

The Sydney Papers

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Photo – Alfonso Calero

Shaun Brown

Shaun Brown was appointed as Managing Director of SBS Corporation in January 2003. Brown began his career at the ABC in Perth and has worked in various positions with the BBC and Television New Zealand. Under Brown, SBS Television has broken new ground, at times controversially. In 2007, however, SBS Television received its highest ratings ever and increased its audience share of people over 16 to six per cent of the total – a record for SBS Television. On Monday 1 September 2008, Shaun Brown addressed The Sydney Institute on the continuing vitality and importance of SBS broadcasting.

MULTICULTURAL

SOCIETY, MONOCULTURAL MEDIA: SBS – MORE SPECIAL THAN EVER

SHAUN BROWN

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we stand.

Let me start by declaring, with absolute confidence, that the next few months are the most important for SBS since its inception in the 1970s. Shortly, we will enter into negotiations with the Australian government about our funding for the next three years and beyond. The outcome of these discussions will determine whether SBS will be able to meet the challenge created by the expanding and changing multicultural shape of Australia – or whether it will be marginalised as a well-intentioned but hopelessly under resourced experiment.

Australia is privileged to have three public broadcasters – SBS, the ABC and NITV – to complement the output of the commercial and subscription broadcasting sector. The presence of national broadcasters such as SBS ensures plurality and diversity in Australia's media landscape. From its early days as an experiment with multilingualism, SBS has had a transformative effect on Australian media and the broader community. We have given a face and a voice to multicultural Australia and, in the process, helped to shape it and all of Australian society as a consequence. Prior to SBS, Australians were fed a staple diet of American or British “international” content and could have been forgiven for thinking that diversity came with a difference of inflection and accent in spoken English. Diversity or “foreignness” was presented as unpronounceable, unpalatable or incomprehensible in the Australian media landscape. Some would argue that the broader Australian media has done little to correct this imbalance.

The SBS experience – our endurance as a force in Australian media – has shown that Australia's cultural diversity can be a source of inspiration, discovery and personal transformation. And it can and does inspire the creation of radio, television and online content that informs, educates and entertains *all* Australians while reflecting the true multicultural heart of this country. There is a very real need for

SBS's services to not only continue, but to grow. We need to harness the potential of new technologies to expand and deepen our range of services. To this end, we recently released a document – *SBS's Plans for the Future* – outlining our ambitions and we are currently discussing those plans with various stakeholders. As a protector and promoter of Australia's cultural and creative identity it is important that we consider the views of our stakeholders and our audiences when developing our strategic direction in the new media landscape. The idea is to have solid proposals as soon as possible for an expanded range of television, radio and online services that will chart SBS's course between now and the proposed switch-off date for analogue television in 2013.

The importance of SBS

You might ask whether the broader Australian public understands and values the role SBS plays. Well, we have just completed a research project with Newspoll on public attitudes towards SBS and it shows that 92 per cent of people surveyed agree that SBS exists to provide an alternative to the commercial networks in Australia. Perhaps even more significant is that 87 per cent think it is important that we provide an alternative to the ABC. This is public recognition that SBS is a platform for Australian content that would otherwise never be broadcast, a vehicle for stories that would never be told, a version of Australia that would never be seen. Our viewers believe we provide uniqueness, diversity, innovation, quality and trustworthy news and current affairs. They told us that we are the network that is always trying something new and presenting diverse viewpoints.

SBS's contribution to the Australian community is to help foster a shared understanding of where we have come from and a sense of the wonderful possibility of where we can go. We ensure that everyone's story is reflected in our creative and cultural identity, we give a voice to different sectors of the community in our national debates and we enable different voices and different languages and cultures, to be reflected back to all Australians.

SBS initially brought "the world back home" and enabled a better understanding of the diversity of origins of Australia's rapidly growing migrant communities. Now, SBS must meet the communications needs and content demands of a varied audience that includes first, second and third generation migrants, as well as the broader Australian community which itself comprises new and rapidly evolving culturally diverse communities and global connections.

Building an inclusive society

In 2008, SBS's contribution is more important than ever as Australian society becomes even more diverse and complex. Prime

Minister Kevin Rudd recently remarked that “every Australian should have an opportunity to be a full participant in the life of the nation”¹. This is the fundamental premise of any discussion about social inclusion in this country. The Minister for Finance and Deregulation Lindsay Tanner also recently spoke at length in the 2008 Redmond Barry lecture about the challenges faced by Australia’s migrant and refugee communities in settling in Australia.

It is heartening that even at the highest levels of government there is recognition of the challenges that many face in participating fully in all that Australian life can offer. We must all recognise that there are barriers to ensuring that all Australians can play a part in the social, cultural and creative life of this country. An inclusive and cohesive society cannot be left to chance and we must work to ensure we are meeting the needs of our diverse community.

Increasing and diversifying need

While those needs are increasing through the arrival of and growth in new populations, significant and changing need also remains for Australia’s established culturally and linguistically diverse communities. SBS has just completed a comprehensive analysis of data gathered by the Australian Bureau of Statistics through the 2006 Census and the General Social Survey. This analysis demonstrates the complexities of multicultural Australia and the equally complex needs of new and existing cultural and language communities. The study shows that engaging with multicultural society in Australia is not simply a case of pigeon-holing or making generalisations about different communities and their needs.

This ignores the reality that language communities in Australia identify on a variety of levels including ancestry, faith, culture and lifestyle. These factors interrelate and make the cultural diversity experience in Australia unique and complex. The study found that household resources and age were just as relevant in defining need as the level of language proficiency in communities. It is fairly self-evident that groups with lower English language proficiency tend to participate less in civic, social or political life and this was reaffirmed by the ABS data. But these communities also tend to have lower levels of trust in others in their community and tend to have greater difficulty accessing services. The groups with the lowest English language proficiency per capita in Australia include Vietnamese and Dinka, Hmong and Korean. Other communities have substantial ageing populations, among them the two biggest language groups the Italians and the Greeks, as well as some smaller groups such as the Dutch, Lithuanian, Latvian and Ukrainian speaking communities.

This raises the issue of new needs for established communities as, anecdotally, these Australians revert to their mother tongue in

old age and renew their need for in-language support. The ABS data also shows that communities with lower household resources have a greater need for government services and more issues in gaining access to the services they need. These communities are far less likely to have access to satellite or pay television services in their preferred languages. The groups with the lowest household resources include Indigenous languages and Dinka, Kurdish, Dari, Hmong, Pashto, Assyrian, Amharic and Arabic. Communities with the highest levels of community dispersal throughout Australia [for example: Indigenous languages and Torres Strait Creole speakers] also find it harder to access specialist services and may be isolated from the broader community. They also tend to have far less access to local in-language media and therefore national in-language services become increasingly important to these sectors of the population.

It must be recognised that not all cultural communities are “disadvantaged” – many are economically empowered, culturally competent and strong contributors to Australian society. However, in delivering our Charter and in recognising our role in ensuring all Australians have an opportunity to participate in civic life in this country, SBS must acknowledge, consider and lessen where possible, the factors that make people vulnerable and undermine their ability to access services.

A vital link

Providing for community need has always been a crucial role for SBS and we must continue to find means of delivering communication services that are relevant to the needs of Australia’s diverse population. Television, radio and, increasingly, online are key to delivering those services. On television, our award winning sub-titling unit and our commitment to our World Watch in-language news services complement our commitment to producing locally made programming that presents a diverse view of Australia’s multicultural society.

SBS Radio is the most linguistically diverse radio network in the world, broadcasting in 68 different languages to a potential audience of more than three million Australians who speak a language other than English at home. Around a quarter of Australians were born overseas and more than a quarter of Australians born here have at least one parent born overseas. More than 200 languages are spoken in the Australian community which indicates just how vast the need is for in-language services and support. But these culturally and linguistically diverse communities in Australia are under-served and under-targeted by the English-language media who, because of language barriers and cultural differences, cannot effectively engage with these communities.

I would also say that broadcasters in Australia often make a conscious choice not to engage with these communities. This is where SBS differs – across all platforms. As Australia’s national in-language broadcaster SBS Radio enjoys a unique position of trust with culturally and linguistically diverse communities. It is one of their lifeline brands – a treasured element of their media consumption. SBS Radio is many things to many people: a news source, an information provider, an entertainer, an educator, a cultural resource and a medium for diverse community views. It helps Australia’s many communities participate as fully as possible in society.

