do their job with dignity and integrity.

But that doesn't mean I want them to "reign over us" any more than I want King Juan Carlos or Emperor Akahito as my head of state, much as I love Spain and Japan.

We are a nation of many colours, creeds and practices. What can unite us?

We shall never achieve a uniqueness, a sense of self, until our Head of State, the person recognised internationally as our chief representative, is one of us. The rest of the world must continue to view Australia as a colonial outpost of Great Britain as long as our Head of State is the Queen Of England who lives twelve thousand miles away. She can dismiss our Governor-General at any time; she has the power to disallow our legislation; we are sworn to be her subjects. So is our Governor-General.

How much better to have a Head of State who is an Australian citizen, who lives among us, knows and understands us on a day-to-day basis rather than through the sanitised shop-window impression of the occasional whirlwind royal tour..

How much better to have a Head of State who wants to see Australia win The Ashes and The World Cup, who wants to put Australia's economic interests ahead of those of the E.U. Let's have one of us – a mate for Head of State.

The USA was the dominant world force for most of the twentieth century, its popular culture, from Hollywood to Rock-'n'-Roll, all pervasive. This was possible only when America ceased being a colony and became a nation. The trigger of its greatness was Independence.

The cost of America's nationhood was bloody rebellion and civil war. Australia, happily, need not go down the same path. We can part from the Mother Country on amicable terms and still remain a member of the Commonwealth of Nations.

A 2004 Newspoll revealed that 64 per cent of Australians want an Australian Head of State, as opposed to 30 per cent who do not.

Perhaps a Newspoll conducted in 1776 would have revealed a similar split among the American colonists regarding Independence. But not too many Americans these days would wish to be subject to the House of Windsor. They moved on – so should we.

All it takes is the courage to let go the apron-strings. Until we do, and learn to stand on our own two feet, we'll never know what it really feels like to be Australian.

ANNUAL DINNER 2006



Photographer: David Karonidis



Photo – David Karonidis

Aneurin Hughes

Aneurin Hughes is the author of *Billy Hughes: Prime Minister and Controversial Founding Father of the Australian Labor Party* (John Wiley & Sons) and former European Union Ambassador to Australia 1997-2002. His biography of Billy Hughes records how a humble Welsh immigrant to Australia rose to become one of the most popular of Australia's prime ministers during the First World War and one of the most controversial when he split from the Labor Party to join the conservatives. Aneurin Hughes addressed The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 24 January 2006 to recall some of the highlights of Billy Hughes' life and times.

REMEMBERING BILLY

HUGHES

Aneurin Hughes

In researching my book on Billy Hughes I had many discussions with a variety of friends and contacts in Australia and in most cases anyone over 50 had some memory of the man. Conversations would inevitably include: "Did you ever hear the one about Billy..." Often people said: "I met him once; of course I was very, very young at the time." A taxi driver in Christchurch claimed he was Billy's great-grandson; there were several phone calls from people named Hughes asking me if I had any evidence that they were related to him. Wendy Hughes the actress was certainly related to his stepson. Staying at the Carrington in Canberra when I was ploughing through the multitude of documents Billy's widow had bequeathed to the National Library, I discovered that his great-granddaughter Diana was living in the same building. There were other coincidences which further impelled me into this hazardous and, for me, entirely new business of writing a book.

My son Ellis is a consultant anaesthetist in North Wales, just a stone's throw away from where young Billy spent all his holidays, between the ages of six and twelve, and the Llansantffraid church which has a magnificent window donated by Billy in memory of his mother, depicting the Australian states. And then there was my friend Father John Eddy who lived opposite the European Union Embassy in Canberra and regaled me with many stories from the twelve years he had spent sharing a room at the ANU with Billy's main biographer Lawrence Fitzhardinge.

Everyone seemed to know Billy's response when asked why he hadn't joined the Country Party, when at some time he had joined all the others: "Had to draw the line somewhere," he would say. Many quoted the Low cartoons, especially the one which has a troubled Asquith beseeching Lloyd George to speak to a raging Billy in the cabinet room and do so in Welsh to pacify him. Dame Enid Lyons paints a fascinating portrait of him in her interesting memoirs which includes the story of him listening to Black Jack McEwen speaking in his laboured style: "There he goes, describing the dairy herds of New

South Wales, not cow by cow but teat by teat.” Even in recent weeks, people who have read or heard of the book have come up to me with yet more stories: how Billy, doing his politician’s rite of passage and kissing a gaggle of babies, was dragged back to one pram which had become the unintended repository of Billy’s false teeth; how during the long journeys by car from Sydney to Canberra, he would lodge his bony knees against the seat in front and read Zane Grey westerns; or the occasion when some of his colleagues had mischievously inserted some blowflies into his hearing aid such that when he turned it on it was as if he was being attacked by a horde of hornets.

The National Library is a great place to do one’s research, with ample and comfortable space, an excellent restaurant and obliging staff. On one occasion I was afforded the rare honour of handling Captain Cook’s original log and of course donning silk gloves to do so, marvelling at his copperplate writing. However, when I was first confronted with the 30 metres which constitute the William Morris Hughes archives, my resolution became a trifle wan. Let me spell it out: there are 50 volumes of catalogued papers with some ten or more folders in each volume and up to 200 items in each. Billy would seem never to have thrown anything away and I suspect it was a great relief to his widow to get rid of the whole accumulated mass in one fell swoop and deposit the lot with a grateful NLA. The task of cataloguing must have been daunting; not only did he keep masses of cabinet minutes, records of war committees, lists of everyone who had sent him Christmas cards, he also kept copies of all the letters that came; both personal and official as well as his replies even if the reply was only “I beg to acknowledge receipt of your communication of – .” There are also shards of paper on which he had scribbled bits of speeches, quotations, cuttings from numerous papers, translations from Welsh, Greek and Italian and, as I say in the book, a pair of his false teeth and a huge hearing aid.

Despite this plenitude of research material, however, it is selective, in the sense that Billy, with his abundant vanity, knew that it would be the mulch from which writers would pen their pieces. Thus, most criticism of him and the attacks of his numerous enemies and disparagers only make fleeting appearances, expunged by an industrious Billy. He had little doubt of his place in history and would see to it that it was unsullied by the rancour invariably associated with the political game. This, of course, is nothing new; history is replete with the testimonies of politicians who do not recognise that their time is up. It may be that one of the hallmarks of the successful politician is this passionate need to secure a place as they see it in history, often more powerful than the perks of office or even the trappings of power itself. However, the personal letters which do show him in a very bad light such as his relations with Ethel, his eldest child, were not

removed or destroyed which I did find somewhat odd. They show him as mean spirited in respect to his children whose births had not been registered and their mother, whom he never married. It may be that he did not expect that the personal memorabilia could possibly interest a researcher, only the *serious* activities of the politician and statesman.

The correspondence at the NLA is often fascinating since letter writing was the norm for communications in those days and they are often very literary, with the writers giving vent to imaginative meanderings, not merely the communication of information. Sir Arthur Streeton muses on the life of the silkworm, Billy waxes lyrical in Greek to thank the Postmaster General for providing a telephone kiosk in his neighbourhood, the British Colonial Secretary wonders how much more damage Billy will wreak on Australia's eucalyptus after yet another car accident by the terror of the Canberra/Sydney pockmarked road. In our age of email and text messaging future biographers will have a much greater task in unearthing the more vital and illuminating traits of character of contemporary politicians than authors writing about personalities in what perhaps was the golden age of letter writing. Worse, I fear, we may be interesting as an age of diminished literacy where communication seems more and more to be condensed into jargon shorthand.

Two years ago I was having lunch with the then head of Parliament's research department in the Senate when Mark Latham passed by, greeted me and said that he thought I had returned to Europe. I replied that indeed I had but was back writing a book on Billy Hughes. "Not the greatest friend of the Australian Labor Party," was his immediate response. When Barry Jones learnt of the book's imminent publication, his immediate question was whether I had included the episode concerning Mahon who had been kicked out of the ALP for sedition, the worst example of Hughes' perfidy according to the President of the ALP. Now of course sedition rings contemporary bells and Hughes' abandonment of the Party he had helped to create cast him into the front line of Labor defectors. But it did strike me as at least a trifle surprising that this was the first reaction of current Labor leaders, 50 and more years after Hughes' death, when other Labor leaders like Evatt (temporarily) and Lyons had also defected from the Party and a man of the stature of Curtin, for example, had held Hughes in high esteem despite the trauma occasioned by the conscription issue some 20 years earlier.

The book is not an assessment of Hughes' place in history, a properly qualified historian is needed for that, nor does it attempt to defend or approve his actions and policies. I was intrigued by the man and wanted to juxtapose his public face with the often banal, sometimes dramatic events in his private life. Nevertheless some

reflections on issues he was involved with over a long public career were inescapable, so let me mention a few.

Conscription

In the book I quote Gerard Henderson, who wrote that “Hughes was one of the few Australian leaders who put guns before butter”. Some commentators believe that Billy was seduced by the attention he was given on his year-long visit to the UK shortly after becoming Prime Minister and wanted to ingratiate himself with British leaders by pouring more and more soldiers into the trenches. I think a dispassionate examination of the record shows this to be false. Hughes and many others at the time, including the Allied High Command, believed even in the early months of 1918 that the war could be lost. Correspondence between Hughes and Keith Murdoch makes this very plain. It was not just the consequences for Europe that concerned Hughes, but the fact that Germany would retain her possessions in the Pacific and thereby constitute a potential threat to the security of Australia.

It may be that what became a watershed in Australian politics was not the issue of conscription as such but the manner in which the two campaigns were fought or slugged out. On reading the details of the really gross exaggerations of both sides, I was rather reminded of the campaigns fought in Norway over successive referenda on whether the country should join the European Union or not. One typical example similar to some of the propaganda of both sides in the conscription debate was a poster, in what I can only describe as Soviet realism style, depicting Norway as a fair damsel defenceless on the floor with a hooded and black figure poised over her about to drive a stake through her heart, a claw of a hand and a rosary around it. In Australia there was the intriguing story that someone had tried to assassinate Billy Hughes during one of the conscription campaigns when a figure was reported prowling around his house in the early hours of the morning. On investigation it appeared that the alleged prowler was in fact the milk-man.

It is also worth noting other points relevant to this time.

- The strange irony that even if conscription had been instigated it is unlikely that more men would have gone to war than went voluntarily.
- Although some allied soldiers were shot for capital offences during the war, but nowhere near the numbers of popular misconception, Hughes ensured that no Australian was subjected to the death penalty whatever their transgression.
- His decision to repatriate the AIF at the earliest possible opportunity.

- His zeal in pursuing compensation for the returned soldiers; in his house in Melbourne before the move of Parliament to Canberra, he kept a stack of blankets to give to ex-servicemen down on their luck who regularly knocked on his door.

The little digger image remained attached to him and was remembered for years after his death with an empty chair reserved in his memory in Martin Place, Sydney, for the Anzac parade and a digger's hat laid on it. The image, however, was not merely the result of his incumbency and zeal in pursuing the war nor his three visits to the front or his stirring speeches. It was also due, I believe, to both his countrymen's pride in having a visible champion of their own bestriding the international stage and also his unceasing work on behalf of returned servicemen both in his consequent official and unofficial capacities.

Others, especially W.J. Hudson, have written of the ensuing peace conference constituting the birth of Australian diplomacy and the beginnings of a distinctive Australian external policy. I imagine that the younger generation of Australians would be somewhat surprised to learn that, at that time, Australian Foreign Affairs were conducted via the British Colonial Office and that Australia had no independent foreign embassies until the 1940s. Hughes hated the Colonial Office and throughout his career consistently argued for an independent Australian voice, albeit within the British Empire. It was this defence of Australia's rights which saw him insist on Australia having mandatory powers for the territories in her Pacific hinterland, especially Papua New Guinea, and refuse the Japanese Government's demand for the insertion of a racial equity clause in the final convention. This was, of course, also a reflection of the then almost unanimous Australian commitment to a White Australia Policy but for Hughes it also underlay his deep suspicion of Japanese intentions in the Pacific, suspicions that were shown later to have been well founded.

Domestic Issues

Commentators over the years have mainly concentrated on Billy's short heyday in the international arena, but his contribution to the development of the infant Commonwealth throughout his long career was considerable; much of the early tactical and strategic thinking of the nascent Labor Party came from his and his friend Holman's fertile minds, especially from the newspaper they published called *The New Order* and later a series of articles Hughes wrote for the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* prior to his election to the New South Wales Parliament. Hughes was in the forefront of having Labor adopt the principle of party before person.

In parliament one of his early passions was to get the eight hour working day onto the statute book. And it was Hughes who became the main force behind the reforms of the Fisher ministry, establishing old age pensions, and he was the instigator of the arbitration court as a means to settle industrial disputes, as strikes were always the worst option. And there was his guiding counsel for equality legislation. He was a member of the committee set up to choose a capital city; he boosted the creation of the CSIRO, the development of civil aviation, fought for the establishment of the trans-continental railway, furthered the cause of opening up the Northern Territory, argued for the appointment of an Australian born Governor General and toyed with the idea of getting rid of the paraphernalia of state parliaments and state governors. Even in his late eighties he was exhibiting continuing curiosity in nuclear energy, Australian inventions such as the aircraft, acidification, a possible home for Jewish people and an Australian brand of cigarettes made from eucalypts. Evatt, I think, was right in his evaluation of Hughes as an unreformed radical.

And the man

A conundrum, multi-faceted and multi-layered, choose any adjective critical or laudatory and it could apply to Billy Hughes - apart, perhaps, from modest or humble. There is a tale of the Franciscan, the Dominican and the Jesuit being asked to convey what their various orders stood for. One said poverty, the other obedience but the Jesuit replied, "Well I think we're tops on humility." If Billy had been in orders he would have been a Jesuit.

When he was about to be ousted as PM in 1923 *The Herald* wrote:

In public life there have been men much sounder in judgement, richer in culture and infinitely less selfish and less vain but none so engaging in personality nor so variable in mood. At his worst, Mr Hughes is perhaps the rudest, most uncouth, most morose personality that has stalked large upon the Australian stage. At his best, the richest in humour, the most brilliant and engaging in conversation, the most appealing in personality. He is the most incongruous man we have known.

I am no apologist for Billy Hughes but it does strike me that this would have been a fitting summation for posterity; certainly he deserves better than "king rat".

ANNUAL DINNER 2006



Photographer: David Karonidis



Matt Price



Margaret Simons



Stephen Matchett

Long criticised, the Parliamentary Press Gallery has been nicknamed the “Rat Pack” – feeding off gossip and statements from politicians and their staff, and often putting out a sort of Gallery consensus in their commentary from their all too familiar and common environment. But the politicians can’t ignore them, spinning their messages and feeding out lines. On Wednesday 1 February 2006, as federal parliament returned from its summer break, Matt Price, columnist with *The Australian’s* Press Gallery office, Margaret Simons, journalist and author, and Dr Stephen Matchett, a Sydney based leader writer and columnist for *The Australian* gave three very different views in a discussion of the Gallery and its function. Stephen Matchett’s paper is an edited transcript of his remarks on the night.

THE FEDERAL

PARLIAMENTARY PRESS GALLERY: INSULAR, INTRUSIVE, INDISPENSABLE?

Stephen Matchett

As a Sydney based leader writer and columnist for *The Australian* I bring no inside understanding of the Gallery. I have never worked there, and unless all their smart staff desert my present masters, never will. As an outsider I look upon the work of Hartcher and Maiden, Price and Tingle in awe. I often look upon the work of Ramsey in incomprehension. So, all I can do this evening is offer personal opinions on the three charges levelled against the Gallery. My views are utterly inexpert, informed only by what I read, which I fear is far more political coverage and commentary than is healthy.

As to insularity, it is inevitable, assuming covering the great game of government can be called insular in the first place. But the charge cannot be levelled at the Gallery as a whole. Coverage of Canberra, and all that happens there, is a good deal more diverse than it used to be. Where once the Gallery was mainly interested in the gladiatorial combat of politics, today it has many members who are focused on policy.

The old guard of the Gallery works as it always has, comfortable within the keep of the walled city that is Canberra. And some of its members rarely venture beyond the fortress. These members of the Gallery are the equivalent of court correspondents, they deal with the minutia of the imperial household, rather than the impact of politics as it is played out in the provinces, where we plebs live. They are obsessed with the politics of the pecking order, the “whose-in-whose-out” stories. The meanings of the muffled conversations in the corridors of power, the rumours of executions imminent or avoided, fascinate them. The story they live for is an abdication or assassination at court. And they dream of the exclusive announcing a handover of the keys to the Lodge.

You might think not even obsessives can write about party leadership every day, well they can and they do. The problem is editorial

enthusiasm, for the story is not absolutely endless. And strange to relate, not all that many Australians care about Peter Costello's career. Even fewer know Jenny Macklin has one. So to feed their addiction for intrigue and confrontation they find lesser stories that are important around parliament, and even present the ephemeral as epochal.

We saw a great example of this last week with reporting of the latest stage in the death march of the National Party. Senator McGauran's defection, like any argument advanced by Barnaby Joyce, does not matter much. But by the time the Gallery scribes were finished the circumstances of the two senators were gotterdammerung in Gippsland and St George.

Certainly the decline of the Nationals is a strong political story, one we have not heard the end of. And it is easily argued that this is what politics is about, that the elements of the next election are being assembled now in affrays like this. But today there is more going on in the Gallery than the pursuit of politics in Parliament House. The professionals are now just as likely to be policy as well as political tragedies.

It sometimes seems that critics of the Press Gallery are on a generational delay in the way they accuse all its members of focusing on politics as a blood sport and ignoring the issues that shape all our lives. Because, ever since the Whitlam and Fraser governments demonstrated that economic incompetence has consequences, Australians have kept a keen eye on the economy and public sector spending. And the media, particularly the quality print media have served them well. Anybody who argues against this should consider the coverage of public policy and economics in the quality Australian papers against what appears in their international peers. *The Australian* and *Australian Financial Review* compare very well in the quality of analysis and depth of detail.

Yes the *Financial Times* and *Wall Street Journal* have more money to spend on specialist stories. But at their best, our quality papers match the work of serious papers written for general readers, like the *Telegraph* in London, the *Washington Post* or the *Chicago Tribune*. There is a great deal more written about tax and water reform, communications policy or electricity prices in the main media here than in most comparable overseas products.

Certainly the *AFR* is likely the most leftwing business paper in the world, with old and opinionated warhorses on its staff writing commentary. But it also has a raft of policy experts who are across their rounds in detail. The same applies at *The Australian* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*. And having experts who speak fluent Treasury or Defence is as important today as having reporters who are on chatting terms with the National Party whip, (whoever it is has plenty of time to talk). Nor is the journalist as policy wonk always based in

the Gallery. Certainly many policy experts, such as Laura Tingle at the *AFR* and Patrick Walters and David Uren at *The Australian* are. But that master of the dark arts of tax policy and welfare spending, George Megalogenis, is located in Melbourne

So, the Gallery is insular; the political part of its collective task requires it to be. But it is also focused on public policy. The Gallery exists to keep the politicians honest in the way they exercise power and us all informed on public policy. And if this is insular, then more insularity is what we all need.

Whether the Gallery is intrusive depends on who you are. For Malcolm Turnbull, who in his most recent incarnation seems to never meet a journalist he does not like, it probably is not. When Craig Emerson was stuck with selling the ludicrous IR policy Labor carried to the last election he appeared to take commentary and criticism quite personally. Once, incredible though it must seem, he even issued a media release condemning the innocents who write leaders for *The Australian*, who had pointed out some of the problems in his policy! But now he is back on form as a tax reformer I imagine he welcomes every call asking for his opinion on how we can reduce the evil impacts of bracket creep.

As for ministers, as well as major mandarins – they are fair game. While the rules about what is on and off the record are clear, these people prosper by giving out information as and when it suits them. One very senior public servant once gave a journalist an advanced copy of a speech detailing how he was going to crack down on leaks. It is the Gallery's job to get what these operators don't want to give.

Then there are the people the Gallery does not intrude on often enough – public servants with secrets to keep for their masters. It is the job of journalists to learn everything they can from minor mandarins who are the keepers of the policy detail. Sadly most mandarins dare not talk for fear of ending up in the slammer. It is worth remembering that two *Herald Sun* hacks acquired details of a cynical strategy that tried to dress a policy loss for Danna Vale when she was a minister as a win. A public servant actually faced the prospect of prison if he had been convicted of the leak.

So while it is the job of journalists to intrude, and keep on intruding, they should accept there will be inevitable rebuffs from cautious civil servants. But people's private lives are always off the record – except when a politician's behaviour puts them into play. As Bob Woods did in his very public affair with a staffer, funded in part from the public purse. Like Peter Reith did by giving his son the famous phone card. And like the way Mark Latham did when he made his family part of his public persona during his brief run as Labor leader. Mr Latham talked constantly of his family, trotting his sons out for pic ops when it suited. It was only when the alternative prime

minister decided for his own erratic reasons that they were out of the picture that he objected to any one photographing them.

Certainly Mr Latham's private life was used unreasonably by the *SMH* in a failed smear by Damien Murphy and Deborah Snow on 10 July 2004. They trawled for dirt and when they found nothing much wrote a story anyway. When people complain about journalism that is intrusive and vulgar this is the sort of story they mean. It added nothing to our understanding of Mark Latham's erratic public performance and eccentric ideas. But it is also worth remembering that because most of the Gallery inhabit the walled city of Parliament House they often feel a sense of familiarity, if not friendship, with the people they work with. Cheryl Kernot tried to make herself a martyr over the way her affair with Gareth Evans eventually emerged, but the story was known and not written until she all but dared somebody to do it.

Certainly Gallery members stick their bibs in when people would prefer they didn't. Sometimes they go too far. But when it comes to the policy-focused press, far more often than not, they don't. As to whether they are indispensable, a question that would not even occur to many of them, in fact they are. If the Gallery did not exist we would need to invent it, if only to give us a hope of knowing how we are being governed.

We need the political Gallery to keep us briefed on the factional deals our masters would prefer us not to know about. And we need the policy Gallery to explain to us, and often to the politicians, what their policies mean. Certainly all strategy stories have a tactical element, the last minute deals done in the corridors of power, that sort of stuff. The way the Prime Minister outmanoeuvred Mark Latham over the Tasmanian forests towards the end of the last campaign is a classic tactical story. But much of the coverage was not complete because the people reporting did not have time to get across the regional forest agreements. Watching the Environment Minister and his shadow interviewed by Tony Jones at the height of the dispute was less than illuminating, because none of them appeared to have much of an idea what they were arguing about.

And this is where the experts enter. The people with degrees in accounting and economics, the defence and social security specialists, journalists who can write like reporters but bring policy expertise and the sense of the scholar to their rounds. And wherever they are based, these are the journalists we need to keep us informed on policy as well as politics. These roles are equally important and the greats of the Gallery fill them both. The practice of parliamentary democracy is ultimately about raw power, about who has the numbers, who has the courage to stare down his or her enemies and the cunning to stitch them up before they know they are under attack.

And the Gallery journalists with the experience and insight to understand what is happening explain it to the rest of us. It is important that they do. Because the more lights that are shined in the corridors of power, the more accountable politicians are, especially the professional plotters of the party machines who infest state and federal upper houses.

But in a policy literate electorate policy also matters. The debate on tax reform is now shaped not only by what Peter Costello and Wayne Swan say. It also involves the work of experts in the universities, think tanks and industry associations. And they reach the broadest audiences through the work of journalists who understand, and communicate their work. In place of tax I could insert, social security and defence, IT and childcare, water policy and energy strategy.

The role of the crusading editor is also essential. At *The Australian*, editor Michael Stutchbury and editor-in-chief Chris Mitchell drive coverage of debates on core public policy issues ranging from tax reform to school curriculum. And an opinion editor with news sense and policy nous can play an essential role in giving academics and industry experts a bully pulpit to reach an educated audience far larger than anything they could hope to attract through their normal work. The work of Tom Switzer at *The Australian* is an obvious example of journalism where policy shapes political coverage.

Is the Gallery indispensable? Perhaps the response depends on what part of it you are talking about, the policy analysts or the political commentators. As far as I am concerned the answer is yes and yes.

In conclusion, the Press Gallery is unavoidably insular, rightly intrusive and utterly indispensable. Many its members are also idiosyncratic, iconoclastic and at times inappropriate. But who said being inoffensive is part of their job description?

THE PARLIAMENTARY

PRESS GALLERY – INSULAR, INTRUSIVE OR INDISPENSABLE?

Margaret Simons

The question posed by tonight's topic is fairly easily answered. The Gallery: insular, intrusive or indispensable? The obvious answer is "all of the above". But before I delve any further, I'd like to address the context in which this question is posed - the times we live in. If the gallery is indeed indispensable, then we neglect this context at our peril. This is because we are living at the end of a media era, and one of the things we are going to have to come to grips with is that the business model for what we usually call "serious", or "quality" political journalism (all terms which I think need critical examination) in this country is broken.

There are no broadsheet newspapers in Australia that are making serious money. A senior Fairfax executive confided to me recently that while the broadsheets do still make money, it is less than you would make by putting your funds in a term deposit. Nobody knows the breakdown of figures for *The Australian*, but it is public knowledge that it used to lose money, and I don't think it makes heaps now. *The Bulletin* makes a loss. Channel 9's *Sunday* doesn't make money. And so on.

Television and radio make big money of course, but still it is the case that none of the dominant media players can be confident that their business models will survive the next ten years. I am not saying the industry is doomed. I am sure it will change. Some will make the leap to the future, others will fail either to leap or build adequate bridges. What I am trying to highlight is that very fundamental change is upon us, and as the form by which news is delivered alters so too must the content. Form has always both followed and altered function.

Why, since they don't make much money, are the portals of serious journalism still with us? Partly it is legacy and history – although change is upon us, it has not yet played out. Also such journalism has a value above and beyond its money making capabilities, and this is very important indeed. We have been accustomed to thinking of media as the bundle of ads and journalism, but in the new media world these links are loosened, and perhaps broken. We can have ads without

journalism. As most of you will have discovered for yourselves the most efficient way to search for a new car, or house or job these days is not to buy a newspaper. Online ads do the job better. When you find your car or whatever online, it is most unlikely that as a by-product of that process you will find yourself reading Michelle Grattan or Gerard Henderson or Stephen Matchett or Matt Price. So there are ads without journalism.

What is less certain is whether we can have journalism without having the ads. Whether there is a business model that can pay for what good journalists do.

The new media world makes the business model for serious journalism very vulnerable, but it also highlights the obvious point that journalism is *not* media. The media is the business of conveying audiences to advertisers. Journalism has been part of this process, but it has a purpose and an importance different to that of media.¹

And this is part of the reason the portals of serious journalism survive. In the case of News Limited and, at least until recently, the Packer organisation, there have been strong proprietors who for whatever mix of motives are interested in journalism and who have supported it. Many underestimate the importance of this.

Fairfax has lacked such a strong proprietor, and so answers to investors concerned with return on investment. Understandably it is seeking expansion into “media” rather than necessarily into “journalism”. RSVP and the like. Journalism is still important to Fairfax, but as insiders confide the business model to support it has not yet emerged. Perhaps it will. Perhaps not. Perhaps in the future there will be little difference between advertising and journalism. This is one of the possible futures.

But another of the many possible futures in media, (and I don’t pretend to know where the future lies) one possibility is that we are living at the end of the media empires and their emperors. Kerry Packer is dead. Within 10 years, Rupert Murdoch may be dead too. The pressure is for the empires to become companies like any other – answerable first to investors looking to maximise returns. These investors will be interested in media, but not necessarily in journalism.

So if the empires are in their dying days, then those of us who rely on so-called quality political journalism for part of our world view may be entering a post-colonial era. Like all post-colonial eras, this may teach us some of the things the empires did for us that we failed to fully appreciate. I am reminded of that Monty Python film *The Life of Brian*, in which a character says belligerently, “What did the Romans ever do for us?” He is reminded that the answer is – quite a lot. Aqueducts. Schools. Roads. Sanitation. So what did the media empires do for us? Information. Investigation. Discussion. The animation of democracy. Entertainment. Quite a lot.

We will have to think seriously about how these things are to be obtained in the future. In our country, with its small population, entertainment is probably the only one that can be relied on to look after itself.

This gives a new urgency to tonight's question – insular, intrusive or indispensable – because the likelihood is that if people are going to want political journalism of the “broadsheet” kind in the future, then one way or another they are going to have to pay much more for it than they do now. Will they be willing to do so in sufficient numbers? For the press gallery it is an urgent and uncomfortable question, I suggest. Because the gallery in my opinion is so insular for so much of the time the only answer can be “no”. This does not mean, or should not mean, that serious political journalism is dead. I think it does mean that it will have to be re-imagined and redefined.

Let me try to explain what I mean.

Reflect for a moment on the journalism leading up to the 2004 federal election. Can you name any single piece of journalism, or even any collection of journalistic efforts which you believe had an impact on the final result? If you are like me, it's quite a challenge. Certainly there are images. The Latham-Howard handshake on the last day, perhaps, may have swayed a vote or two. And all that stuff about the bucks' night video, if you can call that journalism. Fiction or gossip might be more appropriate metaphors. What an unhealthy fever that was, for the Canberra press gallery. Do you need any more evidence of their insularity? Baseless gossip built up such a head of steam that it boiled over into print.

Another candidate might be Mike Carlton's interview with Latham in which the latter declared his intention to bring Australian troops home by Christmas. Possibly, the journalism relating to Latham's personal life was damaging, leaving as it did an impression of a bully who, (while this allegations was never made and I do not believe it to be true) was a wife batterer. And as Stephen Matchett pointed out on the night this discussion was held, there was that final image of timber workers greeting John Howard like their best friend. Only some of this journalism came from the Canberra press gallery of course.

But by and large, I don't think journalism did have any measurable impact on the election. All the surveys and public opinion polls suggest that most voters made up their minds long before the campaign opened. Another sizable minority made up their minds very early in the campaign, and the remaining few were far more influenced by advertising - particularly the ads on interest rates and those showing Latham on L plates. And I would suggest this is the way of things. Ratings for news and current affairs are dropping. In the 1980s and 1990s they led the evening for commercial television. No longer. Newspaper circulations are dropping. Audiences are partially

fragmenting, but for what we are accustomed to thinking of as serious political journalism they are shrinking.

This raises the question – an urgent question not only for the Canberra press gallery but for all journalists. Do people actually want journalism any more? Or another way of asking this question is (a way I much prefer) are journalists providing the sort of journalism that people want? Is journalism *useful* to the majority, or even a minority, of Australians? As I said, these are questions for all journalists, not only those in Canberra. But the Canberra press gallery always seems to represent the pointy end, or the most extreme example, of the pathologies and the strengths of the whole occupation.

I'm not suggesting that, to be useful, journalists should become populists, or reality television producers intent on giving the masses exactly what they want and nothing more. But I am suggesting that if there is to be good journalism, relevant journalism, then journalists will have to address this divide between what they are providing, and what people find useful and interesting.

The problem is not that people aren't interested in politics, although this is often rather glibly claimed. As Murray Goot has found,² and the ANU's consistently excellent surveys of social attitudes show, Australian levels of interest in politics are consistently high by international standards. And yet it is also the case that commercial television news producers well know that whenever they show a picture of the inside of the House of Representatives in Canberra, there is an instant turn-off effect. They can measure these things these days – minute by minute. There is so much information on when people turn on and off that it can, to quote one Channel 7 executive I spoke to recently, "drive you crazy". But the pictures of the House of Representatives are well known as a reliable turn-off.

So what do Australians mean when they say they are interested in politics? And how might political journalists in this new century respond to this, reinvent themselves?

Who can deny that as it stands much political journalism is awfully boring? No more than reports of people saying pretty much what you would expect them to say in a kind of abstract posturing in the public eye. A playing of the game, with well defined rules. Being "off message" is a disaster, even if what you are saying is true and interesting.

It's no coincidence I think, that at a time when current events ratings and newspaper circulations are trending down, that non-fiction books are in the ascendancy. The faux objective voice of much news reporting and analysis has become a barrier in itself, and an artefact of a strange kind of politics which most people find impenetrable, boring and irrelevant.

Think, for example, about what journalists are doing every time they refer to the voters, and how they might think and react, as though the voters were some group of people very different from the ones reading the newspaper or watching the television. There are other abstract terms, too: the markets, the bush, are two in common use. What do they mean? Not much. They're facades behind which the journalists broadcast their own world view. The language appears objective but is anything but. Another example. How many people do you think know who Julian McGauran is? Certainly more than did a few months ago. But, in all seriousness, what would be your best guess? A senior politician I asked suggested 30,000 to 40,000 as a starting point. I think it might be more than that, but I doubt if it is more than a few hundred thousand. If he was a member of the lower house, we might be able to factor in his electorate, but given that the Senate voting system is designed to keep voters in the dark about who they are actually voting for, I don't think we can cut much slack there. How many care who he is? Those that do must care mainly because of the impact of McGauran's defection on the Cabinet reshuffle and the long term impact on the coalition and the National Party. I am not suggesting these are unimportant things, or that they shouldn't be reported.

But look at the acres of newsprint devoted to his defection over the last couple of weeks, and more on Saturday, with very little of this really focussing on the end results. What on earth does the press gallery think it is doing? Can it really believe that this blow-by-blow-how-he-made-the-decision-when-did-he-call-Peter-Costello style of reporting is what most people want and need, when they say they are interested in politics? Only an insular gallery, insular to the point of pathology, and insular bosses back in the state capitals as well, could behave as though this were the political story of most interest and importance that week.

And it is not enough for the gallery to reply, "Yes but what do you expect. We rake over the politics ad infinitum. This is what we are paid to do." There were other political stories that were relatively neglected in the same week. For example, it took nearly a fortnight for any analysis of what Judy Bishop's move to the education portfolio might portend. The first analysis I heard of this move was on the specialist ABC Radio National arts and science programs, rather than in the mainstream of political reporting. And yet most Australians care deeply about education.

The second part of tonight's question is whether the gallery is intrusive. The answer depends partly on what case study you pick, but I think you can argue that it is sometimes not intrusive enough. The example I would choose is that of Laurie Oakes' decision to publish the facts of Cheryl Kernot and Gareth Evans' affair. Now that was

a difficult call, and Oakes agonised over it, to his credit. I think on balance it was a justifiable story. Kernot and Evans had been involved in negotiating key legislation through the Senate at the time of the affair, and later there was Kernot's defection to the Labor Party.

But the story was not broken at this time. It was broken years later, when both people were out of public life. The publication would have been much more clearly justifiable when they were still powerful. Why were the rumours not investigated, and the story exposed, back then? The answer, I suspect, is that when the gallery reports politics, it is reporting office gossip. Like any office, there are subtle and largely unconscious conventions that govern what is permissible behaviour, and what is not acceptable. To have published the details at the time would have been a very rude thing to do. Not at all nice. And the reporter who did it would have to carry on living and working alongside the other denizens of the office. Years later, with one party out of the country and the other out of politics, the heat was considerably reduced.

It is impossible to measure or prove, but I think the gallery's insularity leads to it being *not intrusive enough* at times, because they are simply too damn close to be able to live with the consequences of intrusion. Nevertheless, I do think the Canberra Press Gallery is indispensable. We do need people up close. We do need a window on the gossip in this most important of offices. But we need more as well. In the post-colonial era, I would suggest that we need to redefine what we mean by quality political journalism.

Historically, when idealistic journalists have talked about journalism's role, they have used light-based metaphors. Journalism, it is said, is a mirror on society. It is about reflecting society back to itself or as the journalists' code of ethics puts it, describing society to itself. "Shining light into dark corners" is another phrase often used. But in the new world I think other metaphors may be more useful. I like the one suggested by Jay Rosen, the New York University journalism academic, on his trip to Melbourne last year. He suggested that journalism was best understood not as a mirror, but as a map.

Maps tell you where you are, but they also tell you how where you are connects to everywhere else. You can have all kinds of maps. You can map demographics, streets, sewer systems. The key question is not "is this a biased map", or "is this a map with the correct values". The user of a map asks only "is this a useful map?" Does it explain the world to me in a way that makes sense of where I live, and my connection to others? Can I use this map? Does it give me the power to move around and explore? (Obviously an extremely biased map, with relevant bits missing, out of place or distorted, would not satisfy any of these tests).

But enough of metaphors. What do I mean in concrete terms? One of the reasons journalists are so despised is surely because so much of what they do has a corrosive effect. Journalists themselves tend to talk about the highest aspirations of their craft in negative terms. Good journalism, it's said, is that which scrutinises questions, picks apart and exposes. Journalists are spoken about in canine metaphors: they're watchdogs, or attack dogs, they hunt in packs, and they sniff things out. Deeply embedded in this jargon of journalists is a largely unconscious view of themselves as hard, unlovable and driven characters. The language of the news room is full of quite hilarious male sexual metaphors. The kinds of stories that go on the front page of newspapers are hard news. This is urgent news that must be conveyed straight away. Human interest is soft and usually regarded as less important.

A good story is said to be sexy. There's no room in that sort of world for the amorphous, the uncertain, the mysterious; little room for the local, the family oriented, the private. Secrets exist only to be exposed character only to be divined, the murky only to be illuminated. Seen this way, journalism is an intensively *corrosive* profession.

But there is another way of looking at journalism. Much more important than journalism's corrosive effect is the way in which it connects and builds. Journalism is predicated on an assumption of social cohesion. News organisations assume that there are some things that interest us all, or ought to interest us all. Every time an editor or a producer decides on the content of a front page or the lead story in a television bulletin, they're heeding some innate and largely unquestioned sense of the common concerns of the community. So journalism, almost despite itself, has a nurturing, building role, and this too is caught in the language of the news room. Journalism, when it works, is a statement of what concerns we have in common, and it is necessarily constructive in this way. And it's in this direction, an increased appreciation for the linking, and building role of journalism that the future must lie. Those who already use the Internet to get information will readily appreciate the relevance of these words to how the Internet works. Linking. Connections. Constructing.

We need to have the courage to reinvent ourselves and to go back to root purpose. Rather than put material out that we think people should want, and expect it to find its audience, (which is what the Canberra Press gallery does most of the time, and also what the new alternative publications, such as *The Monthly*, and *New Matilda* are mostly doing), we need to go back to the roots of journalism. We need to find audiences and discover what they need in the way of journalism, and start to give it to them. I like to think of it not so much as building bridges between the political insiders and outsiders, as making inside bigger, more dispersal of power, more channels through

which information and power can flow, and surely these have always been the characteristics of the best journalism.

In the world of the future we will have smaller audiences, but they will be intensely and quickly networked. Connections will be powerful. And this intensity of connection might well mean that people are prepared to pay for their information. And the intensity of the audience engagement may well mean that these publications of the future are attractive to advertisers. This kind of journalism – local not necessarily in a geographic sense, but certainly in the sense of serving audiences with common interests – needs to become the repository of the best journalism, the most intense investigation. It needs to be treated with the sort of seriousness of purpose which in an earlier age was lavished on the work of the nation's broadsheets.

To the extent that political journalism remains insular, it will increasingly be confronted with what is already the fact: that the office gossip of Parliament House is riveting only to those who are part of that club, and perhaps a very few rather weird outsiders. This is an audience to be sure, but serving it has a very limited effect. What the rest of us need is a map that is useful, compelling and indispensable. A map that starts with what is happening at the local school or hospital, and shows how this is connected to the big ideas and the big tides of politics. We need to know what politics means for the connections we make, the services we need, the aspirations we have.

Endnotes

- 1 I am indebted for this insight to Jay Rosen's "Press think" blog at <http://journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/weblogs/pressthink/>, and also to conversations with Rosen during his visit to Melbourne for the Alfred Deakin lectures in 2005.
- 2 See Goot's essay in *The Prince's New Clothes: Why do Australians Dislike Their Politicians?* Edited by David Burchill and Andrew Leigh and published by UNSW Press.

THE PARLIAMENTARY

PRESS GALLERY – INSULAR, INTRUSIVE OR INDISPENSABLE?

Matt Price

It's always a pleasure to get to Sydney and a privilege to share a podium with Margaret and Stephen. I guess I'm here to defend the press gallery, which I'm happy to do. But it's also a rather tricky assignment since there is, in my view, no such thing as a definitive press gallery.

There are 200 to 300 individuals who work in that crowded corridor on the second floor of the Senate side of Parliament House. They – we – perform all kinds of tasks ... from wiring up MPs for press conferences, reporting for international wire services, churning out hourly radio bulletins, covering individual rounds such as defence, education and health, and – I guess most famously, or infamously – there are the pundits, the pipe smokers, the higher profile columnists who, I suspect, are the people I'm really here to defend.

I'm happy to do that but I think it's useful to point out that they – we – are the tip of a rather large iceberg. We write columns and appear on TV and get our faces in the paper and, I guess, represent the allegedly glamorous side of our profession. But what's usually ignored is the spectacularly unglamorous, often incredibly important digging, scraping and trawling going on beneath the surface. I won't take up precious time documenting some of the brilliant, crucial work that gets done in that second floor corridor by roundsmen and women on the various papers.

But my judgment, after close to 25 years in the trade, is that this is journalism of the very highest order. In a column, a few years ago, I described these often unheralded reporters as the saints of democracy. Not many people agreed, but I'll stick with that assessment. What everyone seems to agree upon is that the gallery, as a brand, has its problems.