During community consultations I have been conducting across Australia about SBS’s future plans, concerns have been raised about the impact of unmediated access to in-language content from overseas [such as satellite or online services] and the difficulties this may pose for certain communities. In Brisbane, one participant told me she was concerned about the local young Muslim community in particular accessing news and views from satellite services. She said it was important that communities were able to engage in local issues that they can identify with rather than solely engaging with news and views from overseas sources.

That is the difference with SBS’s in-language programming – it is responsible, independent and has editorial integrity – we present all points of view and tread the fine line that often exists in language and cultural communities. SBS’s expertise, particularly in radio, is to bring the professional standards of a national public broadcaster to issues relevant to diverse communities. This includes national, professional news services and forums and discussions about international and Australian issues. SBS prides itself on inclusiveness and impartiality and unbiased discussions about policy and public issues. In a globalised world, it is more important than ever that Australians are encouraged to engage with and demonstrate tolerance and openness towards different cultures and communities.

Recognising change

Despite multiculturalism being embedded in Australian society, there is more work to be done to create greater cultural awareness, understanding and inclusiveness. SBS has fearlessly championed the evolution of Australian multiculturalism, often times in the face of great criticism. By exploring multiculturalism and challenging cultural stereotypes in content that spans a range of languages and origins, SBS promotes understanding and combats intolerance. To test our effectiveness, SBS has been conducting an audience and industry engagement study looking at two of our recent Australian television productions – *The Circuit* (set amongst the circuit courts in

Australia’s Kimberly region) and *East West 101* – a hard hitting police drama about a multicultural police squad in Lakemba.

The independent research found that the cultural diversity messages of these programs were “potent and necessary”. Focus groups, which included ethnic and Indigenous Australians as well as independent producers, said SBS was presenting a different and more balanced perspective on Muslim and Indigenous issues that is missing from commercial television screens. Participants said by credibly portraying their cultures on television screens this SBS content had the potential to become a force for social change – it could increase awareness, acceptance and tolerance of cultural diversity.

Participants spoke of the content starting “water-cooler” conversations about cultural diversity rather than the latest celebrity booted off a reality television show. They called the content “brave” and said it didn’t airbrush any of the social and cultural issues present in Australian society.

To continue to be relevant, SBS must be able to reinvent itself and find new ways of delivering its Charter which are both thought-provoking and appealing to audiences. Multicultural society continues to evolve, and many younger culturally and linguistically diverse Australians do not participate in, or are frustrated by, long-standing forms of community representation or cultural identity. This is where our Australian made content becomes critical in a continued effort to create a culturally cohesive society. At a consultation in Parramatta recently a Muslim woman talked passionately about the positive impact the SBS comedy *Salaam Café* had on her and her community. She told me that for the young people in her community to see themselves portrayed not as a problem in the news but as lively, witty contributors to a humorous discussion in the Australian experience, was simply transforming.

Changing technology presents both challenges and opportunity for SBS. Firstly, it is vital that all Australians benefit from the advances technology can bring and that there is both ubiquity of access and participation for all Australians – regardless of where they live or what language they speak. SBS is the only broadcaster in Australia that can speak to *all* Australians and help shape or give voice to their perspective in the national conversation. But herein lies the challenge. Consider the equation – Australia has changed, community needs have increased and technology has created the means by which SBS can continue to deliver to meet those growing and changing needs. The missing part of the equation is the funding required to turn the opportunity presented by new technology into powerful, effective and essential new services. Digital television and radio will allow us to expand our services but the technology is not an end in itself – we

must have the content to deliver Australian audiences the services they demand and expect.

Online services are now the norm and with improvements to broadband speeds in Australia, audiences now expect to be able to access their favourite content online. Yet SBS has never had one cent from the Federal Budget allocated to online services since the Internet was invented. Despite the lack of resources, SBS is making real gains in the type, range and quality of the content that we produce. And our audiences are noticing.

Our Newspoll research found that around a third of our online audience has noticed an improvement in our online services and more than half of our television audience believe that the quality of SBS television has gotten better in the past 12 months. Our rebranding exercise earlier this year under the banner *SBS: six billion stories and counting* has refreshed our television, radio and online presence and given us a contemporary identity to build on over the next few years.

Making content that matters

SBS, on a shoestring, has created some of the most outstanding locally produced content seen on television over recent years and we have the critical and audience acclaim to back it up. *East West 101*, *The Circuit*, *Who Do You Think You Are?* and then there is the groundbreaking documentary series about our Indigenous history – *First Australians* – one of the most powerful series to have ever been shown on Australian television screens. We have won Logies and Walkleys, countless AFI awards and IF awards, sub-titling awards, prestigious international radio broadcasting awards and even two Oscars – which is testament to the integrity of our content.

On television, SBS has committed to producing a second series of *The Circuit*, *East West 101* and *Who Do You Think You Are?* and with Screen Australia we will commission another landmark history series, this time on the evolution of multicultural Australia. We expect this series to feature a credible, innovative and intelligent perspective on Australia's recent migrant history – ranging from the White Australia Policy to a more recent push to expand economic migration. We want a provocative examination of how Australia's immigration policies have been motivated by shifts in the ideological, social and political climate. SBS has, at its heart, a commitment to understand and reflect Australia's cultural diversity. The immigration policies of the past, present and future have helped shape that diversity and I am excited about the potential of this series. All of these programs will be commissioned from the independent production sector in Australia – making the best use of Australia's diverse creative resources.

We are a major stimulus to this community and our engagement research shows just how much the independent production sector

value SBS's support for their ideas. One producer said that the "freedom and respect" that SBS showed to producers means they are willing to try harder to produce great television. Others said we are one of the only networks to value the contribution of the production sector and that we were the only network willing to back a program such as *The Circuit*. Other audience participants in the research recognised that the Australian dramas on SBS were high-quality and far better than anything being shown on other Australian networks. One said he was surprised to see such high production values from SBS content and asked whether we had "robbed a bank" to make it. I sincerely hope that SBS doesn't have to resort to grand theft to continue to make great content in the future. But I acknowledge there is a very real disconnection between our bottom line and our ambitions.

Future plans

SBS and the Australian community face the very real risk that our unique content and multicultural perspectives will be lost or marginalised in the new digital environment. We face pressures from all corners on our already stretched financial base. The costs of acquiring and producing content are increasing. Our audience is demanding a wider range of services that are on-demand and online and as I discussed earlier, there are new communities with pressing communications needs that are emerging. This challenges our ability to serve them while at the same time preserving and expanding the services for established communities. New digital television, radio and online services will allow us to better meet growing audience demands. And with a real increase in our base funding we can achieve this.

There is a tough battle to ensure consumers switch to digital before analogue switch-off in 2013. Internationally it is recognised that new content is the key driver for digital take-up. Consumers don't just want more of the same; they want a set-top box that will allow them to access new and expanded services from current broadcasters. Public broadcasters such as SBS are well placed, although not well resourced, to experiment and innovate in the digital space. In the UK, television viewers have just voted Freeview – the free-to-air multichannel platform – as the technology that has had the most impact on their lives. SBS is working with the commercial broadcasters and the ABC to launch a similar platform in Australia.

I think we can expect Australian audiences to increasingly realise the importance and potential of an Australian Freeview service with more than 10 channels available free-to-air. But for SBS to have a real presence on this platform and other emerging platforms like digital radio, we must be able to fill a gap in the Australian viewing

experience by expanding our range of services and creating new, compelling content for viewers. These new services form the basis of our plans for the future. With increased investment by government SBS plans to:

- Add at least 100 more hours per year of original Australian multicultural programming on television by 2012.
- Expand SBS's programming of the best of overseas content across four digital television channels by 2013 starting with a full fledged second channel – SBS World next year.
- Progressively over the next six years establish nine, new digital radio channels, expanding greatly both the range and depth of multilingual service to more communities. Digital radio allows us to do this without confiscating time from established language groups on our analogue service.
- And make all of our content available streamed or on-demand over our online service.

SBS World will be the starting point for these ambitions and will complement our main television channel. It will show predominantly sub-titled content so that all Australians can access content in other languages. We will dedicate more of the schedule to international content focusing on the Asia-Pacific region in which we live as well as showing more of the best international films. We will expand our *World Watch* news service to accommodate new language groups and give more time to existing language groups. Importantly, a well-resourced second channel will allow SBS to introduce English language tuition to support language learning and for the first time show children's programming in languages other than English to support both language communities and language learning. I acknowledge that these are ambitious plans but I equally feel they are both realistic and necessary.