When Mark Latham gave his remarkable interview to Andrew Denton during the public relations blitz for the infamous diaries, the only time the audience applauded was when the gentle chronicler-turned-home-dad criticised the gallery. They may have been appalled

or enthralled by Latham – I’m not sure which – but they most certainly didn’t like us. Nor, I suspect, do many of you. Perhaps it’s because we are, as the title of this discussion suggests, insular and intrusive.

Now it’s true we live in a peculiar hybrid city, full of confusing roundabouts, large buildings jam packed with public servants and punters who, by and large, are better educated, better paid and more inclined to vote Labor than anywhere else in the land. And it’s also true we spend an inordinate amount of our time focusing on federal politics. But to criticise that is to chastise Richie Benaud for obsessing about cricket. Or to wonder why your local newspaper’s Jakarta correspondent writes so many stories about Indonesia.

That’s why we’re paid to inhabit that second floor corridor – to report politics.

I try to avoid it myself – finding any excuse to dip into whatever else is going around on the national daily. Yet it can’t be avoided – probably 70 per cent of what I’ve written these past five or six years has been about federal politics. Does this make us insular – I don’t think so.

You’ve got me at a good time – in the final few days of a five week break. There’s nothing like a holiday to make an opinionated, puffed up press gallery journo understand his or her place in the wider scheme of things. I general try to tune out during holidays but, like you all, I’ve not been able to evade the avalanche of coverage afforded Julian McGauran’s defection to the Liberals. It is, after all, still technically the silly season and there are very few sillier than the Victorian senator.

I guess you could argue that my colleagues engaged in the endless reporting of McGauran-gate are obsessive and insular – after all, does anyone really believe your average punter beyond the boundaries of the parliamentary triangle gives a flying Wilson Tuckey about McGauran – now or ever. Of course not.

I haven’t spoken with them, but I’d bet these colleagues who have been up to their armpits in the reporting of Coalition hijinks are more acutely aware than anyone else that the minute details of much of this story are about as relevant to the average Australian as arts programming on the ABC. But sorry, that’s what journalists – press gallery or otherwise – do.

When there’s a big murder or crime yarn, police reporters immerse themselves in the story, fishing for detail that can take the tale further and enhance public understanding. Sports journalists do the same when there’s a footy or cricket scandal. Press gallery journalists are paid to dice, slice and julienne federal politics. Sometimes their work can be futile and not published. Sometimes it can be complex or boring – the phrase “disappears up a cat’s arse” was invented for this

type of yarn. Often it's informative, especially for people interested in the field. Very occasionally it can be important and influential.

Of course, you can never be sure that what starts out seeming futile and cat's arse-ish might not develop into the latter. The McGauran story is very much an inside-the-beltway tale right now, but what if the Nationals back up their incessant grizzling with a split in the Senate? Or perhaps an attempted veto on Peter Costello's leadership claims.

Maybe those smelly cat's innards might eventually wind up flaming on the griller as a rock solid, ironclad barbecue stopper.

I hope many of you have read Gerard Henderson's recent *Quarterly* magazine because it contains an excellent piece by Stephen Matchett mulling over Mark Latham's legacy. It's a long essay which, early on, presents as one of its aims an explanation of "why a great many commentators and millions of electors took him – Latham – seriously for 12 months". The commentators, Stephen surmises, were having themselves on. I don't agree. In fact I think the opposite; that it was because we and our editors and ultimately the voters took Latham seriously that his flaws emerged and he was heavily defeated. Latham copped all kinds of coverage as befits a bloke who was foisted on the public as alternative PM on the eve of an election year. We reported his highs and lows, his mistakes and alleged triumphs. An awful lot of investigating and ruminating was performed by colleagues outside Canberra, but the gallery was all over Latham like a rash. It ultimately annoyed the heck out of him – Latham eventually concluded us to be a "miserable collection of oddballs and freaks" - but it also produced plenty of information to assist voters in making their decision. They chose wisely.

Recently, in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Michael Duffy, who is normally quite sensible, wrote one of the silliest paragraphs I've seen from a so-called pundit. In October, while railing against Kim Beazley's alleged uselessness, Michael thundered: "The media [he was referring to the gallery] is central to Beazley's position because it continues to take him seriously even though he doesn't deserve it. When an opposition becomes as irrelevant as Labor is now, the media should just turn off." I might caucus my colleagues in the Canberra bureau to test this novel approach on the editors at *The Australian* when I return to work. You can just imagine afternoon conference - "Sorry, Chris (Mitchell, editor in chief), but Labor and Beazley are irrelevant so we've all decided to just turn off." You can guess the response.

It may upset many of the political pipe smokers who occupy the *op ed* pages – a majority of whom, incidentally, aren't gallery folk – but a sizeable chunk of voters, ergo readers, vote Labor. Even at the 2004 election, when a wildly successful PM and government were pitted

against a volatile rookie and basket case party – or is that vice versa? - 47 and a half per cent of people preferred Latham to John Howard.

This is why we take the major political parties and their leaders seriously. Perhaps, occasionally, too seriously. But remember, even the most senior member of the gallery has limited sway over the prominence afforded their work. Outside the *Canberra Times*, none of the important editorial decisions on TV, radio and in newspapers are made in the national capital. We file our sometimes interesting, sometimes cat's-arse-ish tales to editors in Sydney, Melbourne and beyond who are paid to make decisions about spiking them, running them off page one and everything in between. No one is immune.

I once worked for the Nine network in Perth where – how's this for journalistic blasphemy – Laurie Oakes' stories would occasionally be ripped apart and re-voiced to cater for a local angle. This isn't a quaint West Australian custom – what Oakes gets up as the lead story in Sydney might be relegated to the second break in Melbourne or dropped in Brisbane. This may be infuriating for Laurie, but it's part of the process of local editors making local decisions about what their audience is interested in. As you'd expect – if this can happen to the Big Fella (and he doesn't like it) the rest of us are doubly vulnerable.

My paper – *The Australian* – is all over federal politics – it's our core business and Canberra stories routinely get a lot of prominence. But don't think there aren't arguments between HQ and the parliamentary bureau about whether Canberra is getting a fair run. These happen often, occasionally there is shouting involved and – guess what – Sydney decides the argument every time.

So yes, press gallery reporters are immersed in federal politics, perhaps unhealthily so. And yes, we know we live in an odd place, performing a peculiar and privileged job. And yes, we take federal politics seriously, very seriously. But there are filters – otherwise known as editors – who both demand this kind of commitment and ultimately decide how to run the stories.

That the highest selling newspapers in the land carry less political news than their so called more serious rivals is not, I suspect, a coincidence. By any fair measure, the gallery is not overly intrusive in its coverage of national affairs. The news cycle demands a lot of its politicians – if you want to, some one will point a microphone in your direction 20 hours a day (for more on this topic contact Kevin Rudd or Barnaby Joyce.)

If you're under the pump, you cop it on the net, at the doors of parliament, on AM, PM, *The World Today*, Radio National, the evening news, Sky's half hourly news and, when they eventually land on the doorstep, those dinosaurs, the daily papers. Political life is a vocation best avoided by fragile shrinking violets. But largely, we leave pollied' private lives alone, certainly in comparison with colleagues

in the UK and US. John Howard's been through the ringer during 32 years in politics, but Janette has remained a mainly private person and their children – Melanie, Richard and Tim – are safe to walk the streets sans sunnies and baseball caps. This, I think, is a very good thing.

Latham grizzled about the scrutiny – and some of the stuff published in 2004 was, I thought and wrote at the time, a bit over the top. But heavens, a bloke nobody really knew wanted to run the country. He happily exploited his family situation yet squealed when reporters wanted to know whether the boys would be educated at a public or private school. Latham's claims that the media was overly intrusive don't wash. Indeed, reflecting on the Latham experiment you could make a convincing argument we should have been more intrusive.

The *Diaries* revealed an astonishing capacity for nastiness and hatred – I suspect even my old mate Piers Akerman was surprised by their contents. In retrospect, we knew very little about the strange man who ran Howard close for a year. But let me make these observations about the coverage of Latham. First, he was very successful for a period – that's not rewriting history, that's fact. Second, I think Latham benefited in a way from the legacy of Bob Hawke – infamous drinker and womanizer who mended his ways on attaining high office. Surely Latham – charged with the job of alternative PM – would attempt to do the same. Yet, while I've explained how the gallery took Latham seriously, Latham, we now know from the *Diaries*, wasn't really serious about politics.

Thirdly, despite our alleged giant egos and eagerness to take centre stage, most journalists try to keep themselves out of the story. And I think this helped Latham because he had very odd relationships with many reporters – strange encounters and peculiar reactions to stories – which many of us simply wrote off as part of the rough and tumble of covering politics. I suspect even Gerard's guilty of this – I've heard he and Latham had a few odd encounters but, correct me if I'm wrong Gerard, I don't think you wrote about them.

Yet that instinct – to play down or ignore the personal interactions between MPs and journalists – is generally a sound one. This kind of thing can usually be filed under C for cat's arse ... readers aren't much interested. Before ending, let me end by dispelling a few myths. Press gallery journalists have families and mortgages. They mainly eat at home at night – I certainly do. This image of MPs and journos drinking and gossiping into the wee hours is largely a myth – it may have happened in the good old days but not any more. Everyone's too tired and busy.

The gallery is not, I believe, venally anti-Howard. I don't think it's possible to observe the PM at close range and not be astonished

by many of his qualities. Of course the gallery puts the government under the pump – and if Howard’s head comes into the frame it will get kicked as well. But anyone who argues Howard has suffered bad media coverage in recent years is a dill. Does that mean everyone loves Howard – of course not.

I may be going out on a limb here, but I’ll make an educated guess and declare Alan Ramsey doesn’t seem overly besotted with the PM’s charms. But that’s Captain Cranky’s business – he has a very well read column and can fill it as he pleases. I’m always bemused by the chorus of criticism about Ramsey. On the one hand, people chastise the gallery for allegedly singing from the same song sheet. Yet Ramsey dive bombs in from Planet Belligerent and causes all kinds of palpitations in Op ed Ville – and, while plainly shrieking from his own, very unique sheet music is regularly cited as evidence of the gallery and its ills.

Of course journos talk to journos in Canberra – we can hardly avoid each other. But in pipe-smoker/pundit land, there’s always fierce competition to say something original. You lodge your opinions or analysis on the page, not in your competitor’s ear. All this leads me to the third “I” of our discussion – indispensable.

No individual journalist is indispensable – you recognise that very quickly when you take a holiday. The relentless news cycle waits for no pipe-smoker – if you’re not around, that white space is quickly filled by somebody else. But the gallery is an important institution which serves this country well. It can be tough on our MPs, but the very best learn to deal with the scrutiny and criticism which, I think, prepares them well for the pressures of high office. Howard and Alexander Downer are excellent examples of this.

The gallery is coming under increasing scrutiny and I think this is a very good thing – we can’t be precious when we’re dishing it out ourselves. Can we do things better? Undoubtedly. Do we get things wrong? Absolutely. Are we indispensable? Until someone comes up with a better way of covering politics, I think so. At the very least, we give bloggers, non-Canberra columnists, cultural warriors and the Howard cheer squad something to complain about.

What on earth would they do otherwise?



Photo - David Karonidis

Judy Lumby

In her recently released *The Gift: Grandmothers and Grandchildren Today* (Pluto Press), and after interviewing a range of today's new grandmothers including Helen Garner, Wendy McCarthy, Quentin Bryce and Margaret Fink, Professor Judy Lumby asks why her experience felt so different from what she had observed about her own grandmothers' and mother's experiences of being a grandmother? What does it mean to be a grandmother in an age when women are living longer and healthier lives and looking and feeling young at 60? To discuss some of this, Judy Lumby, a nurse educator, spoke for The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 7 February 2006.

THAT WAS THEN; THIS

IS NOW

Judy Lumby

I first thought about being a grandmother when I held my first grandchild, Charlie, in my hands as he emerged from his birthing journey. I was privileged to have been part of this wonderful experience of being with my eldest daughter Catharine as she tackled her labour just as she tackles life – purposively, focused and with all the energy she can muster. For someone who found birthing my own children a powerful experience which I took somewhat for granted, I was amazed that watching your own daughter doing the same thing somehow elevates it to a different level. And, of course, this changes the relationship you have with your daughter forever – you see her as a woman. Similarly I found this with my middle daughter when she gave birth several years later.

As Michelle Miller Day says in her book on maternal relationships: “The mother-daughter connection is a loving one that seems to bind women together across generations, even while they pursue separate identities – they continue to negotiate their relationships throughout the lifespan.”¹ I went home that morning on a high and went to work. But the feeling of the experience stayed with me and I couldn’t wait to get back and to hold this little boy once more. I began a diary of my feelings which were somewhat mixed as the weeks wore on and I took time off to be a support to the new family. This diary was the trigger for *The Gift; Grandmothers and Grandchildren today*.

In writing this book, I considered the genre in which it should be or could be written. At no time would I claim to be an authority on grandmothing in the academic sense, and at no stage of becoming a grandmother did I believe I held the ultimate truth or understanding of the phenomenon. My past publications had all been quite academic texts, apart from *Who Cares* which is a book about the changing healthcare system and which included stories from patients. Hence my move here, to sharing stories with women who were in careers like I was and were also involved grandmothers.

My interest in story telling and narrative arose well over a decade back when researching methodologies best suited to understanding

patients' experiences of illness. In my doctoral and post doctoral work, I used patients' stories of facing life threatening illnesses as a means of transmitting knowledge through personal experience narrative. This was quite difficult at the time since the world of medical research I inhabited was very wedded to one way only of gaining and interpreting truth - that is the Randomised Control Trial (RCT). Yet as an intensive care nurse, researcher and mother of a child who had a lot of hospitalisation, I knew that method did not get to the heart of the experience.

Increasingly since then those working and researching in health-care are recognising the validity of personal narration in terms of understanding a patient's journey through our very complicated system and using this to understand how our system is working and as a learning tool for students. Several trends have been responsible for this. One is the move to translational research – research which is followed through to make a difference in the system itself. This is different to wet lab research which may or may not ever make a difference in the real world and takes years often to show outcomes. The other trend is the shift to what has been named patient centred care and to understand what patients need and want we need to ask them and listen to them - that is that they also hold the truth as validly as a RCT. Hence there is now a shift to what has been described as Radical Pedagogies, although the Arts and Humanities have used such methods for centuries.

So it was that when I was approached to write this book I immediately thought of speaking with other women who had become grandmothers having had lives also as mothers and wives. In many ways the selection technique of the participants could be named snowballing. I had already met several women through my business contacts who had shared how they felt as grandmothers and they would suggest someone else whom they knew. I also attempted to get a mix of backgrounds if possible, although I must say I didn't always know that until they told their stories.

All the women in the book have had careers and many are still immersed in them. This is a very different profile to the one presented by their mothers and certainly by their grandmothers. And this was the other perspective which I explored with the book – that is the intergenerational changes for women over time.

Let me introduce you to the women in *The Gift*.

Quentin Bryce is the governor of Queensland; she has five children and five grandchildren. Wendy McCarthy is a public advocate, educator, change agent and mentor to women. She has three children and three grandchildren. Helen Garner is a well known writer who has one child and two grandchildren, while Rosemary Sinclair, once Miss Australia and still very involved in public life with her politi-

cian husband Ian, has 3 stepchildren, one son and six grandchildren. Jo Tiddy, one time Commissioner for Equal Opportunity in South Australia, has one daughter, two stepchildren and five grandchildren. Sue Bosch, a medical technologist and lawyer, inherited three stepchildren when she married later in life. Sue has six living grandchildren. Margaret Fink is a filmmaker. She has three children and four grandchildren.

Rubylai Blakeney, the Aboriginal Liaison Officer at a major hospital has three daughters and six grandchildren. Molly Moyes, first generation of a Chinese Australian family, has worked with her husband building a very successful business; she has four children, 14 grandchildren and eight great grandchildren. Virginia Dowd, a financial consultant, is the single mother of a daughter who has a son. Dr Diana Horvath, now Commissioner of the National Quality and Safety Commission, has two daughters and two grandsons. Dr Doreen Clark, recently retired as an analytical chemist, has one son and two grandchildren.

Dr Sue Nagy is a “grandmother in residence” as she has her youngest daughter and two grandchildren living with her. Sue has two other children. Dr Marilyn Walton, the inaugural Healthcare Complaints Commissioner, has two daughters and two grandchildren living in the United States. Alison Bronowski, former diplomat and writer, has two children and one granddaughter. Last, but certainly not least, is Anne Henderson, Deputy Director of this Institute, who has two daughters and four grandchildren. As you can, see the women come from diverse backgrounds and careers. This made my job of gathering the stories fascinating, as it always is.

Beginning with my own experience, I was aware of how much becoming a grandmother had made me reflect on my own mother as a grandmother and my own lack of grandmothers as influences in my life. While these issues may have received consideration from me in the past, this time I was much more reflective and analytical. Thus it was that while my approach was to meet with each woman and listen to her story as a flowing narrative, I had a loose framework which I outlined with them before we began. This framework enabled me to make meaning out of all the narratives as a collective. This was not to generalise their stories to the wider community but to provide commentary in a way which reflected our common and different experiences and perceptions. After all our individual experiences are always unique.

The other issue for me in writing this book, as it must be for everyone who attempts to understand their own responses to situations, is that it made me think more deeply about my own mothering and what the difference was for me now that I was a grandmother.

As I write on pages x-xi:

Out of my car window as I crawl along in the traffic near a busy intersection, a small boy catches my eye; he's ambling along, contemplating the world around him. Close by but not interfering with his musings is an older woman. Every little while he moves across to her. He hangs on her hand, chats and moves away. Instinctively I know how that woman feels when she holds his hand. A few blocks down the same street a younger woman is pushing a stroller and hanging on to a reluctant toddler, pulling him along, her head down, body tense against the rush of the day-to-day. I see myself in both snapshots. And I catch a glimpse of the difference between mothering and grandmothering – and why the latter is so wonderful. For me it's about slowing down and contemplating life and smelling the roses and it's about being the sync with the rhythm of a small child who is naïve to the world but who holds enormous potential.

As a result of such contemplation I began to think more about my mother and her generation as well that of my grandmothers, whom I never knew, and their lives. My life as a young woman growing up in Newcastle, then a very working class town, was limited, although I didn't see this at the time. Expectations for young women were narrow – working as a secretary, a teacher or a nurse until marriage meant children and family commitments became the priority. Recently I spoke at a school reunion and only two of our class had careers. While I worked and was also a full time mum as the result of necessity it was frowned upon by many, including my own mother who had been a full time, dedicated mother and a superb housekeeper.

My prime aims for my daughters were as different from my mothers' aims for me as they could be. Despite still being a child myself, when I became a mother I inherently saw how education and diverse experiences could enable choice. Although a few of the women in my book did attend university following their schooling, many didn't and like me most began their university education as mature students. Thus it is that in three generations the women in my family have lived lives as different as if they came from different planets. The women's stories reflect such changes.

Of course, not all young women have such opportunities, even today, but certainly many realise they have choices. They are also liberated sexually and economically if that is what they choose. They do not necessarily accept that there is only one way of being or doing things as a woman, something my mother fought against but did not have the personal resources to act on and so was frustrated and often angry.

A major difference for the women in this book is that grandmothering is not just an extension of their mothering, as I think it was for my mother and many of her generation. We also have the benefit of a greater understanding of our bodies and how to remain healthy. Our

longevity has increased and we remain independent physically for longer.

We're women who had our children in our early adulthood. We're women who not only raised our children but juggled that role with attending university in our twenties, thirties and forties and, in the main, only developed high-powered careers in our forties and fifties. We're the first generation of grandmothers to exchange bowling outfits for gym gear and tuckshops for the boardroom."²

The book is divided into chapters following my story. – these include;

Chapter 2 Grandmothering in the past – remembering our grandmothers and our mothers as grandmothers

Chapter 3 Coming to Grandmothering

Chapter 4 Engaging with Grandmothering

Chapter 5 New ways of doing and new ways of being

Chapter 6 My epilogue : Hi guys. My Name is Sam

To provide a flavour of the book, the best way is for me to explore a little of the women's stories from each chapter.

Grandmothering in the past

Quentin Bryce said that her mother didn't express her emotions openly and that, following her death, her letters and papers revealed a deep love and attachment, particularly for her granddaughters. Remembering her own grandmother, Quentin recalled (and this might bring back memories for some of you) sleeping with her maternal Grandmother in a double bed, the gold silk bedcover and a big silk lacy cover over that: "She cooked beautifully, cared for us and read to us and would take us into town into the CWA rooms. I have lots of memories of her." (p.40)

Virginia Dowd speaks lovingly of both her grandmothers but particularly her maternal grandmother. She used to spend holidays with her in the Blue Mountains with all her other cousins and she contrasted that with her relationship with her paternal grandmother for whom she had to get dressed up with lace and starched aprons before being taken down to see her on a Sunday: "You got a pat on the head and a bag of lollies from the matriarch." (p 42)

Helen Garner paints a beautiful picture of her grandmother's house:

We loved it there because it had this gigantic garden; we just ran out and disappeared for hours. They used to go to Hawaii and places like that. My grandmother used to wear what I realise as a grown up was really quite expensive perfume. She always smelt delicious and she smoked and she played the piano. The thing about her that I remember is they had not just a kitchen, they had a scullery. In those kinds of houses there was a room down the hall where there used to be a crate – you know those old flat wooden crates that the bottles used to stand in, the original coke bottles – and we were allowed to go down and get ourselves one. It was so luxurious... I don't know where they got it from but anyway... my grandmother, on my Mum's side, was very, very good. I never felt on intimate terms with her – I was always a bit scared of her because she was kind of... I don't think she got on well with my father; I don't think she liked my father very much. So I never had a sense of it being a comfortable relationship. (p 52)

Molly Moyes remembered her maternal grandmother very clearly: “She had bound feet, and Mum brought her out from China just to see her [Mum's] children. She used to just sit all day, yet she was only 67 years old. When she came out she looked a very old woman. It was very difficult for her to get around so it wasn't a very interesting life. She was so homesick for China that she went back home. She died when she was in her 70s.” (p 45) Molly spoke of how grotesquely mutilated her grandmother's feet were and how Molly's mother refused to have bound feet and so became the first emancipated woman in her family.

Merrilyn Walton said that while her mother was a very distant mother, she was a stunning grandmother to her two daughters. Merrilyn brought her daughters up virtually alone: “I knew my mother would be a hard act to follow because that's the only model of a grandmother I've ever had. What my mother's done has given me a blueprint for grandmothing, which has really had a powerful impact on me.” (p.58) Merrilyn's mother, who's now dying, has a very strong bond with the two older daughters still, which is fantastic.

This is also reflective of things that happened in those days, hidden things. Sue Nagy said she didn't ever know her father's family because he was estranged from them but she thought it was always a bit strange. Following recent investigation, she suspected that he was actually the child of one of his sisters, that he'd been brought up in the family as their brother. She had found “illegitimate” stamped on his birth certificate. I think some of that sort of story is very reflective of those days.

Coming to grandmothing

Coming to grandmothing has been one of the most inspiring phases of my life. And it's interesting the number of women who

talk about it as so overwhelming and so powerful - and how they are amazed at the love they feel. Wendy McCarthy talks about unconditional love for her grandchildren and how extraordinary it is. When I talked to Quentin Bryce she said she couldn't talk about it, that it makes her want to cry when she thinks about it. (p. 78)

Alison Broinowski talked about being determined to be a different sort of grandmother from her own who had so many rules and regulations. To her, all the things that have been wrong with her experience of being grandmothered she was trying to make right for her grandchildren. That's often the way we use experience, not only reflecting the moral we want but the moral we don't want. Anne Henderson speaks of the great joys of grandparenting. Unlike being a parent, there's scope for just enjoying the relationship. Sometimes this means doing things you wouldn't do as a parent. As Anne describes it, "My first granddaughter Hannah and I have a sort of bridge because we're the naughty ones, well not quite that. I do try, but every now and then you forget." (p.91) Then she gives a wonderful description of a shopping outing where her two grandchildren con her into getting things they shouldn't really have. I understand that well.

Jo Tiddy says, "One of the things I remember most clearly saying to my friends in Adelaide was that I wasn't going to become like all those grandmothers who get besotted. I was going to be quite cool about it which is really interesting. Of course, one loses one's head." (p.93)

Diana Horvath said: "When Lisa was born I was handed this little bundle; I just dissolved." (p 95) Margaret Fink talked about her feelings when seeing her grandchild coming towards her.

Engaging with grandmothering

Molly Moyes engages with her grandchildren at the beach where she lives, she kicks the football with them and has taught them how to surf, all this very different from her grandmother whose feet were bound (p 116). Virginia Dowd described taking her grandson out: "I let him walk and explore and instead of pulling the leaves I've taught him to feel the leaves and look at the texture - and he does - it's so amazing... It's just fascinating. Anyway, when I got to the park and let him go and start to run and just scream with the joy of the freedom, he lay on the grass and rolled over and over and over. It was such pure joy and it stirred in me. You think, '*when was the last time I did that?*'" (p. 117/8)

Helen Garner talks about the fact that as a mother you really don't know what you are doing but as a grandmother you've already done it so you feel you can be quite creative in the way you grandmother. (p 133)

My interviewees talked a lot about how they negotiate families. Marilyn Walton spoke of her blended family experiences, perhaps indicative of many families today. Marilyn has a relatively non-traditional relationship, for a time, with a partner of 16 years to whom she is not married; her children are not his children but those of her first husband. Says Marilyn, of her partner, "... for him it's like a new role as grandparent, where he feels more of a grandparent to Oliver and James, in that traditional sense, than he ever did as a father to Nina and Joanna [Marilyn's daughters by her first marriage] because they had their father and Rob was just there supporting them and me. In the present situation there are four other people who are like Rob – we have eight grandparents but four of them are de facto in a way." (p.159)

By the time I wrote my "Epilogue" I had Sam, a second grandson, who comes each weekend with Charlie. I wrote: "Here is Charlie's brother, not yet three years of age. Bold as brass and confidently opening the door, a huge grin on his face, his chunky body braced ready to face anything which he encounters on the other side of the door."³ In addition, my middle daughter Alison had Josh, after losing a baby three years before. I felt the need to honour these two grandsons by including them in this book

As this book was drawing to a close I was searching around for a fitting way to bring such rich stories together. One Sunday afternoon I stood around the graveside of the mother of a dear friend as her son, Damon, read an "Ode to Nan" which reflected his relationship with his grandmother and how she managed her relationship with him.

I will quote a small excerpt of this Ode here but a more lengthy portion is in the book and it's quite beautiful written by an exceptional grandson. His Nan had suffered with dementia for many years, dying slowly in a nursing home, much to the deep grief of her only daughter and her two very loved grandsons. These two boys, now men, were her pride and joy and she adored them. The younger one spoke at the graveside. It was a Jewish funeral and I knew I had to conclude the book with it since it said so cleverly what I'd been thinking about:

Nanny, how to best remember the sharp, funny, compassionate woman you once were, fierce advocate whose unwavering confidence in me was so much a part of the texture of my childhood, of myself in formation. I can't remember her without also acknowledging the frail helpless woman shrinking away before our eyes over the last ten years.

When I was a fourteen year old exchange student in France, suffering a case of early onset existential angst, [which prompted one of Mum's friends to observe 'I don't know, maybe it's just because you're Jewish] I wrote you a letter on one of the many pre-addressed, pre-paid aerograms Pop so conveniently thought to provide me with. The shape my distress was taking at this painfully formative moment was a sensitive attention

to the fact that other people didn't seem to like me or like me enough. I wrote something along the lines of "other people aren't drawn to me" or "other people don't think I'm attractive". Your bemused response, promptly received by return aerogram, followed a logic so natural, so effortless, that it destroyed the plausibility of the latent self-pity from which I constructed the words of my torment. Your simply effective strategy, blame everyone else. "Why would you care what other people think?" you wrote, genuinely perplexed, "If they're not drawn to you, it's proof only of their foolishness; the people who matter love you very much, it's a grievous waste of energy to worry what strangers think. You can't take responsibility for anyone else's stupidity." (p 191/192)

And herein lies the true role of grandmothers: "To let them (our grandchildren) know they have at least one person who will always be on their side - who will always be there to listen to them without judgement. This is our gift to them as they are the ultimate gift to us".⁴

Endnotes

- 1 M.A.Miller Day 2004 *A Communication Among Grandmothers Mothers and Adult Daughter: A Qualitative Study of Maternal Relationships* . London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. p.4
- 2 Lumby J. 2005 *The Gift; Grandmothers and Grandchildren Today* . Pluto Press Australia
- 3 Ibid p179
- 4 Ibid p 194



Yu Jie



Wang Yi

Photo – David Karonidis

Yu Jie is a literary and political essayist and critic living in Beijing. He is co-founder of Independent Chinese PEN. In 2004, Yu Jie, was detained, along with two other prominent Chinese intellectuals after writing articles calling attention to the arrest of Shi Tao, a poet and journalist. Yu Jie is also the author of “The Freedom and Perils of Internet Writing in China” (2005). Wang Yi, a writer and law lecturer at Chengdu University, has called for protest against China’s increasingly harsh suppression of reports about corruption and social problems and of discussion of political reform. On a visit to Australia in 2006, Yi Jie and Wang Yi addressed The Sydney Institute on Wednesday 8 February. The function was co-hosted by Sydney PEN and translator for the evening was Dr Yiyang Wang from Sydney University. Thanks also to Chip Rolley, Vice President PEN Sydney, for the translation of Yu Lie’s paper and editing of Wang Yi’s transcript.

THE LIE OF CHINA'S

RISING PEACE

Yu Jie & Wang Yi

YU JIE: When Hu Jintao consolidated his power in 2005 – heading the “trinity” of the Chinese Communist Party, the government and the military – the foreign policy of China’s Rising Peace rose to the surface. After the Tiananmen massacre, when the Chinese Communist regime’s international reputation fell to its lowest point, Deng Xiaoping didn’t dare strive to be the “third world overlord” of the Mao era. Instead, he adopted a style of drawing back in foreign policy – of “concealing one’s ability while biding one’s time”. While Jiang Zemin personally liked strutting the world stage, his foreign policy continued the legacy of Deng. After Hu took the stage, he relied on China’s market and financial resources, using “Rising Peace” as a new banner – the word “peace” concealing his wild ambition to forge ahead in international affairs. But is this “Rising Peace” the truth, or is it a lie?

Without democracy there can be no peace

“Hu Jintao Thought” can be divided into two parts. Domestic policy is to build a “harmonious society” that “puts people first” and foreign policy is one of a “Rising Peace”. Each part complements and props up the other.

But in the domestic policy sphere, can Hu’s regime truly bring about a “harmonious society” that “puts people first”? This so-called “putting people first” is in reality “killing people first”. The (recent) slaughter of villagers by armed police in Dongzhou in Guangzhou province is the greatest incident of large-scale killing by the military since the 4 June 1989 massacre. It’s clear this was not the unauthorised action of the Guangdong authorities headed by Zhang Dejiang. According to the Party’s military mobilisation procedure, a large-scale mobilisation like this, with the army carrying loaded rifles, must have the backing of a meeting of the (central) Political Bureau. Since Hu took charge, armed police have become a force independent from the military with equipment that surpasses that of the military. Their expenditure and personnel have swollen to become the chief force

used to suppress incidents of mass protest. The most inharmonious aspect of Chinese society is the very existence of the dictatorial Chinese Communist Party. If the Party really wants to establish a harmonious society, it should follow the example of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and disband itself.

In foreign policy, the Chinese Communist Party professes “Peace Rising” as its chief melody but, as Woodrow Wilson said, a steadfast concert for peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations. No autocratic government can have everlasting peace with a democratic government. A dictatorial regime is destined to be a destroyer of international order, an element of instability. Not long ago, Germany’s *South German Newspaper* published an editorial saying the Chinese Communist Party’s regime is in the process of shedding its skin, changing from a left-wing dictatorship to a right wing dictatorship opining:

This kind of deterioration has already left a deep impression on people, causing them to lose hope. While cities are on the path toward wealth, ideology has retreated, and individuals have discovered their self-worth; at the same time, the elites are corrupt and greedy, the workers have been exploited, and peasants’ rights have been expropriated.

Hu Jintao issued a sternly worded directive, requiring the Party to guard internally and externally against the “Colour Revolutions” that occurred in the Central Asian Federated Republics of the former Soviet Union, but in fact the Chinese Communist Party’s own colour changed long ago. Although Hu is one to praise Maoism, there is no way he will drag China back to the leftwing dictatorship of the Mao era. He is only able to conform to present-day China’s “general trend of events” – the triumphal song played on the path of a fascist dictatorship.

Ideologically, Hu is a Maoist fundamentalist, but knows deep down that Maoism long ago fell into disrepute, relying on the “sweet sun” and “oozing radiance” of a useless new left wing and the rapidly declining old left wing of Deng Liqun, He Jingzhi and the like. It simply cannot bring together the will of the people. Even the large-scale launch of the so-called “Maintaining the Advanced State of the Communist Party Members” education campaign has been reduced to a laughing stock. Because of this, Hu has no choice but to half-heartedly raise the great flag of nationalism, while basically ignoring the fact that this nationalism is the fundamental antithesis of the “internationalism” that is the quintessence of Marxism.

Nationalism is the greatest threat to present day international peace. How is it possible for a regime that advocates nationalism to become a force for peace in international society? The Chinese

Communist Party authorities have fallen into a self-inflicted contradiction, just as that *South German Newspaper* editorial points out:

With each passing day, there is a more severe gap between rich and poor and between city and countryside, causing China to become “Latin Americanised”. China’s Communist Party leaders say this is ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’. In reality, what China has put into practice is not socialist politics, but is in fact a kind of fascist politics: the government in power has forged an alliance with big capital, inciting a Great China-ism to replace religion.

The West’s short-sightedness will result in catastrophe

For the past few years, Western countries have gradually lost their vigilance toward the Chinese Communist regime. Western countries investing in China have become the greatest help to the maintenance of the Party’s economic growth. This is particularly the case with the lopsided development of Shanghai, whose economic bubble is for the most part driven by Western investment. Western government and business circles are like the ostrich, pretending they cannot see the reality of China’s political system, pretending they don’t know the appalling human rights catastrophe now happening in China, such as the ruthless persecution of Falun Gong practitioners and the Christians worshipping in household churches – more than 100 million citizens pursuing freedom of belief. This kind of persecution didn’t just happen in the Middle Ages; it’s happening in China today. The Western policy of appeasement is driven by economic interest.

In order to sell China Airbuses and high-speed trains, the French President, Jacques Chirac, when he visited China, shamelessly said the Tiananmen incident belongs to the past century and we should let bygones be bygones. In the greatest rebuke to him, not long after Chirac returned to France, the Chinese communist authorities opened fire on villagers in Dongzhou in Guangdong province. The Tiananmen incident remains China’s bloody reality. The French and German governments have for a time energetically campaigned for the European Union to lift the embargo on selling weapons to China, but the regime is one that maintains its political rule by killing people.

I can be regarded only as a nominal citizen. I am 32 this year, but I have never participated in an election – not an election of the head of state nor an election of the mayor. Not even once. The legitimacy of Chinese Communist Party rule does not come from elections; it comes from military might. The founder of the party, Mao Zedong, once openly declared: “Political power comes from the barrel of a gun.” There has not been any change from this principle today in China.

One aspect of the Party’s foreign policy is to politely propagandise the foreign policy of China’s “Peaceful Rise” to the people of the

West. Another aspect is to deliberately let Zhu Chenghu, a dean at National Defence University and a People's Liberation Army major-general, issue an aggressive threat to the whole world, in asserting that China can launch a nuclear war on the West, particularly the United States. Zhu Chenghu is a crown prince of pure lineage, the grandson of the founder of the Chinese Red Army, Zhu De. According to the Chinese Communist Party ruling principle that "the party commands the gun", it is not possible for a mere major-general to issue this kind of individual opinion on his own. Even in a Western country with freedom of expression, a high-ranking military general cannot indiscreetly make his personal views about a nation's nuclear policy known in a public forum. Zhu's views must therefore have received silent approval from the highest authorities – even from the nation's President, Hu Jintao. It's just like a master unleashing a fierce and vengeful dog to threaten the neighbours. But Australian authorities blithely plan to export uranium ore to this highly dangerous regime, willingly believing a series of agreements, which China signed, that this uranium ore will not be used for military purposes. But when have the Communist Party authorities genuinely respected international agreements?

The European Union should not lift the weapons embargo against China, and Australia should not export uranium ore to China. This shortsighted behaviour can in the short term bring a definite economic benefit. But in the long term it will inevitably endanger world peace. Without any neighbouring country able to threaten China with war, the Communist authorities have, without any restraint, increased military expenditure. Each year, military spending increases by double digits. From Korea to Mongolia; from Afghanistan, Pakistan, India to Myanmar; from Thailand to Vietnam, there is not one neighbouring country with the ability to threaten China with war – only if they decide themselves to go toward extinction. Is this the way the Chinese Communist Party shows off its military might – especially in the passing of the Anti-Secession Bill, the "war law" aimed at Taiwan – part of its "Rising Peace"?

Concern for China's democratisation is concern for the West's own security

Without the slightest exaggeration, apart from Islamic fundamentalist terrorists, the Chinese Communist Party is at present the greatest threat to the democratic world. It is the "venerable dragon head" and comrade-in-arms of North Korea, Cuba, Myanmar, Iran and other "rogue states". Hu Jintao exchanges information with these fellow travelers who stand side by side at the forefront of the "global list of dictators".

Compared with Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang and Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao's policy toward North Korea is much more assertive. When Hu visited North Korea he generously gave US\$2 billion to assist Kim Jong-il, that ugly dictator, to get through a crisis. At the beginning of 2006, Hu also invited Kim Jong-il to visit China and travel all over the country for a total of nine days. On the television news, Hu Jintao and Kim Jong-il held each other in their arms just like brothers, like there was nothing left of the Deng Xiaoping era when the two countries drifted apart. North Korea has embraced the thinking of Chinese economic reform, no longer seeing the Chinese Communist Party as traveling the "revisionist road". These two visits give Hu Jintao a much larger say in the Korean nuclear problem. He is able to call on North Korea as a counter to the West. This tactic cannot but be called the "hiding of a dagger behind a smile".

In recent months, Hu has also successively invited a number of dictators – from Belarus, Africa, Latin America etc – to visit China, including Saudi Arabian Prince Abdullah, who has just inherited the throne. Abdullah and Hu Jintao act as neighbours in the "global list of dictators". Hu Jintao raised with him the "four plank proposal to strengthen China and Saudi Arabia cooperation", among which is to "enhance mutual trust and deepen political cooperation" and "strengthen energy resource cooperation for mutual interest and benefit", etc. In other words, so-called political cooperation is actually using a "dictatorship with nationalist characteristics" against the Western values of democracy and freedom. This so-called "energy resource cooperation" is actually the buying of Saudi Arabian petroleum to resolve China's energy crisis.

Sigmund Neumann, in the book *Permanent Revolution: Totalitarianism in the Age of International Civil War*, points out that the modern totalitarian state maintains a negating attitude toward every existing thing. In international politics it frequently adopts a militant attitude. The everyday true state of affairs thus becomes natural. It's very clear the Chinese Communist regime is the "black hand behind the curtain" of the greater part of the world's dictatorial regimes. George Orwell in his extremely rich, prescient book 1984, brought to light the concept of the totalitarian state, "War is peace". The former head of the Harvard University history department Akira Iriye says that in Orwell's novel, the richest enlightening idea is that the concept of peace has already lost its true nature. "What is peace?" he asks. What kind of peace should we set in place and exert our efforts for? According to Akira Iriye, this kind of traditional problem no longer exists. According to those in power, peace only serves to maintain the totalitarian system and allows the state to be always ready for combat, he says. Although peace cannot be enjoyed in ordinary life, whether materially or spiritually, there is no difference between it and war.

This is actually the Chinese people's present living state. China's army is not a national defence army; it is a violent apparatus used against the Chinese people. Of course, the Party will not simply start its war machine, because war must surely bring about its collapse. Therefore, domestically, they will go all out to emphasise so-called "stability". As Iriye says, if war is to happen, those in power must draw on the support of scientists or technological personnel and start talk of war. And if they want to launch into war, they must also have "rationalist" strategy and tactics. In that way they will establish the consciousness in the thinking of the people. In order to place them in the condition of slaves, peace is, on the contrary, a kind of ideal state.

The Chinese Communist Party authorities' "War is piece view"

The West must show concern for the democratisation of China. This is in fact showing concern for the West's own security. Even without looking at it from a moral standpoint and only from the most selfish national-interest standpoint, the West cannot close its eyes to China's humanitarian catastrophe. The West also cannot foolishly believe the Party's self-deceptive "Rising Peace" talk. The democratisation of China has a similar historical significance to the drastic changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe ten years ago. Although we should not say that if China realised democratisation the whole world's dictatorial regimes would vanish without a trace overnight. Still, China's democratisation must bring with it a domino chain reaction, allowing global democratisation to enter "the fourth wave", surging forward with great momentum. In this way, the West could have the possibility of real peace, the cold war could truly conclude, and history could really end.

WANG YI: It would be comforting to find more intellectuals and Western governments who paid more attention to China's problems. Sometime I feel that China is like a child, always having to cry for attention from other countries. Until now China hasn't had the capacity to be concerned about other people. And, as a public intellectual from China, I feel terrible today that China is not such a big issue.

Many people focus on China's one party rule and the problem this causes in dealing with China. They wonder when China's one party rule might be reformed. However, armed with that one party system, China actually runs another very basic system - the tradition of 2000 years in which there has been centralised statehood where

the state has a very high level of control of different places within its territory. Increased economic development in China and the diversity of China's economic development has meant this central statehood is a serious problem with many, many, hinges. One feature has been the rise of localism and I will deal with this issue in three points.

Firstly there are the social conflicts. Last year about 70,000 social riots occurred in China. In recent years there has been a growing movement of citizens demanding their rights. In oppressing those movements, local authorities have used special methods to take care of their own interests within the local regions rather than follow political demands from above. Yet the officials above them in the central government, who are more concerned about the political effect of those political riots, make their appointments. The central government worries only about its hold on centralised power. And local officials failing to deal with local incidents, means the political consequences for the central government are only multiplied against the central government. This is a political risk that the central state finds more and more difficult to bear. Shanghai is now China's most tightly controlled area in terms of public media and journalism, and recent riots in villages have been met by the harshest measures against villagers.

My second example would be the experiments of local elections in China. Under the Chinese centralised system, officials are always appointed from somewhere else. This means locals can never become officials from within the local area. If the central state does not appoint someone to an area, the area's own officials cannot be substituted by an election. This leads to conflict between the demands of the locals who want to elect their own officials and the central state that wants to keep foisting their own chosen officials onto the locals.

The third aspect of recent conflict between local and central authorities is finance. The one party state has a slogan which used to say that if we gather all our energy we can make big things happen. Now the message has changed, and reads if we gather all the risks then we can make things happen. The political reality of China today is that even though many bad things can and do happen as a result of corruption of the local officials, ordinary people hate the central state government more. This belief has captured not only the local Chinese citizens but has also many Western citizens who deal with China. I can't predict when China's one party regime will finish, but I am tell you that each day China's centralised system is declining.

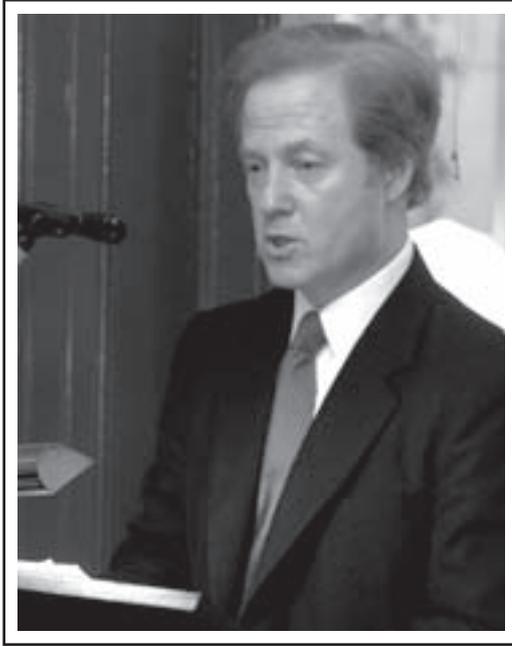


Photo – David Karonidis

Steve Emerson

Steve Emerson is the Executive Director of the Investigative Project, a research organisation which provides intelligence and archival data relating to international terrorism. In 1995, Emerson's film *Jihad in America* won the prestigious George Polk prize for best television documentary and he is now recognised as the first terrorism expert to have warned of the specific threat of Islamic terror groups operating in the US and internationally, including Osama bin Laden and his network. During a visit to Australia in 2006 sponsored by the Australian/Israel and Jewish Affairs Council, Steve Emerson addressed The Sydney Institute on Wednesday 15 February.

JIHADISM: WHERE IS IT

AT IN 2006?

Steven Emerson

The recent episode over the publication of the Danish cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed triggered an outcry in the Muslim world not seen since the publication of Salman Rushdie's book in 1989. Then, like today, riots broke out over the Middle East and southeast Asia. During the Rushdie episode, the West responded largely with resolution and resolve not to cave in. Rushdie was treated like a hero and given protection by various governments. Bookstores continued to carry the book. Rushdie was granted meetings with world leaders including then President Clinton. Newspapers came to his defence. Compare that with the reaction today. The West has responded with a resounding cravenness. Most media publications, with several notable exceptions, refused to republish the cartoon. And most Western governments and leaders painstakingly, echoing the Muslim protestors, endorsed their view that it was "disrespectful" to publish the cartoons and that free speech should only be exercised with "responsibility" - a euphemism for appeasing Muslim demands.

It was truly startling to see the primary defenders of free speech - the media - squirm and deflect responsibility by invoking manifestly contrived excuses in refusing to publish the cartoons. Rather than the lofty reasons they gave in not wanting to disrespect Islam, the real reason came down to the mundane reality that journalists have to look in the rearview mirror when they go home at night. With the exception of the Danish government, nearly every other Western leader and regime kowtowed to Islamic demands in not supporting the absolute right to publish the cartoons or in outright criticism of the cartoons' publication.

The furore over the cartoons recently will take a while to fade away. And we have to ask ourselves what the legacies such an episode will bring to our history and whether we will learn from this. A lesson that is about caving in to an unpluralistic, dictatorial force which will only compound our insecurity later on. A lesson about needing to stand up and draw a line in the sand. And I question the willingness of much of the Western media, and indeed many areas of the Western

world including, more recently, the Prime Minister of Canada, to accept a limit to freedom of speech rather than provoke a clash with the most violent voices in the Muslim world. Where do we place that limit?

Even here in Australia, reaction from the local Muslims has been to condemn the publication of the cartoons as unacceptable and blasphemous. They have demanded, like their brethren around the world, to make blasphemy against the law in Western countries similar to anti-blasphemy laws that already prevail in Muslim countries. Blasphemy may be offensive to some but the notion of making it illegal in the West, where the separation of church and state is the guiding principle of Western civilisation, is indicative of the religious intolerance that radical Islam stands for.

When I was in New Zealand a week and a half ago there were major protests by hundreds of Muslims in Auckland, and later a meeting of Wellington Muslim leaders. In their meetings with their editorial writers and some government officials, those leaders demanded that, from then on, the Muslim community needed to be consulted before any article could be published that might be critical of Islam. The violence we saw in Beirut and Denmark, in Indonesia, in Pakistan – right throughout Pakistan the burning of Western businesses – lie at the heart of what I call the “cultural jihadist” problem.

So what do I mean by cultural jihad? This is the notion that in the Muslim community that deems it acceptable for jihadists to carry out violence or to deny responsibility for the actual terrorist acts themselves. It is manifest when Muslim leaders claim to condemn terrorism but exempt “resistance” from their condemnation. It is manifest when Muslim public opinion refuses to accept the responsibility of Muslim terrorism – for example, the survey of British Muslims after 9/11 that showed that some 55 per cent did not believe that Muslims were responsible for the attacks that day. It is manifest in the denial by Muslim groups that Jihad actual means violent fighting as seen in the claims by “mainstream” Muslim groups that there is no such thing as holy war in Islam. It is manifest in the widespread support in the Muslim world for suicide bombings against the Israelis. And it is manifest in the support for terrorist attacks on Western targets among Muslim communities. Finally it is manifest in the chilling intimidation of free speech and freedom of thought as most chillingly demonstrated in the cartoon controversy.

The public has no problem recognising acts of Jihad when carried out by Islamic terrorists. Bombings in Madrid and London or plots in Canada, Italy, Germany, the US and Australia. Jihad, despite false representations by savvy politically correct apologists for militant Islam, means fighting to impose Islam or to repel non-Muslim “aggressors”. Although genuinely moderate Muslims interpret Jihad

as a spiritual struggle, the traditional meaning and expression of Jihad has been violent holy war to impose Islam or repel the “enemies” of Islam.

How many hard core Jihadists are there in the world wide Muslim population of 1.2 billion? No one knows with any certainty and probably is not something that could ever be determined with any accuracy. With the exception of those arrested for carrying out or plotting to carry out terrorism, it is impossible to know the number of true jihadists—those that are personally prepared to carry out violence.

The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan resulted in the first modern incarnation of Jihad on a local level in the Arab and Muslim worlds. No longer confined to a theoretical or simply religious concept, jihad became accessible to young Muslims. One could actually join the jihad and personally participate in a concept that had been elusive, theological and abstract. It now meant that Jihad was attainable at the local level. “Join the Jihad Caravan” was the promotional brochure that flooded Islamic centers and Muslim student groups throughout the United States, promising young Muslims the opportunity of a lifetime. Jihad became the rage. Tens of thousands of young Muslims, from the United States, Europe, the Persian Gulf, the Middle East, Asia volunteered to fight alongside Afghani mujihadeen.

As the Soviets were defeated, the jihad soon began to spread outside Afghanistan. Intoxicated with their defeat of a superpower, the jihadist movement snowballed into a world wide movement with new jihad fronts opening up in Chechniya, Bosnia, the Philippines, Israel, Kashmir, and elsewhere. With a base of operations in newly liberated Afghanistan, the world wide jihad movement could train under laboratory conditions in territory that would soon be dominated by the Taliban in a de facto power sharing agreement with Osama Bin Laden. Jihad now had a murderous momentum culminating in the 9/11 attacks that killed 3000 Americans.

When radical Muslims crash planes into buildings, it’s not hard to recognise those acts of terrorism as manifestations of Jihad. The conventional jihad is a holy war and is embodied in acts of violence against Western and other declared “enemies of Islam.” We don’t have a problem recognising what Islamic terrorism is when we see it or experience it. Whether in Bali, New York, Madrid, London or Jerusalem.

In recent years, the concept of the global village has been traditionally used to describe the projection of Western culture into the outer most recesses of the less developed world, through telecommunications, the internet, television, and the internet. But in recent years, there has been a reverse global village phenomenon, with jihadism spreading to every nook and cranny of the West.

As a result we now we have another set of jihadists, those I call the cultural jihadists. They are probably just as dangerous, if not more problematic, than the military jihadists. They are not the ones lighting fuses or blowing up airplanes; they are simply the ones that give moral support to those crashing planes into buildings. They are not the ones who carry out suicide bombings; they are the ones that glorify suicide bombings. They are not the ones who carry out fatwas to kill “enemies” of Islam; they are the ones who refuse to condemn such fatwas. They are not the ones who blow up buses full of school children; they are the larger community that condones such actions.

Intimidation and the specter of violence are critical to the success of the cultural jihad. I remember, in 1995 after producing the film *Jihad in America*, being warned by government officials that a fatwa had been issued against me by South African Muslims. I was also told an assassination move could be forthcoming and that I needed to move out of my apartment. That type of intolerance, which we see over and over, has a chilling effect. The journalists who refused to publish the cartoons may claim that they were not publishing the cartoons because of an unwillingness to offend Muslim sensitivities. The reality is that journalists were afraid of being bombed.

Right now we have a dual jihadist issue. The militarily violent jihad, articulated by Jama Islamia from Indonesia, is now in the headlines. Recently, the President of the United States revealed the second stage of the plot of 9/11 was a plot to blow up a prominent Los Angeles tower by Jama Islamia. JI is alive and well and, sadly, you’ve experienced the pain. But so have others. JI is active in this part of the world in the same way that al Qaeda is active in Europe and even in North America.

In the last year two major incidents, among many, stand out conspicuously for what they tell us of the state of jihad. In one, last September, prison inmates from California hatched a plot to blow up military facilities, several synagogues and the Israeli Consulate in Los Angeles. The inmates had converted to Islam and they believed in the jihad, the notion that it was not just acceptable but mandatory to carry out an act of violence against the Western infidel. And if it were not for a very serendipitous arrest made by a local Los Angeles policeman that plot may not have been uncovered and could have succeeded in killing thousands. Similarly another plot, by Pakistani Americans, involved a desire to create a Madrassa on American soil, a religious school that was going to teach jihad for the purposes of carrying out acts of terrorism.

The United States has prosecuted, indicted, convicted or deported more than 300 individuals linked to terrorism in the last four and a half years. From Buffalo to Chicago, from Portland to Virginian, Jihadists managed to ensconce themselves throughout the United

States. But how did the Jihadist groups succeed in getting so advanced in the heart of the West? One word I would use would be “deception”. Cultural jihad hid under the guise of pluralism and became part of the moral equation. Instead of defining themselves as standing for intolerance, the cultural Jihadists inverted the moral argument and said they were the victims of hate crimes. Cultural Jihadists actually created “civil rights” groups and demanded they be included and enfranchised in a plural society where minorities are usually excluded. They targeted the very vulnerability of Western society - the charge of being a racist. In fact, these groups were the very incarnation of racism.

The outstanding example of somebody who deceived the United States, and was probably successful in the greatest strategic penetration of American national security since the Cold War, is a man named Abdul Rahman Alamoudi. From 1990 till early 2000, Alamoudi was the head of a group called the American Muslim Council representing the largest American Muslim group. He appeared at the White House numerous times. You can go online and see pictures of him meeting then President Bill Clinton, or Vice President Al Gore. He was invited to testify at Congress; he was sent abroad by the State Department numerous times as a goodwill Ambassador. He was celebrated as the most prominent mainstream American Muslim leader who would affirm the virtues of moderation. Then it came out, quite recently, that from 1994 until he was arrested in 2003 he was secretly a financier for al Qaeda and Hamas. How could a man get to the most wanted positions of power in the US government; a man who was a cultural Jihadist, perhaps even more; somebody who was actually accelerating acts of violence by financing Islamic terrorism?

Let me be very clear; I am not suggesting that all Muslims are Jihadists or that the entire world of Islam needs be condemned. Far from it. I prefer to believe that the vast majority of Muslims are not part of the radical agenda. But the institutional leadership of the Islamic world, emanating from the Al Alzhar University in Cairo – a Muslim Brotherhood-dominated institution – to the Wahabist Institutions in Saudi Arabia, all articulate and champion the cultural jihad. This is the notion that it is acceptable to carry out violence as long as one is not caught pulling the trigger. The Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo originated in the 1920s and has spread throughout the West. Its aim is the imposition of Sharia law through democratic means. In other words – one man, one vote, one time. That has been the model of some of the Islamic movements who have championed democracy because it offers the power to acquire the reins of democracy.

Where do we stand today? How can the West fight against the cultural jihad and protect free speech, freedom of thought, freedom of the press, freedom of religion? On the other hand, how does an open society tolerate calls in the US calling for death to America, death to

Jews and death to Christians as protected speech? And how do we know what the true agenda of the Jihadists is if they are not scrutinised through their publications and their intentions successfully hidden from public view? The United States has a rich tradition of protecting free speech. But, unfortunately, because of vulnerabilities attaching to that rich tradition, cultural Jihadists can drive a truck through the gaps – sometimes as large as a suicide bomb.

Indeed, throughout the 1990s the Jihadists created a whole infrastructure in the United States, in Europe and even in Australia, of Muslim Brotherhood-oriented institutions that didn't define themselves as a Muslim brotherhood but called themselves different names, different acronyms, that misled and deceived. In the US they called themselves the Islamic Society of North America, the Muslim America Society, and the Muslim Student Association. In Australia it is the same operating under a group called FAMSU. And yet they were champions and deacons of the Muslim Brotherhood doctrine. Every time there was a counter-terrorism action by the governments of Europe, United States or Australia, prior to or even after 9/11, the first reaction by these groups would be the claim that such actions were defamatory of Islam and part of a war to defame Islam and to attack Islam rather than what it really was – a war against terrorism.

The Jihadists believe, as the cartoon protestors believe, that there has been a war against Islam, carried out by the West, since the year 1095. And every action that is perceived to be an insult is part of that war against Islam. So a conspiracy theory has grown up and a culture has developed in which all actions by the West to protect itself – such as stopping the flow of financing from Hamas and Hezbollah, the arrest of al Qaeda terrorists, the deportations of terrorist financiers living illegally in the United States - have been represented by Muslim groups to be part of a war against Islam. As a corollary, many do not believe that Osama bin Laden carried out 9/11.

After 9/11, I was speaking to a university group in Ohio at the University's Law school. A car picked me up from the airport and, as I got closer to the school, I saw police cars and squad cars outside the University. I asked the driver what the squad cars were doing there. He responded by saying, "I think they are there to protect you Mr Emerson." I walked in to a capacity crowd of nearly 1000 students, jeering with catcalls and interruptions. I could not speak. If you are a public speaker and you start getting interrupted by catcalls it is impossible to shout over the cat callers in the crowd. But I realised I had to get their attention somehow. So I ripped up my speech in a very conspicuous act. This seemed very irrational to everyone watching and I got people's attention. There was a quiet in the audience. I thought to myself, "Now what do I do?" I said, "I'm going to take a public opinion poll. How many here in the audience believe that Osama bin

Laden carried out 9/11?” Five hundred people raised their hands. “And how many of you here believe that 9/11 was carried out by the Israelis and the Americans?” The other 500 raised their hands - most of these, as far as I could tell by observation, were Middle Eastern or Muslim as evident by their head covering.

There was a woman in the first row who turned out to be a second year law student. I asked her, “Sister why do you claim that bin Laden was not behind 9/11?” And she responded instantly: “Why do you claim he was?” I said, “The evidence is there. You see the tape; we have our intelligence.” She said, “They’re all lies and fabricated. We know they were the Israelis and the Americans.” This was a second year law student, afforded all of the same opportunities other Americans are. She was emblematic of the cultural Jihadist. I am sure she would not be tempted to an act of terrorism. But I am also virtually positive that, secretly, she applauds the suicide bombings that go off in Tel Aviv or in the heart of Europe.

The reality is that the cultural Jihadists have a monopoly on the debate. No matter what Karen Hughes, now the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy, says, the hearts and minds are not going to be changed by a liberal advertising campaign. The wealth of information emanating from Islamic institutions, from broadcasts, from mosques, from universities, from the schools, the text books, all reaffirm the notion that there is a war against Islam and that the infidel has to be defeated, destroyed or converted.

Bin Laden wasn’t so irrational. In his own mind he actually believed that the US could be brought to its knees by weakening its resolve to fight jihad. In that he was right. He read the tea leaves perfectly up until 9/11. Throughout that period, the previous seven years, the US didn’t ever respond to acts of terrorism – whether it was the bombing of the *USS Cole*, the bombing of the Embassies, the bombing of other US targets. The US simply didn’t respond albeit lob a few missiles into Sudan and Afghanistan after the Embassy bombings in 1998. Bin Laden’s attitude became “I’ve got them on the run”.

There was an email that went out today which I found quite frightening. It was an email put out by a group here in Australia called the Federation of Australian Muslim Students and Youth (FAMSY). They put out publications and editorials claiming there is a war against Islam carried out by the Australian government. They claim that the publication of the cartoons is unacceptable. However, the email today read, “Please do not forward articles about the cartoons. Praise Allah. The Muslim world, the community, has made its views very clear. Inshallah, hopefully, with Allah’s help we can mobilise similar efforts for other issues such as the illegal invasion of Iraq, occupied Palestine, Afghanistan, Iran, Kashmir, Islamaphobia, discrimination.” In other

words, they have learned from the lessons of intimidation, successfully carried out by the cultural Jihadists throughout the Muslim world, in both the Middle East, South East Asia, Europe and North America. And what they have learned is that intimidation has a dividend. It kills freedom of speech. They can now mobilise similar outfits. There was no email put out by FAMSU condemning the bloody riots that had taken the lives of nearly two dozen people. There was no condemnation of the violence that saw the Danish Embassy burned to the ground in Damascus, or a temple to be burned down in Beirut or hostages being taken in the West Bank in Gaza. Instead, they want to mobilise similar efforts because they now see the West on the run.

I fear that sometimes the West loses its resolve. The first US reaction to the publication of the cartoons was issued when the State Department spokesperson said the cartoon provocation was “unacceptable”. Pray tell me, what gives the government the right to make the clam that publication by the media is “unacceptable”? That’s the language of Khoumeniists. Jihad has succeeded in putting democracy in a position where a gun has been held to its head. *The Sunday Telegraph* came out with a phenomenally strong editorial including:

This newspaper would not have published the cartoons of Mohammed at the centre of this controversy, images which we regard as vulgar and fatuously insulting. But we reserve absolutely our right to make our own decision, free of threat and intimidation. The difficulty is that what started as an issue of editorial judgment has become a question of public order. The protesters in London with their disgraceful slogans – “Behead those who insult Islam”, or “Britain you will pay - 7/7 is on its way” – have made it all but impossible for a genuinely free debate on this issue to take place. All such debate is now being carried out in the shadow of murderous intimidation, the cultural jihad.

When an act of terrorism occurs there is a natural market response. We galvanise, and our public consciousness is made more aware. When we understand the threat of terrorism, counter terrorist legislation is made more likely, the public debate then ensues, people understand the whole notion of what terrorism can carry out and how it inflicts such damage upon the moral fibre of Western society. Because terrorism basically denies you the freedom to act as who you are. It’s an execution.

People often ask me whether terrorism is any worse than people dying from cancer. Well, there may be no difference in the loss of a loved one. But there is a difference between dying from the medically induced scars which we can attribute to fate and somebody who is executed. Right now I’m afraid the resolve of the West is wearing thin. We don’t realise the extent to which the Jihadists are emboldened. And while the military Jihadists may not be flagrant every single day, it’s the cultural Jihadists that make the military jihad possible. Unless and

until that cultural jihad is defeated, discredited and de-legitimised, there can be no hope for a true expression of freedom of thought in the Muslim world.

What we seek as an antidote is a reformation in the Muslim world. The first sign of a reformation occurring would be a lot of Muslim comedians suddenly appearing. The ability to poke fun at one's self, to carry out self criticism, is absolutely critical. It lies at the heart of the West. The West's separation of Church and State, the notion that pluralism reigns supreme over any differences of opinion and our affirmation of pluralism is rejected by the cultural Jihadists.

It all comes down to one fundamental fact – the media in the West are currently afraid and they don't want to admit it. But that fear is the fear that will rob us of our freedoms. In Canada, when the government proposed to introduce Sharia courts to the local community the one block of activists that successfully overturned the government's decision was a bunch of secular Iranian women. They understood, more than anyone, what Sharia law would do with them in terms of disenfranchisement. Sharia law is incompatible with democracy, period. And anyone who tells you otherwise is lying.

As we face the prospect of other acts of terror, I am not worried about the response of the British government, the Australian government, the American government, the Spanish government or the Italian government in responding. I know they will do the right thing. What I fear is the successful deception practised by the cultural Jihadists. Unlike the resolve exhibited by Britain in the face of the Nazi scourge in WWII, Western governments have sought to appease the Jihadists over the cartoon issue. They have shown a cowardice which will only embolden future Jihadists.

Now that the West has demonstrated its "cultural sensitivity" to Islamic demands, how far should the West have gone to accommodate Islamic feelings? Should the West now cave in to demands that Western women not wear mini-skirts? Or that public schools segregate girls from boys? Or that health clubs have segregated hours for both women and men? The question is not so preposterous as a national health club in Detroit recently caved into demands from fundamentalist Muslims in the Detroit area to maintain segregated hours.

One of the most encouraging aberrations in my thesis is the emergence of singular voices of moderation in the Muslim world. Whether it's Irshad Manji from Canada, or Tashbih Sayyed who edits *Pakistan Today* or Kamal Nalwash who heads the group called Muslims Against Terrorism. They have the courage to stand up against the cultural Jihadists and affirm the right of free speech and pluralism. But unless, and until, we see more Muslims stand up against the cultural Jihadists the future is bleak.



Photo - David Karonidis

Samdhong Rinpoche

Professor Venerable Samdhong Rinpoche, the Chairman of the Central Tibetan Administration in India, toured Australia in 2006, meeting with Australian leaders and the community to explain possible non-violent solutions to the Tibetan situation. He also spoke at the second Tibetan Conference in Sydney. On Thursday 16 February 2006, Samdhong Rinpoche addressed The Sydney Institute and explained the many developments in Tibetan-Chinese relations since 1949 when Mao-Tse-tung's Army invaded peaceful Tibet. Samdhong Rinpoche was born in eastern Tibet in 1939 and lived through those early years of Chinese occupation of Tibet when, after the installation of a pro-Chinese Administration, the first decisions brought a severe famine, suppressed civil rights and imposed the Chinese language.

TIBET – IS PEACE

POSSIBLE?

Samdhong Rinpoche

I am grateful for this opportunity to meet you and express some of my thoughts this afternoon. The topic is a very big question. Most of you are aware of the situation of Tibet, and the history of Tibet. Tibet, a tiny country between India, China and Russia on the top of the Himalayas, is located at the highest tip of the world. It's a huge territory with a small population. Tibet has never had a population of more than six million and yet it has 1300 years of recorded history. For most of its history, Tibet remained independent, and during the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries it became a military power in the region. It invaded many neighbouring countries such as China and India.

Buddhism was introduced into Tibet in the middle of the seventh century by the great king Srong-tsan-gam-po who was influenced by his two Buddhist wives – one from China, the other from India. Later, in the eighth century, the great monks Shantarakshita and Padmasambhava brought their teachings to Tibet at the invitation of the then king. Before long, all Tibetan people became Buddhist and, as such, they became peaceful people. The entirety of the Buddhist canon from Sanskrit, from Pali and from other Indian languages and some from China were translated into the Tibetan language. Today Tibet is the one country where the entirety of the Buddhist canon is preserved.

Tibet was occupied by a Mongolian force in the thirteenth century for about 20 years but otherwise was a sovereign country until 1951. In 1949, Tibet was invaded by the People's Liberation Army of People's Republic of China. On 23 May 1951, Tibet was annexed to People's Republic of China, through a so-called 17 Point Agreement. By that agreement, signed under duress, Tibet became an autonomous region of the PRC and since then it has been under China's rule. His holiness, the exiled Dalai Lama, has tried his best to reconcile with China's occupiers by implementing the 17 Point Agreement, but after completion of the military road from Beijing to Tibet, the PRC began to edit each point of the Agreement, purposefully and intentionally,

and this led to many problems. Finally, on 10 March 1959, the Dalai Lama, his cabinet members and more than 80,000 innocent Tibetan people took refuge in northern India. Since then we have lived in India where today about 100,000 Tibetan people live as Tibetans exiled from their homeland with another 50,000 around the world. We continue to try to preserve our cultural and spiritual heritage, and to perform our responsibility to share our knowledge and wisdom with the world where there is interest.

From the mid 1950s till the mid 1960s, for about 10-12 years, there was a lot of resistance inside and outside Tibet under the leadership of Gyalo Thondup. He was able to persuade the exiled Tibetan people to commit themselves to violence. Opposed by the 13-Group and Chushi Gangdrug this campaign of violence ended in the early 1970s. Since then we have been able to commit ourselves to non-violent means alone. In spite of the injustice, repression and torture, we have maintained a sense of forgiveness, tolerance and a friendly attitude with the occupiers, the operatives of the PRC, and the people of China as brothers and sisters of the Tibetan people throughout history. We still have a very close bond with the people of China.

After 1979, his holiness agreed that except for separation or sovereign independence, all other things can be settled through negotiation. His holiness and exiled Tibetans agreed to give up their demand for the restoration of independence and seek a general autonomy under the constitution of the PRC. For that purpose, over the past 26 years, his holiness has pursued a consistent policy involving several rounds of dialogue with the Chinese but nothing tangible has been achieved - even now, when we cannot say that human rights in China, and particularly in Tibet, have improved much.

From 2001 there has been a renewed contact with the PRC. We have had four rounds of dialogue with their counterparts - in 2002, 2003 and 2004. The fourth round of dialogue took place outside China and right now the fifth round of dialogue is in progress. We are hopeful of finding a negotiated settlement, peacefully, of the Tibet issue and that Tibetans in exile can be returned to their homeland.

Peace is possible in any society or group of people or individuals who have the willingness and wish to achieve it. Humankind, by nature, is peaceful and non-violent. Violence and disturbance to peace is a temporary and unnatural thing, artificially created. If humanity has the will to get rid of violence and achieve peace, it is possible that can be granted. But the question arises, how can we achieve peace in the present situation of overwhelming injustice and inequality to humanity? Sometimes it appears to us that peace is impossible.

At this moment the world is challenged by many big problems. There are five major challenges to humanity today. Firstly, an increase

in human population, particularly in the developing and underdeveloped countries. Secondly, there is increasing inequality in many ways - economically, socially, politically - along with many inequalities between nations, between continents, and within nations. This causes a lot of violence and unrest. Thirdly, we have the direct violence of war, the conflict of ethnicity, the conflict between cultures, and undeclared wars and terrorism. Since the incident of 9/11 in New York city, terrorism has become one of the biggest challenges for humanity. Fourthly, there is the degradation of the environment and the imbalance of eco-system, and global warming. We have done much to destroy parts of the eco-balance and the environment everywhere. In many parts of the world, finding clean drinking water is a dream. Breathing clean air has also become more and more of a problem. This kind of degradation of the environment is a big challenge.

Lastly, but not least, we seem to lack a real source of peace and solace for each community to offer through its religion. Various religious traditions are at war. The resolution of human conflict, the teaching of brotherhood and sisterhood and the teaching of how to live in harmony is the role of religion. But today the work of this sort among religions has almost disappeared. We hear the names of religious institutions but too often religion has become a cause of complaint, a cause of violence.

Each of these five challenges is capable of destroying the entire world, its peace and the happiness of humanity. We have to find solutions to these challenges. Humanity seems to have forgotten its self knowledge. A name is not the person; at birth there is no name, it is given by someone else. Many individuals can have the same name. The name is not the person. Similarly a profession is not the person - not the doctor, nor the engineer. That is not the person. The philosopher used to say "I think, therefore I am." We might also say, "I am, therefore I think." I used to say, "It is, therefore I think." These are different ways of expressing the human condition. Humans need to recognise their humanity to re-establish harmony and peace.

There are so many external pressures that condition our minds so we become unable to treat others as equal, or as we treat ourselves. The division between the self and the other is the real cause of all the conflict and it prevents the development or cultivation of the sense of love and compassion we need today. If we can see a thing as it exists, not as it appears, then the establishment of peace and coexistence and harmony is possible. It depends on human beings, it depends on individual determination. If the individual or group of people have the determination, then peace will be attained. The Tibetan people have this peace within them - they are very happy to share it with the world.



Photo – David Karonidis

Peter Costello

Deputy Leader of the federal parliamentary Liberal Party the Hon Peter Costello, as federal treasurer, is not often heard speaking about non economic matters. However, on Thursday 23 February 2006, in a much reported address to The Sydney Institute, Peter Costello reflected on Australian citizenship and the value Australians attach to it. Taking Australia's immigrant nation status as its defining characteristic, the treasurer spoke of Australians' natural suspicion with inherited titles and privileges and Australia's successful settlement of many ethnic cultures. But he cautioned against taking Australian values for granted and argued for a more public consensus and recognition of what Australian values are.

WORTH PROMOTING,

WORTH DEFENDING - AUSTRALIAN CITIZENSHIP

Peter Costello

On this day, 75 years ago, in this city of Sydney, an elderly woman by the name of Helen Porter Armstrong passed away. We know her better as Dame Nellie Melba. She had been born in Richmond, Melbourne, almost seventy years earlier, the daughter of David Mitchell, a successful building contractor. She attended the Presbyterian Ladies College where she took singing lessons, and later studied under the retired Italian singer, Signor Pietro Cecchi. In 1885 this protestant, married and separated mother of one was engaged as the principal singer at St Francis' Catholic Church in Melbourne. Shortly afterwards she travelled with her father and young son George to London, and then on to Paris to learn singing under the famous teacher Mathilde Marchesi, who declared her to be a star.

In December 1886, at a concert given at her teacher's home, she sang for the first time under the name of Madame Melba, in honour of her home town. Despite going on to fame and fortune among the sophisticates of Europe and America, Nellie maintained her love for, and loyalty to, the country of her birth. She returned to her homeland for a triumphant tour in 1902, when the new nation was barely a year old. From 1909 she divided her time between Australia and Europe. During the war years she raised some £60,000 for the Red Cross by her efforts.

She was made a Dame Commander of the British Empire in 1918, and a Dame Grand Cross in 1927. In May of that year she sang the national anthem at the opening of the first parliament house at Canberra. Dame Nellie Melba reached for the world stage to fully realise her talent and develop her ability. Her international success was a source of great pride for her fellow countrymen and her country was a great source of pride for her.

Peter Allen, born Peter Woolnough, grandson of a Tenterfield saddler wrote of his experience of international success and the love of country in a famous song “I still call Australia home”. This song is something of an anthem for those Australians now recognised in Hollywood or on Broadway or Wall Street and other centres of the arts or business around the world.

There are many Australians who live overseas because their talent or ability or drive has taken them on to the world stage. Like the sportsmen and women we admire so much they want to compete against or work with the world’s best. In doing so they stretch themselves and their abilities. This does not mean they have turned their back on their country. For many of them the love of country grows stronger through this process. Apart from anything else, living overseas gives them a comparison to measure all the benefits that Australia brings.

Our Ambassadors around the world are not just those employed by the Department of Foreign Affairs. They are the Australians who live and work in foreign countries who can explain what Australia is like; who demonstrate the warm hearted nature of the Australian character.

Sometimes you will hear criticism that talented young Australians go overseas to work. This is nonsense. There are some skills they can only learn through international exposure. They want to be the best. And this is good for Australia. Talented young Australians around the world are a great national asset. If we are promoting tourism to Australia it helps to have Australians who are well known in foreign markets doing that for us. If we are promoting inward investment, it helps to have Australian business leaders who are known and respected to tell the story of Australia’s economic achievements. There is a great deal of advantage in a diaspora.

The Jewish diaspora, particularly in the United States, is one of the great strengths Israel has in generating international political support. The Irish communities scattered around the world have endeared themselves and their country to millions. Ireland is a small country of around four million people. For a hundred years its principal export was its people. And not by choice. Now that diaspora, far greater than the population of Ireland itself, is generating a massive flow of investment back to the “old” country. The Irish Government understands the significance of this and it dispatches Ministers to St Patrick’s Day celebrations in far flung places like Australia so it can promote Ireland for tourism and investment purposes.

I was quite surprised to be asked to speak at a St Patrick’s Day function some years ago. As the son of a Methodist lay preacher who was raised a Baptist, I was not a promising starter. But the organisers had done their homework and found a Catholic grandmother and a

great, great grandfather who had emigrated from County Leitrim to Australia in 1837. On St Patrick's Day we are all Irish. And I am a little bit Irish on the other days too.

But Australia is not an emigrant nation – not like the Greeks or the Irish. Australia is an immigrant nation. This is a defining characteristic of who we are.

Outside Australia's indigenous people, we are all immigrants or descendants of immigrants – some earlier than others – but all with an experience of immigration during the foundation of modern Australia. Australia is part of the New World, the world of immigrants, not part of the Old World or the places they embark from. This is why we are suspicious of inherited titles and privileges. Nobody can afford to get too precious about their position or entitlements in this country because we all know that position and entitlements are comparatively new.

Australia's immigration experience is also a broad one. Originally it was Anglo-Celtic but after the war our immigrants came increasingly from southern Europe. In more recent times, Vietnamese and Chinese immigrants have grown considerably in numbers. And all these immigrant communities have made successful contributions to Australian life.

Australia is often described as a successful multicultural society. And it is in the sense that people from all different backgrounds live together in harmony. But there is a predominant culture just as there is predominant language. And the political and cultural institutions that govern Australia are absolutely critical to that attitude of harmony and tolerance. Within an institutional framework that preserves tolerance and protects order we can celebrate and enjoy diversity in food, in music, in religion, in language and culture. But we could not do that without the framework which guarantees the freedom to enjoy diversity.

On Australia Day this year, as I always do, I attended a Citizenship Ceremony at the Stonnington Town Hall in my electorate of Higgins. People from 36 different countries were taking out Australian citizenship this year. Various dignitaries – local mayors, State and Federal MPs – give speeches at these ceremonies and because it is Australia Day, they usually try to make some observation on what it means to be an Australian.

One of the speakers this year extolled the virtues of multiculturalism telling those attending that becoming an Australian did not mean giving up culture or language or religion or opinions, and it certainly did not mean giving up the love of their country of birth. The longer he went on about how important it was not to give up anything to become an Australian the more it seemed to me that, in his view, becoming an Australian didn't seem to mean very much at

all – other than getting a new passport. This State MP finished up his speech by telling the new citizens that they had done Australia a great honour by choosing to come to the country and choosing to become its citizen.

By this stage I was feeling quite guilty that we had detained these good people so long. Here they were doing us a favour and we were standing on ceremony. But I realised that this confused, mushy and misguided multiculturalism completely underestimated the audience. People who have moved to another country, people who want to take out citizenship do, it because they have positive reasons to do so. They consciously decide to embrace a different country and what it stands for. They want to be part of it. They are conscious that this is not a trivial event. It is a big decision. Becoming a citizen of another country changes their identity.

I was reminded of this recently when watching the Socceroos play in the World Cup Qualifier against Uruguay. A television commentator was moving amongst the crowd that was lining up to come into the ground. He came across an elderly woman with a heavy accent. He asked her where she came from and she replied, “I come from Uruguay to Australia 20 years ago.” The reporter said, “So you’re barracking for Uruguay?” The woman was outraged. “No!” she yelled back at him. “I go for Australia!” and looked incensed that he would think otherwise. Whether she went on to say “Australia is my country” I can’t be sure, but that is what she meant.

If you loved Uruguay, wanted to speak Spanish, loved Uruguayan food, culture and political institutions you would not mark out Australia as the place to pursue these passions. The fact that you have moved to Australia says that there is something about Australia that you want to embrace that you do not find in your country of birth. If you turned up to take an oath of allegiance to Australia you might be surprised to hear that being an Australian involves nothing more than keeping your great love for Uruguay.

People come to Australia and become Australian citizens because they want to embrace the things this country stand for. We should be proud that people from all over the world come here looking for Australian values – our values – and want to embrace them. Values like...

- Economic opportunity: Australia is an open society where inheritance and heredity do not govern a person's economic opportunity. Hard work brings rewards.
- Security: Australia is not subject to revolution, war or political violence. A person who wants to live in peace can do so.
- Democracy: Government is accountable to public opinion and changes peacefully through voting in secret ballots.

- Personal Freedom: An individual is free to write, to think, to worship and act as long as this does not impinge on others. Importantly women have a high measure of personal freedom in Australia.
- The Physical Environment: Australia has clean air and safe food and water. It has open space and natural beauty.
- Strong Physical and Social Infrastructure: Australia has roads that are paved, where traffic moves. It has hospitals that can treat illness and a good education system. It has aged and disability care.

The Australian Citizenship Oath or Affirmation tries to capture the essence of what it means to be Australian, it reads as follows: “From this time forward [under God] I pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people, whose democratic beliefs I share, whose rights and liberties I respect and whose laws I will uphold and obey.” To be an Australian citizen one pledges loyalty first: loyalty to Australia. One pledges to share certain beliefs: democratic beliefs; to respect the rights and liberty of others; and to respect the rule of law.

There is a lot of sense in this pledge. Unless we have a consensus of support about how we will form our legislatures and an agreement to abide by its laws – none of us will be able to enjoy our rights and liberties without being threatened by others. We have a compact to live under a democratic legislature and obey the laws it makes. In doing this the rights and liberties of all are protected. Those who are outside this compact threaten the rights and liberties of others. They should be refused citizenship if they apply for it. Where they have it they should be stripped of it if they are dual citizens and have some other country that recognizes them as citizens.

Terrorists and those who support them do not acknowledge the rights and liberties of others – the right to live without being maimed, the right to live without being bombed – and as such they forfeit the right to join in Australian citizenship. The refusal to acknowledge the rule of law as laid down by democratic institutions also stabs at the heart of the Australian compact. The radical Muslim Cleric Ben Brika was asked in an interview on the *7.30 Report* in August last year: “But don't you think Australian Muslims – Muslims living in Australia – also have a responsibility to adhere to Australian law?” To which he answered: “This is a big problem. There are two laws – there is an Australian law and there is an Islamic law.”

No, this is not a big problem. There is one law we are all expected to abide by. It is the law enacted by the Parliament under the Australian Constitution. If you can't accept that then you don't accept the fundamentals of what Australia is and what it stands for. Our State is a secular State. As such it can protect the freedom of all religions for worship. Religion instructs its adherents on faith, morals

and conscience. But there is not a separate stream of law derived from religious sources that competes with or supplants Australian law in governing our civil society. The source of our law is the democratically elected legislature.

There are countries that apply religious or sharia law – Saudi Arabia and Iran come to mind. If a person wants to live under sharia law these are countries where they might feel at ease. But not Australia. And the citizenship pledge should be a big flashing warning sign to those who want to live under sharia law. A person who does not acknowledge the supremacy of civil law laid down by democratic processes cannot truthfully take the pledge of allegiance. As such they do not meet the pre-condition for citizenship.

Before entering a mosque visitors are asked to take off their shoes. This is a sign of respect. If you have a strong objection to walking in your socks don't enter the mosque. Before becoming an Australian you will be asked to subscribe to certain values. If you have strong objections to those values don't come to Australia.