To deliver these new and improved services to the Australian community will take a substantial new investment from the Australian government – somewhere in the order of an additional \$70 million per annum. That may sound a lot. But when you consider that SBS has had no real increase in funds for many years now and we currently operate on a government appropriation around one fifth of the ABC's to deliver more complex services on a national scale, we think it is realistic. We already complement our funding with the limited amount of commercial revenue we are permitted to raise. This is our only means to supplement our core funding. The revenue SBS raises through all commercial activities is modest – \$49 million in 2006-07. But, importantly, all this revenue is invested into producing content. SBS's commercial revenue pales in comparison to the commercial networks in Australia and even the ABC. In 2006-07 Channels 7, 9 and 10 had combined commercial revenue of nearly \$4 billion². And

while not permitted to carry advertising in its programming, even the ABC raised \$154 million in 2006-07 from the sale of goods and services³. That's three times the commercial revenue SBS generates.

While criticism is sometimes levelled at SBS because of its ability to raise commercial revenue, this revenue funds local content and better services and is essential to our delivery on the Charter. Without it, SBS would not be able to deliver services of value. But now the time has come to address the shortfall in our core funding. SBS will be working with the government over the coming months to strongly make our case for this investment for the benefit of our audiences and the community more broadly.

Conclusion

SBS's contribution to Australia is to help foster a shared understanding of where we have come from, to ensure that everyone's story is reflected in our creative and cultural identity, to give a voice to different sectors of the community in our national debates and to have different voices and different languages and cultures, reflected back to all Australians. SBS is the only media organisation in Australia that can ensure that all Australians can engage with the issues that matter and participate in national public debate, regardless of their cultural provenance or language proficiency. This is a valuable contribution that SBS makes to enhancing social inclusion and improving cultural citizenship in Australia. It is what sets SBS apart from other Australian or international media organisations.

SBS is passionate about our civic, cultural and creative contribution to the Australian community and we hope we will get the support needed from the community and from the government for its ambition for an even greater presence in the Australian cultural landscape. The need for a distinctive and courageous broadcaster like SBS to reflect the reality of modern Australia is more vital than ever.

Endnotes

- 1 Perusco, Michael (4 June 2008), The Age newspaper, *'Promises on social inclusion need policies to back them up'*, p 19.
- 2 ACMA Communications report – \$3,915.1 million – 89.1 per cent generated by advertising
- 3 Departmental financial statements Additional Estimates 07-08

FUNCTIONS - 2008



Photographer: Alfonso Calero



Paul O'Sullivan



Bob Carr

Photo - Alfonso Calero

Spies serve at the forefront of national security and the stories they inspire have captured the imaginations of the public they protect. The Hon Bob Carr, a former NSW Premier, has been a key figure in NSW state politics for over 20 years. Paul O'Sullivan was appointed Director General of the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) in 2005 and recently announced that ASIO is commissioning an *Official History of ASIO* from its establishment in 1949 to 1978. Bob Carr and Paul O'Sullivan addressed The Sydney Institute on Thursday 4 September 2008 to discuss their shared passion for spy fiction.

SPY FICTION:

THEN AND NOW PAUL O'SULLIVAN

Thanks Gerard for this invitation for Bob Carr and myself to talk about and critique spy fiction. It's worth saying that the spy fiction we read is only one slice of spies and spying in popular culture. Popular fascination with espionage and counter-espionage is borne out in films, TV series (*The Avengers*, *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, *Spooks*), comics, and, now, video games. Not to mention spoofs like *Get Smart* and the *Austin Powers* series that send up spying, spy fiction, and our fascination with it.

I enjoy reading spy fiction, but it pays to discriminate. There is literary fiction with spies and spying in it. Think Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, Greene's *The Quiet American*, McEwan's *The Innocent*, Norman Rush's *Mortals*, Christopher Koch's *The Memory Room*. There is spy fiction as written by the likes of Ian Fleming, Robert Ludlum, Tom Clancy and Daniel Silva, with its thrills and intrigues, half-truths and caricatures, and, above all, gripping plotlines.

Spy fiction also has a grown-up cousin: the "adult spy fiction" of writers such as John Le Carre, Len Deighton, Alan Furst. The boundaries, of course, aren't always so neat. Adult spy fiction often has all the twists and turns of the classic spy thriller. And the themes of trust, loyalty, betrayal are common to all types of spy fiction: whether as part of an exploration of character, morality and power; or more as a narrative device used to build intrigue and suspense, as plots twist and turn to some labyrinthine resolution.

Perhaps what sets adult spy fiction apart is the ambition – one might even say the pretence – to transcend the limits of genre and stereotype. The focus is less on the 'tricks of the trade' – although there is usually plenty of this, albeit mostly as a metaphor for dissecting the meaning of spying as a vocation; and, in so doing, exploring deeper questions of politics, history, morality and identity. John Le Carre looms large here. He has said, and I quote: "For decades to come the spy world will continue to be the collective couch where the subconscious of each nation is confessed." Readers familiar with *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* – the first of Le Carre's "Smiley trilogy"

– will remember also, that Bill Haydon, the British blue-blood turned Soviet mole, takes “it for granted that secret services were the only real measure of a nation’s political health, the only real expression of its subconscious”.

Early spy fiction

Contemporary spy fiction has a history. It emerged around the turn of the last century, about the same time that spying began to be organised professionally in the form we know it today. I’m grateful, by the way, to Stephen Loosely for giving me a copy of Hugh and Graham Greene’s *The Spy’s Bedside Book*, which has excerpts from some of these early spy stories. As with early crime fiction, and its part-time sleuths, early spy fiction was the province of the amateur – the remarkable “gentlemen” of William Le Queux’s stories, who, as patriots, protected their compatriots, drawing in large measure on reserves of raw courage and native intellect.

Readers of Phillip Knightley’s, *The Second Oldest Profession*, will recall he in fact argues that early spy fiction, particularly Le Queux’s writings, had some influence on the British decision to establish its first formal civilian intelligence service. With the institutionalisation of espionage and counter-espionage as aspects of modern statecraft during the twentieth century, the exploration of the relationship between individual, organisation and society has been grist for the mill in spy fiction. Plots and situations vary. Some are vehicles for the heroic individual to save the day, just in time, once again, against the odds. More sinisterly, there is a sub-genre of spy fiction that embodies deep-seated suspicions about the corruptibility of power. This is a world where the enemy is within; a world where nasty organisations, or a cabal within, turn on the individual – wantonly and without prejudice, as with the Jason Bourne series.

Some, like Greene’s *Our Man in Havana* or Rush’s *Mortals*, find comedy or irony in the discordance between context and purpose. Why on earth would *that* spy be *there*? Other strands of spy fiction are deeply pessimistic, committed to exploring the way spying ultimately grinds down or destroys its protagonists. In the face of secrecy, suspicion, moral relativities and betrayal, there are no heroes left standing, only hollow, dejected, seriously compromised, individuals. It’s as though, in the professional world of spy versus spy, the values of commitment, patriotism and higher purpose would render the protagonists as innocent as Le Queux’s spies are amateur. “We’re all the same, you know, that’s the joke,” says Fiedler to Leamus in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*.

007

No-one personifies the heroic individual as boldly, as brashly, as downright sumptuously, as 007. As we know, he's a composite figure: one part dandy, one part deadly assassin, one part derring-do, most part fantasy. Shaken, not stirred. However, the Bond we know in Fleming's novels is more complicated, less likeable, than the Bond we know in the films. On the job, Bond's a consummate professional. Well, mostly. He'll take on all comers, and just as well, because in Fleming's world, the threats to Western democracy and global order are polymorphous. 'SMERSH' – the Soviet agency whose name means "Death to Spies" – is recognisably Cold War. Others, such as "SPECTRE", a syndicate of international criminals, led by Blofeld, or the diamond smuggling "Spangled Mob", don't fit neatly into any frame or epoch – one reason, maybe, why Bond endures.

As an employee, Bond is something of a mixed blessing. He's loyal but, in dispatching with enemies, can be insubordinate. He does his paper work; but seems willing to fudge the record. In the novels and the films, there is the strange, relentless juxtaposition of danger and pleasure; discipline and luxury; focus and appetite. Sometimes these blend into one another; at others times, they clash. As when Bond, longing for his lunch, is desperate to wrap-up an important briefing on Sir Hugo Drax with M – who, Bond can't help by notice, "never seemed to be interested in food or sleep". A strange quality for the head of an intelligence service, I agree.