We need to be very clear on these issues. There are some beliefs, some values, so core to the nature of our society that those who refuse to accept them refuse to accept the nature of our society. If someone cannot honestly make the citizenship pledge, they cannot honestly take out citizenship. If they have taken it out already they should not be able to keep it where they have citizenship in some other country.

Of course this is not possible for those that are born here and have no dual citizenship. In these cases we have on our hands citizens who are apparently so alienated that they do not support what their own country stands for. Such alienation could become a threat to the rights and liberties of others. And so it is important to explain our values, explain why they are important, and engage leadership they respect to assist us in this process. Ultimately however it is important that they know that there is only one law and it is going to be enforced whether they acknowledge its legitimacy or not.

It will be a problem if we have a second generation – the children of immigrants who have come to Australia – in a twilight zone where the values of their parents old country have been lost but the values of the new country not fully embraced. To deal with this we must clearly state the values of Australia and explain how we expect them to be respected. I suspect there would be more respect for these values if we made more of the demanding requirements of citizenship. No one is going to respect a citizenship that is so undemanding that it asks nothing. In fact our citizenship is quite a demanding obligation. It demands loyalty, tolerance and respect for fellow citizens and support for a rare form of government – democracy.

People will not respect the citizenship that explains itself on the basis of the mushy multiculturalism I have described earlier. We are

more likely to engender respect by emphasising the expectations and the obligations that the great privilege of citizenship brings. We have a robust tolerance of difference in our society. But to maintain this tolerance we have to have an agreed framework which will protect the rights and liberties of all. And we are asking our citizens – all our citizens – to subscribe to that framework.

I do not like putrid representations like “Piss Christ”. I do not think galleries should show them. But I do recognise they should be able to practise their offensive taste without fear of violence or a riot. Muslims do not like representations of the Prophet. They do not think newspapers should print them. But so too they must recognise this does not justify violence against newspapers, or countries that allow newspapers to publish them.

We are asking all our citizens to subscribe to a framework that can protect the rights and liberties of all. These are Australian values. We must be very clear on this point. They are not optional. We expect all those who call themselves Australians to subscribe to them. Loyalty, democracy, tolerance, the rule of law: values worth promoting, values worth defending. The values of Australia and its citizens.



Photo – David Karonidis

Glyn Davis

Can Australian public universities, like public schools, hope to compete with a new expanding market in private sources of education and what are their chances of survival in the long term as centres of excellence? Professor Glyn Davis AC, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne believes Commonwealth control of Australia's universities means these institutions cannot respond quickly enough for their own progress as student demand shifts, nor can they reconfigure undergraduate profiles in response to market signals. To discuss all this and more, Professor Glyn Davis addressed The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 28 February 2006.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE

FOR AUSTRALIA'S PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES?

Glyn Davis

When Australia set up its first universities in the 1850s, it consciously copied British traditions. Degrees, rituals and buildings all resembled those found in Britain. This pattern had a profound influence on the development of universities in our country. We have conceived universities in one frame that we picked up through experience. It means there has been only one model of university in Australia. We tend to judge other universities we encounter as approximations toward this ideal, and this has proved a very constraining influence on debate.

Recent developments, however, are challenging universities to broaden the debate about what it is to be a university.

Universities are now ranked globally. There are a number of ways of ranking universities, all suspect and all celebrated by those who profit from them. The University of Melbourne was ranked in the top 20 in the world by the *Times* recently, but we recognise that it is about reputation rather than hard data. In the Jiao Tong world ranking of the top 100 universities, there are only two Australian universities - the ANU and the University of Melbourne. Oxford comes in at number 10 and it is slipping. There is only one thing that matters on the Jiao Tong ranking - research. Teaching is irrelevant. The message from this ranking is, send graduate assistants out to do your teaching, don't ever let professors into the classroom. They should be out there doing research. If that sounds perverse, you need to understand that there's a world competition under way, an arms race of sorts, and it's all about research capacity. This ranking is now structuring what universities do, including Oxford which is going through a rethink of its rationale and approach. Research measures mean that reputation is no longer sufficient.

Many countries have a deliberate policy of trying to get universities into this top 100 ranking. Singapore, for example, is spending big and so is China. Australia has chosen not to do this and the inevitable

cost will be that we will be very lucky to maintain two universities in the top 100.

The focus in the higher education debate has tended to be around research but this has disguised the profound change happening in the private higher education sector. For the first time, a viable large private sector is emerging. It is most developed in America, but growing in Australia. It has a radically different notion of what a university is.

The University of Phoenix, a “university for working adults”, started in the US in 1976. Unlike others, this company has worked out how to do credible and reasonable quality online learning. It remains largely unknown in Australia, despite the challenge its model poses to traditional public institutions. After just three decades, Phoenix is America’s largest accredited private university, claiming 17,200 qualified instructors (some perhaps moonlighting from other universities), 128 learning centres and internet delivery worldwide. Media reports put the student body as high as 295,000. It is the most profitable university in the United States.

This is a university as unlike an Australian university as it is possible to be. First, it is unashamedly for profit. Second, it has hit upon a unique formula for market profitability. The problem with universities is they have campuses - expensive bits of real estate to be maintained. Phoenix has dispensed with the notion of the campus. When it needs space, it hires office space; it does not have gargoyles or libraries or pleasant lawns. It is a very vocationally focused institution, knowing that most of its students will stay home, work online, and very occasionally attend a tutorial in an office building.

The other truly frightening thing, from an Australian perspective, is that Phoenix is not run by academics; it is run by managers out to make a profit. They hire academics to teach the courses they want and, if the demand is not there, they drop the courses. No one has a tenured position; nobody is doing research. In the Australian context that is heresy; but Phoenix makes a proud boast that it has no interest in research.

I learnt about Phoenix a few years ago when I went to see a senior manager at Rutgers University in New Jersey. He told me that Rutgers had a proud history going back to the 18th century, and he was very confident of its future until it started noticing that its general staff and administrative staff, when they decided to upgrade their qualifications, were not going to their own university but to online universities where it cost about half as much as at traditional universities. He decided the best way to find out more about the phenomenon was to pay for a couple of staff to do their MBAs so he could have a look at the material. For the first time he saw the future - and that there was not necessarily a role for the public sector in universities.

Phoenix can sound like one of those interesting things Americans do but presenting no great issue for us. In Australia we have seen, in the last five years, the emergence of a stream of degree granting institutions. These are not called universities, but they are handing out degrees and are supported through FEE-HELP, a Federal government initiative that assists students with loans repayable through the tax system. There are about 40 of these institutions accredited around the country.

On the latest figures we have, there are 45,000 Australian students (the same number as the University of Sydney) studying for a degree outside the public sector, in a private college or institute. They are growing at a rapid rate. This is a profound change in Australian higher education. Private providers, for the first time, now offer a coherent alternative to the public sector which has enjoyed a monopoly over universities for most of the last 150 years. They also provide a powerful and well-organized lobbying group to push the case of further deregulation of education.

We are also seeing a challenge from international universities moving into Australia. Carnegie Mellon will open in Adelaide in May, the first international university to open a substantial facility in Australia. The South Australian government has paid them \$20 million to come, but others will follow on their own steam.

Last December Kaplan, a major competitor of Phoenix and with a turnover of more than a billion US dollars a very large provider in its own right, bought Tribeca, an Australian provider of diploma courses in the financial services industry. We are going to see a number of such players. They use scale to provide online products which are of high quality; they do not provide in areas that are not profitable. There are no science degrees available; no philosophy degrees. They provide business, IT and law in the United States and they will providing the same here.

This is the challenge for the public sector. We've often talked about the challenge for the public sector as though it were in the movements of the high-end private universities. In fact the real challenge is this much larger market that's going to emerge, for-profit providers. The Australian public sector, therefore, has to think about how it will confront all this. And so far the debate inside public universities has been disappointing. It has been defensive and resentful of change. But having 38 public universities lined up all in a row in a single file on the way to the deep north is no way for the public sector to face the emergence of a market. In universities we face the same situation that electricity utilities and gas companies have faced. When you look ten years on from deregulation, very few of the players who were there at the start are there at the finish. That tells us the stakes are very high for the public sector in higher education.

What options are open to the public sector? The key option is specialisation. Watch the way private schooling has adopted this strategy. Some private schools have decided that their future is not in being comprehensive, or open to all-comers. They are deciding what their specialties are and providing opportunities for students at a very young age to specialise. These schools worked out that if they did not specialize they could risk becoming residual providers, providers for people who could not get to the places they wanted. The public university system has yet to make the same call.

The future for public universities is about diversity of institutions. The law, based on current national protocols for approving higher education institutions, requires that universities not specialize. The rules drive universities to be very similar; in fact you cannot have a specialist university in, say, engineering in this country because it could not be accredited as a university. Clearly there is a scope for universities specialising in engineering or business or performing arts to present themselves to the market as world class institutions in their areas of strength. All of our regulatory systems, all of our enabling legislation, all the missions provided by parliament, are written deliberately to be broad, comprehensive, and as much alike as possible.

The University of Melbourne has decided to become a more graduate-focused university - that is, to teach the professions mostly as graduate degrees following a broad undergraduate degree. This is a major shift as it means teaching everything from law to medicine to dentistry at graduate school level, not undergraduate. No Australian university has tried this.

But universities should not wait for governments to do things; they should be putting up propositions about what they want to do and then working with government to get there. Change is a very complicated process. It takes ten years minimum to change from an undergraduate to a graduate profile. It will probably take longer because of the complexities of seeing through timetables, introducing new degrees and achieving accreditation. Nonetheless, if the public sector does not start thinking about what should happen and start moving, there is a real risk that we could end up as the residual providers- not a happy position to be in.

Universities are often criticised for somehow refusing to change, despite the need to do so. But as well as some initiatives from within the sector we need a series of policy changes from government. The government chooses to control a great level of the sector. We need universities to decide their own student mix. At the moment, this is decided for us, as are the courses we teach, as is the size of the university. These are all matters of regulation.

We need to revisit the definition of a university to allow specialist institutions, but inevitably that means allowing some universities not

to see research as central to their mission. This is not an argument for teaching-only universities; it is an argument that says if universities should decide their own fate then one of the options open to them could be the amount research that they choose to do.

Universities should be allowed to set their own fees. There need to be constraints and protections and there can also be support with subsidies and income-contingent loans. Substantive policy changes are necessary if we are to move from a highly regulated system to a diverse system where you can think about the distinctive strengths of each institution. If the public sector does not embrace its choices and change, then others will do it for us and we will end up like the public school system, struggling to find a role and watching the really important developments happening around us.

It is important that when public universities glimpse the future, they can see themselves in it.



Glenn Milne



Caroline Overington

Photo – David Karamidis

On 2 March 2006, the Coalition under Prime Minister John Howard achieved a decade in office. According to *The Howard Factor* (MUP), a compilation of the views of 21 journalists/staffers at *The Australian* released to coincide with the tenth anniversary of the Howard Government, it has been a decade that has changed Australia “forever” and “redrawn the political map, turning the conservatives into reformers and forcing the progressives to defend the status quo”. On Wednesday 1 March 2006, contributors to *The Howard Factor* Glenn Milne and Caroline Overington addressed The Sydney Institute to discuss the implications for Australia of ten years of reform under John Howard. Glenn Milne writes for *The Australian* and is Chief Political Correspondent for the *Sunday Telegraph* and Caroline Overington is a columnist with *The Australian*.

THE HOWARD FACTOR

Glenn Milne

Gerard and I have known each other for a long time. I first met Gerard when he was in John Howard's office advising him as opposition leader on industrial relations. Gerard holds the distinction of coining the term "Industrial Relations Club". And I think I saw him a month ago when we went to Peter Costello's commemoration of the Dollar Sweets case - such is the tragedy of our existence.

I was impressed by Peter Costello addressing people there and one of the cleverest questions came from one of my colleagues who asked him about the institution in public life over which he really has most control, which is the Essendon Football Club as the number one ticket holder. My colleague noted that the long standing captain of that team had been passed over this season for a relative neophyte, Michael Lloyd. And he (i.e. the Treasurer) was asked whether he would like to see that principle applied to public life in Australia, to which he replied, "Well, first of all I think Michael Lloyd actually kicked many goals last season and was always a quintessential figure in our greatest victories. And, if I was the coach, I wouldn't be playing John Howard in the ruck." So there you go. What I will discuss tonight might be in the past tense, at least if Peter Costello had his way.

My contribution to *The Howard Factor* is in fact a couple of principles; firstly that John Howard is misunderstood in some respects as a large "C" conservative, when in fact he is something of a changeling; and, secondly, the key to Howard's success has been his capacity to adapt. I began my chapter in *The Howard Factor* with the 2001, 28 October City Recital Hall campaign launch in which he declared, "We will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come." On researching this, I have discovered this was not a scripted line. Nobody in Howard's staff had written it for him. He hadn't workshopped it with anybody and, to the extent that things aren't spontaneous in politics, this was a spontaneous line. We all know subsequently how effective it was because it became the centrepiece of the Coalition's advertising campaign. To me it illustrates that there is a large part of John Howard that is conviction politician. He does get out ahead on his own and he does state firmly what he believes. And I think this is one of his strengths.

Now the potency of that line in the 2001 campaign is a symbol for the instinctiveness synthesis between two divergent forces which Howard has maintained throughout his prime ministership. By that I mean he is a pragmatic but reformist market economist on one hand, but he's a conservative and social idealist on the other. So the 2001 campaign, the *Tampa* (to be shorthanded), represented the latter, while the rest of the 2001 campaign economic policy launch represented the former. Now while these forces have strained against each other at times during Howard's prime ministership, he has managed to keep them broadly coupled and in so doing has re-made Australia in his own image. This the key to the Howard prime ministership.

In extremely political terms this has been a precise tool. He's used that same political fusion to prise enough of Labor's base away from the Opposition to keep it in the political wilderness for the past 10 years. Howard's supremacy is a demonstration that he understands that Labor's blue-collar base has always been socially conservative – and if you want proof you only have to go back to the union with the DLP. They are socially conservative but economically aspirational. Howard's pact with this critical grouping has been this: provided Prime Minister that you deliver on economic policy – growth, jobs, low inflation and low interest rates – and you remain in step with our social conservatism, we will continue to vote for you.

This in turn has created a so-far-insoluble dilemma for the ALP. Every time Labor produces a policy, it must have a dual appeal – not only to the group that I've just mentioned which in shorthand again is "Howard's battlers", but also to Labor's middle class educated constituency. And more often than not this has proved impossible. What some have defined "the chattering classes" are socially progressive, the "battlers" socially conservative. So Labor finds itself in an irreconcilable internal collision course that has seen the party implode at four consecutive elections. The quintessential example of this is what became known as the "*Tampa* election". Howard hung absolutely tough on the issue of border protection and therefore on the side of the "battlers" who might otherwise have voted for Labor. "We will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come" was the message to which they responded.

On the other side, Kim Beazley floundered. He was trying to thread his way between what should have been Labor's blue-collar supporters, who backed Howard's strong stand, and an educated middle class demanding a more compassionate position on refugees. The resulting confusion proved disastrous. Once again Howard, and this is the key to his genius, stood between Labor and its natural base. He is the gatekeeper and he is the obstacle. For the term of his office he has used successful economic management in the same way, in the process re-casting the Australian political landscape.

It is also important to realise, that when we talk about John Howard, this reality has not always been so. This was somebody judged to be a political failure through much of his career. But whatever his political skills, he has developed and he has been tested over time and the two things that emerge over these years are what I call failure and fear. A fear of failure is the critical component to Howard's energy levels and his iron discipline. Having been a failure, having known failure, he's petrified of it. He always feels he may only be five minutes from calamity and he works like a man possessed to outdistance potential disaster. A metaphor for that I think is his prime ministerial power walk in the morning. Here he is, arms pumping, wired to the morning news, purposeful and charged.

I remember speaking to people after the announcement of the Iraq war. You might remember, there was a group of anti-war protestors that ambushed him at the gates in Kirribilli, on the evening news, and he out paced them. And they were in their twenties. None of them were interested in the Iraq war, they just said "Wow." That's a very important part of his political profile. But this was not always the case. In May 1989, Howard lost to Peacock and was again in the political wilderness. Something that Gerard Henderson would remember acutely. He was left looking vaguely pathetic: a small, awkward man with outsize spectacles, teeth that resembled flying bowling pins and eyebrows that belonged to the garden. And he was an object of sympathy. His *Future Directions* statement had been lampooned by a commentariat that had been educated by the charisma of Bob Hawke and the starling economic reforms of the Zegna-clad Paul Keating. He was a man without a political future.

That *Future Directions* document was pivotal and this goes back to my thesis that Howard is somebody who learns how to change and adapt. That document was particularly pilloried. You might remember it, the one with the picket fence on the front, the Mum and Dad, the perfect family, a boy and girl. A lawn that looked as if had been manicured with nail scissors. And it didn't contain the element of choice for women. It tried to dictate the role of women in economic life. And it was judged as being too conservative. But Howard learnt from that experience. The point that that turned on was how he recognised for any policy program to be successful he had to have the element of choice. That might seem a relatively simple point, but it was a lesson Howard had to learn. He learned it and he's never presented a document like it again.

What also led to Howard's downfall in 1989 was his mismanagement of people. He was secretive to the point of paranoia; he was a loner. He ruthlessly rewarded his own supporters inside the Liberal Party, the so called "drys" at the expense of the "wets", but in the process he simply fuelled the factional division in the party and that

helped contribute to his own demise. When he finally returned to the leadership in 1995 this was another lesson learned. He proved inclusive and consultative and more embracing of his former internal ideological rivals. One example was that he appointed the leading moderate Robert Hill to the leadership of the Senate. And John Moore and David Jull, two of the assassins in 1988, the so-called "gang of five" were both given ministries. So again, here was a leader who could adapt and learn from his previous mistakes.

This is an approach that Howard has adopted in his relations with the electorate at large. He became a leader who was an expert at getting 90 per cent of what he wanted, provided his core objectives were met. And he still uses that model. An excellent example was the GST, negotiated through a hostile Senate, he took it off food and got most of what he wanted. He was no longer somebody who was prepared to put his leadership or his prime ministership to the torch for the sake of arguing for everything he wanted.

And again when he took the reins of Opposition, Howard demonstrated another lesson learned. His teeth were capped, his eyebrows were pruned and gone were the nerd glasses replaced by television-friendly lenses. My conclusion from that experience is how it signalled Howard's realisation that that while ideas are important, so too is image.

In 1996, Howard recognised the judgement of Wayne Goss that the electorate was largely waiting on the verandahs of their Queensland homes with a baseball bat to get Keating. He recognised that was a situation across the country and presented himself as a small target for that reason. That was the brilliance of the 1996 campaign. He sought not to get in between Keating and the voters, which is what John Hewson did of course which lost the election.

Howard is also known to be what I call the father of the nation. He is not a warm person. He is not naturally affectionate but I think he learnt two things from the Port Arthur experience - how to be affectionate and compassionate to victims of national tragedies, something that he carried right through the Bali bombings, and from the Port Arthur massacre he learnt the gun-law lesson which was that sometimes it is important to take on your own base with a big idea and win the debate. He learnt that lesson through the gun debate and he carried through right through to the GST and the Iraq War. In other words, if you fight for the big idea, no matter how unpopular it might seem at the beginning it earns you big points with the voters. So he's adapted that and made it part of his mantra as well.

John Howard is as significant as Bob Hawke, probably more significant than Hawke, in the modern era. He is a consummate politician. The Howard haters underestimate him and the thing they underestimate most about him is his capacity to change and adapt. People who

try to put him into a capital “C” conservative box, misunderstand him fundamentally. Until the Labor Party comes to grips with that fundamental misunderstanding they will not defeat him. Having said that, I think an excellent measure of change and adaptation will be how he reacts to Peter Costello’s tilt at the leadership. And for that we haven’t got a template.

THE HOWARD FACTOR –

AND YOUNGER AUSTRALIANS

Caroline Overington

I must admit, I was flattered when Nick Cater, the editor of *The Howard Factor*, asked me to write the chapter on young conservatives. “You can do it,” he said, “because you are young.”

I am so not young. I’m married and I’m the mother of two school-aged children. In the language of my six-year-old son, that makes me Jurassic. More to the point, I’m ancient compared to anybody born in the 1980s. And - as tough as this is to believe - people who were born in the late 1980s now vote in federal elections. According to recent research, particularly from the excellent Australian Electoral Study at Queensland University of Technology, these new voters are trending conservative.

In 1990 – that is, around 15 years ago – young people gave Labor their vote at a rate of 10.4 per cent more than the general population. By 2001 - that is, just five years ago - young people gave Labor their vote at a rate of just 1.2 per cent more than the general population. In other words, young people aren’t voting Labor at the rate they used to.

At the last federal election in October 2004, just 32 per cent of people under 25 voted for Mark Latham, while 41 per cent voted Liberal. In the 25-30 age group, an overwhelming 62 per cent of young men voted for John Howard, compared to 27 per cent for Mark Latham. Clive Bean, who is an election results analyst at the Queensland University of Technology - and one of the principal investigators in the Australian Election Study - believes it might have been the first time more young people voted Liberal than Labor.

In what might be called an understatement, Professor Bean explained that “Young people tend to be a bit left wing.” The trend was established in 1972, when young people flocked to Gough Whitlam’s rocking “It’s Time” campaign. It continued throughout the 1970s, when young people rejected Malcolm Fraser, and through the 1980s, when they flocked to Bob Hawke (and tried to mob Paul Keating). So the election result of 2004 - where young people swung right - was contrary to a fairly stable pattern of young people voting Left.

Given that it is well-known that people tend to get more conservative as they get older, the drift by young people - to the right - must be deeply troubling for anybody on the left of politics. The question, of course, is how much John Howard had to do with it.

I think it's fair to say that when Mr Howard was Opposition Leader, he was not entirely attractive to young people. He was mocked for his dorky appearance. He wore big glasses; he had awful teeth; and some of his ideas seemed so old-fashioned. Over time, however, young people have learnt to respect John Howard. On the face of it, that's curious because, from the outset, many of Mr Howard's policies seemed like they were designed to repel the young.

One of the first major policies that Howard introduced, shortly after being elected, was a "work for the dole" program. In explaining how it would work, Howard said young people who wanted to get welfare payments would have to clean animal cages ... or tend worm farms. Mr Howard has also forced young people to contribute substantially to the cost of their own education. He has overseen a near doubling of HECS fees. Mr Howard has sent Australian troops - that is, young people - into conflicts overseas three times, in East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq. So, why do young people vote for Mr Howard? To annoy their parents?

No, not really. It's actually part of a worldwide trend toward conservatism amongst the young, first seen in the United States, where young Christians dominate on university campuses, and among the interns at Bush's White House. In Australia, too, young people are significantly more conservative than their parents were at the same age.

In 2005, the advertising agency, Clemenger BBDO, released a survey called "Tomorrow's Parents Today". It found that today's young people are more likely to volunteer, more likely to give to charity and to go to church than their parents were. They are more likely to marry, and there is evidence that they plan to have their children earlier. The Democrats got similar results when they surveyed young people in 2005. They found that 64 per cent of young people viewed "family" as the most important issue in their lives. Family was ahead of health, education ... and even money.

The Democrats' poll found a significant drop in the number of young people who had tried marijuana and much less support for the decriminalisation of drugs. Young people also backed the Howard government's policy of mandatory detention for asylum seekers, in numbers that the Democrats did not expect to see. Many young women have grown disillusioned with one of the Left's favourite movements: feminism. Indeed, ask any 10-22 year old girl whether they are a feminist. The answer will very likely be no. Young women see the movement as unfashionable. Young people are also dismayed

by the high rate of divorce – particularly if they grew up in broken homes themselves. They remember what it was like to be a “latch-key kid” – to walk home alone, to an empty house, because both Mum and Dad were working. In surveys, they indicate that they want something different for their own children.

In recent years, some very high profile Australian women have gone public, lamenting the fact that they were so busy climbing the career ladder, they forgot to have children. The ABC journalist Virginia Haussegger wrote a book in which she expressed her anger and frustration at her childlessness. She said she couldn’t believe that she once believed that having a briefcase, instead of a baby, would be enough. Young women have absorbed this message, and there are signs that this generation – Generation Y – is already inclined to have more babies, more often. In short, there is a general trend toward conservatism amongst the young. Part of it is a backlash to left-leaning policies embraced by their parents.

But there is more to Mr Howard’s appeal. In preparing the chapter on South Park Conservatives – we stole the name from Brian C Anderson’s book, and the cartoon show – I interviewed the Liberal’s Brendan Nelson. As education minister, he dealt with young Australians every day. Nelson pointed out some of the more obvious reasons why Mr Howard is appealing, not only to young people, but to voters generally. The economy has boomed under the Howard Government. There are plenty of new jobs. Interest rates have stayed low. Nelson said that when he visited schools, principals often told him: “Fourteen years ago, we had parents at the school in tears, because their kids were going straight on the dole.”

That’s no longer the case; at least, not as often. But Nelson said Mr Howard’s critics made the mistake of mocking the government, for wanting to “return to the fifties” or the era of the “white picket fence”. “It’s backfired,” he said. “Because actually, young people are reassured by that. They like the fact that with John Howard, there is a sense that he knows what he is doing. It’s like, they know the bus is driving along uncertain ground. But they are comforted by the idea that the driver has experience.

Let me now turn to what Labor has tried to do, to win back some of funky John’s appeal. Labor’s Nicola Roxon was just 31 when she was elected to parliament. She wasn’t deluded about how old that made her, in the eyes of truly young voters. “I go and talk to students, and I am double their age,” she told me, in an interview for this book. “They look at you like you’re some amazing authority because you’re a member of parliament. But they are really quite perplexed that you might be described as *young*.”

Roxon is one of many in the Labor party who have analysed – and agonised – over the youth vote. She said that young people

have drifted right – and this, she said, was really depressing - in part because the Howard government had been in so long. “Howard has been prime minister for as long as they have been voting,” she said. “He has been prime minister all their adult lives.” In order to win the last election, Labor knew it needed to win young votes, but some of the tactics were woeful. For example, some in the Labor Party expressed the deluded hope that a new recruit – the rock star, Peter Garrett - would appeal to young people.

Nicola Roxon didn’t buy it. “Some people did think that Peter had youth appeal,” she told me. “And to some extent, he does. But if you asked a 19 year old, they might not even know who Midnight Oil was.” She told me about the time he came to speak at one of her functions. “It was fabulous,” she said. “People really wanted to meet him. But they were all 40 and 50 year old men.” Roxon says Garrett gave a very passionate, very interesting speech that night and people were energised, and entertained. It proved to her that Labor’s message can resonate. “We’ve got a perfectly good message,” she said. “If we can get people to listen to it.”

Labor fought the last election with a leader who was supposed to be able to connect with the young - Mark Latham. And, it’s true, he was young - at least compared to John Howard. When they faced each other at the last election, the two men were a generation apart. Mr Howard was 65, and he was already the second-longest serving Liberal prime minister, after Robert Menzies. He had been in parliament 30 years - and prime minister for nine. Mr Latham, at 43, was 20 years younger. He had been Opposition leader for just nine months.

There was an idea, in the media, that Latham had youth appeal. In a headline on 30 March 2004, the *Sydney Morning Herald* headlined: “Latham proves a man of the young”. But the results of the 2004 election tell a different story. Latham didn’t capture young votes. He lost them, not only to the Liberals, but also to the Greens.

In the interview for this book, Nicola Roxon told me that John Howard benefited from incumbency. But it’s also fair to say that young people *like* what they’ve seen of Mr Howard. For as long as they can remember, he’s been prime minister. He’s presided over ten years of very low interest rates, and low unemployment. He has provided them with large amounts of cash, in the form of tax cuts, and the first home owners grant. For the most part, they have been able to find jobs - well-paid jobs, in exciting new industries.

Labor’s best chance to win back the young vote came when John Howard decided to support the war in Iraq. Young people generally don’t like wars, in part because they have to fight them. It is certainly true that young people marched against the Iraq war. It was the young who led a cardboard puppet of John Howard up the street, in an enormous protest against the invasion of Baghdad. More than 25,000

students took part in the “Books not Bombs” protests, too. But the war did not influence the way people voted in 2004. Palm Sunday peace marches, which were once dominated by young people, are essentially dead. Even protests against voluntary student unionism attracted nothing like the crowds of protesters that were once seen on university campuses.

In part, that’s because young people don’t have time to paint slogans onto protests signs. They work an average of 20 hours a week, on top of full-time or part-time study, and they leave university with HECS debt worth \$30,000 or more. But it’s also true that young people today aren’t as concerned about the so-called fringe issues – like Aboriginal reconciliation, the Republic, the asylum seekers – as Labor would like them to be. Also, they don’t see capitalism as evil, and why should they? Their experience of it has all been positive. It means new cars, plasma TVs and trips overseas. They don’t see a need for a welfare state, since so few of them have been poor.

A few days ago, while I was writing this paper, I was alerted to another new book, by an Australian writer considerably younger than me. His name is Ryan Heath. His book is called *Please Just F* Off: It’s Our Turn Now*. I think it’s fair to say that Ryan Heath is not among John Howard’s young conservatives. He spends much of his time, in his book, heaping criticism on Australia for not being as sophisticated and wordily as London – where he now lives. Heath says in his book that 10 per cent of Australian 18 to 25-year-olds live overseas. He calls them Generation eXpat. He complains about Sydney house prices, and about the lack of “opportunity” for young people in Australia.

He also writes: “Tens of thousands of young people are thinking - ‘I am only in my twenties once. Do I really want to spend them... putting up with that twat John Howard?’ For increasing numbers of young people over the past ten years, the answer has been, and still is, “yes”.

ANNUAL DINNER 2006



Photographer: David Karonidis



Photo – David Karonidis

Julia Gillard

Julia Gillard is the federal Shadow Minister for Health and Member for Lalor. She entered federal parliament in 1998 and has had a rapid rise as a shadow minister in that time. Following the 2001 election, Julia was appointed Shadow Minister for Population and Immigration. In February 2003, she added Shadow Minister for Reconciliation and Indigenous Affairs to her responsibilities. In July 2003, Julia Gillard took on the health portfolio. In a speech to the Sydney Institute on Tuesday 7 March 2006, however, it was not health but conviction and the Labor Party that were her key themes.

COURAGE, CONVICTIONS

& THE COMMUNITY THE NEXT TEN YEARS

Julia Gillard

Last week we saw the Howard Government at its most relaxed and comfortable. Relaxed and comfortable, indeed smug, as the sound of all that back slapping drowned out the growing concerns of Australians about their future and the nation's future. But what's important isn't a triumphalist retrospective on the last ten years. It's what will happen in the next ten years.

What's important isn't cynically clutching a sign that says "Right Direction, Mainstream Values". It's setting the right direction for the nation and being prepared to live up to your values. This is what I want to talk about tonight.

Right direction

It is a truism that if you don't know where you are going then any road will take you there. And the only road the Howard Government has trodden footprints into is the short term road to political success. It's convinced Australians that only the Howard Government can be trusted with their mortgages. It's bought support with its cheque in the mail culture. And it's whipped up fear, so that it can then be ready to comfort. I'm sure they all reckon it's good politics, good politics for them - but not for Australia.

The Howard Government hasn't governed by asking Australians to imagine a better nation and then to contribute to building it. It's asked Australians to imagine something worse and to shy away from it. But where are the policies to build prosperity past the resources boom? Where are the policies to address poverty and disadvantage? Where are the policies to turn the words "a fair go" from a slogan to a day to day reality for decent hard working Australians and their children?

In my own area of health I've been to the future, been to where the Howard Government's health policy will lead us. I recently visited the USA and it was there that I saw the ugliness of a world where the treatment you receive depends on your wealth and your insurance.

I recently visited one of the leading cancer hospitals in New York only to be told that this hospital not only won't treat people who aren't insured, it won't treat people unless they have the right kind of insurance. And I can see how easily we could wake up in that American health nightmare within just a few short years.

Already Australians are paying more for health services and getting less help to meet the cost. Already Australians living in the most disadvantaged areas have potentially avoidable premature death rates 54 per cent higher than those in the most well off areas. And we already know the Howard Government is in the thrall of private health insurers who are advocating tying insurance to employment. You know you are going in the wrong direction when the painful truth is that in spite of the medical advances and our economic prosperity, our children are facing a growing array of chronic illnesses and developmental problems that threaten their lifespan. And the Howard Government stands idly by, while at the same time spruiking its so-called mainstream values.

Mainstream values

I didn't know whether to shudder or laugh when the full cynicism and audacity of the Howard Government was revealed with its new slogan "mainstream values". It reminded me of John Major's "Back to Basics Campaign". The tub thumping, old fashioned morals campaign that ended up being parodied as the "Back to My Place Campaign" after the exposure of the Tory's sex scandals.

Now I'm not suggesting we will see the Howard Government mired in the same sort of sex scandals. I suspect they lack the imagination of the British Tories. But the message should be clear that you demonstrate your values by living by them, not by shouting a hollow slogan. Schools around the country are supposed to be teaching our kids mainstream Australian values. Our kids learn about the values of care and compassion; doing your best; a fair go; freedom; honesty and trustworthiness; integrity; respect; responsibility; and understanding, tolerance and inclusion.

How does the Howard Government measure up against these fine mainstream values? Honesty and trustworthiness? Integrity? Responsibility? As the Australian Wheat Board scandal has demonstrated this is a Prime Minister and a government that has made an art form of picking exactly the right moment to decide that they don't want to know anything more about an issue. They always know when they don't want to know. They always know when they don't want to take responsibility.

Tolerance and inclusion? How does the Treasurer's speech to this Institute stack up against those values? Can we expect kids to leave school with good values if every time they look at their government

they see adults whose sole concern is what they can get away with rather than what is right? After years of cynicism and low expectations, I believe there is a growing constituency looking for more than the crafty politician peddling a short term political fix.

Labor vision, Labor values

Undeniably, Australia has enjoyed high levels of economic growth and record levels of employment. But interestingly, numerous surveys have confirmed that, beyond a certain point, more and more money can't buy us happiness. Indeed, we are becoming an increasingly fragmented, individualised and time poor society, lacking the social structures and networks required to meet our daily needs and the needs which arise in times of crisis. We have seen growth in incomes, but most of us have little time to enjoy it with our family and friends. It's not just commodity fetishism that has failed us.

While we can't and shouldn't turn back any of the gains made by the gender revolution, there is a legitimate and deep concern that the huge changes to our society which started in the 1960s and 1970s era of free love have now left us with the era of sex sells - anything and everything. This commodification of sex and beauty makes its own contribution to a sense of dislocation and unease in our community. Coupled with this unease and resulting from it, we are seeing an emerging wave of desire for renewed engagement and a yearning for social solidarity. This yearning for connection should not be underestimated as a powerful political force for change.

For Labor, the next ten years needs to be about responding to these trends while implementing our traditional values of decency, of a fair go, of understanding that we can build a shared future that supports those in need and offers a hand up to hard working Australians. The Federal Labor Party has convictions and many Australians share those convictions. But what Labor has lacked is the courage to express these as clearly and as forcefully as it should.

In order for Labor to revive, it must find that courage. Many reading these words will nod their heads and think of the debates about refugees or anti-terrorism legislation. But that is not what I mean by these words. For all of the importance of those debates, Labor's fundamental tradition is not rooted in individual rights-based politics. Labor's fundamental tradition and the key to its revival lies in focussing on the wealth and well-being Australians, on their rights and their obligations to each other, on values in action. And it is on these core issues, the very basis of our tradition, that we have sent mixed messages over the ten long years that the Howard Government has been in office.

Under Kim Beazley's leadership, Labor has increasingly put forward its vision about building both for our future prosperity and

investing in community. It's a good start and more will be revealed in the coming months as we build for government.

Beyond Left and Right

We understand that concerns about the Howard Government will not magically translate into political support for Labor. To get Australians to turn away from the Howard Government and toward Labor, we need to earn their trust and respect. The Australian Labor Party, like social democrats around the globe, is facing difficult policy choices about how to fight for equity, security and social mobility in a world in which nation states are not separated from the global economy or global culture.

Indeed, there is a whole body of literature on whether in the broad political spectrum the terms of "Left" and "Right" mean anything anymore. But if you read the newspapers you would be forgiven for believing that somehow the next ten years for Labor is all about Labor's Right and Labor's Left and the fighting between them.

Before you can persuade Australians of your credentials to run the country, you have to show that you can run your political party. And to do that, we must unshackle our Party from factions. It's time to stop mincing words and acknowledge that factionalism in the Labor Party is out of control and destructive. Indeed, we are no longer talking about factionalism, we are talking about fractionalism. A Party in which almost anyone with a pocket full of votes, often procured in dubious circumstances, believes it is their right to demand something from the Party in return.

Labor's factions have played a role in the past. A role of maximising the voice of individuals who wanted to be heard by bringing like-minded individuals together. At their best factions have been structures to enable consultation and power sharing. But that's not what is happening now. The factional structures of Left and Right are now ossified and devoid of meaning. Indeed, the true ideological spectrum within the modern Labor Party has little to do with the historic labels "Left" and "Right".

Within Labor there are those who are attracted to more interventionist economic models, a position historically associated with the Left. But some on the Left are amongst the most ardent advocates of competition policy, of the role of markets, of ensuring that governments do not allow business to develop into bloated inefficient monopolies or duopolies, and of the right of workers who are consumers to fair treatment. Within Labor there are those who have a particular moral and ethical standpoint on questions like abortion and euthanasia. This view is historically associated with the Right but some of the most strident pro-choice advocates in our parliament are in the Right.

What does this tell us? Simply that the factional labels do not mean much any more, which can hardly be a surprise in a world in which the meaning of the terms “Left” and “Right” are the subject of global debate.

In contemporary Australia, is it any wonder, that an individual Federal Labor Member of Parliament is capable of being quite “Right” on economic questions, quite “Left” on social questions or the other way around? Indeed, one of the worst ways of trying to predict what conclusion an individual member of the federal Labor Party will come to on a policy decision is to look at their factional label. In a world in which labelling an individual “Left” or “Right” can be impossible, it obviously follows that the labels “Left” and “Right” on Labor factions are now without meaning.

That doesn’t mean that there aren’t big policy issues at stake, where views differ sharply and debate is required. But the current factional structure isn’t in any way facilitating those unbelievably important debates. Rather power comes first, permeated by a winner-take-all culture. It’s become about who wins, not what for.

So what role should the factions play in Labor’s future? Do the benefits of today’s factional system outweigh its risks? Frankly, all I see is risks. The risk that preselecting a person from a particular faction, or indeed sub-faction, or fraction is more important than getting the best possible candidate. The risk that policy debates are limited to small groups or become the most stylised clashes about the old disputes between the “Left” and the “Right”, not the current true policy challenges. The risk that the bloody struggles within the Labor machine between the fractions destroy any capacity for a united Labor team. Most members of the federal parliamentary Labor Party fully understand the problems with the factions; it’s now time to do something about it.

We need to break the nexus between stacking branches and being rewarded with jobs. We need to have preselection on merit, always. I am not naïve enough to think that a simple statement about the destructive nature of the factions, even one that attracts support, will cause a wind-down in factional machinery. But I do think there are a number of positive things the federal parliamentary Labor Party can do to change the way it operates and to de-factionalise. Tonight I would like to argue for two such positive changes that should be part of Labor’s future.

The Ministry

Shortly after the last election, Kelvin Thomson, the Member for Wills, called on Labor to think about adopting the system where the Leader picks the Ministry or Shadow Ministry, as happens with the Liberal Party. I believe changing the way we select the Ministry or the

Shadow Ministry warrants serious consideration. The truth is Labor's election system does not equal a free vote of Caucus. Instead, there is a complex set of factional arrangements about the numbers within and composition of the Ministry or Shadow Ministry.

Even worse, factional contests about pre-selections are often viewed through the prism of which faction or sub-faction that candidate will support for the purpose of bartering out the Ministry or Shadow Ministry. In the long term, the best possible system is likely to be a Ministry or Shadow Ministry which is elected by a full free vote of Caucus. This was the system that delivered the first Hawke Ministry. It is also a system that guarantees the Ministry encompasses all views.

But I do not believe we will get to free vote of Caucus, devoid of factional ticketing in one step. In order to get there, to clear the factions out of the system, I think we need to send a message right from the top that change is required and the Ministry or Shadow Ministry is not a creature of the factional system. Labor giving notice that after the next election, in Government or in Opposition, it would give the Labor Leader the power to appoint all or part of the Ministry or Shadow Ministry would send such a powerful message. A message that from the very top, that Labor wants to start de-factionalising the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party and that advancement is not about who controls which vote, but who is competent, hard working and decent.

In the Liberal Party, such a system has led to distortions, to a vengeful Howard excluding competent Liberal moderates and rewarding incompetent Howard backers. But even Howard has seen some limits to his power and felt the need to include and promote Costello supporters like Julie Bishop. In such a system the Leader's power is not unlimited in the sense that as the Leader is judging his or her political colleagues, the colleagues are judging the Leader. And for the message of the need to de-factionalise to be favourably heard and received, the Leader would need to ensure the team selected is the best team, a model of inclusion.

For Labor such a change would be the sort of cultural shock to the system that could break a pattern of entrenched factionalism, indeed fractionalism. This is an idea for the future but it requires consideration and debate - now.

The four leaders to be beyond factions

In the presidential nature of modern politics, it is easy to forget that each side of politics has four influential leaders; the Prime Minister/Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader, the Senate Leader and the Deputy Senate Leader. The Leadership Group has special rights and heavy responsibilities. It is a group which must

always be motivated by what is best for the Party, not any subset of it. And to visibly demonstrate that sense of responsibility to the whole of the Party, in my view, on election, each of the four leaders should cease to participate in their factional activities.

Once again, this would send a message from the very top that the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party wants to move beyond factionalism and fractionalism. I am sure that the current arrangement will have defenders who say it is important to managing the Labor Caucus that the four leaders maintain their relationship with their factions, particularly the ability to communicate with their factions and steer decision making. But that very argument shows the nature of the problem. Federal Labor should not be viewed as a federation of fiefdoms. Each of the four Leaders is not a delegate or representative of his or her faction or fraction.

Each of the four Leaders has an obligation to engage, inform and involve every Caucus member and particularly the whole backbench in designing and implementing the strategy to achieve government. Kim Beazley understands this clearly and makes himself available in a number of formal and informal ways to all Caucus members. It is time to take the next step.

Currently Labor's "Left" and "Right" factions meet on Monday afternoons during sitting weeks. Wouldn't it be a major step forward if at that time each Monday the four leaders convened meetings for an open, inclusive, free flowing exchange of ideas and strategies about improving this country, about helping its people, about winning elections. A time when debate would be seen to be a good thing. A space where the big policy issues could be thrashed out and each different contribution heard and treated with respect.

Obviously these two reforms are the starting point, not an end point. But importantly these two reforms are entirely within the decision making power of the federal parliamentary Labor Party. And while the ideas have merit in themselves, their symbolic importance is almost as significant. Adopting these reforms is a way of the federal parliamentary Labor Party telling the world it knows the factions and fractions are a cancer eating away at the very fabric of the Labor Party and everybody knows it. We need to stop pretending the problem will go away without treatment. It's time for the leaders of the Labor Party to do something about it.

Conclusion

To win the next election, to regain the trust of the Australian people, Labor must demonstrate our commitment and ability to boldly build a new and better Australia. An Australia that truly enables our people to achieve the great Australian dream of love and family, cocooned in security and with a real chance at getting ahead.

We must demonstrate the highest ethical standards in how we operate. Saying we are no worse than the other guys isn't anywhere near good enough. On the question of standards in government – openness, accountability, divorcing the workings of government from the influence peddlers and the donors – we need to be absolutely right, not just better by comparison. On the question how we treat each other we must show our values in action.

We must build the next wave of prosperity by investing in communities, in skills and infrastructure, and by including in our economy those who are so easily left behind. Stopping the human waste caused by inter-generational welfare and low achievement from Australia's pockets of disadvantage. Fixing the human tragedy of having a population that isn't as healthy as it could be. Addressing the human cost of marginalising sections of our society. We must develop the bold social policies that don't tinker at the edges of social problems, but drive at their heart.

It's a big agenda. But it's a Labor agenda that can be delivered by a party with courage, including the courage to renew itself.

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Photographer: David Karonidis



Photo – David Karonidis

Marek Belka

Dr Marek Belka was appointed the new Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in December 2005. He was formerly the Prime Minister of Poland between May 2004 and November 2005 and helped direct Iraq's post-war economy by serving as Chairman for International Coordination for Iraq and later as Director of Economic Policy. Marek Belka addressed The Sydney Institute on Thursday 9 March 2006.

POLAND, THE UNITED

STATES AND EUROPE

Marek Belka

Over the past fifteen years, Poland has managed to have eleven prime ministers and something like sixteen finance ministers. And some of them took the position twice. However, that does not mean that Poland has suffered from instability. I would even say that the turnover helped provide continuity in basic policies, both in foreign policy and economic policy.

I'll focus my comments on Poland's foreign policy which is somewhat caught between the United States and the European Union. We don't think this is a dilemma; we don't think we have to choose, although during the process of ratification of Poland's accession to the European Union, in one of the West European parliaments, there was an allegation that Poland was the "Trojan Donkey" of the US. We are untroubled by this as we have never wanted to chose between the "Mum and Dad", as they say, and those of you who are more familiar with the Polish history can understand why.

As early as 1991, two years after the democratic and pro-market changes started in Poland, we made it very clear to our West European and American partners that our goal was to join the European Union. Well, it proved to be much more difficult to get into the European Union than NATO even though, in the early 1990s, to us it seemed that NATO was much less accessible, because of the still existing, albeit crumbling, Soviet Union. In 1991, I remember Poland signing an association agreement with the European Union, what Poland called the "European Agreement". We also wanted a preamble pointing out clearly that the association agreement would be the first step to membership. Our West European partners, on the other hand, wanted none of that and looked with disbelief at Poland, only months before one of the most destabilised and disorderly economies in Europe at that time.

However, this tells you something about the very clear aspirations in Poland. I would even risk saying that Poland had a very clear foreign policy agenda from the very beginning of our transformation from a centralised economy. Our political thinking had developed,

both among the émigrés and inside the country, and we knew basically what we wanted, where we wanted to be and what we wanted to do in the region. If I look back to the beginning of the 1990s, Poland found itself in a rather unstable neighbourhood. We had three neighbours before 1989 - the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. None survived 1991 and now we have seven new neighbours, Germany (reunited), the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania and Russia (the Kaliningrad enclave bordering Poland on the North East). The immediate problem for our democracy, which was not obvious to us then, was that we had to sort out things with our seven new neighbours. And if you look back at the history of Poland, more than 80 years back, it was not certain that relations with some of the countries would be smooth. Yet, we managed to define, properly, our national interests from the very beginning.

First, and very early, we clearly demanded the Russian troops withdraw. You might say this would have happened anyway, but before they did withdraw Poland pushed them to go. In 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, new states were established, amongst them three Baltic States which are now both in NATO and the European Union - Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. But even more important for Poland was the establishment of Ukraine and Belarus. Poland was the first country to recognise independent Ukraine in 1991. With Belarus, it turned out to be much more difficult simply because, unlike Ukraine, the national identity of the Belarusians is still weak. For example, malicious remarks I heard in Moscow put it that the only people in Belarus who speak Belarusian are Poles, which is only a moderate exaggeration. This is not so in Ukraine where you have 50 million people, some of them speaking Russian, but most feeling Ukrainian.

In 1999, finally, Poland joined NATO, along with the Czech Republic and Hungary. Obviously this was not well received in Russia although Yeltzin was somewhat vague being the sort of person who would give different signals, unlike Putin. For those of you who know Central Europe well, this decision in 1999 was somewhat surprising because with the acceptance of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, there was a visible absence of Slovakia. The four countries had been assessed together in all political processes, then suddenly Slovakia fell out because of the political change there to a somewhat less democratically inclined leader. For Poland, it was a big set back as we wanted Slovakia to be in NATO.

That is why, from the very first moment we became NATO members we started campaigning for further enlargement and we not only mentioned Slovakia but also the Baltic States. This was not well received by Russia but we got a positive response from the

White House which is in favour of NATO enlargement, irrespective of which party the President is from. Poland saw it as its achievement when NATO further broadened to include the Baltic states, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria.

Now some say that NATO is in crisis. On the one hand there have been moves in Western Europe to create an alternative to NATO by European powers such as Germany, France, Belgium and Luxemburg. On the other hand, NATO has proved ineffective on occasion such as in the formation of Coalition of the willing for the invasion of Iraq. Poland joined NATO at a time when the original rationale for the alliance appeared to have begun to dissipate and yet, for the countries of Central Europe, Central Eastern Europe and Central South-Eastern Europe, NATO remains a symbol of security. It provides a feeling that we are under an umbrella. I don't know whether we are or not, under an umbrella, or whether we need an umbrella. But our membership of still is one of the pillars of Poland's geo-political strategy.

Our EU membership is something different from our NATO membership. NATO is a political organisation. And you need to adjust your army, you need to invest in your army and you need to better formulate foreign policy, or you'll be meaningless in NATO. But this was not a problem for Poland; no matter what happened with or without NATO we would have invested more in our armed forces, we would have modernised them. As a matter of fact, we trimmed the number of soldiers by half or more than by half to create a quite different army.

European Union membership was something else. It was more about the legal system and the economy, as well as about every aspect of social life. The EU is not only a political organisation; it is a club of established democracies, of affluent countries, of countries that boast of the highest standards in different sectors and fields. And it took more than ten years, nearly 15 years of transition directed at satisfying the criteria for EU membership, and it became for Poland an ultimate goal. We did it; we achieved it in May 2004. Now we are somewhere in between the US and EU. Is this a conflict? On occasions there is some conflict. The most flagrant example of this was our involvement in the invasion of Iraq, the war in Iraq. But Poland continues to resist a need to make a choice between Europe and America.

If you know anything about Polish history, you will understand that our psychology is affected by our location. Poland is squeezed between Russia and Germany. This is probably the best location in the world as far as trade is concerned or economic development, and has been for centuries. But in more recent decades, it also made Poland a battleground for these powers. So Poland has to build its security policy on many pillars, not just on the European pillar. And

it is something of a miracle that Poland and Germany are now in the same political and military organisation. That Poles and Germans serve side by side in many countries, like Afghanistan, is now a matter of fact. Miracles don't come easily - you have to work hard on them. That is why we think our political strategy should be based not just on a European pillar but also on a second pillar, and that is the USA.

We tell the French, the Germans, the Austrians, and others, that we don't believe European identity should be determined or built on anti-Americanism. There are differences, there may even be cultural differences, but there are also exigencies of the world that require a united response. If you are serious about fighting terrorism, if you are serious about opening accession negotiations with Turkey, this is impossible in a situation of hostility or rivalry towards the USA. The border of Turkey lies just beyond the Tigris and Euphrates; and Iran is also a neighbour of Turkey. How can you accept Turkish membership or Turkish ties with the European Union if you are not coordinating or working closely with the US? I can understand that for some it's difficult to be America's friend and I know how many West Europeans don't like Americans, but at the same time there is reciprocal admiration from both Americans and Europeans. Poles are comfortable with partnerships with both the Europeans and America. A strong partnership with the US does not make us less European.

In fact, if you take a count, there are some twelve countries of the EU who have troops in Iraq so you cannot say that Europeans have not been involved in Iraq. Yes, there were divisions but now these divisions have faded. Now it's more a problem of what to do with this mess, how to help, to stabilise, to limit instability in that country. And some Europeans are more active because of their absence - they are more active in Afghanistan for example. The Germans have said they will make up their absence in Iraq with an increased presence in Afghanistan. Don't forget that the Europeans are very active in the Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy. And then there is Iran which is only beginning.

To conclude, Poland has always had a very clear list of foreign policy priorities. There are still unresolved issues, but Poland is now, very happily, in the Western alliance.

ANNUAL DINNER 2006



Photographer: David Karonidis



Photo - David Karonidis

Jane Connors

Like US presidential visits today, a visit by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II used to be a grand and momentous event. In 1954, when the young Queen Elizabeth II visited Australia for the first time, a million Melburnians lined the streets from Essendon Airport to the city, squeezed together so tightly that hundreds fainted. Historian and Program Manager of ABC Radio National Dr Jane Connors has examined the pageantry and public debates of Royal tours in Australia in some detail, in particular the Royal Tour of 1954. To discuss the psychology behind the pageantry and strength of the monarchy at the time and why it faded in half a century, Jane Connors addressed The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 14 March 2006

ROYAL TOURS IN

AUSTRALIA

Jane Connors

One of the strange things in my life has been my obsession with Royal tours. From the time I began my Ph D on the story of the 1954 Tour, in about 1990, I spent six years trawling through the many, many sources available in search of the royal footprint on this country. There are an astounding number of boxes in the archives around the country, and when the official documents had been exhausted, I turned at the media commentary. The ABC covered the tour every day. It was wall-to-wall radio coverage. Newsreels were broadcast every night of the tour and books were put out. There are 17,000 photographs in the Commonwealth archives. I also conducted oral history interviews with people who remembered what they'd seen.

Despite all of this, I was disappointed to find such an event has been so little covered in Australian history. It's taken not very seriously on the record, although, in my view, it was the biggest event ever to be staged in this country. So what I want to talk about is how it has been forgotten.

When the Queen was crowned in June 1953 she became the first British monarch who took the title "Head of the Commonwealth". Her father, King George VI, had been Emperor. Commentators noted her commitment to this new persona. The British press immediately tried to warn that the Queen would be spending a lot of time away from home because she was so committed to the Commonwealth. Her first journey came very quickly and she was gone from England by November 1953. She and the Duke of Edinburgh left their two young children behind, and sailed away from Southampton making their way through Bermuda, Jamaica, Fiji, Tonga, Australia, New Zealand, Cocos Keeling Islands, Ceylon, Uganda, Libya, Malta and Gibraltar. It was said at the time to be the longest tour of the world ever made by a monarch and there never has been such a one since.

My thesis was about the Australian leg of the tour - which was the single longest part at 57 days - in the summer of 1954 and swallowed in a blur of landscapes and faces as the Queen and her husband, with their very substantial entourage of drivers, police and a number of

media, a parcel of politicians and miscellaneous dignitaries, fulfilled the obligations of a truly relentless itinerary that drove them through seven capital cities and 70 country towns. Their journey covered 27,000 miles by car, train, aeroplane and boat, with never an accident and rarely a delay. No piece of luggage apparently was ever misplaced and, according to police and media, probably some seven million people actually got themselves in front of the Her Majesty. It was the most anticipated, the most witnessed and most intensively chronicled journey ever undertaken through this continent.

The frenzy with which we met the Queen made daily headlines in the local press, and was covered daily in both Britain and America. Australians drove hundreds of miles and slept in the streets overnight to see their visitors arriving and departing from civic receptions, church services, parliamentary occasions, commemorations for returned servicemen, children's displays, parades and the inspection of industry and the arts – everything we thought were the nation's finest achievements were laid out in endless display. Much of this activity was planned and regulated by the state. The tour had in fact been planned for more than seven years in expectation of a visit from King George VI, in 1949 and 1952, but he was not able to come. And then he died.

It is impossible to get to the bottom of how much money was spent on the 1954 Royal tour, but not one question was ever raised about it at the time. Ordinary people were simply devoted to arranging public and private celebrations. There was no perceptible public dissent; politicians of all colours, including a number of well-known Communists, spent their time vying for space at the Royal elbow. There was a fantastic dispute between two members of the Communist Party about whether to buy a new suit or not. One of the members said he was going to buy a new suit because it was the right thing to do as it would show that working people were as good as anybody else. The other said he was damned if he was going to and would turn up in his old lounge suit. It seemed to encapsulate the dilemma posed to the left-wing by the extent of the public enthusiasm.

I also found some fascinating correspondence from Eddie Ward – the very left wing Labor MP for East Sydney. It was addressed to the secretary of the Cabinet, asking innocently about the policy of inviting family members of MPs to the state reception in Canberra. The reply came back that unmarried daughters over 18 years could be admitted. After about four or five further letters it turned out that a 17 year old daughter of another MP had got in and Eddie Ward's daughter hadn't. And he was furious. It was a wonderful series of letters.

Towns and cities sought to devise the most memorable tributes, children gathered in formation on ovals, songs were composed, souvenirs purchased and the interest of many people was entirely

absorbed for the months before and during the Queen's appearance. It was widely felt, at the time, that this was a very, very significant "historical" moment. Many of the people I heard from or spoke to in the course of my research told me that they remembered this event with more clarity and emotion than any other public occasion during their lifetime. So when I came to this topic, in the early 1990s (and I am very conscious that historical writing has moved on) it did surprise me to find that there was barely anything about the tour at all on the record. When you looked at books about the 1950s, many events of much less historical moment had lasted on the record. The Royal tour, if it was mentioned, was a joke – trivial, a funny moment where Australia had embarrassed itself with so much kitsch and overwhelming displays of affection for the Queen, not to be taken seriously at all. A lot of this had to do with Australian historians being mostly of the left and unable to cope with popular monarchism. But, in fact, most conservative historians were anxious also to see constitutional history separately from emotional ties to the monarchy.

When I wrote my thesis, in the late 1990s, it was clear there was going to be a referendum on Australia becoming a republic. The question of why we are still tied to the throne was still very much alive then, as it is now. Then the referendum came and went and the idea of popular monarchy went completely out of the picture. But it has been a huge part of our history – this feeling of closeness to members of the Royal family. It has been significantly symbolic of empire and ties to home in the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. This has never been taken seriously by historians, so that when a lot of them were railing about the fact that we'd never become a republic, they had no answer because they weren't looking in the right places. They could deconstruct why the colonial relationship had not been in our economic interests, or our political interests, or our military interests, but to me it was never the point. To me there was a huge hole in the explanations.

In my thesis, I looked briefly at the six preceding Royal tours – the first in 1867 which was the famous one where the Duke of Edinburgh was almost assassinated on Clontarf beach by an alleged "fenian" assassin who was subsequently hanged. There were five after that. The one immediately before 1954 had been in 1927 when the Queen Elizabeth's parents, King George VI and Queen Mary had come over. My favorite tour is 1920 when the Prince of Wales visited to thank us for our considerable contribution during World War I. It was an extremely "sexy" tour when young women stitched their hair into silk pyjamas before throwing them at him from the crowd.

I looked at the sequence of these tours and the way they were, in a sense, an elongated preparation for 1954. The importance of 1954 is that the Queen was the first reigning British monarch to visit

Australia. Then I looked at the other things in the 1950s which are so hard to understand now. There was the proliferation of royal books, including all the courtly books that little girls found in their stockings at Christmas. There was the abdication and the extraordinary drama there, and then the way the heavy manhood of the throne had fallen on this young “girl” Queen, how interested people were in that story, how she was a young mother with this sudden duty. At the same time, we were in the middle of the Cold War. During World War II the Royal family had stood for civilian resistance against the Nazis and somewhere after that they had become synonymous with resistance against “Uncle Joe”. And we were the “whitest” (or Anglo-Saxon) that we’ve ever been in 1954. All previous mixed race (in as much as it had been mixed) migration had stopped after the outbreak of World War I and didn’t resume till around the time of the Queen’s visit. So by the time the Queen, the first reigning monarch to come, set her foot down on Australian soil in 1954 a collective intake of breath could be heard from the one and a half million people who were said to be lining the harbour in Sydney for the moment that had finally arrived. It was a validation of our nationhood that the Queen had come to see us and tell us that we had done well.

I then followed the tour from Sydney to the eventual conclusion in Fremantle on the 1 May, where thousands of people stood on the docks, weeping as the boat pulled away from the shore, standing there silently until the Queen had gone over the horizon and made by the Commonwealth Film Unit and I remember the extraordinary the scene where the crowd was singing “Will ye no come back again” as tears ran down their faces. It was extremely poignant.

I soon discovered much I hadn’t known, such as the extent to which we were still in a state of post war grieving at the time of the Royal visit of 1954. Many of the most emotional moments of the tour were the many commemorative meetings with returned servicemen. I hadn’t realised we had organisations for mothers of deceased single sons and how prominent war widows had been and how much they were still part of who we were. There were terribly affecting scenes; in Melbourne at the cenotaph during the wreath laying ceremony very old men, even one who had fought in the Crimea, were brought out on stretchers to lie in the centre of the assembly. They tried to stand for the Queen but they couldn’t – they were too old. And they cried and the crowds cried with them. These were moments of the most extraordinary emotion. There was also a consciousness of the trauma of settlement in this great south land – this was still present in the national psyche and continually present along the tour.

So, to set the scene, I’ll go back to Sydney. The Queen landed on Thursday morning of 3 February 1954 and then did a tour of what were then the rougher parts of town – Kings Cross, Alexandria and

past the tanneries which had been closed down a few days before because of their stench, then down Cleveland Street where most of the terraces had had to be refurbished because we were conscious of how shabby they were, and through Camperdown - it was a good route for getting to see thousands of people on the streets. People ran after the cavalcade to get a second look. The next day the Queen went to a women's luncheon at the Trocadero Ballroom in George Street where 450 people fainted in the heat waiting to see her. After the lunch there was a State banquet in the David Jones Market Street store. Some 200,000 people tried to get themselves into the area where the Queen would alight. They broke the barriers and the police had to bring in their horses. It was chaotic; there were angry shouts from the crowd where the horses had to avoid the many children.

By the Saturday it was obvious the tour was a sensation, with British newspapers reporting that Australians were going to wear the Queen out, and that the police had to rescue the young monarch from the "pitiless exuberance of her subjects". Journalists began describing crowds as a "shrieking mob" that police were forced to battle. On Friday 5 February, the police estimated that a million people went to see the Queen, including 150,000 school children in two separate assemblies - one awesome gathering at the Showgrounds and another at Concord Oval. Everywhere, the crowds were so large that people had to scale down expectations of what they would witness. There were grumbings from ex-service personnel about being pushed aside, of not seeing the Queen at all, and anger at the number of civilians barging in. On the way to the Concord Repat hospital, the roads were so congested the Queen's car had to stop at several points. St Johns Ambulance treated some 1000 casualties during the day and a further 2000 in the really frightening press around the Town Hall that evening for the Lord Mayor's Ball, where the Queen wore the first of her stunning frocks.

Pleas for public calm went out - London's *The Daily Mirror* ran a headline: "Go easy, you might harm the Queen". *The News of The World* had: "Please Australia, you must look after the Queen". We started to report that it was our sincerity that had led us to this. There was a poem in *The Bulletin* that read: "Our land is lusty, vigorous and young/Our songs, if roughly, are sincerely sung/Our ways are generous, albeit blunt/Enthusiasm is our chief affront." But then, suddenly, things calmed down. Official statements denied that the Queen was exhausted. So journalists got a bit more confident, even rude. The first ball was described as a "flop"; *The Bulletin* said something was seriously wrong - "it was hot and crowded and the Queen spent the whole hour she was there under the unremitting gaze of 2000 mesmerised guests". *The Bulletin's* women's pages were also contemptuous and took a very superior tone wondering if the haute

bourgeois were really up to the task ahead of them. Finally columnists became supercilious and cartoonists picked on would-be social climbers.

On 6 February the Queen was said to be all vitality again as she made her way to Randwick for the horse races. The crowds around the race course were enormous but attendance at the course was down. The Jockey Club blamed the media for scaring the public away. The Chairman issued a statement saying he was disgusted at the hysterical reports of public functions with the Queen. The behaviour of the crowds on Saturday was much better – just one incident where a hat was thrown into the Royals open car which Prince Philip caught and threw out again. Some in the crowd thought it was Philip's hat, whereupon four people had a very nasty fight over it until being told it was "just a hat". The following day, Sunday, there was a service at St Andrews Cathedral where 30,000 people turned up, with hundreds of them kneeling on the footpaths outside with newspapers over their heads as it was so hot. The Queen and Prince Philip then returned to Government House and were not again on duty for 36 hours.

The ABC took a body count of the first four days. St Johns Ambulance had attended to more than 7000 cases of collapse. Thirty ambulances had responded to 4000 calls. A spokesman for the Army said that its contribution had already constituted the biggest single effort ever made at a State occasion in peace time. They had provided 10,000 soldiers on street duty and as escorts. The police were hoping to have a rest on the Sunday but as a result of five separate rumours of where the Royals would be they had none. The Queen was said to be at Palm Beach, Manly, Camden, Moss Vale and in Goulburn all at the same time, when she was actually tucked up in Government House. Police stations were besieged with calls – 100,000 believed the North Shore rumours. In Moss Vale the police began broadcasting denials over the radio: "The Queen is not in Moss Vale" – but people refused to believe this and stayed in Moss Vale till midnight waiting to see the Queen. There were similar stories in every capital city and region around the country.

So what happened afterwards? Within a fortnight of the Queen leaving Fremantle, we were back to normal. And the liminal, warm emotions of the Queen's visit were gone. On 3 April 1954, while the Queen was en route from the Cocos-Keeling Islands in Ceylon, the Russian diplomat Vladimir Petrov slipped quietly into the headquarters of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation in Canberra and requested political asylum. The Prime Minister informed Parliament of his defection ten days later, and on the following morning announced the establishment of a Royal Commission into the extent and nature of Soviet espionage in Australia. The mandate of the

Liberal-Country Party coalition was renewed at the general election held seven weeks later, at the end of May.

There has been a lot of discussion among Labor historians over the years about the relevant effects of the Petrov defection and the Royal tour on the election results. I think most people believe they came together and helped the re-election of the Menzies Government. Mr Menzies had been so closely present with the Queen during the tour and then was also able to capitalise, so soon after, on the many ramifications of the Petrov affair.

After all this, the place of the monarchy in Australia declined rather quietly. There were three more tours in the 1950s – the Duke of Edinburgh returned by himself in 1956 to open the Olympic Games, then the Queen Mother came out in 1958 and Princess Alexandra came in 1959. They were big events but not huge. Then the Queen herself came out in 1963 again, for a short tour, and it was clear almost immediately that the place of the Royal family in public affection had begun to decline. You could see that the world had changed.

It was in 1963 that Robert Menzies made his speech with the words “I did but see her passing by; yet I shall love her till I die”. Today, most people think it belongs in 1954 because that was the time of such overt affection for the Queen – and not so much subsequently. But that’s why we remember it; because it was a bit out of time and embarrassing in 1963. Brisbane’s *Daily Mail* reported that a “slight national shudder had been detected on the seismographs at Woomera”. The media gave the 1963 tour its due; television had arrived and the ABC broadcast reports of the tour every day. Journalists, though, began to say that it was not the same as 1954 – and this has been the measure ever since. This tour also marked the end of the Queen coming just because she chose to. Royal visits ever since have been tied to a specific event. The 1963 visit also provoked direct satire of royalty for the first time. It was all part of the new era.

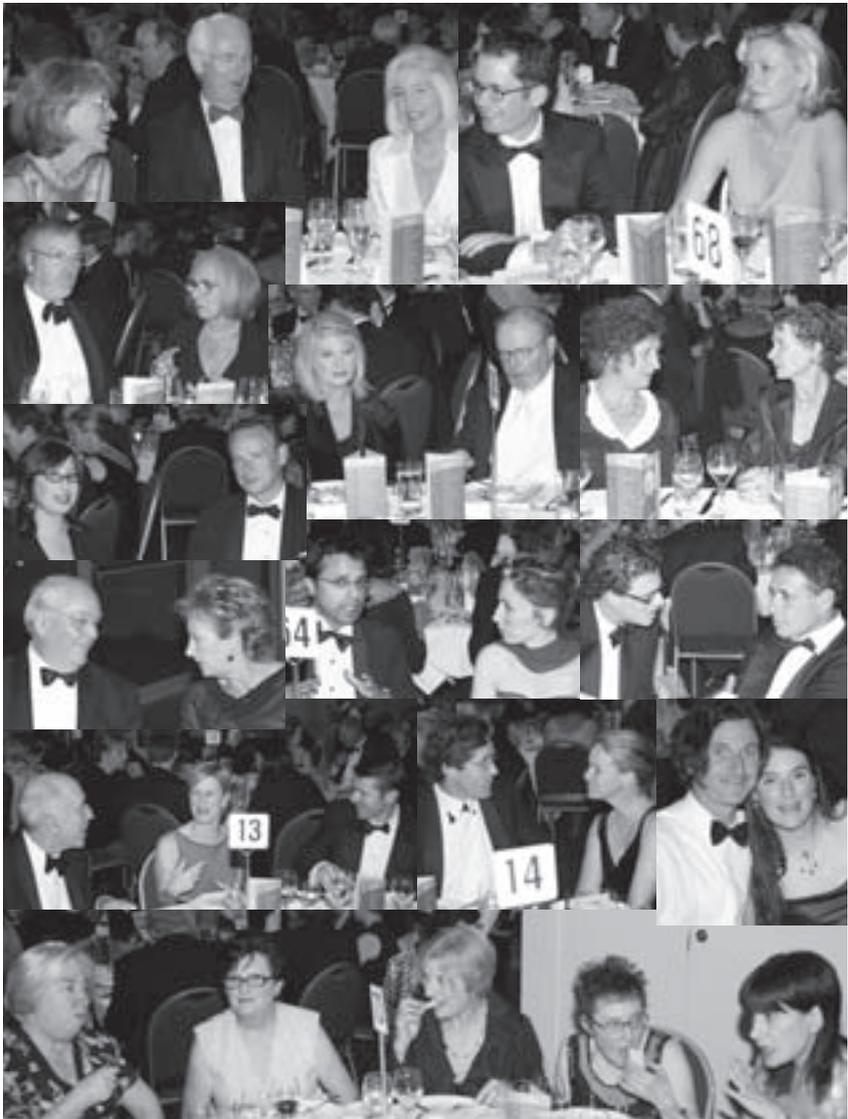
I spoke to my interviewees, some 35 people, about this decline in the Royals in Australia. Only two had ever gone to see the Queen again after 1954. One went in 1970 and one in 1963 and felt the whole thing underwhelming. Yet they had all been staggered by the 1954 experience. This apparent nosedive of the Royals is a conundrum which I raised in all my interviews – but there were few who could explain it. A few thought it might be the advent of television and that it could all be seen in the home. People also offered the impression that Australia in 1954 was a very unsophisticated country; that was how they saw themselves. They said no one important ever came before and in a way they had been overwhelmed that the Royals had come to see their country. Some also, parents especially, had thought it would be the last time it would ever happen. It was something they had to take the children to.

The people I spoke with could remember to Royal tour of 1954 extremely clearly, even if they had only been children. They loved the tour. But they also had accepted that the event wasn't any longer important and they were initially puzzled that I had come to see them and that I thought it was a significant part of our history. The younger people in particular, the ones who had been children at the time, were quite keen to work this out. They were very interested in the speed with which the universal enthusiasm had dissipated. One of them commented on the transitory nature of the moment – some people had kept scrap books obsessively and then stopped after the Queen left and never looked at them again. My mother's family, from Irish roots and never interested in the UK Royals, had suddenly found in 1954 they were just as interested and caught up as other Australians and my mother was interested to work out why this had been so. It was quite simple really: they had nothing actually against royalty and to be out of step with their neighbours and friends was unthinkable.

It was a social event for the nation. Communists told me it was not worth the bother opposing the tour – it was just a massive social event. For many it was merely a curiosity. The oldest person I spoke to was Edna Ryan, a very active Labor Party person from New South Wales. She was no fan of the Royal family but as a member of the Fairfield Council she had met the Queen. Reasons for attendance at events and by roadsides were numerous. Some were patriotic; for others it was as if attending a celebrity event. Some said they went to see the Queen's diamonds or the attending ladies-in-waiting. The romance of being able to see a real royal was a factor. That this was the first reigning monarch to visit also mattered. Some migrants, even very left wing ones such as Italians who had fled Mussolini, said that they had run from republican governments and to settle in a country with a stable, benign monarchy was very comforting. And, unlike today, no one questioned the cost. But, as people recalled all that it was as if to remember Australia then as a foreign country to them today.

In the 1950s Australians felt very isolated: that the Royals had come so far and went to remote parts of Australia fascinated us. There was anxiety about our image as rough and perhaps a little uncivilised. The number of times the Queen's clear and beautiful skin was mentioned in reports seemed to support this as I read. Film stars didn't come to Australia then. That these important people, celebrities, would come to us was such flattery and it gave us a reason to feel proud, important after all, in spite of feeling our children were the healthiest in the world and boasting of how fit we were. It was probably the last time Australians were happy to be known as British. All this would change during the next decade, with the closing in the gap of distance to the rest of the world and with a unique new wave of post war immigration.

ANNUAL DINNER 2006



Photographer: David Karonidis



Photo – David Karonidis

Rebecca Huntley

Just who is Generation Y and why does it bother Generation X and the Baby Boomers so much? In a world changing faster than ever before, will these children of the Baby Boomers be up to all that this challenge entails? And as their world becomes our world, will we survive their onslaught? Dr Rebecca Huntley, author of *World According to Y Inside the new adult generation is a Gen Xer*, has a PhD in Gender Studies, has worked as an academic and a political staffer, and is now a freelance writer. On Tuesday 21 March 2006 Rebecca Huntley addressed The Sydney Institute to speak about “Gen Y” and what she has discovered.

GEN Y AND POLITICS

Rebecca Huntley

Generation Y I define as Australians born in the early 1980s, currently in their late teens and early 20s. Today I am going to focus on their political attitudes and behaviour. Many political parties would like to claim this generation as their own. John Howard has recently stated that he considers young Australians one of his core constituencies. The Greens see themselves as Australia's natural youth party, as did the Democrats under Natasha Stott Despoja's reign. And the ALP has lately made a conscious bid for their support with a raft of policies in the area of education. But public discussion about the political outlook of Gen Y rarely reaches beyond makeshift conclusions of "apathy" and "conservatism".

Early on in the research for my book, *The World According to Y*, I attended Oxfam's International Youth Parliament. I wanted to see whether, in fact, the politically active IYP delegates felt the same way about politics as some of the young Australians I had interviewed. IYP is an event that brings together youth leaders from around the world to workshop action plans for community-oriented projects. One delegate I talked to was a young man called O'Neil Simpson, a 24 year-old university student from rural Jamaica.

O'Neil's country suffers from widespread poverty, alarming rates of HIV/AIDS infection and lawlessness which gives it one of the world's highest murder rates. When I met him, O'Neil was in the process of establishing a reading program in his rural community with the aim not only of improving literacy but stemming the growth of HIV/AIDS. He spoke clearly and passionately about health and education and the sense of powerlessness amongst Jamaican youth. I asked him if he would ever consider a career in politics. He didn't think so. Political parties in Jamaica are an obstacle rather than an agent of change, he told me. His priorities were helping people to read and encouraging sexual responsibility. He talked about hope for a better future and the love he has for his home town Mt Carey, near Montego Bay. He was inspired by the ways in which other conference delegates from places as diverse as Tonga and Zimbabwe have dealt with problems facing their communities.

Talking to O'Neil was an illuminating experience. Here was a young Jamaican saying the same things about politics as someone like Hannah, a 20 year old, single mum living in western Sydney. Talking to other delegates, it became clear that while their political activism is local, and focused in the communities where they have the closest ties, they draw inspiration and energy from what is happening globally. They are connected to each other's struggles both in spirit and via the Internet, judging by the frenzied swapping of hotmail accounts amongst delegates at lunch time. The problems of a young unionist in Indonesia can be interesting and relevant to the struggles of a health activist in the West Indies. What is left out, almost shunned, in this new "local meets global" politics, is the national and the party political. Political parties are the problem rather than the solution to the problems facing young people and their communities.

My encounter with O'Neil and other IYP delegates revealed some basic truths about Generation Y's attitude to politics. They are turned off, annoyed by and distrustful of political parties, politicians and increasingly the media that is supposed to keep them honest. Few see mainstream politics as a useful vehicle for changing the world. But despite being disengaged and disillusioned with conventional politics, they do care about political issues (or at least they feel guilty when they don't). Many are looking for alternative ways to get involved and so they focus on issues that affect them directly, at the local and the community level, or international issues, something facilitated by information technologies without borders like the Internet.

In the minds of political scientists, Generation Y is just like the generation that preceded it – Generation X, my generation. We were the original apathetic and anti-political slackers. Of course, this charge of political apathy was forged out of an unfair comparison between us and the Baby Boomers, those 1960s and 1970s radicals. Unfair because there is ample evidence that young people have always felt left out and cynical when it comes to politics. In 1972, the year I was born, legendary *Rolling Stone* journalist Hunter S. Thompson covered the Nixon/McGovern presidential contest in his book *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail*. For the young people he encountered on his trips around America "politics was some kind of game played by old people, like bridge". These teenagers and 20-somethings – basically my parents' generation - were waiting around hoping that they would one day get a "chance to vote for something, instead of always being faced with that old familiar choice between the lesser of two evils". Thompson's observations challenge the notion that everyone back then had joined the revolution.

It is still common for journalists and political scientists to reiterate the "finding" that young people are disinterested in and not very knowledgeable about formal political processes. Countless

studies in Australia have shown that there is a serious weakness in young people's understanding about how the political system works. Fewer young Australians eligible to vote are enrolled compared with older Australians. There are significant blocks of young people who are dismissive of and even antagonistic to political acts like protest marches and petitions.

If you were going to measure the political engagement of Generation Y according to statistics on youth membership of the major parties, then the charge of apathy would be justified. Party membership is comparatively low across all demographics of the population but it is particularly acute amongst the young. The membership of all Australian political parties is aging. And with an aging population and a dropping birth rate, the median age of voters is going to keep rising. In 1971 the average age in Australia was 27 but today it is 36 and headed up. Politics in the future will be less hip and more hip replacement.

Instead of seeing Generation Y's disinterest in party politics as evidence of their apathy, it should be seen as an indication of just how unappealing political parties have become. The reasons for Generation Y's distaste for the major parties is reflected perfectly in a Halloween episode of *The Simpsons*, entitled *Citizen Kang*. In this episode Homer is abducted by aliens who take him to Washington where they replace political leaders Bill Clinton and Bob Dole just before an election. No one believes Homer when he tries to alert people to the fact the two candidates are aliens in disguise planning to take over the world. In the end Homer manages to unmask the aliens in front of a crowd of voters, yelling, "America, take a good look at your beloved candidates - they're nothing but hideous space reptiles." The aliens respond to their public unmasking calmly, telling the crowd: "It's true, we are aliens. But what are you going to do about it? It's a two-party system; you have to vote for one of us."

This is Generation Y's view of party politics. In their eyes, the two-party system provides no real choice. They feel that there isn't enough difference between the major parties to justify feeling strongly about one over the other. Whoever is running the country isn't really going to change your life so why bother? For a generation that values choice and difference, similarity is a major turnoff. As far as Gen Y is concerned (and they are not alone in this) politicians appear both alien and alike.

Not only do political parties seem like alien territory, Generation Y feels that there is little that can be done to change them. The major parties don't allow for enough internal democracy and freedom to satisfy the needs of a generation that expects flexibility and choice in all its endeavours. This is a generation that is enthusiastic about direct democracy. Gen Y'ers get to choose the next Australian Idol

and the next evicted housemate on *Big Brother*. The “tow-the-party-line” mentality of the major political parties seems too simplistic, too constraining for a generation used to this kind of direct involvement in decision making.

If young people are “the great unwashed of the electorate”, then it is no wonder they are disengaged from politics. However, “apathy” just isn’t an accurate way to describe the political attitudes of Generation Y. Whilst they might see politics as boring and unappealing, they aren’t comfortable with their current levels of political ignorance. They believe they should know more about how the system works. For example, 83 per cent of those surveyed in the 2003 Democrats Youth Poll believed that students should be taught more about Australia’s political and legal system at school. And Generation Y makes a vital distinction between caring about party politics and caring about the stuff of politics, the issues that matter. They have views and some idea about what is going on but that concern hasn’t translated into traditional forms of political behaviour like party membership.

Rather than apathy, Y men and women project something more like powerlessness, either to change the political culture or to make progress with political issues. Even those that are more optimistic about the possibility of change set their sights pretty low. Gone are the big, bold pronouncements of the Baby Boomer era about changing the world and revolutionising society. When Y’ers do identify a possible change to society that can happen it is usually something small but profound. Saving some trees in a public park. Raising money for a local community project. Or sending a text in support of dropping Africa’s debt. This is a generation that feels that “one person can make a difference in the world – but not much”.

The media contributes to this sense that the world is constantly changing but essentially unchangeable. Knowledge isn’t always power – sometimes information overload can leave you feeling helpless. Young people feel inundated with a seemingly endless stream of bad news about the world, which increases their sense of powerlessness. Perhaps this is one of the reasons they aren’t avid consumers of political news. Media analyst Jason Sternberg found that since the 1990s young people have been reading, watching and listening to less current affairs than ever before. Those who do make an effort to follow the news media talk about it in the same way older people talk about taking their vitamins.

It’s no great revelation to say that Generation Y is wary and cynical about politics. This is the natural result of growing up in a conspiracy theory age where it is well accepted that governments and politicians cheat and manipulate in order to seize and hold onto power. Y’ers use words like “lie”, “distrust” and “corrupt” in connection with politics without any sense of false bravado. It seems that this

is a generation that anticipates being duped by authority figures. Why take an interest or invest in a system that you expect is going to lie to you about important stuff? Better to disengage than be fooled. And the news media are no help in this regard. In Gen Y's view, the media is part of the problem of politics, rather than an independent force informing people and keeping tabs on those in power. In 1999, the Democrats Youth Poll found that 29 per cent of poll respondents listed the media as the most trustworthy source of political information. In 2003 that plummeted to 5 per cent, 1 per cent below the percentage point for politicians.

If party politics is so unappealing and the news media so untrustworthy, what are the alternatives for Generation Y? As a response to the constraints and monotony of party politics, they have turned their energies towards local and community politics. This means that young people's activism has been largely invisible to political scientists. Young people are heavily involved in public life, but often in ways not conventionally deemed "political". Ari Vromen, a leading Australian researcher on the civic behaviour of X and Y, argues that young people's political activism shouldn't be measured against some preconceived notion of what "real" political behaviour is. Rather we need to look at the diverse ways in which young people participate in public life beyond electoral politics. Whilst they may not measure high on the scales of traditional political activity – donating money, contacting MPs, joining political parties or unions – the vast majority of them are involved in community, campaigning and protest activities, church groups, parents and citizens groups, environmental and sporting organisations. She also found that they are particularly willing to boycott products for political reasons. Turning away from the national and the party political, Generation Y are taking a small target approach to their own political behaviour, focusing on organisations and issues that are closest to them. These seem easier to understand and influence.