Fleming's Bond fears; suffers; has doubts, dark thoughts. He acknowledges, at least to himself, his foibles and hypocrisies. And, on occasion, he admires traits in those he must defeat. There are double entendres galore, albeit more so in the films. All part – with notable exceptions, like Miss Moneypenny – of the inevitable conquest: not just *by* Bond; but *of* Bond, in a classic "honey trap": orchestrated by one of his many enemies. After all, he may not be quite the polymath, but he is a "cunning linguist". There is a sheer exuberance of 'tradecraft': involving physical prowess, tricks of the trade and, especially in the films, gadgets. So entrenched has this last metaphor for the spy world become, it is easy to forget that if Bond can do it all – and it seems he can – this has less to do with "Q", than with 007's discipline, training, and focus. There's none of the predicament of Colonel Mercier, the French military attaché-cum-spy in Alan Furst's, *The Spies of Warsaw*, who is sent to Poland with just six weeks of training under his belt, just one of which covered 'the management of espionage'.

Identity

Readers of Fleming sense that Bond has no real identity beyond his job; beyond his status as 007. It's almost as though the very openness and optimism of the Bond identity – and his phoenix-like indifference to setbacks – forestall the deeper questions that infuse more serious spy fiction writing. This is probably why he's been mimicked, spoofed, deconstructed, and, particularly by writers of adult spy fiction, strongly reacted against. So much so that one could plausibly argue that “realism” in spy fiction has defined itself as much against Bond as the actual world of espionage.

It is precisely the question of identity, and its implications for values like loyalty, courage, honesty, friendship, belief, that fascinates serious writers of spy fiction, as well as the literary interlopers who occasionally tackle the genre. Who is this spy who lives secretly, lives a double-life, assumes various identities? And what are the psychological and moral effects of managing assumed and covert identities? It occurs to Khristo, a character in Furst's *Night Soldiers*, “that if you had nothing else in the world you could at least have a secret”.

But can the spy in fiction have that secret and other things too? Can the spy maintain his or her normal identity? Can the spy balance work and domestic life? And what of friendships? Commitments? Trust? Leonard Marnham, in McEwan's novel, *The Innocent*, is deployed to work on the Berlin tunnel operation in the early 1950s, where he strikes up a love affair with a German woman, Maria. New both to espionage and love, he struggles to reconcile his two worlds:

He had spoken to no one about [Maria] at work, and he could not talk to her about what he did. He was not certain whether this time spent travelling between his two secret worlds was when he was truly himself, when he was able to hold the two in balance and know them to be separate from himself; or whether this was the one time he was nothing at all, a void travelling between two points.

Others, like Len Deighton's unnamed spy, who calls himself “crafty, nasty, suspicious and irritable”, has no-one to come home to; but when he does come home, it's a kind of anchor, as he takes “strange pleasure in handling well-known implements in a well-known place”.

If identity begins with a name, won't spies have as many identities as pseudonyms? And in all this confusion, ambiguity, and deceit won't they lose themselves, their sense of purpose, their values? Is spying inevitably cynical? Dealing with others on the basis of pseudonyms, and assumed identities, Deighton's unnamed spy tells one of his agents, “Johnnie Vulkan”: “The moment that you think that you know who your friends are is the moment to get another job.” To which

Vulkan replies: “You’ve become so good at pretending to be different that you have lost contact with your identity.”

Pessimism

This brings us close to spy fiction as pessimism, of which Le Carre is the master. In his fiction, spies struggle to identify, and identify *with*, a cause – “everything is maybe” – and if they did, what would be the point anyway, because spies, we are told, “abandon first what [they] love the most”? His characterisations have pushed the world of spy fiction into a darker, bleaker landscape. Where Bond is seriously *haute couture*, Leamus, the spy who came in from the cold, is haughty, has a utilitarian approach to clothing, and most other things. Soviet spy master, Karla, is a “little wiry chap”, who appears “modest” and “avuncular”, lacking the scars, the cruel smile, the very physiognomy of evil one might expect to find in such a character. Bill Haydon is winning, but of course *he’s* also the traitor.

George Smiley, Le Carre’s most famous character, is anything but (smiley). He is podgy, absent-minded, late middle-aged, seemingly always coming back from retirement. His powers, like an old-lover, are inexorably deserting him. And his one touch with beauty is his wife Ann, who is notoriously unfaithful and, in a cruel twist collapsing the boundaries between the personal and the professional, has been seduced by Bill Haydon – all part of Karla’s scheming to put Smiley off his game, and off Karla’s scent.

Le Carre can write. And some of his set pieces dazzle: Fiedler’s debriefing of Leamus in *The Spy who Came in from the Cold*; Smiley’s interview of Grigoriev in *Smiley’s People*; and the scenes involving the likes of Connie Sachs. What I find particularly interesting, though, is the nature of Le Carre’s pessimism. The layers of cynicism and betrayal in the *Spy Who Came in from the Cold* have an iron-clad logic. As Leamus falls to the ground, shot in no-man’s land, that cruel and grisly space dividing east and west, he sees innocence and humanity, waving cheerfully, childlike, whilst being crushed like “a small car” between the “great lorries” of Cold War politics. As Leamus doesn’t really believe in anything, has no friends, and is duped by his superiors, his fate both echoes and subverts the maxim expressed by E.M. Forster: “I hate the idea of causes, and if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend, I hope I should have the guts the betray my country.”

If Le Carre pulls back from this bleak vision in the Smiley trilogy, then it’s not by much. Consider Smiley himself. At the end of the trilogy, Smiley’s “defeat” of his long-time nemesis, Karla, seems to be worse than meaningless. Watching the lonely figure of Karla shuffle across that bridge in Berlin, from east to west, “an unholy vertigo seized [Smiley] as the very evil he had fought against seemed

to reach out and possess him and claim him despite his striving". At this moment, Smiley can't escape the thought, "I have destroyed him with the weapons I abhorred, and they are his. We have crossed each other's frontiers, we are the no-men of this no-man's land." A cautionary lesson for the spying business? Perhaps. Or has Smiley tricked himself with what James Bond – of all characters – would call "his own little sophistries"? After all, Karla has left a trail of dead bodies, and would likely have killed many more. And he is, as we've learnt throughout the Smiley trilogy, a fanatic "who would rather die than disown the political system to which he was committed"; an absolutist "for whom killing had never been more than the necessary adjunct of a grand design".

Smiley knows first hand, from his earlier, unsuccessful attempt in that prison in Delhi to lure Karla to West, that Karla has none of those usual fears or foibles of character by which men might betray or be pressured to betray their country. If Karla was ever to be defeated, Smiley had always thought it would be because of, not despite, his fanaticism. Smiley, it turns out, was wrong. And here's the killer blow, Karla's perverse revenge on Smiley, if you like, Le Carre's surprise assault on the citadel of Western values. Rather than his fanaticism – the only victory, Le Carre seems to say, that would reconfirm Smiley's already tepid belief in the political system he serves – Karla's undoing begins in the least expected place. That is to say, in his love for a daughter who suffers from advanced schizophrenia, and can't be helped by a punishing system that diagnoses her disease politically, rather than medically. So Karla risks everything to shepherd, covertly, his daughter into the West to receive the care she needs.

As Smiley slowly unpicks Karla's unauthorised operation, and his murderous attempts to cover his tracks, Smiley realises that Karla's "downfall, if Smiley chose to bring it about, would be caused by nothing more sinister than excessive love, a weakness with which Smiley himself from his own tangled life was eminently familiar". Using this intelligence, Smiley reluctantly "pressures" Karla, an adversary who has all of a sudden "acquired a human face", to defect. Not the most pleasant of tasks, but hardly the moral equivalence Le Carre implies.

So as a reader I ask: is all of this merely to insinuate, wrongly, that liberal democracy might be as bad as Soviet dictatorship? If this is Le Carre's conclusion, and I think it is, then I can't help but recall, tongue only slightly in cheek, the character Mathis, Bond's French liaison, in *Casino Royale*. After patiently hearing out Bond's doubts about their profession, Mathis comments: "Englishmen are ... like a nest of Chinese boxes. It takes a very long time to get to the centre of them. When one gets there the result is unrewarding, but the process is instructive and entertaining."

Post Cold War spy fiction

Spy fiction became so closely associated with the Cold War, how has it fared since its end? Some writers have struggled to come in from the cold. Le Carre's ambivalence has blossomed into full scale cynicism, and his later novels, *The Constant Gardener*, *Absolute Friends*, *The Mission Song*, condemn more than reveal. The cleverness of Rush's *Mortals*, set in the early 1990s, is that he makes the seeming hiatus in global power structures caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union – its meaning for the world of spying, and, by extension, for spy fiction itself – into the predicament of his central characters and their lives. Ray, anticipating a recurring argument with his wife, Iris, “knew all the questions that were looming up”: “Why were they still in Botswana or anywhere in Africa, for that matter? ... things were cyclical and got more harrowing each time, but undoubtedly the collapse of Russia, the astonishing collapse of all that power, was telling her it was the moment to dismiss what he did, did for the agency.”

Despite Iris' concerns, spy fiction does track geopolitics, at least in its broadest shape, and there is an emerging genre of spy fiction dealing with the rise of authoritarian nationalism, like Daniel Silva's *Moscow Rules*, and Alex Dryden's *Red to Black*. Nevertheless, among the string of works attempting to take on 21st century terrorism, I'm yet to read one that rises to previous heights, or quite grasps the significance of this global threat.

Maybe this is why the best contemporary spy fiction is found, I think, in the historical spy novels of Alan Furst. Full of atmosphere, suspense, courage, people already battered, bruised, scarred by the Great War, his books take readers into a Europe on the precipice of World War II. We already know the ultimate outcome of the coming conflict. But Furst has us suspend disbelief, as we inhabit an uncertain, gritty world, where the best intelligence requires great patience, and may only provide partial insights. Significantly, spying in Furst's universe, despite the many disappointments, thwarted efforts, failures, doesn't equate to cynicism.

Some final remarks

This year sees the release of the 22nd Bond film, the most famous spy franchise, as well as the new Bond novel, penned by Sebastian Faulks. With the resurgence of Bond movies, and of popular spy thrillers, spy fiction still seems to ask readers to choose: Fleming or Le Carre? Bond or Smiley? Gloss or grit? In terms of my own preferences, if I'm reading for literary merit, for tradecraft, for careful and patient analysis, as much as I enjoy Alan Furst, it's still the Smiley trilogy. If I'm reading for a rollicking good yarn that helps sustain faith in liberal

democracy, then it's probably Ian Fleming. But I'm sure you want to know which is closest to the challenging and important work we do at ASIO to protect Australia from espionage and terrorism?

Work, which, as Ray says of himself in *Mortals*, involves: "bringing out into the light designs that for their own usually bad reasons certain people wanted kept hidden". Whether, in doing this, ASIO is located in a kind of space between an upmarket casino called "Royale" and a dilapidated training facility called "Sarratt" ... well, you'll just have to apply to find out. Short of that, you could read our unclassified Annual Report to Parliament. The narrative may not be quite as gripping, but it's definitely fact, not fiction.

SPY FICTION, TWO VIEWS

BOB CARR

Sometimes, you can recall how you first fell in love with a book. I remember Europe 1974, on a first trip to Europe, being enthralled by *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*. I couldn't stop turning those pages. Many of you would be familiar with it, but it's a story of how George Smiley, called back out of retirement, is given the job of finding out who is the senior spy in the Circus, who is the Russian mole in a branch of British intelligence. Is it Tinker, – they use code names – Tailor, Soldier or Spy?

Smiley's interrogation of colleagues, some of them former colleagues, some of them out of the service, is one of the delights of Le Carré's fiction. But the climax is definitely in the locked garden safe-house in Camden Town by the canal. They've set it up, having provoked the Russian spy located at the Russian embassy in London and the as yet undetermined senior British intelligence officer who's in the pay of the Russians. They will wait, with the safe house bugged, to hear which of their colleagues arrives to be greeted by the Russian. The mole came first – that was protocol. The front door opened, with Smiley listening on headphones in the attic. Immediately, a second taxi pulled up, then came voices.

"What is our cover story in case we are disturbed?" Polyakov asked in good English. This was the Russian. "What is our fallback?" There was a muffled murmur. Smiley and his agent couldn't yet tell which of their colleagues was keeping the appointment. "What will you drink?" asked the Russian. "Scotch," says Haydon, "A bloody, great, big scotch." He knows the game is up, and his Russian contact will negotiate his exit out of the UK, as agreed over the decades, and back to his first love, Russia.

The thing that grips me about Le Carré, is how it's driven by character. Bill Haydon, who turns out to be the Russian mole is played by the late Ian Richardson in the TV series, and he is described by Le Carré thus:

He was of a pre-war set that seemed to have vanished for good, which managed to be disreputable and high-minded at the same time. His father was a High Court judge. Two of his several beautiful sisters had married into the aristocracy. At Oxford, he favoured the unfashionable

right over the fashionable left – but never, never to the point of strain. From his late teens, he'd been a keen explorer, an amateur painter of brave, if over-ambitious, strand. Several of his paintings now hung in Miles Circum's fatuous palace in Carlton Gardens. He had connections with every embassy and consulate in the Middle East and used them ruthlessly. He took up remote languages with ease and when '39 came the Circus snapped him up. They'd had their eye on him for years. He had a dazzling war. He was ubiquitous and charming; he was unorthodox and occasionally outrageous. He was probably heroic. The comparison with Lawrence [of Arabia] was inevitable.

And there he is – set up to be the great traitor within the British Intelligence service. But it's Smiley who's our hero, and what a character he is. He is described as small, podgy and, at best, middle-aged. He was, by appearance, one of London's meek who do not inherit the earth. He seems to dress expensively in black, but his overcoat sleeves are too long for his arms, and the London rain always accumulates on his glasses. He collects old editions of German poetry. His wife, Lady Ann Sercombe keeps leaving him. "George, how could you be so vulgar?!" a colleague puts to him. "Nobody divorces Ann – send her flowers, take her to lunch!"

Sir Alec Guinness plays Smiley in that BBC TV series. I love the way, in *Smiley's People*, when called back to solve the problem of the death of the Russian émigré general in Hampstead Heath, he looks at a roll of film. He's at home now, in Chelsea, and he lies on the couch – and he's worrying out the identity of the face captured on this secretly snapped roll of film. Here's how Le Carré describes it:

Wakefully now, he's stretched out on the sofa and, with the print before him, began plodding through the long galleries of his professional memory, holding the lamp to the half-forgotten portraits of charlatans, gold-makers, fabricators, peddlers, middle-men, hoods, rogues and occasionally heroes who made up the supporting cast of his multitudinous acquaintance.

So there's the spy master – with all the accumulated knowledge and half knowledge of those decades in the service – racking his brain to identify who that face is. He knows it. He recognises it, and the rolodex is spinning in his mind.

It's a great novel; it's a work of literature. It starts with an attempt on the life of an old Russian woman in the hot streets of summery Paris, and then with the murder of a Russian General; he's in exile, an agent of the British; he's been their best Russian agent for years. On Hampstead Heath, his body's found. And how do these two plot lines intersect? The attempt by some Russian hoods to bundle off an old Russian woman on the streets of Paris, and the murder of a general in the Russian Army on Hampstead Heath. Trying to penetrate this plot, Smiley has to go and interview a former spy, someone he picked

up in the ruins of Vienna after the Second World War. His name is Toby Esterhase and, out of the service, he's running a little art gallery in Bond St selling fake Degas. Smiley picks up a statue of a ballerina and goes to finger it saying, "What providence is this?" and Toby says, "George, don't linger there too long." And Le Carré describes Toby Esterhase as. "... a small and dapper figure, quite motionless, his full white hair was swept back with bravado. He wore a black suit with broad stripes and shoes with pantomime buckles. The stripe was definitely too big for him." That phrase "pantomime buckles" on the shoes puts Le Carré in the category of Dickens. He writes later about the grubby old exile's headquarters, the Baltic émigré organisation in London – "its little windows squinted down into a forecourt of the British Museum". That's also with Dickens.