Y'ers combine this interest in local, community politics with an intense interest in international issues. This engagement with international politics started with Generation X and its anxieties about nuclear war and environmental disaster. This fear of an environmental apocalypse hasn't diminished. The political importance of the environment coupled with celebrity sponsored campaigns about everything from third world debt to garment worker exploitation has ensured that today's young adults have a resolutely international focus when it comes to naming the political issues that matter to them. The state of our global environment is now part of a package of concerns for this generation that include anti-corporatism, globalisation, international human rights, the rights of workers in third world countries and peace issues.

This interest in the international over the national is driven by a number of factors. International politics certainly seems more glamorous. The stakes are higher and the divisions clearer. And technologies like the Internet have provided a virtual platform for a wide variety of political causes. Quicker and closer connections create a wider political outlook. The plight of garment workers in Thailand doesn't seem like such a distant struggle if information about it can be obtained quickly and easily via the Net. Online petitions, protest emails and donations can be dealt with in a matter of seconds.

So Y'ers favour international politics over domestic politics and as a consequence are more likely to support non-government organisations (NGOs) than political parties. They are more likely to volunteer or join organizations like Oxfam than they are major or even minor political parties. NGOs seem more trustworthy, able and willing to make a difference. Like NGOs, smaller political alternatives within the party system are also attracting the support of young people. These alternative political parties trade on their difference, emphasising that they provide a real alternative and clear policy positions within a system where all politicians look and sound the same. They seem to be more democratic and offer supporters a real chance to participate. Y'ers believe that smaller parties as well as non-partisan organizations like NGOs are more honest and accountable. They haven't yet sold their souls.

It seems that Generation Y has rejected the "too cool to care" credo of Generation X and display a genuine interest in volunteer work, community and local politics. While some commentators persist in their description of Y as apathetic and politically clueless, they are a principled and idealistic lot with a "commitment to making the world a better place". They just don't see political parties or national politics generally as the way to create that better place. Generation Y expects to be deceived by politicians and manipulated by the news media. As a result, they have embraced the diversity, difference and challenge of international politics. They support NGOs and educate themselves via the new global soapbox of the Internet. They are active in local politics because it affects them more directly and because it seems possible to bring about some change there.

What might future politics shaped by the values of Generation Y look like? A future Y politics will be a unique combination of Left and Right positions and perspectives. For Generation Y, the political distinctions between Left and Right are far less clear and relevant than they were for previous generations. These divisions once tightly structured national politics and public debate. They now mean little to a generation that has seen left wing governments embrace privatisation and deregulation and right wing governments promote black women into positions of power. As a consequence of two decades of

political change that have messed up the Left-Right political axis, the Y world-view contains a complicated mix of political perspectives. Attracting the Y vote means that political parties will have to rethink old orthodoxies and commitments formerly designated as either Left or Right.

National politics will have to fully embrace both the local and the international to be relevant to Y voters. It will have to address everything from urban environments to deforestation in Asia – and draw connections between the two. For those who are politically engaged and radicalised, the politics of identity (focussed around questions of race, sex, ethnicity and so on) will seem less important than the politics of anti-corporatism. Generation Y knows that money is power and in a world where the gap between rich and poor is growing every day, they see poverty as the greatest social handicap. Political parties need to recognise this and knit a political agenda that incorporates both the local and the international and addresses the politics of economic disadvantage.

In an institutional sense, Generation Y voters challenge political parties to either change or die. Parties themselves – their structures and their culture – must become more open, flexible and democratic if they are to recruit younger members. This is a generation that doesn't just value direct democracy and freedom of choice: they take it for granted. They aren't going to pledge undying support for a political leader elected in an undemocratic way when their own culture gives them the power to evict housemates from the *Big Brother* House. If political parties achieve these goals, Generation Y will continue to turn away from national politics. Politicians will remain aging aliens and political parties and processes part of a galaxy far, far away.



Photo – David Karonidis

Kenneth Gee

Kenneth Gee QC, former judge of the District Court of New South Wales, was one of the young Australians who followed the Trotskyite flame in the 1940s. His memoirs, *Comrade Roberts – recollections of a Trotskyite* (Desert Pea Press, 2006) tell the story of a middle class boy so fervid for a better world that he rejected the Labor Party, the Langites, the Leninists and the Stalinists and hitched his star to the tiny Sydney cell of the Fourth International. He became Comrade Roberts, a man who transformed himself from a bright-eyed young solicitor to a boilermaker's labourer on the Sydney waterfront. Kenneth Gee addressed The Sydney Institute on Wednesday 29 March, 2006.

MY LIFE AS COMRADE

ROBERTS IN THE MID 1940S

Kenneth Gee

So who was Comrade Roberts? Well, obviously, that was me. But more interesting is how I became Roberts.

I came to the Trotskyite movement through John Kerr, which is an astonishing proposition. He and I were at law school together, in Sydney, and we'd been at high school together. It was he who one day suggested that I might read a book called *The Soviet Union, A New Civilization* by Sidney and Beatrice Webb (in the second edition they put a query at the end of the title). Kerr told me the book was very persuasive for anybody taking up a political position. And that's how I came to be a Trotskyite. John Kerr was the person who introduced me to the idea of being a Trotskyite.

As you know, Leon Trotsky played a key role in the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution – which was led by Vladimir Lenin. Trotsky maintained that the Soviet Union should become a place of permanent revolution. Josef Stalin did not agree and, more importantly, regarded Trotsky as a leadership rival. Trotsky was sent into exile in 1929 and murdered by Stalin's henchman in Mexico in 1940. We Trotskyites favoured Trotsky's view of political utopia in the Soviet Union but we opposed Stalin's advocacy of socialism in one country.

Our first meeting was in Rawson House (near Sydney's Central Railway station) which I always think of being, in its day, the centre of many disillusionments. There I was invited to join the Trotskyite movement which I did shortly afterwards. John Kerr didn't follow me.

In the 1940s, when one joined the Communist League, not the Communist Party but the Communist League or Trotskyites, one had to have an interview with the man who was in charge of new members. You would be told various matters of routine which you otherwise wouldn't know. One of them was that, if the person wished, he could be invited to take a Party name, a name to be used for Party purposes. We also thought, perhaps big-noting ourselves a bit here, that it would be better to have a Party name if there was any trouble with the Federal Police. There was no ASIO in those days, only the

special branch of the Federal Police and to us they were a great enemy. No doubt we exaggerated the importance we had with them.

Comrade Kavanagh, who was in charge of initiating new people, called me out after I'd been told I had been accepted as a member of the Communist League or Trotskyites. He said there were two things I still had to do. One was the question of the Party name, and whether I wanted to take a Party name. I couldn't see the point but Kavanagh advised me that it could be a bit of a protection if we were all suddenly arrested. You'll remember, the Bolsheviks all had special Party names. Lenin was really Vladimir Illych Ulyanov and Stalin was really Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili. They had taken their Party names probably as a genuine protection against the Tsar's police. Kavanagh told me that one fellow had taken the name Barker, a good English sounding name, because he always thought his Italian sounding name was a bit of a disadvantage in his Party work. So I said what about Roberts? It was the first name that came to me. And he said righto, Comrade Roberts it is. And that's how I became Comrade Roberts.

Kavanagh was an amazing man. He had been the secretary of the Communist Party of Canada and claimed to have also been a member of the *Comintern* (Stalin's organisation in Moscow to control the world communist parties). That may have been so. Kavanagh was a remarkable man, because he pulled off probably the best timed strike in human history just as the two arms of the Sydney Harbour Bridge were six inches apart and ready to be lowered into position. At that precise point, Kavanagh called a strike, excellent timing, and as the result everybody got five shillings a week more. A very profitable thing as far as the workers were concerned.

Writing my recollections into a book was not just a matter of sitting down at the keyboard. I had never kept a diary; in fact the book is quite vague about some of the dates of when things happened, and the chronology of many events. It is more a collection that I finally decided I must get together. Some people wanted to know what had gone on in those days, which spurred me to get together the memories I had. So I have put together some years of recollection and I can give no guarantee that it's always accurate because it's a memory of what now is 60 years ago.

You have to remember that there had been the Stalin/Hitler pact in 1939, to everybody's astonishment. Good communists were always taught that the great enemy was Nazism. Then we found that Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov and Germany's Foreign Minister Von Ribbentrop were suddenly to be seen shaking hands and swearing eternal friendship. This was very devastating to members of the Party and its sympathisers. Of course, after 1941 the whole thing broke asunder and it was a different matter altogether. We Trotskyites were not followers of Stalin; we regarded ourselves as true communists.

It would be quite superfluous and a bit annoying if I were to assume that there were people here who didn't know a good bit about Stalin. Trotsky, of course, is not so well known, although his name is recalled in the newspapers every now and then. What's more, it is said by some that the ABC is now run by a group of Trotskyites, a truly astonishing proposition. Naturally, in my day, we would have liked to run the ABC but we never quite got there.

So who were the Trotskyites of the 1940s in Sydney? First of all there was Comrade Origlass, who had been born Origlasso but whose father had dropped the Italianate O after arriving in Australia from Italy. Origlass was by then Chairman of the Trotskyite Central Committee which he ruled with an iron hand, oblivious to the rules of debate. He was a very able worker, a genuine worker, in the sense that he had to work in heavy industries. He had worked at Mount Isa for some years and came down to Sydney to work in one of the dockyards as what was called a "riveter's holder up". This a tribute to the English language in being a phrase created by itself to deal with a difficult situation.

Others in the League were Comrade Short and Comrade Kavanagh, along with Comrade Wishart, or John Royston Wishart, a solicitor who had created a miniscule Trotskyite sect mainly of middle class intellectuals, including acolytes of Professor John Anderson. There was also Jim McClelland who like Laurie Short later left the Trots to further his career. In spite of always being a small group, I had no idea as I joined how deep were the factional schisms that constantly wracked the Communist League. I learned only later that the reason Comrade Origlass abstained in the vote to accept my membership was that he feared a Strathfield boy like I was would become a member of the Wishart faction.

One very interesting person I met at this time in Auburn was a man who had been my grandfather's coachman. At 2 am on a freezing winter's morning, it was his job to sit on the little seat at the back of his coach and wait for my grandfather to appear after playing billiards. I heard from the bootmaker that if anybody was a bit slow in rising for God Save the King (or Queen), they were likely to feel Grandpa's walking stick very hard on their legs, so I have good revolutionary blood in that respect.

Trotskyism today has assumed a measure of importance it didn't have then. It was never a movement with many people, and those that followed Trotsky were always a bit of a fluke on the left, and denounced by the Stalinists. By that time, the left had divided into the Stalinists, or worshippers of Stalin, and Trotskyites, those few who were interested in a dissident voice on the left, the voice of Trotsky. We were attacked with absolute ferocity by the Stalinists. It's possibly hard for you to imagine what tremendous hatred there was, not

merely between Stalin and Trotsky but between the Stalinists and the Trotskyites. For example, one denunciation screamed at Trotskyites during the Moscow trials was: "Trotskyite wreckers, stool pigeons of the fascist bourgeoisie, informers, bosses' stooges, Nazi spies, police pimps, to be shot down like mad dogs." In 1936-38, when Stalin had arrested most of the central committee, only ten per cent of those sent to the camps in 1936-38 survived. The majority of those sentenced during the repression were tried behind closed doors. Ninety-eight of the 139 members and candidate members elected to the Central Committee in 1934 were executed in 1937-38.

We existed in this sort of atmosphere. It didn't worry us and we even got quite used to it. We were quite convinced that we were the people who would finally bring about Socialism, which was our goal in all of this, and we weren't going to worry a great deal about Stalinist abuse.

My first job as a Trotskyite (I'd just become a Bachelor of Laws) was on the waterfront. I hadn't expected to be on the waterfront. I had the romantic idea there'd be a nice spot for me somewhere else. But a necessary thing as a revolutionary is to be a member of the proletariat. I talked to various people whom I thought might bring that about and finally one afternoon there was a message waiting for me in the office to say I would start work the next morning at 7.30am with Nielson Bros, a ship repairing firm. That was almost enough to have me give it all up - the horror of finding I would become a worker on the waterfront rather than having some nice sit down job in an office.

But I went and found the foreman finally and said, "Have you got a job for me today?" He looked at me in my shining white boiler suit which I had bought overnight and said, "You're the first so-and-so that's ever asked me to give him work; everyone here wants to avoid work." He told me take a big barrow that was nearby and fill it up with steel off cuts lying there. I was to move a pile of them to the other side of the yard. That was my job on my first day employed as a toiler. The next day, I went again to the foreman and said, "I haven't got any job for today." Again he was amazed. But he obliged with another task - he told me to take the barrow again and move the off cuts I had moved the day before back to where they had been. And that's how I spent my second day of life as a proletarian. It was not a very promising introduction.

Later I was assigned to a ship at the Finger Wharf. It was a French ship, the *Ville d'Amiens*, that had survived the German takeover of Northern France and was in the service of de Gaulle. It was about 20,000 tons, very old and rusty. With a boilermaker mate, I had the job of renewing the copper pipes. In those days, inside a boiler, there used to be a series of copper pipes which ran the length, internally, of the boiler. They were designed to distribute the enormous heat of the

firebox and give a reasonable spread of heat throughout the water in the boiler. Our job was to renew some of these copper pipes. We had to get into a little room, if you could call it such, at the very back of the boiler, to work on expanding the end of the copper tube onto the steel of the boiler itself. We had on hats which were paper caps. Above us, some mad electrician had installed a naked globe about to set fire to any of us, any minute. And there we had to work.

Finally I said to my mate, a man getting on in years, that I would take over. I thought it was too much for him and he seemed to be fairly exhausted. With that, there was a roar of rage from one of the boilermakers who had wriggled his way along the firebox. He had a huge stomach, which was getting very much in the way, and he had emerged at our little steel room. He had brought along the Secretary of the Boilermaker's Union, Hughie Grant, in spite of the two of them being barely able to fit in the space. I can't reproduce the language that was used in this company but he said, in effect, "Yous fellows have really f...d up the whole thing because we're all out." When Hughie Grant had left, he had called out on strike the whole of the boilermakers on the waterfront. I had unwittingly initiated a demarcation dispute by offering to do my colleague's job.

I'll pose a question: what was it that we wanted to happen, the Trots on the waterfront? What we wanted to find were thoroughly indoctrinated comrades who would be part of the great movement towards socialism. That was our goal, and then we would prepare the ground for our own move towards socialism. But I became a member of the Central Committee of the Communist League at a time when the Party had more chiefs than indians. The Communist League, the Australian section of the Fourth International, had not been able to draw away from the exchange of uncomradely abuse that was tearing every other branch apart. Was Stalin's Soviet Union truly a Workers' State, or a crypto-fascist behemoth distorted beyond redemption?

The schism aroused two factions that divided the Party on every topic of debate since its first fragile unity – on the one side Comrade Origlass' proletarian wing and on the other Comrade Wishart's faction - petit-bourgeois in Comrade Origlass' terminology. That night we assembled, on the instruction of Chairman Origlass, in Comrade Wishart's room to debate once again the nature of the Soviet Union, which was typical of the endless debates we had.

There were only chairs for Comrade Origlass, Comrade Barker (because of his tailored trousers) and Comrade Kavanagh because of his deemed senility (he was fifty something). The rest of us sat on the mysterious boxes that housed Wishart's library. We were late in starting as Comrade Barker had been delayed composing a poem for his daughter Gilda's birthday. Before the meeting could begin there was a preliminary crisis to be dealt with. Two sets of boots,

clumping up the wooden stairs like the hoofs of a pair of Clydesdales, announced the approach of two celebrated thugs from the ranks of the drinkers below – Thommo, owner of Sydney’s biggest swy (two-up) game and his enforcer Kicker Kelly. They had come to demand instant membership of the Party. A mixture of Irish whisky and Aussie beer had convinced them that Trotskyites were a branch of the Irish Republican Army. They were summarily sent back by an order from Comrade Barker, drawn up to his full tailored height.

Comrade Origlass, not to be troubled by the rules of debate, appointed himself to speak in support of the majority view, embraced by Comrade Cannon of the American Socialist Workers party and the British Trotskyites under Healy. “Correctly understood,” he announced, “the Soviet Union must be regarded as a Workers’ State, but a counter-revolutionary Workers’ State.” And so on – apparently oblivious to us all. He was scornful of the intellectuals who were “no better than middle-class splittists ... lacking all understanding of the lives of the toiling masses.” Comrade Barker spoke in support. Comrade Wishart followed in explosive dissent, “Tell that to the old Bolsheviks, with a bullet in the back of the head in the cellar of the Lubyanka.” And so it went. It was a discouraging night.

My career at Neilson Bros ended where it began, in the same yard where I had spent my first days as a proletarian, carrying a barrow of scrap metal from one side of the yard to the other, and back again. And it ended confronting the same man; the one-eyed foreman in the waistcoat and battered bowler: “You can git up to the f--ing office and git your money, Ken.” They had heard in the office that I had qualified for the Tech for three months training as a Dilutee fitter and turner.

So I said goodbye to my boilermaker mate and to the waterfront itself, where I had learnt two things – that the steeling of the masses, in the Terminal Crisis of capitalism, seemed to have been adjourned *sine die*, and how reluctant the toiling masses, Marx’s midwives of history, seemed to be to begin the tasks of midwifery. Wherever Comrade Lenin’s “iron battalions of the proletariat” might begin their march toward the socialist revolution, it was not likely to be from the Sydney waterfront.

ANNUAL DINNER 2006



Photographer: David Karonidis

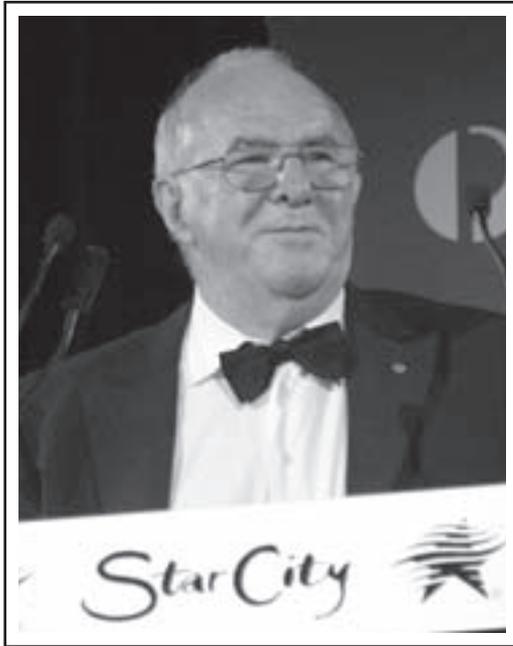


Photo - David Karonidis

Clive James

On Wednesday 5 April, Clive James delivered The Sydney Institute's Annual Dinner Lecture for 2006, at Star City Harbourside Ballroom, to a capacity crowd of 840 guests. The author of more than 20 books, including three autobiographies - *Unreliable Memoirs*, *Falling Towards England* and *May Week was in June* - Clive James has also published collections of literary criticism, television criticism, verse and travel writing. With countless appearances on television, Australians will especially remember James for *The Clive James Show* and as presenter of the *Postcard* series of travel documentaries. Clive James was introduced by the Institute's Chairman, Meredith Hellicar, the MC for the evening was Sydney Institute Board member Nicholas Johnson and the vote of thanks was given by Network Nine's *Sunday* presenter and media journalist Jana Wendt. The Annual Dinner for 2006 was sponsored by Australia Post.

PRELUDE TO THE

AFTERMATH – THE MEDIA AND CELEBRITY

Clive James

I'm bloody honoured. That's a little up-to-date casual Aussie greeting I heard from Lara Bingle.

I want to thank The Sydney Institute for asking me here. On the flight out I was a bit disappointed not to be sitting beside a world leader as we both watched *Brokeback Mountain* on the new Qantas entertainment system. I suppose all the world leaders were already here being granted an audience, one after the other, by John Howard, whose office of Prime Minister so increasingly resembles the papacy. The Pope and Mr Howard have at least one big similarity – they're both infallible. The big difference, of course, is that though the Pope comes and goes, Mr Howard is there forever.

Sometimes I still have to tell the British how our system works. In London, on formal occasions, I'm often asked what this decoration is – whose button I'm wearing here. I tell them the truth. I tell them that it's the Order of Australia, and that it's a very rarely awarded honour given to those very few special people who were alive before John Howard became prime minister.

But I understand that there are several of Mr Beazley's friends here tonight and I don't want to rub salt in the wounds. So I'll just say that this is a democracy and your candidate's time will come. One day he'll be running against a doddering old man bereft of his faculties and barely capable of pronouncing his own name – Peter Costello.

Although it doesn't quite equal the prestige of being received at the Lodge, I must say that I was pleased to be invited, along with all the other Aussies in London, to Buckingham Palace a few weeks ago. I was a bit nervous and so was the Queen, because we were both in presence of Germaine Greer, but the Queen inclined her head at just the right angle. More remarkably, so did Germaine. It was perfect little curtsy from the one-time revolutionary and I wonder if her Majesty and the Duke realised just how significant an historical development this was. Forty years ago, in similar circumstances, Germaine might have removed her knickers and crossed her ankles behind her

neck. The Duke would probably have declared her open. But this time there was none of that. There was our magnificent firebrand of a girl from Downtown Push doing her curtsy. What happened to the revolution? ... Time.

Time, and in 40 years the world has turned upside down. Australia is the most successful nation of the old Empire and Britain is a failed state. None of the British find it inconceivable anymore that their ex-colony should have produced a new and triumphant master race. Once the British were astonished when Jack Brabham - and Sir Jack was eighty yesterday, let's give him a hand here - once the British were astonished when Jack Brabham conquered them in a car he designed himself. Now, when Elle McPherson conquers them in a bra she designed herself they regard it as perfectly normal. When the Aussie women's 4 X 400m Commonwealth Games relay team tries to give the Poms some of our spare medals, do the Poms feel insulted? No. Where else are they going to get any? They're resigned now to inferior status. Nothing built in Britain anymore actually works. The British War Department sent the British Army into the Middle East with a rifle that won't work in hot, sandy conditions. They could have tested it in better conditions at Cronulla, but it never occurred to them.

In fact the British War Department has succeeded in developing precisely one weapon system that works: the Diana Anti-Personnel Fountain. The idea was brilliantly simple: build a water feature in Hyde Park at colossal expense and then wait for the enemy to go paddling in it. Every morning they go through the bodies looking for Osama bin Laden. It can only be a matter of time.

It's standard practice for a guest speaker to plug his latest book but you'll be relieved to hear that I'm not going to, because I no longer agree with my book's thesis. The book was *The Meaning of Recognition* and it drew a distinction between two kinds of fame, celebrity (bad) and recognition (good). For example, Paris Hilton has celebrity as a pornographic heiress and Sir Isaiah Berlin had recognition as a historian of ideas. Paris Hilton, Isaiah Berlin: a tale of two cities. Nothing could be simpler. But also I have since decided, nothing could be more false. Because I'm fascinated by celebrity too. It is a language we all share. We measure our own love lives for example by what Brad and Angelina get up to. We all speculate about whether Angelina's mouth is really hers, or whether it's a half-inflated army surplus rubber life-raft that got stuck to her face after a high wind.

So, celebrity gossip is a language by which we communicate, so why pretend to be against it? So I'm not going to plug my last book. I'm going to plug my *next* book. I haven't finished writing it yet - which is a bit disturbing because it's going to be published in October - it's the fourth volume of my "unreliable memoirs"; it's called

North Face of Soho. It deals with the 1970s, the years when I was a TV critic for the *Observer* in London, but I was also doing my very first interviews for a TV series called *Cinema* made by Granada in Manchester. These interviews were with some of the film stars. The character called Arthur who keeps popping up was my producer, Arthur Taylor. He was a very patient man because I had everything to learn. Here goes.

With Richard Burton

After several disasters which were all my fault, an interview with Richard Burton went well enough to reach the screen. Burton had a stiff movie to push and was therefore available. Even in those days we could get the stellar names only when they were flogging a dog. Burton's movie, called *Hammersmith is Out*, barked and chewed bones. I don't think even he even sat through it. I did, as part of my preparation. Something had gone wrong with every part of the movie. The action never started.

On the other hand, it never ended. As a token that the plot was going nowhere, Burton spent the whole movie standing around. When he walked, it was so that he could stand somewhere else. Nobody would give a toss. But he was still a star. When Granada proposed to Burton's people that he should be interviewed in Manchester, they proposed Monte Carlo. London was the compromise, but at least we were in a studio.

I can't remember which one it was – they all look the same from inside – but I can remember exactly my first impression of Burton. In the press profiles he had always been called stocky and, as his career declined, the journalists took to calling him short. Later on I realised that journalistic estimates of physical stature are always relative to perceived status, but I was still at the stage of believing what I read, so it was a shock to find that Burton was quite tall. What made him look less so, especially on screen, was the size of his head. It was as big as a tea-chest. You had to lean sideways to look past him.

On the front of that vast expanse of cranium, the features were arranged like a caricature of Richard Burton. I was still getting used to the fact that the stars look so much like themselves, it is the first, and sometimes the only, characteristic they have. Burton seemed quite tolerant of my beard. He would probably have been tolerant if I had been dressed as a Maori chieftain. Though upright, with his bulky shoulders squared, he was barely awake. He was sober that afternoon, but the previous day had taken its toll along with the previous half century.

Fortune decreed, however, that he had his answers ready, whatever the question. I made sure that I dug out of him all the best stories about his more popular movies. Some of them, after all, were pretty

good especially *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold*, which I thought masterly. He was pleased to hear that, although he would have been less pleased to hear that I thought his co-star Oskar Warner attained a naturalness on screen that Burton had never dreamed of.

Happily I didn't say that. Most of the opinions came from the client: a desirable imbalance, because the viewers, on the basis of their experience, can decide for themselves whether the interviewee is talking nonsense or not, and even if they decide he is, they still find him a lot more interesting than the interviewer. I even managed to look excited when discussing *Hammersmith is Out*, which is more than I can say for Burton.

But although never more than half awake, Burton was also never less than intelligent and civilised. Discounting the occasional flash of his undying belief that his alliance with Elizabeth Taylor had raised him to new artistic heights unknown to the Stratford Memorial Playhouse or the Old Vic, Burton handled his end of the business pretty well, and I was almost as impressed by him as I was by his one-man entourage, a black heavyweight who drove the car and arranged the details. After the heavyweight loaded Burton into the back of the limousine so he could finish waking up, I was glad to find that I had my producer's favour. "We can use that." When I saw the trimmed version on screen, I could see that it was no triumph for either party. But it wasn't bad.

And Robert Mitchum

An interview with Robert Mitchum went better still, mainly because Mitchum was more interesting all round. Burton, to prove himself alert to the English language, had to quote Shakespeare or Dylan Thomas. Mitchum could quote himself. There are people you can't take your ears off when they talk, even when they mumble. Mitchum was one of them. His mumble, however, was formidable.

Operating through a spokesman in his retinue, he demanded to audition us over lunch at the Dorchester. Arthur and I were there early, and well dug in. Mitchum turned up in time to the minute but we couldn't understand what he was saying. "I seem fine squaws rive earl." A trained simultaneous translator from Geneva would have told us that he had said, "I see my firing squad had arrived early."

Theoretically, Mitchum was on the wagon at the time, but he must have taken one look at my beard and changed his mind, because when the waiter asked him if he would like something to drink he made the waiter bend down and spent a long time whispering in his ear. The whispering was accompanied by illustrative movements of his hands, as if he were passing on arcane secrets in the art of flower arrangement.

When the drink arrived it was about two feet tall, changed colour on the way up, and had a foliage sprouting from the top, like a core sample from an Amazonian swamp. All it needed was a toucan perched on a branch. There was always the chance that this concoction had no alcohol in it, but it certainly had some kind of active ingredient, because after he had inhaled about half of it, Mitchum's voice suddenly came into focus.

It was still, however, pitched very low. It has always been a practice of the big male movie stars to pitch the voice low when off screen, so as to make the interlocutor lean forward. The angle of inclination is an index of prestige. For a movie star, being interviewed on television counts as being off screen, so the volume is duly screwed down, which duly increases the amplitude of the timbre. This can give a TV sound engineer unmanageable problems.

I had seen an interview with Lee Marvin during which I had to lean my head against the TV set. It shook to the reverberation. Here was Mitchum doing the same thing in a restaurant. If he did the same thing in the studio, we were dead. Inspired by fear, I decided to play it deaf. Nowadays it would be no trick, but then I had to fake it.

Mitchum took pity on a fellow actor and raised his volume into the range of audible. Greatly daring, I offered not to ask him about his early stardom in the first-ever celebrity marijuana bust. "Go ahead." This answer cleared the air nicely, and the following conversation flowed without a hitch, except for his reluctance to expand on an anecdote for giving us its bare bones. Afterwards, Arthur told me this was a good sign: the client was saving his best stuff for the air.

He did, too. In the studio he was tremendous. He liked it that I knew about the off-rail movies as well as the mainstream ones. *Build My Gallows High* was a favourite film noir of mine and I could have proved it by reciting the dialogue from memory, but I had learned my lesson and let him recite it instead.

I was a big fan of *Thunder Road*, the low budget thriller about the best moonshine liquor driver in the mountains ("He sets a pace that only a madman can match.") So was Mitchum: the project had been his initiative, and he was instantly off and running about the difficulties of getting a pet idea financed and filmed within the prevailing system. His rare intelligence was apparent in every sentence he spoke, and for a wonder he spoke every sentence clearly, although he was still no louder than a mole in hiding.

But compared to Lee Marvin, Mitchum was Cicero. It went so well that we asked him if we could keep rolling long enough to turn the footage into two programs instead of one. He agreed on the spot. It was as if he didn't want to go home. I didn't either. Finally the electricians pulled the plugs, Mitchum wandered off into the gathering

dusk, and I waited with some confidence for Arthur's accolade. "We can certainly use that."

Then Burt Lancaster

Arthur had been fruitlessly chasing Burt Lancaster for some time. Burt Lancaster suddenly became available after our first Mitchum program was successfully screened. Lancaster's people were sufficiently impressed with what they saw to think that we might do the same for their man. For them, it would be good advance publicity for a Michael Winner movie called *Scorpio*, then in the last stages of filming at Shepperton.

The deal was that I would interview Lancaster at an exterior location, somewhere not far from the studio but far enough to ensure that it would be difficult to control the sound. Open-air interviews are hard for just that reason. Unless you are using two cameras at once, noise in the background makes the footage hard to edit, so you are always going for another take on an interchange that might not have gone very well already, but will be certain to go worse when you shoot it again.

Arthur told me it would be good practice, and anyway, this was our only chance to get Lancaster, even though his career was in the doldrums by then. After personally revolutionising the Hollywood production system so that actors acquired real creative power for the first time, he had clung on too long to his status as the magnetic leading man. Later on, when he allowed himself to be cast as the old timer, his career entered a second phase of glory, with movies like *Local Hero* and *Atlantic City* being built around his hulking but always graceful moving presence, whose boundless vitality had at last mellowed towards the bearable: he became less of a ham as he lost vigour. But if, at that stage, he was no longer what he was, he was still a huge name. We would have said yes if he had been in gaol.

So down we went to the location, in an open field where there were tents for dressing rooms, tents for offices, and tents for two different grades of dining hall, one for the dogsbodies, and the other, a hundred yards further away, for the director and the star. One glance at the film's prospectus told me it was a tired old spy drama that would be released only into oblivion, like a blob of spit aimed at a hot stove.

But I had no reason to despise Michael Winner and indeed I still don't today. *Death Wish* might be a favourite movie among gun nuts but it is not without a measure of narrative drive, and at least Winner got his movies made, when so many of other British directors were sitting around moaning about their wounded artistic purity, which they didn't mind compromising by making commercials anonymously.

Recently I read Winner's autobiography and it wasn't half bad. It was three quarters bad, but only because of its many thousands

of superfluous exclamation marks. Clear those out into a skip and the book would be a fascinating, if much shorter, story of diligence rewarded, told in a prose admirably forthcoming if not always edifying. One of the sub-stories in the book concerns Winner's love-hate relationship with Burt Lancaster. You might wonder why it wasn't hate-hate. Once, on location in Mexico, Lancaster grasped Winner by the throat and hung him out over a high cliff. It's either kind or craven for Winner to remember this behaviour as somehow an indication of Lancaster's loveable volatility, because it sounds exactly like homicidal mania.

On location near Shepperton, things were more restrained, but still very weird. The unit was between set-ups when we arrived. Sitting intensely in a canvas-backed folding chair marked BURT LANCASTER, the star stuck a cigarette in his mouth and waited. He had to wait only a few seconds before Winner shouted "A light for Mr Lancaster!" The factotum bounded forward with a cigarette lighter already spouting flame.

After the next shot, lunch was called. The smaller mess tent for the star and the director was in plain sight, about two hundred yards away. Lancaster stood up from his chair, but that was as far as he went by himself. He stared at Winner with a weary impatience. Winner took the cue and shouted: "A car for Mr Lancaster!" A black Mercedes 600, longer than a school bus, loomed across the grass and stopped precisely so that the action hero could step directly into it after the back door had been opened by the assistant director, the PR attaché and other members of the door-opening party that I could not identify.

The Mercedes set off on its epic journey across two hundred yards of grass, arriving at the sacred tent only a short time before the rest of us arrived on foot. Lancaster's door remained firmly closed until it was opened by the chauffeur, the assistant director, the PR attaché, the other members of the door-opening party, and Winner himself. Winner congratulated Lancaster on his successful voyage in terms which would have embarrassed Lindbergh after his arrival in Paris.

It was a graphic demonstration of the perennial need for the institution of monarchy: because there is a total, ineradicable potential for subservient ceremonial bullshit in the universe and it all has to go somewhere.

I would have been open-mouthed if Arthur had not conveyed to me in a whisper the vital necessity of keeping my trap shut. I already knew that Lancaster had not attained his position of one of Hollywood's most powerfully creative figures by self-denial and humility. His company Hecht, Hill and Lancaster had changed the industry, making it possible, for the first time, for a star to be in full charge of his career.

Lancaster had not only starred in more than his share of important movies, he had produced them, and often developed them from the initial idea. To do all that, he had to get some respect, and had frequently got it by imposing his personality with the full force of his improbably gleaming teeth, sometimes implanting them in the outstretched neck of a courtier he found insufficiently supplicatory.

But this stuff on the *Scorpio* location went beyond self-assertion. This was megalomania. Lancaster wasn't precisely carried into the tent, but its flaps were held aside by two men who had clearly learned their flap-holding skills at the court of Hailie Selassie and the business of making sure that Mr Lancaster sat down safely would have been familiar to Louis XIV.

As Lancaster, once a champion acrobat and still in superb physical shape, lowered himself from the standing to the sitting position, Winner, from the other side of the table, flung out one hand in a gesture of caution, as if the star might be putting his life in peril from the speed of transition and change of altitude. You should see the instruction hovering on the director's lips: "A parachute for Mr Lancaster!"

From our position in one corner of the tent, I watched Mr Lancaster eat. Everybody at Lancaster's table watched him eat as if their fate depended on the proper functioning of his digestive system. I was disappointed that there was nobody to taste his food first, in case of poison, but would not have been astounded to learn that his excrement was weighed afterwards, in the same way that the output of Chinese emperors was examined for portents.

After lunch, the interview took place in another tent at the edge of the compound. Once again, Lancaster was transported the distance of several yards by limousine. But in our preliminary conversation he seemed to like my references to his early career as a gymnast. Flying in the high bar, Lancaster had forged in a touring circus the magnificent athleticism that made him, on screen, so beautifully poised even when he was standing still.

It is always a plus, when warming up a difficult subject, to get him or her talking about their formative skills. This gives them a chance of instruct you. I hadn't yet formulated this as a principle: I had got it right merely by luck. It was flattery, of course, a version of "A light for Mr Lancaster!"

But it worked. He scaled down the hauteur considerably. Instead of being Louis XIV, suddenly he was merely Napoleon Bonaparte. By the time our cameras rolled he was practically mortal. From *The Crimson Pirate* onwards, I got a good story out of him about every movie that counted, and from each story he emerged as a model of reason, taste and judgment. He really was a brave, intelligent and

original man, although not original enough to protest at being told he was all those things.

At the end of the interview he indicated his satisfaction in way that had been lighting up the screen for decades. His teeth looked like tombstones anyway, and when he bared them in a smile he looked like a carnival in a graveyard. Film stardom has more to do with presence than with acting, and Lancaster had always had so much presence that everyone else felt absent. He still had it then.

Getting away from him as far as possible seemed the only thing to do. As Lancaster, once again surrounded by his entourage, prepared to enter the limo for the awe-inspiring journey to the tent next door, I followed our crew towards our humble van. Arthur muttered: "Don't say anything. He might be listening."

The Lancaster interview looked good on screen, but it made me wonder if I was really cut out for soothing the frailties of these fabled beasts. The mild-looking ones could be as dangerous as the known killers. Riding a tiger was one thing, but stroking an antelope could cost you your eyesight if the creature rounded on you and stuck out its tongue. Already I was wondering if I wanted to go on much further with *Cinema*. Did I really need the anxiety of talking to madhouse people with household names? The question was settled by my next big *Cinema* special, an interview with Peter Sellers.

Peter Sellers – and Tony Hancock

Universally acclaimed as a comic genius, Sellers, after *Doctor Strangelove* and *A Shot in the Dark*, was still on a high plinth, but the cracks were starting to show. There were stories that he was driven by his own version of Tony Hancock's fatal reluctance to admit that a comic star might be to a certain extent dependent on those who supplied the words he said.

When Hancock heard too often that the scripts provided for him by Galton and Simpson were essential to his screen persona, he met the threat by firing them. His final destruction duly followed. Sellers wasn't as stupid as that, but he had already reached a dangerous state, for a comedian, of wanting to be cast as a romantic lead, as if he had more than comedy to offer.

Successful comedy is already "more than" almost anything else, but there will always be comedians who regard their reputations for getting laughs as a cruel diminishment of their real qualities. It had become known that Sellers was one of these.

It had also been attested that his famous range of mimicry included no character that could reliably be identified as Peter Sellers himself. He brought a new car every week, changed women every few months – usually after giving a press conference to declare that the latest tie was eternal – and generally showed all the signs of someone

short of an identity trying to supply it with sufficiency of fancy toys, ranging from the latest automatic camera to Princess Margaret. All of these things I had read about but most of them I had discounted, on the assumption that he had attracted journalistic envy.

There could be no safer assumption than that, but within minutes of meeting him I realised that the press had been giving him an easy run.

The encounter took place at some swish restaurant whose name I have repressed: it might have been Odin's. Sellers and his latest agent were in position at the table before Arthur and I arrived. While Sellers was regaling Arthur with a superb imitation of John Gielgud, the agent leaned in my direction and said: "He's a vegetarian this week."

The implication was that the star didn't want even to smell meat, so Arthur and I ended up eating a small pile of vegetables each while Sellers became Laurence Olivier, Ralph Richardson, Richard Burton and Alex Guinness. In broad daylight, it was jamboree of spectres. He went on to become Field Marshal Montgomery, President Nixon, Bing Crosby, Winston Churchill, Adolf Hitler and Marlene Dietrich. The only dud in the range was when he was pretending to be himself. His beautifully produced standard BBC English had the unmistakable gleam of a freshly forged banknote.

But it was what he was actually saying, in his voice purportedly his own, that rang alarm bells. He launched into an account of how Blake Edwards, the director of *A Shot in the Dark*, had screwed up the billiard room scene. As his agent studied the ceiling while looking down at his plate – the trick needed a practised pair of eyeballs – Sellers moved pieces of cutlery about to demonstrate that whereas on screen the sequence had gone like that, it should have gone like this.

Edwards, apparently, had deviously seemed to agree with Sellers' suggestions on the sound stage, but had double-crossed him in the cutting room. As the well modulated tirade went on, Arthur and I exchanged the glance shared by two coal-miners when they hear water coming down the tunnel. Arthur told me later that this was the moment when he started thinking about the relative ease of dealing with Burt Lancaster. I was thinking of *A Shot in the Dark*.

Sellers had come up with the perfect face, voice and set of movements for Inspector Clouseau, but he was everywhere abetted by well-planned scenes that could only have been the work of the director, because they were the product of concentration, and Sellers was clearly incapable of concentrating on anything for five minutes, except, probably, on Sophia Loren in the passenger seat of his new Ferrari.

According to him, however, the movie was all his. Transparently untrue, this contention was a sign that he was already far gone in the fatal delusion that the people who helped him to succeed were

conspiring to his downfall. The sure sign of a weak man who ascends to glory is that he can't tolerate having strong men around him. But it would be a long time before I figured this out as a general principle.