Who captures dialogue better than Le Carré? After this murder, the bureaucratic head of the Circus, Oliver Lacon, has Smiley in. Smiley's got to solve this problem for him, and he's got to give Smiley some background into the bureaucratic manoeuvring that's been going on. So Lacon says in wonderful bureaucratic dialogue. "Three years ago George, let us start there, right after you left the Circus, your successor, Saul Enderby, your worthy successor, under pressure from a concerned cabinet – by concerned I mean, newly formed – decided on certain far-reaching measures of intelligence practice. I'll give you a background, George," he explained, interrupting himself, "I'm doing this because of who you are, because of old times and because" – he jabbed a finger at the window – "because of out there." Now that dialogue is brilliant, the dialogue of a senior British cabinet factotum. And later on we have:

"Brother Lacon told you the facts of life, I suppose, the stalemate and all?" Enderby asked. "Young idealistic Cabinet, mustard for détente, preaching open government, all that balls. Ending with additional reflexes of the Cold War, sniffing Tory conspiracies under every Whitehall bed – ours especially. Did he? Did he tell you they're proposing to launch a damn great Anglo-Bolshie peace initiative – yet another! – which will duly fall on its arse by Christmas?"

I think the high point of Le Carré is when Smiley interrogates, peels back the layers, to get to the heart of the problem.

Alan Furst

The high point of Alan Furst is the border crossing. Take one from his novel *Red Gold* where Casson, a French movie director, is working as an agent of the French underground in occupied France. And he's got to make a journey pretending to be an insurance inspector from occupied France, across the border into Vichy France, to pick up arms in Marseilles to bring back to Paris – a whole truckload of semi automatic weapons – to arm the Resistance. But,

at the border crossing, he's interrogated by a Vichy policeman. And your heart is beating; your heart is in your throat as you read this. The Vichy policeman knows nothing for sure, but he pretends to know that Casson's papers are not in order.

"Where is that office?"

"22 Rue la Botie in the 8th Arrondissement".

"And your supervisor?"

"Monsieur Labattaye."

"And your address?"

"I live at 8 Rue Fortunie"

As Casson talked, the official made notes with a scratchy pen he dipped in an inkwell.

"Please step outside, Monsieur."

Casson goes and waits outside the office. He sees the Vichy policeman make a phone call and make some notes. Then he gets called back in, and the police chief says, "Fake. Your documents don't check out." Casson looked puzzled, "How can that be?" "You tell me." Casson shrugged, amused by his own confusion. "Well, I don't know. The spelling of my name, perhaps?" "There's a possibility you and I can work this out, just a possibility, right here and now, and then you can go wherever you're going but you have to tell me everything. If you do, I might – might – be able to help you." That was a temptation. Casson lived up to it. He shook his head, "Fault in the records? I don't have any idea what it could be." And then he's allowed to go. Out on the station platform, after he has inquired when the next train to Marseilles will arrive, he reflects. Suddenly he was grateful for the whole pirate ship of characters his life had stirred up: lawyers, studio executives, actors, agents. "Forgive me, my friend," he thought. "But I've been down that road too many times." In other words, he recognised the bluff and he was up to it.

I agree with Paul O'Sullivan that betrayal is a persistent theme of spy fiction, and I draw your attention to a Le Carré that appeared in 1995, called *Our Game*, which has a retired spy opting to take on the British government and side with a colleague who's gone off to join the Ingushetians, a nation in the Caucasus, which is resisting Russian encroachment and Russian tyranny and Russian atrocities. So it's interesting to me that Le Carré, moving out of the Cold War, will opt to dramatise an argument against what he sees as Russian imperialism. It's a very interesting work in that sense.

Two beautiful examples from Furst's fiction always appealed to me. One is from *The Polish Officer*, concerning a Jewish chemist in occupied Poland who's lost just about everything and knows that soon he will lose his life. But he's applying himself to gathering reports for British Intelligence, and what he analyses is cotton wool – cotton wool found in dumps, in garbage dumps, cotton wool that has been used to

clean the rifles. What he does as a chemist is to analyse the chemicals that are on that cotton wool. If it's a fluid used to clean these rifle metal surfaces, with a low viscosity, it's not useful in temperatures below -5 degrees Fahrenheit. The moment the Germans change the nature of the oil used to lubricate the barrels of the rifles he knows they're preparing for winter warfare. This was a great introduction to spycraft.

The other is a heart racing scene from occupied Paris in the same novel. In a hotel room on the Left Bank, there's a British agent tapping out a message. She's got information to get to London. It's night, there's time for sending radio messages, she's got material that will be used by pilots of the Royal Air Force. And she's got 15 minutes to get this into the stratosphere before there's a danger of Gestapo radio vans closing in. Furst switches between her room in the seedy hotel and the room in one of the Gestapo headquarters where they're tracking her message and sending out the direction-finding Gestapo vans, with a street map of Paris, tracking her messages and closing in, block by block. They get her, but fortunately she's got cyanide pills secreted and can take her own life before she is tortured in one of the Gestapo prisons.

All of this represents an encounter with totalitarianism. It brings us up against the evils of the last century and, as I say in my book *My Reading Life*, all of us have to confront this human proclivity to indulge in totalitarianisms; to tolerate them, to apologise for them, to invent them in the very first place. The totalitarianisms of the Italian and German fascisms and some of their off shoots, we find delineated in Alan Furst's novels, or the great smouldering totalitarianism of the Soviet empire that finally comes undone. For me, a devotee of Le Carré above all, the Cold War ended not with the events of 1989 in Berlin; the Cold War ended that night on the bridge, when Karla, shuffling and lonely, emerged from the shadows and was wooed across by Smiley, and Smiley said, "Win? Win. I suppose we did."



Photo – Alfonso Calero

Lisa Pryor

Lisa Pryor is a weekly columnist at the *Sydney Morning Herald*. She has written a compelling account of what happens inside the corporate world for young high flyers – *The Pinstriped Prison* [Picador 2008] – and many of her contemporaries. Lisa Pryor addressed The Sydney Institute on Monday 8 September 2008 on the quiet desperation of the youngest and brightest members of corporate Australia.

OVER-ACHIEVING AND

SELF-LOATHING IN CORPORATE AUSTRALIA

LISA PRYOR

If you attend Sydney Institute events regularly, you'd know they're often held in the conference rooms of law firms. But not tonight. It is fortunate we are at The Sydney Institute itself, as it is probably one of the few places in the central business which isn't defamed by my book. It is also fortunate this event is being held at 6pm. I feel like I can speak freely because the people who might be upset by my comments are most probably still in their offices working.

In those offices, in the buildings all around us, from Mallesons to Clayton Utz, from Goldman Sachs to Macquarie Bank, from McKinsey to Bain, there are young recruits discovering what it means to be trapped in a pinstriped prison. The latest crop of analysts, consultants and solicitors are discovering what those a few years older already know, that corporate life is not all that is promised by the glossy recruitment brochures and the twilight cocktail parties. In the backrooms of the big firms, many are learning that work life is something akin to war: long stretches of boredom, punctuated by intense moments of excitement and fear when a deal closes or a case goes to court.

For recruits who do feel trapped, the disillusionment can be particularly galling when they consider how long and hard they have strived to attain a prestigious job in an elite firm. As I realised when researching my book, this striving begins long before graduates apply for their first job, long before they even finish high school. Typically, in a pattern repeated again and again, workaholic professions start out as achievaholic students. High achieving high schoolers learn to take pleasure in collecting accolades – winning academic prizes, captaining sporting teams, excelling in music and drama. As teenagers they are already putting in long days at the office, perhaps starting the day with swimming squad at 6am or busying themselves with homework until 11pm. When they graduate from school with excellent marks, parents and friends will bombard them with the folklore which says you should not waste high marks by doing a university course with a low cut off

mark. So they find themselves doing a prestigious course such as law, regardless of their interests. Used to judging themselves against peers based on marks and achievements, judging themselves against peers based on job offers and salaries is a small and natural step.

Once the groundwork is laid, the real entrapment begins. As the highest achieving university students approach graduation, the elite firms unleash on them an impressive propaganda assault. With information sessions and cocktail parties, sponsorship dollars and freebies, elite firms do all they can to make office jobs seem exciting to kids in their twenties. Under no circumstances can the firm give the impression that the jobs on offer are bland, repetitive, desk bound and identical to the jobs offered by rivals.

To see this propaganda assault in action, let's consider the wonderful world of recruitment brochures, a genre as manipulative as military recruitment material, only with a whole lot more stock photography of skyscrapers. The challenge facing the human resources managers who write these brochures is to make their firm sound as unique as possible, while touting exactly the same qualities as their rivals. Every firm is "unique", "dynamic" and "diverse". These words come up again and again, along with others such as "solutions", "team", "environment", "drive", "fast-paced", "respect", "culture", "challenge" and "excellence".

If you want to stop someone you know becoming a victim of this propaganda, or if you simply want to write a convincing recruitment brochure yourself, I'll share four rules of recruitment brochure writing.

Rule 1: *Appropriate the language of self-help and adventure tourism:* Big firms love using the language of personal development and exploration to make long hours in an office sound like a mind-blowing, consciousness-expanding journey. Consider the following description: "When I walk around the different floors, there's a vibrancy about the place. Everyone is busy with interesting things, things they're enthusiastic about. People aren't running around constantly worried about what they have to do. You know people are really busy but they're still remaining calm. It's a hospitable place ... you feel comfortable ... it's pretty easy to fit in, regardless of where you come from or what you're like." To me this sounds like it should be coming out of the mouth of someone with a name like Leaf, describing perhaps a hippy commune somewhere near Nimbin. But it is not. It is a solicitor called Paul describing life at Freehills.

Rule 2: *Promise more diversity than a United Nations convention:* The elite firms of today are peopled by a rainbow coalition of different races, expertises, sexual orientations and religious persuasions performing an endless variety of engaging tasks, if you believe what you read in the brochures. Investment bank UBS says it reaches out

to people from “all social and educational backgrounds”. Clayton Utz says it employs “a diverse selection of people”. Corrs too hires “the very best lawyers from a diverse range of backgrounds”. Even though every firm seems to claim it is diverse, Freehills believes it is the only place which really deserves this mantle: “The diversity among staff is also a unique feature of Freehills. Our partners are a mix of men and women, young and senior partners. Many are also achievers outside of work: Olympic athletes, winegrowers, university lecturers and even members of successful rock bands. Our partners are not only mentors at work, but also mentors in life.” That’s right. Diversity means that staff are young and old, male and female. Plus some have colourful hobbies.

Rule 3: *Insist your greatest asset is your people*: Professional firms love to remind prospective employees that people are its core business. This is true of any business which is based on providing services rather than selling goods. But of course a recruitment brochure must hint that this makes it special among its peers. At Minter Ellison? “Our people are our greatest asset, so we are serious about providing our people with a positive, motivating and challenging work environment.” And Baker & McKenzie? “The quality of our people defines the quality of our firm. So we invest in people ...” And Bain? “Our people and our culture are our greatest assets”. To prove how much they value people, firms showcase their flexibility and family friendliness. At Mallesons they are working to make work more human and therefore, presumably, less humanoid, robotic or animalistic: “Like all major organisations, Mallesons is constantly looking for ways to make work more enjoyable, more fulfilling, more human. That’s why we’ve implemented a major cultural change program called Making work work, together. This is not a glib name for a policy that exists only on paper, but is not properly practised. Making work work together is working right now in our firm.”

Rule 4: *Profess a culture as unique and intriguing as Easter Island*: Every firm has a culture as unique as a snowflake, if you believe the hype, worthy of study by anthropologists for generations to come. Some firms have a culture which is unique because it is professional yet relaxed. Another might be unique because it is innovative and business focused. Or team oriented yet valuing the individual. The British law firm Herbert Smith, for example, is totally unlike anywhere else: “In keeping with its reputation for the quality of its work and innovation, Herbert Smith’s culture is unique.” The Australian law firm Henry Davis York promises a highly professional service that is refreshingly down-to-earth: “That’s very much our style. Professional. Friendly. Cohesive. Progressive. Caring. Committed.” Their Sydney office is so buzzy that the “energy is palpable”. This is not just talk, of course. “It’s

hard to put into words; it's how you feel when you walk into HDY and deal with our people." "That's not just rhetoric, it's reality."

This is just a taste of the propaganda prospective recruits are subjected to. But can we really feel sorry for them? This is the question I have been asked over and over since the book came out. Who cares about young people who are so privileged they can manage to feel unhappy even when they're earning six figure salaries? If these graduates are so smart how could they be so easily seduced? Why shouldn't we save our sympathy for people with real problems? Like homeless amputees, burgled pensioners or injured puppies?

These are fair questions. My trite response is "who said anything about *sympathy*?" Self-loathing corporate recruits are a great source of *comedy*. I love the irony of seeing the very young people annointed as our best and brightest lured away from their interests and ideals, as easily as babies, by bright shiny things: jaunts to Switzerland for training, gourmet meals if they stay in the office after 8pm, big fat bonuses.

My serious response though, on the question of sympathy, is that we all have reason to care about disillusioned corporate recruits. They're not simply shallow and money hungry. If they were, they wouldn't be disillusioned by corporate life, they would not be searching for meaning. More important, the mild tragedy of talented individuals leading lives duller than they hoped for is not the only thing at stake. What we are witnessing is a kind of brain drain. Regardless of whether corporate recruits enjoy their jobs, it affects the nation's economy, culture and future when some of the best minds of a generation are providing professional services to business rather than leading public policy development, making scientific breakthroughs or teaching the next generation.

To illustrate this brain drain, let's consider the career paths of Rhodes Scholars. Rhodes Scholars are supposed to be the ultimate in well rounded achievement. As the Rhodes Trust explains: "Cecil Rhodes designed his Trust for the purpose of educating future leaders of the world. He had studied at Oxford and felt that its organisation especially fostered broad views and personal development." It takes more than brains to be worthy of the scholarship. Cecil Rhodes was seeking scholars who were fond of sport and successful at it. They should also demonstrate qualities of truth, courage, devotion to duty, sympathy for and protection of the weak, kindness, unselfishness and fellowship. As I researched my book, I thought that if anyone could resist the dismal tendency for high achievers to study law, or siren song of the corporate track, it would be Rhodes Scholars. But I was wrong. So wrong.

I must say I do feel slightly evil being mean about Rhodes Scholars. It feels like pulling the wings off butterflies. Here I am, a

muck-raking journalist, without the slightest sporting ability, having never volunteered in a third world refugee camp, seeing fit to criticise individuals who are not only talented but also altruistic, judging by their extracurricular activities. However, I think this issue is important enough, and the evidence is stark enough, that I am willing to look like a complete bitch to make this point.

Firstly, let's consider where Rhodes Scholars come from these days. You may not be surprised to learn that, more and more, they are coming from law. Here are the statistics from NSW. In the first 58 years of the Rhodes program, only two recipients were lawyers. By the end of the 1980s, another five law students had received the award, including the human rights lawyer Geoffrey Robertson and federal members of parliament Tony Abbott and Malcolm Turnbull. Overall, in all the years of the award up until 1990, fewer than one in ten recipients studied law. Since 1990, half the Rhodes scholars have been law students.

Secondly, let's consider where Rhodes Scholars are going to these days. This is where the story becomes even more depressing. Even those scholars who defied the pressure to study law regularly end up becoming management consultants. I think of management consulting firms as being the driftnet fishermen of the intellectual seas. Just as the wide and deep nets used by driftnet fishermen catch shark, squid, marlin and bottle-nosed dolphins, the driftnet of management consulting catches future physicists, lawyers, engineers, palaeontologists, entrepreneurs, neurologists and doctors. Even the high achieving students who defy the pressure not to "waste" their marks and instead to study choose engineering, physics, history, theology or economics can be trapped by the net of management consulting before they graduate.

Let's consider three anonymous examples.

One Australian scholar, who represented the country in swimming, wrote her geography honours thesis on refugee repatriation and undertook work experience with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Timbuktu. She later worked for the United Nations on a program to raise awareness about refugees in schools. She studied at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar before being recruited by the Boston Consulting Group in Sydney as a management consultant. Another scholar graduated with a degree in mining engineering from the University of New South Wales in 1992. After studying at Oxford she returned to Australia in 1999 to work for McKinsey in "industries ranging from consumer goods manufacturing, to insurance, telecommunications" as well as mining. Yet another scholar studied theology at Oxford as part of the Rhodes program. In the five years after graduation he taught ethics and theology, was ordained as a Uniting Church minister, worked as

a university college chaplain and held a fellowship in the Uniting Church's Theological Hall enabling him to lecture and complete a book on Christian ethics. Then he became a management consultant at McKinsey.

Australia is not the only country affected by this brain drain. Just as Cecil Rhodes mined diamonds in Africa and sent the profits back to the heart of the empire, management consulting firms are mining brains from around the world and exporting the riches to the heart of the new empire, companies headquartered in New York and Boston. So strong is the nexus between Rhodes Scholars and McKinsey, in particular, that there has long been a rumour that McKinsey is the second biggest employer of Rhodes Scholars, after the United States State Department. When I asked McKinsey about this, they confirmed they had used this statistic in their recruitment material, then denied it.