At that moment, I was too busy remembering the scene in which Clouseau hurls himself at the door of the upstairs in the concert room in the castle, hurtles across the room in long shot, and is then seen, in the exterior shot, bursting through the window and falling, still running, into the moat below. Out of three shots, his stunt double could have done the second and almost certainly did the third. In *The Pink Panther*, also directed by Edwards, Clouseau, preparing for a rare night of passion with his wife, heads into the bathroom while holding a bottle of pills. Of course, being Clouseau, he will spill them. But when he does, we don't even see him. We just hear the pills hit the tiled floor. The camera is looking at Capucine, who doubles the laugh by putting her hand over her eyes in resignation. Clouseau is present only as an idea. The joke emerges from the character, who has been created not just by the actor but by the writers and the director.

How could Sellers be so ungenerous as not to concede that? He could even have been proud of it, because without his talent at the centre, none of all these other talents would ever have formed around him. The answer was not long in coming. He was ungenerous because he was unrealistic. When Charles Chaplin thought he could do everything, he could provide the evidence to back up the claim, although the evidence ran thinner when sound came in and it turned out that his touch with a story did not extend to its dialogue. But Sellers had always needed other people. The need, however, conflicted with his nature.

I was wrong, however, to suppose that Sellers thought the world revolved around him. He thought the cosmos did too, and history, and the fates.

After the endless lunch had ground to its conclusion, we headed off around the corner to the hotel in which our crew had taken over a room to rig the cameras and lights. The moment that Sellers saw which hotel it was, the really weird stuff started. He had drunk nothing during lunch except some special water that had to be brought by courier from high in the Himalayas, where it had been strained through the loin-cloth of a swami. So he couldn't have been drunk. But suddenly he was staggered.

"Oh no", he said, in a version of the Sellers voice that sounded like his cockney accent in *The Wrong Arm of the Law*. I suspected that these might be his true tones, to the extent that they could be resurrected.

Resurrected was the right word, because he looked like living death.

“Oh no. No. Can’t go in there.” While he stood staring paralysed at the hotel’s front door, his agent whispered to us fiercely: “Jesus, what made you pick this place? He can’t go through the door.”

It turned out that we had chanced on the very hotel where Sellers had begun his liaison with Britt Ekland. Their eternal alliance having ended with the usual bitter abruptness, bad karma had gathered around the doorway of the place where the universal catastrophe had begun under the guise of bliss. Evil sprits walked and groaned. Voodoo tom-toms, inaudible to us, pulsed. Negative feng shui enveloped the building. All of it, apparently, except the roof.

When Arthur explained that there was no time left to hire another venue and reposition to the camera, agent asked client if there was any way of getting into the building that would not offend its incorporeal guardians. Blinking as if called upon to assent to the sacrifice of his immortal soul, Sellers whispered that an indirect approach might be all right. “We could go in over the roof.”

It took ten minutes to navigate upwards through the building next door, Sellers giving autographs all the way, with the terrible smile of the condemned. You could imagine Christ ascending Golgotha, asking the autograph hounds to hold their books still so that he could sign one-handed while dragging the cross. The transition over the rooftop would have been quicker if Sellers had not been bailed up by what we deduced to be a particularly hostile spiritual presence speaking Spanish. Sellers spent several minutes negotiating with thin air. Inside the hotel, certain corridors had to be avoided. Our small party was exhausted when it finally attained the room full of lights, cameras and technicians.

The interview itself could have been worse. Sellers decided to impersonate a normal, even reasonable, human being. In a position, by now, to realise that this was the most remarkable acting feat of his life, I managed, while the magazines were being changed, to keep him occupied by proving myself familiar with the details of his more off-trail achievements, the ones we weren’t talking about on camera. I was further struck, however, by the way he was not in the least surprised to encounter someone in possession of all this knowledge. He thought everyone knew it.

Like every egomaniac, Sellers behaved as if everybody spent their day being interested in him as he was. Even at the time, I had enough sense to mark this down as a lesson for life. Self-regard would get out of hand, if it were given the power, so watch for the symptoms. Sanity would be hard to get back if it were ever let go of. At the end of his career, Sellers would show signs of wanting to get back.

After a long and progressively disastrous series of scripts chosen on the grounds that they presented him as an irresistible sexual object, he elected to star in *Being There*, a movie about a man minus

a personality who rises to prominence because people can read their dreams into him. Perfect for the part, he was able to go out on a high note. His whole career might have been like that he had always been so judicious. But it would have been a lot to ask. He had a conspicuous individual talent, but it was interpretive, not directly creative.

Sellers could never have emulated Chaplin, Keaton or Jacques Tati and set up a whole project by himself, controlling its every detail even if the task took years. But there is no point carping. He had such a protean capacity that it would have been a miracle if he had been in full command of it. Those of us with less to offer earn no points in ordering our lives better. Wagner couldn't compose unless he was living in Byzantine luxury, worshipped as a living god.

You and I aren't quite that nuts, but we didn't write the Magic Fire music in the past pages of *Die Walküre*, either. When Sellers was far gone on the road to self destruction, I tried to remember him as Dr Strangelove, strangling himself with one black-gloved hand. It was all too symbolic. But it was also an idea, a moment of brilliant improvisation. He just thought of something perfectly expressive on the spot, and hardly anybody could do that.

Thanks

Meanwhile, for this evening, to The Sydney Institute – all my thanks. Gerard has kindly arranged for some of my previous books, including my previous memoirs, to be here at the signing table, and afterwards I will gladly sign any books you care to buy or bring, although I must be honest and warn you that the unsigned ones are the rare ones. But I'm not one of those authors who sneaks into bookshops and signs the whole stock of his books in the knowledge that once the book is signed, the owner of the bookshop can't send it back. Jeffery Archer used to break into the warehouse to sign his books. He would probably have done time for that if he didn't do it for the other thing.

Time... Now it's really gone.

But one last thing. We've all got an ego. The most we can do is keep it in perspective. Just as the most we can do with celebrity is to enjoy it, not take it too seriously, and hope that the celebrities will have the sense to see it the same way. We shouldn't ask them to be superhuman. Just human.

I know a lot of you came here tonight hoping for something eloquent, and I share your disappointment that Jana Pittman had to cancel. But in the immortal words of Laura Bingle: Bloody thank you very bloody much.



Photo – David Karonidis

Moreen Dee

Dr Moreen Dee is Executive Officer, Historical Publications and Information Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Her book, *Not A Matter for Negotiation*, uses Australian foreign affairs documents to interpret what happened during the Malayan-Indonesian Confrontation or *Konfrontasi* of 1963. Australia, as a major force in the region, partly for economic reasons and partly because of its defence of Malaya since World War II, was intricately involved in this period of regional destabilisation. Reviewing Moreen Dee's work, Khoo Kay Kim described it as especially unique in viewing the conflict from an Australian perspective. Moreen Dee addressed The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 18 April 2006.

AUSTRALIA AND

MALAYSIA: CONFRONTATION AND THE POLITICS OF THE 1960S

Moreen Dee

As an historian with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), I am tasked with recounting particular episodes in Australian foreign policy making, working primarily from the department's files held in the National Archives of Australia. The work is absorbing, particularly when assigned a topic that suddenly reveals all the ingredients of what appears to be a near-perfect foreign policy making scenario. One in which a state is able to single-mindedly pursue a clearly defined policy towards a particular situation, never deviating from its core objective or objectives. My paper tonight recounts one such scenario, Australia's foreign policy making with regard to the events surrounding the formation of Malaysia in 1963.

This episode is set against the backdrop of Indonesia's objection to the establishment of this new state - a political and military campaign of confrontation, that became known as Confrontation or *Konfrontasi*.

The Federation of Malaysia concept

Briefly, the situation developed from the announcement in 1961 of proposals for a Federation of Malaysia - incorporating Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak, Brunei and British North Borneo - the final stage in Britain's process of decolonisation in South and Southeast Asia. The proposed state was a deft means by which Britain could settle the future of its Borneo territories and, at the same time, establish a country sufficiently viable to be a stable influence in this strategically important area. It was not foreseen that the Philippines and Indonesia would oppose the new state to the extent that it would become a major point of friction in the Southeast Asian region.

The Philippines' objections to the inclusion of British North Borneo in the proposed federation - on the grounds that it was part of the Philippine Sultanate of Sulu¹ - was known from the outset. (Although dismissed by Britain, there was some legitimacy to the Filipino claim.) Indonesia, on the other hand, initially declared that it had no problems with the proposals. With the resolution of the West

New Guinea dispute in its favour, however, President Sukarno needed another nationalist issue upon which to focus popular attention and so divert it away from the deteriorating economic situation. The December 1962 Brunei Revolt, which followed the Sultan of Brunei's acceptance, in principle, of Malaysia, provided the catalyst for Indonesia's opposition. Indonesia now opposed the inclusion of the North Borneo territories without a plebiscite. When Britain's intention to retain authority over the Singapore Naval base became known, Indonesia's rhetoric grew increasingly militant, as President Sukarno called on the Indonesian people to adopt a policy of *Konfrontasi* against the proposed new state. Malaysia, he claimed, was a neo-colonist puppet of an imperialist power bent on encircling Indonesia and on prolonging its interests in Southeast Asia. With the arrival of Malaysia Day on 16 September 1963, Indonesia's policy of *Konfrontasi* crystallised into a "Crush Malaysia" (*Ganjang Malaysia*) campaign.

Australia and the Malaysia concept

Before looking at Australia's response to all this political activity on its northern doorstep, it is necessary to review Australia's principal foreign and defence policy priorities with regard to its immediate geo-strategic region at this time. These were to maintain regional stability, to retain British and American interests in the region; and, should it become necessary, to defend Australia away from its own coastline—the "forward defence" strategy. Following the announcement of the plans for the proposed federation, Canberra therefore moved quickly to consider the effect the "Greater Malaysia Plan", as it was known, would have on any or all of these objectives. Despite some concerns on about the viability of the proposed federation, given the planned racially delineated political and economic control and social structure, the Australian Government concluded that, overall, it was sympathetic to Australia's important trade and business interests in Singapore and Malaya and to its regional defence interests.² But the establishment of Malaysia and the ensuing Confrontation campaign, nonetheless, posed a number of challenges to Australian defence and foreign policy interests.

Malaysia was a fellow member of the Commonwealth with which Australia had long-standing formal defence links, essential to the forward defence strategy just mentioned. On the other hand, Australia's bilateral relationship with Indonesia was in the process of rebuilding after the difficulties arising out of Australia's opposition to Indonesia's claim to the former Dutch territory of West New Guinea.³ The dilemma facing the Government was how to institute a policy that would see Australia accept its obligation to defend the proposed federation, while endeavouring to prevent a situation developing where Australian forces would be engaged against those of its nearest

neighbour, Indonesia. Consequently, as relations between Indonesia and Malaya grew increasingly hostile in the early months of 1963, Australia's immediate response was understandably cautious. Garfield Barwick, the Minister for External Affairs, argued that Australian, and regional, interests would be best served by a diplomatic rather than a military approach.⁴ Jakarta had to accept that Malaysia was not negotiable and Kuala Lumpur encouraged to recognise the long-term importance to the region of good Indonesian-Malayan relations.⁵

Cabinet agreed and, on 5 March 1963, decided that Australia's approach towards the emerging Indonesia-Malaysia conflict would be to support the formation of Malaysia, politically and militarily, and accept the risks this support would pose for Australia-Indonesia relations, while, at the same time, direct Australian diplomacy towards maintaining this latter relationship. The view was that such diplomacy would not only protect Australia's long-term interests with respect to Indonesia, but it would also allow Australia to use what influence it could to curb Indonesian opposition to Malaysia. Principally, Australia had to assist in anyway it could to resolve the tension between the two countries, if stability within the region was to be maintained.⁶ That these objectives were achieved is why I have identified this episode as a significant example of successful foreign policy making.

There was ample opportunity in the months ahead for Australia to implement the above strategy as, despite an increase in tensions as military incursions from Indonesian Kalimantan began into Sarawak,⁷ there was some respite gained from a sequence of Australian-initiated tripartite regional meetings. These culminated in a summit in late July-early August. All the meetings were held in Manila and at times appeared as if they would resolve Malayan-Indonesian-Filipino differences. But the pan-Malay accord reached during the summit was short lived. The crisis point came with the formal establishment of Malaysia on 16 September. President Sukarno refused to recognise the new state (as did President Macapagal of the Philippines) and, as mentioned, committed Indonesia to the "Crush Malaysia" campaign of Confrontation. In Jakarta, anti-British and anti-Malaysian agitation became violent. The British Embassy was sacked and burned and the homes of British nationals were systematically wrecked and looted.⁸ The Malaysian Chancery was also severely damaged. During days of rioting, many British companies were taken over by Indonesian trade unions, including the large Shell refinery in South Sumatra. Further takeovers were prevented by President Sukarno ordering that all British firms be placed under the control of Indonesian Government departments.

The defence commitment and broader diplomatic strategy

In view of events in Jakarta, the Australian Government could no longer avoid taking the decision it had hoped to avoid on its defence commitment to Malaysia. Throughout the previous months it had concentrated on its diplomatic efforts to obtain a political solution, which would obviate the need for a military commitment. There seemed little purpose in jeopardising Australia-Indonesia relations by committing Australia to a formal undertaking to defend Malaysia before required. It was sufficient that Indonesia understood an Indonesia-Malaysia conflict would involve Australia militarily. But something stronger than diplomatic warnings was now required. On 24 September, Cabinet agreed to a formal declaration of Australia's defence commitment to Malaysia.⁹

During the last months of 1963 through to mid-August 1964, however, there was more rhetoric than action in Indonesia's campaign to "crush Malaysia" and no decision was taken on deploying Australian combat forces. Taking advantage of the relative quiet in the situation, Australia adjusted its diplomatic strategy in seeking a political solution. An open, but firmer, Australian-Indonesian dialogue was adopted, with Barwick personally ensuring that the Indonesian leadership understood that if Australia and Indonesia were "forced on to a collision course by a continuation of Indonesian confrontation of Malaysia we shall honour our obligations to the full and perform our assurances".¹⁰ But Australian diplomacy now also sought to influence Indonesia's policy indirectly by gaining more international support for Malaysia.

All Australian missions overseas advocated Malaysia's position to their host country's government and Australia firmly opposed any possible challenge to Malaysia's credentials at the UN and in other international organisations. Importantly, Australia sought to encourage the US to be less accommodating to the way Indonesia was behaving and to give more public support for Malaysia. In particular, Australian diplomacy focussed on countering American and Thai pressure on Tunku Abdul Rahman, early in 1964, to agree to further tripartite talks with Indonesia and the Philippines. Australia did not believe that Malaysia should have to engage in talks with two countries that refused it recognition. Canberra, in fact, considered it highly unlikely that any discussions in the current climate would achieve anything positive and, in these early days of federation, Malaysia should not "be faced with anything that might increase its internal difficulties".¹¹ Australia was unable to get the US to withdraw its existing economic support for Sukarno but it did obtain

an agreement that the US would provide more positive support for Malaysia.¹²

There were quite a number of “stormy sessions” between Australian and the US officials during this period as Australia refuted US criticism of Malaysia’s supposed recalcitrance. In challenging the American attitude towards Malaysia, Australia forcefully argued that while Indonesia was important, Malaysia was now a fact of life and the “West [could not] afford to see it fall”.¹³

Assessing the defence obligation

Throughout this period of intense diplomatic activity, the defence obligation issues were not neglected. Even though the security situation was deemed to be relatively quiet, Indonesian incursions were still occurring across the border into Sarawak and Sabah. Indonesia did not appear to have a clearly defined military strategy but there were also no indications that it intended to curtail the military aspects of its confrontation campaign. Defence authorities in Canberra began a careful assessment of possible Malaysian requests for military assistance.

The first aim was to delay the provision of combat forces for as long as possible in the hope that “calmer counsel [would] prevail” in Indonesian policy. British defence planners in London were informed that Australian military assistance to Malaysia was to “be clearly related to a need and not merely a gesture” and Australia’s assessment of the security situation (which proved correct) was that there was, as yet, no need for Australian combat forces in the Borneo territories. Canberra was looking to implement what it called a “carefully graduated” Australian military response to Indonesian harassment. One that would allow Australia “the means of retaining some scope for exercising a deterrent role in Indonesia”.¹⁴

Nonetheless, the government recognised the precariousness of Malaysia’s situation and considered there was a need to provide practical assistance in building up the Malaysian Armed Forces. On 28 January 1964, Cabinet agreed to the creation of a special fund of £3 million¹⁵ in defence assistance to go to strengthening Malaysia’s capacity for self-defence.¹⁶ In April, Cabinet agreed to additional assistance in the form of an engineer squadron, a light anti-aircraft battery, coastal minesweepers, helicopters, short range transport aircraft and troop and freight carrying flights. In the face of increased threats of sabotage in Singapore and Malaya, it also agreed to a Malaysian request to use Australian forces with the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve against Indonesian-trained infiltrators on the Malayan mainland.¹⁷ Later, the 1964–1965 defence budget provided for a further £2 million in defence aid for Malaysia.¹⁸

“The year of living dangerously”

But on 17 August 1964, (Merdeka Day) Sukarno declared “The Year of Living Dangerously” and opened a second military front on the Malayan peninsula. Confrontation had now reached its most critical military stage. Political tensions in Jakarta had been increasing throughout 1964 as Sukarno struggled to balance the competitive nationalism that he had fostered between the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) and the Army. But the continued deterioration in the Indonesian economy had seen an increase in PKI activities and influence. To the Australian Government the hostile tone of Sukarno’s address seemed to indicate a further move towards Indonesian alignment with communist policies.¹⁹ Of more immediate concern, however, was the landing of over 100 Indonesian infiltrators at a number of points on the west coast of Johore in the early hours of 17 August.²⁰ Further incursions into Malaya occurred in early September. The situation became critical when a stand-off developed between the Indonesian and British Governments over the passage of the aircraft carrier *HMS Victorious* through the Sunda Strait and Indonesian forces were placed on military alert. It appeared that Indonesia was seeking to provoke British retaliation on Indonesian soil.²¹

The Australian assessment from Jakarta was that the Indonesians did not want war but that, “living dangerously and engaging in brinkmanship”, they might well provoke one.²² The possibility of a limited war between Indonesia and Malaysia’s Commonwealth allies was becoming a distinct possibility. Canberra believed it was now imperative that Malaysia take a complaint against Indonesia to the Security Council without delay. The Malaysian Government could not ignore the effect that the incursions were having on morale in Malaysia, nor the threatening implications of Sukarno’s seemingly reckless declaration and his increasingly open pro-communist and anti-American stance. Importantly, there also needed to be some form of United Nations’ consideration before any armed retaliation could be mounted against Indonesia.²³

To head off the dangers to Malaysia’s position should the Council adopt an indecisive resolution, which could imply fault on both sides,²⁴ Australia provided behind the scenes assistance to the Malaysian delegation in New York. At all overseas missions, Australian diplomats again worked to gather international support for Malaysia’s position. The nine to two result in Malaysia’s favour of the 17 September vote on the draft resolution (only Czechoslovakia supported the Soviet veto) was considered a success for the Federation. The result was not legally binding but it did place Indonesia under a moral and political obligation to abide by the resolution’s terms. These were that

each party refrain from the threat or use of force and respect each other's political and territorial integrity.²⁵ Canberra moved quickly to apply further pressure by making sure that Jakarta understood that Commonwealth and Malaysian forces were operationally ready and at a high state of alert.²⁶

The crisis deepens

After the Security Council vote, there was a brief lull in Indonesian military activity but, in late October, larger seaborne landings began on the Malayan peninsula. One such landing resulted in the first engagement between Australian and Indonesian forces. The crisis had reached the point where Australia's policy to assist in the defence of Malaysia while maintaining friendly relations with Indonesia was to face its first real test.²⁷ The moment in fact passed without any reaction from Jakarta. Any relief Canberra might have felt over this, however, was negated by anxiety about the deteriorating political situation within Indonesia. The balance between the competing political forces of the PKI and the Army was increasingly unstable and there was talk in Jakarta of looking to China and Russia to support Indonesia's confrontation policy.²⁸ The situation was highly charged and uncertain and a mistimed operation carried the risk of a serious escalation of the conflict.²⁹

By December, intelligence reports indicated increased infiltrations into Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah, signs of a substantial build-up of Indonesian forces in Kalimantan, and the possible movement of forces into Sumatra.³⁰ Without warning, on 4 January 1965, President Sukarno withdrew Indonesia from the United Nations³¹ and Malaysia and its allies could only wait and prepare themselves for Indonesia's next unpredictable step.

Australian forces in Borneo

Australia now accepted that the strategic situation had deteriorated to the extent that its "graduated response" was no longer tenable. On 27 January, Cabinet responded to a formal Malaysian request and agreed to the deployment of a Special Air Service Squadron and the battalion already stationed in Malaya, to serve on rotation with British and New Zealand forces in the Borneo territories. These forces were to maintain the current defensive role in the territories, while the pursuit of a political solution continued.³²

For Indonesian forces to engage with Australian forces that were part of a deployment to Malaya that had been in place since 1955 was one thing, but now Australia was making a specific deployment of Australian forces against Indonesian forces in Borneo. Canberra fully expected that Australia's most important regional relationship was in jeopardy.³³ Given the emotional and unpredictable nature of

Sukarno's reactions over the previous two years, there were few guarantees that Australian–Indonesian relations would hold against the strains it could now expect to face.

But military considerations soon became secondary. Infiltrations against Malaya and Singapore continued, as did the incursions into Sarawak and Sabah, but the anticipated military crisis did not eventuate. Instead, the focus became the increasing volatility of Indonesia's internal and external policies and the accompanying threat to the country's stability as the economy became increasingly subordinate to political considerations. Uncertainty surrounding President Sukarno's health further intensified the struggle for succession and resulted in considerable gains for the PKI and numerous setbacks for non-communist forces, including the Indonesian Army. Anti-American activities increased in the major cities and Sukarno began to speak of closer links between Indonesia, North Vietnam, the People's Republic of China and North Korea - a "Jakarta-Hanoi-Beijing-Pyongyang Axis".³⁴

Strains in the federation

Across the Malacca Straits, the political situation within Malaysia was also precarious. The strong Malay accent of the policies of the Central Government in Kuala Lumpur was causing anxiety among non-Malays in Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak.³⁵ In particular, continued social, political and economic tensions between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur threatened further communal conflict,³⁶ and personal differences between Tunku Abdul Rahman and Lee Kuan Yew were becoming difficult to contain. There were talks between the two of disengagement and days of acrimonious debate in the Malaysian parliament,³⁷ as the gap between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore widened even further and the threat of a communal crisis escalated. Finally, without consultation with any of Malaysia's allies, the Tunku and Lee Kuan Yew agreed on 6 August that Singapore was to separate from Malaysia and become an independent state on 9 August. From Canberra, Prime Minister Robert Menzies made a desperate last minute personal bid to persuade the Tunku to postpone the announcement. But Australia's concerns that the separation of Singapore, at that particular time, could harm Malaysia's position internationally and "encourage Sukarno to even more dangerous courses" failed to strike a responsive cord in Kuala Lumpur.³⁸

End of confrontation

In the event, Indonesia was in no position to take advantage of the changed situation. Its own political troubles also came to a head. An abortive coup on the evening of 30 September – 1 October brought the clash between the Indonesian Army and the PKI into the open.

It caused massive loss of life throughout the archipelago, put the Army in the ascendancy and precipitated a change in government in Jakarta.³⁹ It also marked the beginning of the end of confrontation. Within days of this attempted coup, the Indonesian Army established contact with the Malaysian Government. However, Indonesian military units were not withdrawn from Kalimantan and incursions continued into Sabah and Sarawak.⁴⁰

In an effort to avoid anything that might hinder an end to Confrontation, the Australian Government counselled the Malaysian Government against succumbing to internal pressures to intensify its own operations in the Borneo states. Given the political and social upheaval prevailing within Indonesia, Australia believed that it was unlikely that any positive moves would be made to end the dispute until the political conflict had been resolved.⁴¹ Over the following months, there was in fact little Indonesian military activity against Malaysia and, although there were signs of an Indonesian readiness to talk with both Malaysia and Singapore, nothing of substance eventuated. Australia continued to urge patience and caution as all awaited the outcome of the struggle for power in Jakarta.⁴²

Despite the apparent control of Indonesia by the Army under General Suharto, this did not come in any formal sense until March 1966, when the Army seized power from Sukarno, banned the PKI and set about restoring order. Although there were still no signs of an immediate end to Confrontation, the end in fact was close at hand—as was Australia's involvement in the whole affair. Over the next three months, there were conciliatory interchanges between Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore that eventually led to a number of an Indonesian-Malaysian ministerial meetings at the end of May. Finally, Indonesia's new Foreign Minister, Dr Adam Malik, and Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister, Tun Razak, met in Bangkok on 30 May and, after "some hard bargaining" and "some anxious moments", signed an agreement on the terms for a settlement by an exchange of notes. The terms of the proposed agreement, however, were kept secret and were subject to ratification by their respective governments.⁴³

Sukarno, who formally remained President of Indonesia, not surprisingly, was obstructive about ratifying the agreement but Australia (along with Britain and New Zealand) began the process of disengagement of their forces.⁴⁴ This confidence that Confrontation was at an end was well-founded as the first meeting of a new Indonesian Cabinet⁴⁵ on 4 August agreed *Konfrontasi* would be ended by 17 August. The formal signing of the agreement negotiated by Tun Razak and Malik, in fact, took place in Jakarta on 11 August.⁴⁶

Conclusion

At the very core of Australia's approach to Confrontation was the notion that this was a regional conflict and a sustainable resolution that brought regional stability was only possible if all countries within the region, including Australia, worked together to achieve it. That it was successful can be attributed to a number of factors. Australia never deviated from its objectives to defend Malaysia and remain friends with Indonesia. Canberra was able to gain accommodation of these opposing objectives in the respective capitals of the antagonists through the efforts of the experienced and talented diplomats that headed Australia's missions there during this period. So successful was this diplomacy that both Malaysia and Indonesia not only accepted Australia's policy, at no time during the conflict did either make any untoward demands that might derail its implementation. But the all important legacy of the diplomatic initiatives of this episode is that they led to a sense of collective responsibility to seek and maintain stability and wellbeing within the region. Not only did the period 1961 to 1966 change the political face of the Malaysia–Indonesia area of Southeast Asia and mark a significant milestone in Australian regional policy-making and diplomacy, in the immediate aftermath of the crisis, the five countries involved established the region's premier political organisation—the Association of South East Nations (ASEAN). In 1974, Australia was invited to become the organisation's first dialogue partner.

Endnotes

- 1 The Philippines' case arose from an almost forgotten private claim that the heirs of the Sultan of Sulu still had sovereignty over the North Borneo Territory, as their forebears had only leased and not ceded the territory in 1878. The North Borneo Company, which assumed administrative control in 1882, had transferred the territory to Britain in 1946. The Philippines claimed that Sulu sovereignty was now, in fact, Philippine sovereignty. See M.O. Ariff, *The Philippines' Claim to Sabah: Its Historical, Legal and Political Implications*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1970.
- 2 Cabinet Submission No. 1304 and Decision No. 1543 (HOC), 11 & 16 August 1961 respectively, National Archives of Australia (NAA): A4940, C3389.
- 3 For Australia's relationship with Indonesia during the West New Guinea dispute, see Richard Chauvel "Up the Creek Without a Paddle: Australia, West New Guinea and the 'Great and Powerful Friends'", in F. Cain, (ed.), *Menzies in War and Peace*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1997, and "The emergence of the West New Guinea dispute", in D. Lowe (ed.), *Australia and the End of Empires: The Impact of Decolonisation in Australia's Near North*, Allen & Unwin, Geelong, 1996; and S. Doran, *Western friends and eastern neighbours: West New Guinea and Australian self-perception in relation to the United States, Britain, and Southeast Asia, 1950-1962*, PhD, Australian National University, 1999, www.papuaweb.org
- 4 In particular, Barwick did not want Australia's support for Malaysia to result in Indonesia coming to regard Australia as a "standing adversary". Discussion notes on Australia's attitude to Malaysia and possible involvement in the British Borneo

- Territories, Minister and External Affairs officers, n.d. [c. early February 1963], NAA: A1838, 3034/7/1 part 1. Barwick had become Minister for External Affairs on 22 December 1961.
- 5 See, for example, Cablegram 130, Shann to Canberra, 8 February 1963, NAA: A1838, 3034/7/1/1 part 1; and Cablegram 59 (98), Barwick to Critchley (Shann), 25 January 1963, NAA: A1838, 696/17/1 part 4.
 - 6 Cabinet Decision No. 675, 5 March 1963, NAA: A4940, C3725.
 - 7 The first attack took place on 12 April against a police station at Tebedu, southeast of Kuching.
 - 8 The Australian Embassy was untouched.
 - 9 Cabinet Decision No. 1040, 24 September 1963, NAA: A1838, 682/21/1 part 15.
 - 10 Cablegram 1477, Barwick to Shann, 30 December 1963, NAA: A1838, 3006/4/7 part 18.
 - 11 Cablegram UN1342, New York to Canberra, (containing message from Barwick to Thai Foreign Minister, Thanat Khoman), 9 October 1963, NAA: A6364, NY1963/08; and Department of External Affairs Secretarial Brief, "Current Developments Affecting Malaysia", 11 November 1963, NAA: A1838, 3034/7/1 part 6.
 - 12 Record of Four-Power Talks, Washington, 17 October 1963, NAA: A1838, 3034/7/1 part 2.
 - 13 Cablegram 183, Canberra to Kuala Lumpur, 17 February 1964, NAA: A1838, 3006/4/7 part 21; Cablegram 667, Canberra to Washington, 6 March 1964, NAA: A1838, 3006/4/9 part 5; Cablegram 665, Washington to Canberra, 6 March 1964; Cablegram 669, Washington to Canberra, 8 March 1964; and Cablegram 691, Canberra to Washington, 10 March 1964, NAA: A1838, 3006/4/7 part 23.
 - 14 Department of External Affairs Paper, "British/Malaysian Request for the Use of Australian Forces", c. 10 December 1963, NAA: A1838, 3034/10/1 part 18; Cablegram 5286, Barwick to Sir Eric Harrison (High Commissioner in London), 16 December 1963, NAA: A1838, 270/1/1 part 2; and Cabinet Decision No. 3(FAD), 19 December 1963, NAA: A4940, C1473.
 - 15 Approximately 57 million AUD/168 million MYR (2004).
 - 16 Submission No. 30, Hasluck and Barwick to Cabinet, 24 January 1964; and Cabinet Decision No. 39, 28 January 1964, NAA: A4940, C1473.
 - 17 Cabinet Decision No. 147(FAD), 14 April 1964; and Cabinet Decision No. 138(FAD), 9 April 1964, NAA: A4940, C1473.
 - 18 Budget Speech, Harold Holt, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives*, vol. 43, 11 August 1964, p. 59.
 - 19 Savingram AP108, Canberra to All Posts, 23 September 1964, NAA: A1838, 3034/7/1 part 8.
 - 20 The main entry points were at Benut, Pontian Besar and Kukup.
 - 21 The United Kingdom claimed that it had right of passage under international law and that the Victorious would pass through the strait on 12 September. Indonesia claimed the strait was territorial waters and that it was within its rights to prevent the passage militarily. The issue was resolved at the eleventh hour. Indonesia provided a compromise solution by declaring the strait closed for a month-long military exercise---which the United Kingdom could accept without seeming to back down---and offering an alternate route through the Lombok Strait, through which the Victorious and escorts passed on 14 September.
 - 22 Cablegram 885, Shann to Canberra, 7 September 1964, NAA: A1838, 3027/9/1 part 3.
 - 23 Cablegram 827, Canberra to Kuala Lumpur, 3 September 1964, NAA: A1838, TS686/4/1 part 1.

- 24 Cablegram 827, Canberra to Kuala Lumpur, 3 September 1964, NAA: A1838, TS686/4/1 part 1; and Savingram 78, New York to Canberra, 10 September 1964, NAA: A1838, 3027/9/1 part 4.
- 25 Cablegram UN919, New York to Canberra, 17 September, NAA: A1838, 3006/4/7 part 29. The resolution also recommended that the parties resume talks on the basis of the June Tokyo communique and asked that, when established, the reconciliation commission report to the Security Council.
- 26 Savingram 76, Canberra to Jakarta, 21 September 1964, NAA: A11537, 13.
- 27 The landing occurred just south of Terendak, the Malayan base for the Australian battalion with the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve. The successful deployment against two parties of infiltrators was carried out by elements of the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, which had been in Malaya since August 1963. See D.M. Horner (ed.), *Duty first: The Royal Australian Regiment in Peace and War*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990, p. 157; and P. Dennis and J. Grey, *Emergency and Confrontation: The Politics and Diplomacy of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948--1965*, Allen & Unwin in association with the Australian War Memorial, Sydney, 1992, pp. 226--7.
- 28 Cablegram 1131, Jakarta to Canberra, 3 November 1964, NAA: A1838, 3006/4/9 part 18.
- 29 Cablegram 5359, Tange to Hasluck, 9 November 1964, NAA: A1838, TS687/9/2 part 2.
- 30 For example, Joint Intelligence Committee (Australia) Weekly Report, 15 December 1964, NAA: A1838, 3006/4/9 part 19; and Cablegram 877, Singapore to Canberra, 17 December 1964, NAA: A1209, 1964/6040 part 3.
- 31 Sukarno's withdrawal of Indonesia from the United Nations caused widespread international concern and disapproval. The People's Republic of China, North Korea and North Vietnam provided the only support for the action.
- 32 Cabinet Decision No. 690(FAD), 27 January 1965, NAA: A4940, C1473. Malaysia's formal request from Tun Abdul Razak bin Hussein Tun Haji, Minister of Defence and Deputy Prime Minister, was presented to the Australian High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur on 26 January. It followed an informal discussion between Razak and Paltridge on 21 January, while the latter was in Kuala Lumpur as part of a personal assessment of the deteriorating strategic situation in Southeast Asia in general. See Cablegram 221, Kuala Lumpur to Canberra, 27 January 1965, NAA: A1945, 245/3/26; and Cablegram 184, Paltridge to John McEwen, Acting Prime Minister, 21 January 1965, NAA: A4940, C1473.
- 33 Australian combat forces served predominantly in Sarawak from mid-February 1965 until the end of confrontation on 11 August 1966, on rotation with British, Malaysian and New Zealand forces. For a full account of Australia's military commitment to confrontation see P. Dennis and J. Grey, *Emergency and Confrontation: Australian Military Operations in Malaya and Borneo 1950--1966*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996; D. Horner, *Duty First: The Royal Australian Regiment in Peace and War*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1990, and *SAS Phantoms of the Jungle: A History of the Australian Special Air Service*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989; and J. Grey, *Up Top: The Royal Australian Navy and Southeast Asian Conflicts 1955--1972*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1998.
- 34 For example, Savingram AP2, Canberra to All Posts, 19 January 1965, NAA: A1838, 904/1/2 part 1; Notes on Conversation, Hasluck and Shann, Jakarta, 28 April 1965, NAA: A1838, 3034/11/87 part 8; Savingram 14, Jakarta to Canberra, 2 March 1965, NAA: A6364, JA1965/01S; and Savingram 17, Jakarta to Canberra, 23 March 1965, NAA: A1838, 3034/2/1 part 45.
- 35 See Mackie, *Konfrontasi*, pp. 297--303; Lee, *The Singapore Story*, pp. 603--5, 616--27; and Lau, *A Moment of Anguish*, ch. 7.

- 36 Problems stemmed in part from terms Singapore accepted as the price of merger with the federation. As a trade-off for retaining control over labour and education, Singapore held only 15 seats of the 104 seats in the federal House of Representatives. This was less than an entitlement on a basis of population ratios (approx. 1:5) and proportionately less than the number of seats held by the other states in the federation. Additionally, under the financial arrangements for the federation, Singapore contributed 40 per cent of its revenue to the Central Government.
- 37 Cablegram 1296, Critchley to Canberra, 4 June 1965, NAA: A1838, 3027/2/1 part 22. Critchley reported: "Lee, in effect, charged the government with working towards the extinction of democratic rights in the interests of Malay domination and threatened at least indirectly to encourage other states to seek with him 'alternative arrangements'".
- 38 Letter, Menzies to Tunku Abdul Rahman, 9 August 1965, NAA: A1838, 3027/10/1 part 3.
- 39 On the night of 30 September--1 October, a group of dissident Army and Air Force officers attempted a coup against the Indonesian Army leadership. Six senior generals were killed. General Nasution was injured but escaped the attack on his life. The Army under Major General Suharto, the commander of Indonesia's Strategic Reserve Command, quickly put down the movement and assumed control in Jakarta. The fate of President Sukarno was unknown until 3 October when he made a short recorded message on Indonesian radio again assuming control of the country. Although there is no firm evidence that the PKI inspired the coup attempt, they immediately supported it and were soon perceived to be responsible. A violent anti-PKI reaction ensued that ran out of control throughout Indonesia over the following months and led to the massacre of hundreds of thousands of alleged communists and ethnic Chinese. See Mackie, *Konfrontasi*, pp. 308--22; and Harold Crouch, *The Army and Politics in Indonesia*, rev. edn, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1988, pp. 97--134.
- 40 There were no Australian combat forces in Sarawak during this period, but on 19 October, Cabinet approved the deployment of a further SAS Squadron and RAAF Sabre fighters to Malaysia in early 1966.
- 41 Cablegram 1533, Hasluck to Critchley, 28 October 1965, NAA: A1209, 1964/6647 part 5.
- 42 For example, Record of Conversation, Tunku Abdul Rahman and Hasluck, 19 December 1965, NAA: A1838, 3027/10/1 part 3.
- 43 Cablegram 837, Bangkok to Canberra, 1 June 1966, NAA: A1838, 3006/4/7. The reaffirmation of the people of Sabah and Sarawak was to be specifically included as an issue in the 1967 elections of both states.
- 44 See cablegram 526, Hasluck (Manila) to Plimsoll, 9 June 1966; and Cablegram 1539, Kuala Lumpur to Canberra, 20 June 1966, NAA: A1209, 1966/7358.
- 45 In early July, the Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly had endorsed Suharto's executive responsibility and called on him to form a Cabinet jointly with Sukarno. The joint appointment had been a means of appeasing Sukarno. The intention was that the Cabinet would be Suharto's appointees.
- 46 Diplomatic relations and the exchange of missions were to be deferred, however, until after the elections in Sarawak and Sabah.



Photo – David Karonidis

Andrew Robb

As Parliamentary Secretary to Amanda Vanstone, Andrew Robb MP has day-to-day responsibility for multicultural affairs. In this capacity he represents the Prime Minister on the Muslim Community Reference Group which was set up in Australia following the London bombings of July 2005. At The Sydney Institute, on Thursday April 27th 2006, Andrew Robb gave one of his first key speeches in his new role. Andrew Robb believes that Australia has achieved success with integration in the past – but that there are challenges for integration in the future.

AUSTRALIAN MIGRANT

INTEGRATION - PAST SUCCESSES, FUTURE CHALLENGES

Andrew Robb

A couple of weeks ago, I had the pleasure of speaking to two hundred students at Melbourne High School on the topic of national identity and cultural diversity. Melbourne High School is an excellent Government school, with entry based on academic achievement, drawing students from across Melbourne. Over the years the school has nurtured many future leaders of our community.

Glancing up at the School's Honour Board in their assembly hall I was struck by the powerful story it told. Our rich history of migration jumped out from the names listed through the last 60 years — Jews fleeing the Holocaust in the 1940s, Italians and Greeks in the 1950s and 1960s, Indo Chinese in the 1970s and 1980s, Eastern Europeans and those from the Sub Continent in the 1990s and through this century, and finally names from the Horn of Africa appearing over the last couple of years.

The appearance on the Honour Board of the children of so many migrants, from so many backgrounds, is not only testament to the success and aspiration of those arriving, but also reminds us of the extent of migration in the context of Australia's history. Around 60 per cent of the students each year at Melbourne High School have had at least one parent born overseas. It reflects the fact that today 43 per cent of our population are first or second generation Australians. That Honour Board also graphically reminded me how Australia, and the Australian character, has been developed by waves of migration; how this diversity has given greater breadth and depth to our unique national identity.

There are many ways to describe the Australian character. For me, a few key phrases sum it up — these include our irreverence, our sense of fairness, our sense of freedom and our willingness to cheer for the underdog. Anyone who saw the recent Commonwealth Games knows what I mean. Sure, an Aussie crowd will roar for a winner, but they will also roar for anyone with the sheer guts to try. Just ask Errol

Duncan, the athlete from St Helena who came in 8 seconds short of an hour after the Tanzanian winner of the men's marathon.

The courage and success of migrants over the years in starting with nothing, yet integrating and making good, has reinforced that admiration we have for the underdog. Australians have always been a compassionate people — we are one of a handful of countries in the world who have taken in refugees every year for the last 55 years. But successive waves of migration have made us more understanding and accepting. Immigrants from Europe have added a passion to Australia's traditional laconic national character and dry wit. It is an intriguing added dimension.

While Australians have always been known as hard working people, each new wave of migration has reinvigorated Australia's work ethic. Think of the achievements of the European migrants who came following the Second World War, and the Indo Chinese who came after them. Through hard work to achieve personal success, they have achieved success for Australia. Along the way they have helped to reinforce national traits such as the strong work ethic. Their industry and diverse language skills have provided an invaluable resource that has given us a competitive advantage in doing business with the world. For example, the Halal food trade alone is worth \$4 billion annually — as big as our wool export industry, and growing massively. These achievements have been possible because we have been hugely successful at integrating people from diverse backgrounds because, in the main, we have embraced and drawn from the wealth of that diversity, and we are all the richer for it.

Australians long ago came to realise that persistent plurality is here to stay. And so we became very good at bringing people to our shores and helping them to integrate into our society. It's a great strength. It is always important to leverage our strengths. As a nation, we should use this strength to draw confidence and boldness from it.

With each new wave of migration, there have been some challenges. That's just human nature. We are all naturally wary of difference until we understand it. But I suspect that overall, Australians hold an essential admiration for the courage that migrants have shown to travel to a far flung country to make this place their home.

My teenage years were spent in Reservoir, in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, where in the 1960s there was a very significant Italian population who'd arrived as one of the big migration waves after the end of WW II. These new migrants went through many of the same things that new migrants are facing now. I had many mates who were young Italians, born in Australia with migrant parents, and I watched them, 40 years ago, go through the same sorts of issues that the children of migrants are faced with now.

So as I travel around Australia with my responsibilities talking to young Muslims, I'm seeing the same thing that I saw in Reservoir 40 years ago where young men and women suffered the frustration, the isolation, the confusion and sometimes the anger as they tried to reconcile the culture of their parents inside the home, with the culture they were confronting outside the home – within the broader Australian community. And I saw it every day – I saw it at school on the football field, in shops, at parties and wherever. But the thing is it worked out; in the end it worked out. There were lots of frustrations, lots of anger, there were things that should never have been said – there was discrimination, all of these things because Australians felt edgy about the arrival of these people from Italy and Greece. But as a community we worked through it. As we worked together, studied together, played sport together, socialised together, you'd start to see mutual respect grow; you'd see recognition of the strengths and new perspectives they brought. And the process of recognition was mutual. The respect was mutual. And we succeeded.

Since those times, Reservoir and Australia have gone through many changes. Different communities have made Australia home. In Reservoir, the Italians were followed by the Indo Chinese, the Eastern Europeans and now there is a significant Muslim population, who are facing many of the same issues as my Italian mates.

So, we must do what we've done before. Overwhelmingly, people of Muslim faith have come to Australia from over 128 countries for the sake of their children, for education and opportunity, for a better life. But that quest for a better life has been seriously confounded by the evil acts of global terrorists. These evil acts have generated widespread anxiety across the broader Australian community including, it must be said, the Muslim communities. In its wake, Muslim communities in Australia have been stigmatised unfairly. That's the way of the world, it is unfortunate, but we've got to deal with it and manage it.

We've stared down fear and suspicion many, many times in the past, we've filled knowledge gaps, we have persevered, we've helped the waves of migrants effectively integrate, but above all we've practised mutual respect – and mutual respect is at the heart of a society that is at ease with itself. Once you reach that state you can then go forward in a very constructive way. To this end, much can be gained by seeking to put ourselves in one another's shoes. This means, for Australian Muslims, putting themselves in the shoes of the rest of the Australian community, most of whom are filled with anxiety and uncertainty about how to deal with the reality of random terrorist acts, ostensibly in the name of Islam.

For the rest of the Australian community, this means putting themselves in the shoes of the 300,000 Australian Muslims, 120,000

of whom were born in Australia, most of whom are filled with a sense of alienation and helplessness about how to deal with the reality of random terrorist acts, by people purporting to be acting in the name of Islam. In the end, helping Australian Muslims become integrated and connected to the mainstream community is the best way to prevent extremists getting a toehold in Australia. To that end, one of the most important factors is Muslims taking the lead, Muslims assuming primary responsibility.

I have spent a significant amount of time meeting the Muslim communities. And what I'm hearing from the youth is that they often feel disconnected. Disconnected from their own community, and disconnected from the mainstream Australian community. The situation must be addressed urgently. The challenge for the Australian Muslim community is to find a way to keep their youth connected. It means finding the synergies between Islam and Australian values and lifestyle, and making their religion relevant for young Australian Muslims.

Now I understand that's a challenge for many of the older Muslim generation, but it's one that's got to be met. It means recognising, for example, that many young Australian Muslims only speak English. So, religious leaders will have to deliver much or all of their sermons in English. This means training home grown Imams in Australia. Local training of Imams would be greatly assisted by the creation of a world class Institute of Islamic Studies, established within a prominent Australian university. Such an institute would attract eminent, moderate Islamic scholars who would provide an authoritative community reference point; scholars capable of expanding the circle of reference for the impressionable — those young Muslims questioning their identity, challenged by the question of "who am I?"

Australia can provide a bridge between the West and many of those countries in the region with large Muslim populations. It will also help to put Islam into an Australian context. Many Muslim young people have grown up in Australia and some of the teachings of Islam and the customs of some Islamic countries have no relevance for them. Or that's what I'm hearing from them. I am currently exploring possibilities for establishing an Institute of Islamic Studies in Australia .

For our part, the challenge, for government and the broader community, is to help support the Muslim community to become fully integrated through education, employment and involvement with mainstream community activities. These are the priorities that will be pursued. This will minimise the possibility of an environment being created in which extremists can cultivate recruits.

Education, whether vocational or academic, is central to allowing these young people to taste the freedom and opportunities of Australia. Employment is central to fostering understanding and

fulfilment. When you work side by side with people on a daily basis, you grow in understanding, appreciation and tolerance of one another. And you build a sense of worth and identity. Aligned with these two important imperatives is mainstream community involvement — whether it be through sports, arts, civic organisations, such as the scouts or the guides, or other community based organisations. Such involvement leads to the type of integration which gives people a clear sense of identity, and builds understanding and self respect.

I will be working with some key Australian organisations, such as Surf Life Saving Australia, Royal Life Saving Australia, the Australian Sports Commission, the National Rugby League and Australian Football League, the Australia Council for the Arts as well as the Guides and Scouts to help create avenues for young Muslim Australians to fully participate in, and contribute to, the broader community. To truly integrate.

In his Australia Day speech, the Prime Minister said that “...there is no institution or code that lays down a test of Australianness. Such is the nature of our free society”. Of course he is right. People are “Australian” in very different ways. Being very effective at integration, as distinct from assimilation, is an approach which has helped us successfully combine people from over 200 countries into one family, with one overriding culture — yet a family made up of a very diverse and rich set of communities drawn together by common values. Values such as our respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual, our commitment to the rule of law, our commitment to the equality of men and women and the spirit of the fair go, of tolerance and compassion to those in need. They’re the sort of key values that I think draw people to the Australia to which we are all in one way or another committed. Focusing on these common values in successfully integrating people from diverse backgrounds will become increasingly important as Australia faces not only the threat of global terrorism, but also the other defining challenge of our time, the rapid ageing of our population.

Recently the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations released a report which found that in five years time in Australia, there will be 195,000 more jobs than people to fill them, and these shortages in workers will be spread unevenly across industries and occupations. This threatening situation is explained by a very strong economy and an OECD report which estimates that between now and 2025, the number of people in the retirement age bracket across the OECD countries will increase by 70 million people whereas, over the same period, only five million people across the whole OECD group of countries will move into the working age bracket.

To deal with this challenge, to protect and grow our quality of life, will require retaining existing labour, and harnessing and attracting new sources of labour. This will require policy initiatives across many government portfolios, including skilled migration. And all OECD countries will be in the same boat, all of them competing vigorously to retain their skilled workforce. The experience we have had in effectively integrating people from the four corners of the globe will be put further to the test. We will need to become even better at welcoming and integrating people from diverse backgrounds into our Australian family.

For future new citizens to quickly and effectively integrate into our Australian family, to fully realise their potential and ambitions, it is essential that they learn the national language of English, and learn something about our history and heritage, and make a commitment to the common values I talked about earlier. Over the past fifteen years, various studies have shown that English language comes up as the strongest determinant of people's success in getting good jobs, lasting jobs. Nine out of ten applicants for skilled migration who spoke English fluently were likely to be employed within six months of arrival. People have raised with me, that because a functional level of English is fundamental to quick and effective integration into our community; it should be a formal requirement for Citizenship. They are concerned that, for those currently seeking Australian Citizenship, the assessment of basic English competency is highly subjective, resulting in some people taking the pledge with little understanding or capacity to communicate in basic English — leaving both Australian society and the individual poorly served.

For these reasons people have suggested that those seeking to take out citizenship should pass a compulsory test, a test which ensures that applicants have a functional level of English language skill, and a general knowledge of Australian values and customs. They have a strong belief that a citizenship test will help people understand the society they have chosen to be part of; help them be more aware of their roles, their responsibilities, their rights; that it will demonstrate their commitment to Australia. It is asserted that a citizenship test which requires a functional grasp of English, and a general understanding of Australian values, customs, systems, laws and history, will help people integrate more successfully into our community. It is in their interest, and in the community's interest.

From my point of view, successful integration is overwhelming in the interests of migrants and the broader community. For this reason, I am prepared to have a serious look, over the next couple of months, at the merits of introducing a compulsory citizenship test. As a nation, we have a proud history of moulding a dynamic, stable and strong community from a diversity of cultures and long standing Australian

values. The twin challenges of global terrorism and the ageing population require us to surpass this effort and become even more skilled at integrating an increasingly diverse population.



Photo – David Karonidis

Linda Jaivin

Linda Jaivin is a novelist, playwright, essayist and translator. Her first novel, the comic-erotic *Eat Me* (Text, 1995), was an international bestseller and translated into a dozen languages. American Glamour wrote that “*Eat Me* is the sexiest thing to come out of Australia since Mel Gibson. And it’s funnier too.” Her other novels, *Rock n Roll Babes from Outer Space*, *Miles Walker*, *You’re Dead* and *Dead Sexy* were also published internationally. Linda Jaivin’s latest novel, *The Infernal Optimist*, is the story of Australia’s mandatory detention policy as seen from the perspective of Zeki Togan, a small time criminal who finds himself locked up with asylum seekers and observes detention from a very unique perspective. Linda Jaivin addressed The Sydney Institute on Wednesday 3 May 2006.

THE WRITER AS

CROSS-DRESSER

Linda Jaivin

All novelists are cross dressers. We are constantly trying on our characters' clothes, and worse. We eat their food. We sit on their sofas, listen to their CD collections with their ears and read what they read with their eyes. We lie next to them in bed, pushing up with our toes against the hospital corners in their sheets and noticing the smells and sounds of their nights. When they make love, we're there, in their skin, getting excited – or not. It depends on them. And when they get locked up, we stare at the bars and count the days.

Literary cross-dressing enables an author to switch gender, to crash through barriers of class, time and culture. Truman Capote wore the most fabulous frocks in unforgettable style as Hollie GoLightly in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, and then, carrying this gift into non-fiction with *In Cold Blood*, led us into the cell, the heart and the mind of a murderer. To create his masterpiece, DH Lawrence had to be on the most intimate terms with both Lady Chatterley and her lover, while sitting helplessly all the while in her husband's wheelchair. Dickens, whose novels run to hundreds of characters, must have had a mental wardrobe the size of a house, with *Oliver Twist's* paupers rags at one end, the gentlemanly accoutrements of *Pickwick & Co* at the other, and poor Miss Havisham's decaying wedding gown hanging somewhere in the middle.

In an act of sublime generosity - or extreme solipsism, depending on your perspective -- we even fall in love with our own creations. For many years, I had a crush on the sexy, languid character Jake who broke hearts in my first novel *Eat Me* and got his own heart broken in *Rock n Roll Babes from Outer Space*. So I was not surprised when female readers swore to me that they'd dated Jake, male readers tried to convince me they were Jake, and one poor fan in Los Angeles went into therapy because one part of him wanted to be Jake even though the other knew Jake was a bad, bad boy.

I understood his dilemma. There's something irresistible about bad boys. In my latest novel *The Infernal Optimist*, I've gone a step further and slipped into the skin of a criminal. Zeki Togan, my book's

narrator and protagonist is a wise-cracking, hiphop-loving, semi-literate, Nike-wearing homey from the western suburbs who happens to have been born in Turkey and raised a Muslim. This is a fair stretch for an American-born, eastern suburbs-dwelling Jewish boho booknerd who'd rather be listening to Jeff Buckley and who avoids clothing which advertises its own brand. On the other hand, Zeki and I do share a smart-arse sense of humour, the urge to eat when stressed, a taste for really bad Hollywood movies, a certain frankness when it comes to describing the sexual urge – and a deep affinity with the country to which we've both come as immigrants. Neither of us follow the rituals of our religion as much as our parents would like us to, but we both have drawn from our religious backgrounds a commitment to social justice and compassion (expressed in Islam as charity, one of the Five Pillars of the religion.)

A gay friend of mine, who was raised in a war-torn country and within a religion which severely disapproves of homosexuality – and that could be any one of the Big Three – has what I consider a surprisingly healthy attitude towards life: one of principled amusement. I think something more profound than his superb dog-training skills is expressed when he turns to his ever-frisky puppy and issues the simple command, "Relax, darling." And it does.

My Zeki shares something of that philosophy. As he puts it, when things aren't going well, and you can't do anything about it, the first "Rule a Survival" is to "kick back". And things don't go too well for Zeki. He is picked up by Immigration under Section 501 of the Migration Act. He'd never heard of it until they nabbed him; most people haven't. It's a legal provision for the deportation of non-citizens of bad character, which may be demonstrated, for example, by them having committed a crime resulting in more than one year's imprisonment.

Robert Jovovic, the Parisian-born Serbian man who arrived here when he was two, was deported to Serbia, a country he'd never lived in, under Section 501. At the time Jovovic was deported, he'd gone straight, was working and in a relationship. He camped, hungry and freezing, on the steps of the Australian embassy in Belgrade, attracting media attention and, in the end, was allowed to return. He is currently living in a situation of limbo, his future status in this country still undecided at the time of writing.

Zeki, like Jovovic, is Australian in all but paperwork. Incidentally, some reviewers have been a bit confused on this point – I did not base Zeki on Jovovic or the other "501" recently in the news, a Turkish man called Ali Tastan. That's okay – journalists, who research a story in the morning, write it in the afternoon and see it printed that evening for the following day's paper, sometimes forget that books tend to have a slightly longer lead time. *The Infernal Optimist* was already being

marked up for the typesetters when the news broke about Jovovic and Tastan.

When I began writing *The Infernal Optimist*, there was no public awareness of “501”s at all. My knowledge of their situation came from visiting Villawood Detention Centre. While visiting asylum seekers detained there, I also got to know a flesh-and-blood 501 who, despite his criminal record, was as ebullient, observant, funny, malapropistic and Ali G-like as my narrator.

As he explained to me, “Sure, I did the crime but I served me time.” Like Jovovic, he’d gotten out of prison and gone straight when Immigration nabbed him, threatened him with deportation and threw him in detention. This fellow inspired the personality of my narrator Zeki. He gave me some of the more extraordinary details of prison life as well as the prison slang which appears in the book; Zeki’s story and his experiences in detention, however, are decidedly not those of my informant.

The story of the indefinite, mandatory detention of asylum seekers in this country is a big one. Geographically, it stretches from Canberra, through the Australian desert, all the way to Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Somalia, Sierra Leone and the Sudan, just to name a few of the places from which refugees have fled here for protection. In time, it dates back to the Labor government, though the perfection of detention as an instrument of psychological torture for hapless men, women and children alike must be credited to John Howard and Philip Ruddock, who also politicised the workings of the Immigration Department to an unprecedented degree. (There have been significant improvements both in the regime of detention and the culture of the department in recent times, though massive problems remain; proposed laws mandating the “Pacific Solution” for all boat arrivals and denying them any right of appeal on their initial decisions threaten to return us to Square Sub-Zero.)

The story of the detention of asylum seekers is one which has polarised this country like few other issues, not in small part thanks to the Liberal government’s wilful confusion of refugee policy with the issue of border protection with regard to terrorists.

Within the broader story of detention there are many, many individual stories, each one of them riveting. There are the stories of the men, women and children who have made harrowing, brave and often narrow escapes from tyrannous regimes to seek asylum on our shores only to be locked up like criminals, sometimes for years. There are the stories of the stubbornly persistent and self-sacrificing advocates, people like Father Frank Brennan and Anne and Gerard Henderson as well as many nameless teachers, nuns, church people and others who have spent years trying to bring about reform while helping individuals to freedom and a new life. There are the stories of the guards

and the people in the Department of Immigration, some of whom have acted honourably, some disgracefully, some fairly, and some ineptly when dealing with the issues raised by asylum and detention.

So, given all these extraordinary tales, why did I choose a criminal, someone with an apparently dubious claim on our sympathies, and with a minimal personal connection to the whole refugee story, to narrate this tale? I certainly considered other options. The first drafts of the book experimented with multiple perspectives, as well as focussing on either a single refugee story or the perspective of a visitor. The problem was that the sheer pathos of the refugee story defeated my ability to tell it without falling into the trap of dull earnestness, without leaking outrage, or turning the whole exercise into agitprop. When I experimented with the perspective of the visitor, the asylum seekers and their life inside detention appeared diminished, as though seen through an inverted telescope. And when I tried third-person narrative, it lost focus.

This is when I noticed that this 501 mate of mine had a unique and valuable perspective. He was Australian and yet foreign; he had lived on both sides of the razor wire; he was both part of the story and outside it. Best of all, he was funny. And he was funny in a way which never detracted from, belittled or denied the tragedies unfolding all around him.

Once the thought occurred to me that a personality like his, in a situation like his, would make a great narrator, I knew what I had to do. I also realised that he had so amused and interested me from the start that I was already able to mimic his voice and make it my own. I'd already tried on most of the clothes in the detention closet, but it was the outfit of this unlikely ally, from his baseball cap to his gold chains and on down to his shiny trackie-daks, unzipped to the knee to show off his Nikes which fit the best. It wasn't my usual fashion, but sometimes an author has to slip into something less comfortable to get going.

I began by taking notes on Zeki's speech. The genuine 501 I'd befriended would swear like a truck driver, and then unfailingly, turn to me and with a cheesy little grin, add "Pardon me French". I liked it. It was in. He said "edumacation" instead of "education", "stressation" instead of "stress" and was a natural and frequent malapropist. I liked it. In. When he spoke, he gestured with his hands like some hiphop homey on a music video. I liked it. It was in. His most characteristic, unusual and extremely funny gesture was that of slapping his hands on his stomach. I liked it. I couldn't think of a way to describe it that conveyed its essential hilarity. It was out. He was worried about his weight. In. He felt guilty in the face of his very nice and kind and religious mother's expectations. In. His mother and father were divorced. Unnecessarily complicating. Out. I heard how he used the

word “mate”. In. I observed his clothes and hairstyle. In. I considered his actual crime: armed robbery. Too off-putting. Out. I remembered some stories – possibly urban myths – about stoned burglars trying on clothes, eating food from the fridge and falling asleep in the beds of the people they were supposed to be stealing from. In.

I kept going like this until I had a fully formed character to step into. There’s a magical moment, which every author knows, when the character which you are creating, a bit like Frankenstein’s monster, with a bit of flesh from here, a splash of blood from there, suddenly rises up from the slab and lives. He talks, he walks, and that’s when the real fun begins.

It has occurred to me that the particular style of fictional cross-dressing in which I indulge in *The Infernal Optimist* could possibly draw fire from a number of different directions, left, right and Fundie alike. After all, I’m an equal opportunity satirist.

Let’s start with the Lunar Left. Although I cannot recall ever having met anyone who fitted the stereotype in my own, clearly sheltered life among the mild progressives of the moderate left, I’m assured by their vigilant enemies in the media that they exist and are all around us. The Lunar Left apparently believes that it is unethical to “appropriate” any one else’s stories. I assume that people who believe such a thing limit their reading to autobiographical tales narrated by people who do not have friends or relatives. Whoever they are, wherever they are hiding, they surely will not like this aspect of *The Infernal Optimist*, though they will be torn by the desire to read something which is so implicitly critical of Howard government policy.

Then there’s the Neo-Con men and women. They in fact *are* all around us. They dominate the media, a position they appear to use mainly to accuse the vaporous Lunar Left of doing the same thing. Neo-Con men and women like their stories very clearly told. Mao bad. Economic rationalism good. Reynolds wrong. Windschuttle right. They would rather burn down a row of straw houses erected by some passed and passé ideological opponent than attend to bricks falling out of the building they are living in right now. Damn it Janet! This group will not like the aspect of *The Infernal Optimist* which is implicitly critical of Howard government policy, but they will be torn by the desire to read something which indulges in a certain amount of piss-take on the do-gooder set which has taken up the refugee cause.

Fundies – well that’s pretty self-explanatory. Despite the spelling, there’s no “fun” to be found in fundamentalism. I respect the right of people of all faiths – Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Menzies-ist, Gough-ist – to worship as they please. But as with all things, religion, in my view, is best taken in moderation. I think the only extremist religious position I could stomach would be that of the

Extreme Taoist: that's the do-nothing position. As for the rest, I prefer the version of creation where on the Eighth Day, God cracked a joke. Then he expelled everyone from Paradise who didn't like to laugh. In my book, both literally and figuratively, there are no good or bad Muslims, Jews or Christians – only people doing good, bad and mixed up things.

I hope this is understood. I'm also used to a certain amount of controversy. When I read the first chapter of my erotic novel *Eat Me* as part of the evening's entertainment for a fundraising dinner at the posh Vancouver Club in aid of the Vancouver Writers Festival some years ago, there was a terrible clatter of gold jewellery and a great swish of fur as festival patrons at several tables exited the room in protest at my description of novel ways of packing supermarket produce. Fortunately, I had been invited to read during dessert course, which I believe very rich women don't eat anyway.

Elsewhere, in Marion County Florida, there is an ongoing effort to ban *Eat Me* from the public library system. At present it sits in what some have dubbed the "book jail", from which it may be paroled only into the care of responsible adult readers.

By the way, on the night I read to the Vancouver Club, everyone was invited to mingle at the bar after dinner. There, a man representing Luis Vuitton, one of the book festival's major sponsors, approached me to have a few words. The words were: "That was fabulous. Art ought to be controversial. It ought to be able to stir people up." He said that if I happened to pass the Luis Vuitton shop while I was in Vancouver to stop in and say hello. One day, I did pass the shop and went in. Looking at the price tags, I realised why I had never previously been in one of these shops. I admired a funky little yellow purse which cost nearly as much as my entire wardrobe. On the final night of the festival, after I'd read my work again to a more appreciative festival crowd, the Luis Vuitton man approached me and handed me a gift-wrapped package: in it was that little yellow purse. The moral of the story is: it sometimes pays to be naughty.

There's a fair amount of naughtiness in *The Infernal Optimist*. Some of it is at the expense of the unnamed Minister for Immigration. The wife of the Minister's proctologist and best friend has begun to visit detention. Her name is April. An African refugee called Thomas, who has made a direct appeal to the Minister for a visa, hopes that April will be able to convince Josh to help. The situation is made awkward by the fact that April and Josh have been having a few marital difficulties. On the phone, Zeki asks April when she'll be visiting detention next. "Soon," she answers.

"I want to have some better news for Thomas first. I don't know when that'll be. I've got to go softly, softly. Josh says the whole issue of refugees gives him a headache."

“He’s a doctor,” I said. “If he gets a headache, he can give himself a pill.” I searched in me stash for jelly snakes, what could be eaten on the phone without making any noise, unlike chips and biscuits what get in people’s ears.

“Ha. He also went on about how his relationship with the Minister was a professional one, and why it would be inappropriate for him to try to intervene. I pointed out they were also friends who played golf and had philately in common too. They even go to Philately Society meetings together.”

I nearly choked on me jelly snake. I was horrified. “You mean what does boys?”

“Sorry?”

Maybe she didn’t know. “Them meetings.”

“Yeah, philatelists, how boring would that be? A bunch of grown men getting together to talk about their stamp collections. Honestly.”

If that’s what he told her, I spose it wasn’t my place to say nuffin, but I reckoned she was definitely better off without a husband like that. I met too many a that sort in prison. Maybe if people knew that about the Minister they really would lock him up.

Comedy is a pre-emptive strike, one which aims to disarm. Who is this disarmament policy aimed at? I don’t have any illusions that I might be able, for example, to get Philip Ruddock to give up philately.

Nor do I think I’ll be able to change the mind of the man who said to me that I’d be pretty bloody lucky if none of the refugees who were coming to my book launch blew themselves up. But this latter walking, talking proof of the success of the Howdock government’s wilful conflation of terrorism and the refugee issue, who gets all his news and opinions in one easy package from the *Daily Telegraph*, was never going to buy a novel which wasn’t written by Dan Brown anyway.

On the other hand, I think that there are a lot of intelligent Australian readers who may not know an awful lot about refugee policy, and who may even be generally accepting of the government’s line, but who are curious and open-minded enough to have a crack at a book on the subject which promises not to be too terribly earnest while having a very serious story to tell.



Photo - David Karonidis

Paul O'Sullivan

Paul O'Sullivan, a former adviser to Prime Minister John Howard, took over from Dennis Richardson as Director-General of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation in 2005. A career diplomat, Paul O'Sullivan joined the foreign service in 1971. He served as deputy head of mission in Washington DC between 1996 and 1998 and was also ambassador to Germany. Paul O'Sullivan's appointment as ASIO chief came in the wake of the London suicide/homicide bombings. As ASIO Director General, Mr O'Sullivan is in a unique position to assess national security issues five years after 9/11. Paul O'Sullivan addressed The Sydney Institute on Thursday 4 May 2006.

9/11 FIVE YEARS LATER:

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Paul O'SULLIVAN

On the morning of 11 September 2001 a situation unfolded in the United States that would be the catalyst for changes in the way governments, security agencies and communities around the world viewed the threat of terrorism. As we approach the fifth anniversary of these attacks I would like to reflect on a number of things.

- The way changes that have taken place in Australia over the last five years compare with those elsewhere in the world;
- The positive impact of these changes on ASIO's effectiveness and its ability to contribute to keeping Australians safe;
- What the Australian community might expect of its security intelligence organisation over the next 5 – 10 years; and
- ASIO's place in the broad fabric of Australian society.

The historical context

Before addressing those points, let me give you some historical context. ASIO has been around since 1949. Over that time Australia's security environment has been transformed, as has the broader social and political context within which ASIO has operated. ASIO does not exist or operate in a vacuum. It is very much a product of the values and attitudes of the Australian community at a point in time. And it operates within the legislative framework put in place by the Parliament of the day.

The ASIO of today reflects the broad social values and attitudes of Australian society. That evolving social framework has shaped its organisational culture, policies and approach to the complex and sensitive work of security intelligence. One thing that has remained constant has been the requirement for the Organisation to operate outside the public gaze.

Security intelligence work, which involves working against those who operate secretly and deceptively with the intention of doing harm to others, by necessity must be done discreetly. Indeed, much of ASIO's work relies on the cooperation of people who can and will assist only on the basis of secrecy, respect for confidences and trust.

Trust and respect for confidences are not things which can be a temporary arrangement. They go to the very heart of ASIO's continuing effectiveness as a security intelligence organisation.

In such circumstances, speculation inevitably will generate conspiracy theories and unfounded concerns about the work of the Organisation. There is nothing new in this. Let me give you two examples. Firstly, in the 1970s and 1980s ASIO was investigated by two royal commissions that arose, in general terms, as a result of concerns about the way ASIO (and other agencies) operated in the context of the Cold War attitudes and values of the time. The Royal Commission on Intelligence and Security (RCIS) commissioned by Prime Minister Whitlam in 1974 followed the "Murphy Raid" in March 1973 – the first Hope Royal Commission; and The Royal Commission on Australia's Security and Intelligence Agencies (RCASIA) commissioned by Prime Minister Hawke in 1983 following the "Combe-Ivanov Affair" – the second Hope Royal Commission.

The first Hope Royal Commission recommended an increase in ASIO's functions and powers which were subsequently reflected in the *Australian Security Intelligence Organization Act 1979*, including (i) giving a sharper focus to politically motivated violence (terrorism), including foreign interference; and (ii) giving ASIO the power to open mail, enter premises, to use listening devices and to intercept telex and telegrams under warrant. Justice Hope's other recommendations included establishing a Security Appeals Tribunal; ASIO to publish an annual report; the Director-General to keep the Leader of the Opposition informed on security matters; and ASIO's headquarters to relocate to Canberra.

These changes were directed at making ASIO more effective in the security environment of the day and into the future. They also sought to strike a better balance than had existed previously between ASIO's accountability and the need for much of its work to be done discreetly.

In 1984 Justice Hope saw a role for "an independent person with the power to maintain a close scrutiny of ASIO's performance of its functions, and to look into complaints". This was to be the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security (IGIS). The first Inspector-General officially commenced operations on 1 February 1987 as an independent statutory officer. Since that time there have been five Inspectors-General, including the incumbent, Mr Ian Carnell.

The IGIS has presented 18 annual reports to Parliament. Where procedural issues or human errors have been identified by the IGIS or, as often happens, brought to his attention by ASIO, they have been addressed quickly and effectively. Importantly, as intended by Justice Hope, the IGIS has been able to provide assurance to the Parliament

and the public that ASIO (and other intelligence agencies) operates legally, with propriety and with due regard to civil liberties.

The second example goes to the issue of how ASIO determines what is relevant to security and undertakes investigations. In 1982 the Church of Scientology, as part of a world-wide program of litigation arising from a belief that it was under scrutiny by security agencies, brought a court action against the Director-General, the Attorney-General and the Commonwealth. It was seeking declarations that it was not a threat to security. It alleged also that the Director-General was acting beyond his powers under the ASIO Act in gathering information about the Church, communicating that information to other persons and characterising it as a security risk.

In its decision, the High Court of Australia considered the meaning of the term "relevance to security" used in the ASIO Act. The court found that it may be "relevant to security" to determine that a person is not a risk to security just as it would be relevant to security if they were a risk. That decision still shapes ASIO's approach to its work.

These two examples occurred against the background of a different security environment and community attitudes to those of today. Yet, it is worth noting that Justice Hope twice found that Australia was well-served by its intelligence community. Indeed, as a former Director-General of Security, Harvey Barnett, said, "Neither commission revealed any nameless horrors, bloody crimes, gross perversions of justice, or dark conspiracies fretting at the hem of Australian democracy." Similarly, the High Court decision validated ASIO's role in determining what is relevant to security. And, since 1988 ASIO's activities have been scrutinised by a Parliamentary Joint Committee.

In its current form, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security consists of experienced parliamentarians, including some former Ministers. So you can see that ASIO has a long heritage of being accountable within a rigorous oversight regime, of acting within its legislative guidelines and of actually being seen to operate with legality and propriety. It is against the background of this heritage and experience that ASIO has shaped its response to the challenges of the post 9/11 world.

Post 11 September 2001 changes

While the events in September 2001 certainly were the catalyst for significant changes, it is not the first time there has been a "structural adjustment" in the security apparatus in Australia. And, if previous experience is any guide, such adjustments, including expanding ASIO's powers to allow it to fulfil its functions better, have not

signalled any fundamental change to the balance of freedom and civil liberties in Australian society.

Let me step through some of the changes that have occurred in the five years following the 9/11 attacks. Prior to September 2001 we had established and practised arrangements under the National Anti-Terrorism Plan. The terrorist threat to Australia was assessed to be at the lower end of the spectrum and this was reflected in the level of ASIO resources. Intelligence sharing arrangements were in place for threat assessments and security intelligence advice. But not with the same level of coordination and connectivity across agencies as now exists.

In the event of a crisis, responsibilities between Federal and State and Territory agencies were generally well understood. Although counter-terrorism exercises continued to highlight coordination and communication issues which have since been addressed and tested. And, with the benefit of hindsight, the range of terrorist scenarios that had been practised was unrealistically narrow. Our legislative framework previously was focussed on the criminal prosecution of the perpetrators after an attack rather than on the act of preparing for, or supporting others engaged in, terrorist acts.

The parliament has put in place a legislative framework that better reflects the circumstances of the current security environment. It clearly criminalises any activities that are connected with terrorism. Joseph Thomas, the first person to be convicted on terrorism charges, is now serving a custodial sentence. Under the questioning and detention provisions of the ASIO Act a person can be compelled (as a matter of last resort and only if other methods would be or have proven to be ineffective) to provide information in connection with a terrorist offence or face criminal sanctions;

As the Attorney-General said in Parliament on 29 March 2006, the questioning regime is proving to be a useful tool in the fight against terrorism. The new legislative framework allows for the proscription of groups as terrorist organisations if they are engaged in acts in connection with the preparation or conduct of terrorist acts. Nineteen groups have been proscribed as terrorist organisations making it an offence for people in Australia to be a member of, or engage in a range of activities in connection with, these organisations. Legislation also allows ASIO to keep pace with technological and other developments in connection with the interception of telecommunications. Other initiatives have improved coordination and intelligence sharing arrangements across government, with the business sector and with the wider community.

The establishment of the National Threat Assessment Centre in ASIO brought together agencies with a role in identifying and assessing threats to Australian interests. The Business Liaison Unit

will enhance ASIO's links to the business community. It will assist owners and operators of critical infrastructure and others to gain access to timely information on matters affecting the security of their assets and staff. Building these relationships represents a new dimension to ASIO's work. The community has been encouraged to report suspicious activity through the National Security Hotline. Some of the information provided to the Hotline has been valuable. Let me emphasise again the importance of ordinary people passing on information that may help prevent a terrorist attack.

How do these changes compare with the response of others around the world? While there is variation in the detail of how Australia and other countries have responded, all generally have sought to do three main things:

- build more effective connectivity between relevant agencies;
- enhance the capabilities of their agencies with additional resources and an appropriate legislative framework; and
- build stronger partnerships and information sharing arrangements.

Let me illustrate with the following examples. Some countries, for example Britain and France, already had robust arrangements in place before 9/11 as a result of their previous experience with the threat of terrorism. Britain had enacted anti-terrorism legislation even before the 11 September attacks with its *Terrorism Act 2000* and *Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001* to assist British agencies counter the threat of terrorism. The *Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005*, following the July bombings in London, further strengthened Britain's counter-terrorism regime.

France has had a strong anti-terrorist legislative framework since 1986 which had allowed for the pre-emptive arrest of potential terrorists. But the French still boosted their counter-terrorism legislation following 9/11 and again following the July 2005 London bombings to increase police and telecommunications interception powers.

The United States had been focussed on the threat of terrorism, particularly to US interests abroad, following the attacks on US embassies in East Africa in 1998 and against the USS Cole in Yemen in 2000 to name just a few instances. But US Congressional committees in December 2002 and the 9/11 Commission in July 2004 reported:

- a general lack of preparedness to deal with the challenge of international terrorism brought about by inadequate resources;
- an unwillingness to share information between US agencies;
- and conceptual inadequacies in terms of understanding the nature of the threat and its many potential manifestations.

Changes in the US since then have been focussed on putting in place a more connected system underpinned by the *Patriot Act*

2001. American authorities since have disrupted terrorist cells in Buffalo, Seattle, Portland, Detroit, Tampa and in North Carolina, and prevented several attempts to infiltrate al-Qa'ida operatives into the United States. Canada has also sought to build greater connect-edness into its systems, engage in greater cooperation with US and other international partners and, through the enactment of the *Anti-Terrorism Act 2001*, it provided additional investigative powers to Canadian agencies.

Another major thrust has been the implementation or refine-ment of arrangements for sharing intelligence – including with the community and business sector – and for responding to information about threats within nations and across international boundaries. In North America, the United States amalgamated 23 agencies into a new Department of Homeland Security, established the National Counter-Terrorism Centre and created a Director of National Intelli-gence; Canada established the Integrated Threat Assessment Centre. In Britain the Home Office implemented arrangements to improve communications with the Muslim community and separately with the business sector. They now have a number of working groups to drive these efforts. The British also established the Joint Threat Assessment Centre.

The European Union has established a European arrest warrant regime, appointed a Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, set up a Joint Situation Centre and implemented a range of other initiatives, including in connection with biometrics, money laundering and airline passenger data transfer. Singapore has established a National Security Coordination Centre and Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre.

Seen in this light, action taken in Australia to improve connec-tivity, capabilities, partnerships and the legislative framework, while tailored to our particular situation, compares favourably with other countries.

What does the future hold?

Looking forward, Australians can expect that ASIO will continue to build its capabilities and to work with others to provide high quality advice directed at protecting them from the range of threats to security as defined in the ASIO Act. While the threat of terrorism has been a major focus for the last five years, ASIO's responsibilities also include protecting Australia and Australian interests from the threats of: espionage; sabotage; politically motivated violence (including terrorism); promotion of communal violence; attacks on Australia's Defence system; and acts of foreign interference - whether those threats are within Australia or against Australian interests abroad.

As such, ASIO's role is defined by subject, not geography. This means our work is global in reach – in fact much of our work is about

security threats to Australians and Australian interests, including business interests, overseas. The additional resources committed by Government over the next five years will equip ASIO to meet its responsibilities better across the full range of these threats to security.

ASIO in Australian society

I have said publicly on a number of occasions that Australians and Australian interests are at threat and will continue to be so for some time. Planning for attacks in Australia has been detected and disrupted but a terrorist attack in Australia remains feasible and could well occur, possibly without warning. The threat could originate offshore or from people who are already in the community, including from those who were born here or have lived here for a long time. It is a tragedy that Australians already have been killed or injured in attacks abroad – more attacks are likely, some of which could occur without prior intelligence to enable appropriate warnings to be issued. It would be naïve and unrealistic to expect that we will always be able to prevent people being injured or killed by terrorists. Or indeed always prevent other threats to security from being realised.

ASIO will of course need to continue to do much of its work out of the public gaze. As do similar intelligence organisations around the world. To do otherwise, quite simply, would render the Organisation ineffective. But the ongoing work of the Inspector-General, the Parliamentary Joint Committee and the other elements of ASIO's accountability and oversight regime should continue to provide assurance that ASIO is serving the Australian community as it should.

Let me finish on this note. Our own experience and that of other countries with the threat of terrorism in particular shows that those who would do harm are persistent, resourceful, capable and committed. As a result we need to be even more persistent, determined, resourceful and innovative if we are to stay ahead of the challenge. It is a responsibility the people of ASIO take very seriously.

SPEAKERS AT THE SYDNEY INSTITUTE

January 2006 – May 2006

Kathy Bail (Editor, *The Bulletin*)

John Bell AM (Artistic Director, Bell Shakespeare)

Dr Gerard Henderson (Columnist, *The Sydney Morning Herald* & Ex Director, The Sydney Institute)

A Mate for Head of State – why Australia needs one

Anuerin Hughes (Author, *Billy Hughes* [Wiley 2005])

Remembering Billy Hughes

Matt Price (Parliamentary Press Gallery)

Margaret Simons (Journalist & author)

Dr Stephen Matchett (Leader writer and columnist, *The Australian*)

The Gallery: Insular, Intrusive or Indispensable?

Professor Judy Lumby (Nurse Educator & author *The Gift* [Pluto Press])

That was Then; This is Now - Grandmothers and Grandchildren Today

Yu Jie (Beijing based writer & author; Vice President, Independent Chinese PEN)

Wang Yi (Law lecturer, Chengdu University; freelance writer)

The Writer in China

Steve Emerson (Correspondent & author, *American Jihad: The Terrorists Living Among Us*)

Jihadism: Where Is It At?

Professor Samdhong Rinpoche (Chairman, Central Tibetan Administration, India)

Tibet: Is Peace Possible?

The Hon Peter Costello MP (Federal Treasurer & Deputy Leader, Liberal Party)

Worth promoting, worth defending - Australian Citizenship

Professor Glyn Davis AC

What is the Future for Australia's Public Universities?

Glenn Milne (Chief Political Correspondent, *Sunday Telegraph*)

Caroline Overington (Columnist, *The Australian*)

The Howard Factor

Julia Gillard MP (Shadow Minister for Health, Federal Member for Lalor)

Courage, Convictions & the Community - The Next Ten Years

Dr Marek Belka (Executive Secretary of UNECE; former Prime Minister of Poland)

Poland, Europe and the United States

Dr Jane Connors (Cultural Historian; Program Manager, ABC Radio National)

Royal Tours: Then and Now

Dr Rebecca Huntley (Author, *The World According To Y* [Allen & Unwin])

How Y Generation Sees the World

Kenneth Gee QC (Former judge; author, *Comrade Roberts: Recollections of a Trotskyite*)

My Life As Comrade Roberts in the Mid 1940s

Clive James (Internationally acclaimed author & media personality)

Prelude to the Aftermath – The Media and Celebrity

Dr Moreen Dee (Author, *Not a Matter for Negotiation* [DFAT, 2005])

Not A Matter For Negotiation: Australia's Commitment to Malaysia 1961-1966

The Hon Andrew Robb MP (Parliamentary Secretary, Minister for Immigration & Multicultural Affairs.)

Australian Migrant Integration - Past Successes, Future Challenges

Linda Jaivin (Author – most recently *The Infernal Optimist* [2006])

Literary cross-dressing: eastern suburbs boho becomes small-time hip-hop-loving crim

Paul O'Sullivan (Director General, Australian Security Intelligence Organisation [ASIO])

11 September Five Years Later: Where To From Here?