The academics who select Rhodes Scholars are not particularly happy about this state of affairs. I asked Professor Graham Hutchinson, the general secretary of the Rhodes scholarship scheme in Australia, whether anyone ever mentions in their scholarship interview that they plan to become a management consultant or a hedge fund banker when they graduate. He said that never in his nine years in the job has anyone said they planned to become a consultant or a banker.

Rhodes Scholars illustrate the broader problem, of high achieving students being coralled in a small number of courses and later a small number of corporate professions. The effect this has, of depleting other fields, is gradually being recognised by people in positions of power. In April this year, Mervyn King, governor of the Bank of England, complained to a British parliamentary committee about the excessive pay offered by London banks, which lure so many graduates away from other jobs. "I do think it is rather unattractive that so many young people, when contemplating careers, look at the compensation packages available in the City and think that these dominate almost any other type of career," he said. "It's not a very attractive situation that such a high proportion of our talented young people naturally look at the City and think it is the only place to work in. It shouldn't be. It should be one of the places, but not the only one."

The point King is making, the point I am also making, is not that corporate jobs are evil. The point is a disproportionate number of high achievers are going into a small number of professions and we should be equally concerned if the smartest graduates were all being sucked into hairdressing, marketing or construction. So what can we do to address this problem? I have a few modest suggestions, points for discussion really.

Firstly, we need to reconsider the university admission system. At the moment, students are reduced to a single mark in the final year of high school to determine which university courses they can study. This encourages the idea that degrees can be ranked hierarchically according to the cut-off mark. It also puts pressure on ambitious high school students to choose safe subjects which will not put their final result in jeopardy. It teaches young people to choose marks over knowledge, benchmarking over happiness, safety over risk. More universities should consider only offering medicine and law as postgraduate degrees, so the brightest students are not channelled into vocational paths when they are still teenagers.

Secondly, scholarships should be better targeted. There is little point in handing free money to successful students from affluent backgrounds so that they can get better marks which they then use to secure a job at a top firm. This practice is a disgrace and a lost opportunity, not to mention a subsidy for the training costs of firms such as McKinsey which target academic high performers.

Thirdly, student debt should be structured to encourage altruistic choices. Concessions for graduates who move into fields such as health and science would be a good start. Fourth, universities should be more circumspect about handing over their facilities and the eyeballs of their students to public relations campaigns by big firms. Lecture theatres and assembly halls should not be turned over to big firms to spruik their wares unless the universities offer a balancing message. Fifth, as well as providing a less thoroughly lubricated entry into big firms, more could be done to provide a more lubricated exit. It is common for professionals who have worked and studied overseas to feel the only way they can return home to Australia is by taking a job in a big firm, as governments do not properly recognise experience obtained overseas. There are particular issues in the field of education, with highly qualified graduates, who may have honours degrees or even doctorates in literature or science, not being able to teach in public high schools because they do not have specific education qualifications.

But finally, the responsibility for solving this problem must lie with the disillusioned recruits themselves. After all, the overachievers we're talking about are hardly the most vulnerable group in society. They are young, it is true, but they are also intelligent and extremely well educated. I'd go so far as to say that this demographic includes some of the most fortunate people living at one of the most fortunate times in human history. If they have the intelligence and tenacity to get a job in a big firm, they have the intelligence and tenacity to get out and succeed elsewhere. And if they are worried what their parents might think? Then I'd recommend *The Pin Striped Prison* as a wonderfully passive aggressive Christmas present.



Photo – Alfonso Calero

Anthony Albanese

The Hon Anthony Albanese, the Member for Grayndler, is Australia's Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government. As part of the Rudd Government's nation building agenda, Minister Albanese has sought to include industry and community in partnership with government in order to modernise the nation's critical economic infrastructure. On Wednesday 10 September 2008, Anthony Albanese addressed The Sydney Institute on the importance of national leadership in achieving crucial infrastructure and transport reforms.

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORT REFORM

ANTHONY ALBANESE

It is a great pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to the Sydney Institute as Australia's first Commonwealth Infrastructure Minister. Tonight we are not far from one of this nation's most recognisable examples of well-planned infrastructure – the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Built in the 1920s and early 1930s, the designers had the foresight to build eight lanes in anticipation of future demand. It is hard to imagine Sydney without it.

At the other end of the scale, we are also close to the mismatch of roads that is the Sydney CBD. These roads were generally constructed by chain gangs on the basis of the lines of least resistance or the path most often used by goats or bullocks. The results of this ad hoc approach to planning are more evident than ever, particularly at this time of the day when the city's workers start to head home. Well-designed infrastructure can literally shape a nation and deliver productivity benefits to the country for decades to come. This is the context for the Rudd Government placing the national coordination of infrastructure as a central element of our economic reform agenda.

Tonight I want to discuss the Rudd Government's nation building agenda and in particular the need for the Commonwealth to reengage in policies that impact on our cities. The new government's approach is consistent with Labor's traditions, but that doesn't mean we are simply repeating what's been done in the past. Consistent with Labor's tradition as a dynamic political party that looks to the future, we are embarking on an innovative, comprehensive and transformative approach to delivering our vision. From the construction of the Snowy Mountains Hydro Scheme under Chifley to the floating of the dollar under Hawke, we have always been willing to take the tough decisions to both meet immediate challenges, and also support the nation's long term interests. The last 18 years of economic growth had as their foundation reforms championed by Hawke and Keating which made the Australian economy competitive in a globalised world.

Infrastructure Australia

Today's challenges require new approaches and new solutions. Many of the previous Labor government reforms were the product of constructive dialogue between government, business and the community – including trade unions. The introduction of the superannuation guarantee is just one example which will help to sustain the Australian economy in the long term. The Rudd Government is once again engaging in constructive dialogue with the business sector in first framing and then fulfilling our agenda. As I met with the business community at conferences and around boardroom tables in the two years prior to last November's election, I was struck by the consistency of the message I received.

A need for national coordination, the development of a pipeline of projects, ending the "blame game" and removing impediments to investment were messages so consistent they could have been on a pre-recorded loop. This was in harmony with the message from the Australian public. Infrastructure failings have a real impact on Australians' everyday lives and they have become increasingly frustrated over urban congestion, water shortages and limited broadband capacity.

It's truly remarkable that the Howard Government was deaf to the growing noise around infrastructure. Even 20 warnings from the Reserve Bank of Australia about capacity constraints caused by infrastructure and skills shortages were ignored. I put this down to their ideological view that markets would deliver by themselves and that public investment in infrastructure was just a cost. As Infrastructure Minister, I inherited a policy vacuum. The Rudd Government has acted quickly to fill the void. We established an Infrastructure Department in the Executive Orders and introduced legislation to create Infrastructure Australia in the first Parliamentary session.

Infrastructure Australia brings all levels of government together with the private sector. The appointment of Sir Rod Eddington as the first Chair of Infrastructure Australia was followed by the appointment of the 12member Advisory Council. This included Mark Birrell from Infrastructure Partnerships Australia; Phil Hennessy from KPMG; Heather Ridout from the Australian Industry Group; Ross Rolfe from Babcock and Brown; and Garry Weaven from Industry Funds Management, as well as senior public servants including Terry Moran and Ken Henry. This collaborative approach is consistent with the government's overall policy of creating the environment for market based solutions, while also providing critical government leadership when required.

If Infrastructure Australia provides the way, our decision to set aside \$20 billion for the Building Australia Fund provides the means

– or at least its beginning. This initial injection is from the surplus and is right for the times. It is one of the reasons why the surplus is being defended by the government as an essential component of responsible economic management. The Budget produced a surplus with a purpose. A purpose in the short term because it puts downward pressure on inflation and interest rates. A purpose in the long term because it provides for long term investment funds to address capacity constraints and lift productivity. Every time the opposition votes in the Senate to diminish the surplus, they are voting to reduce infrastructure spending and are putting short-term political interest before long term national economic interests.

The global economic uncertainty created by the credit squeeze and rising global oil prices, makes the Budget decision to focus on infrastructure even more prescient. But there is another factor beyond immediate economic and political considerations that underlines our approach. Australia must break the link between the electoral cycle and the investment cycle. Our predecessors squandered the opportunity presented by the resources boom to invest in our long term future. They wasted opportunities which were presented by successive budget surpluses on solely boosting consumption, and ignored supply side issues including skills and infrastructure which would have boosted productivity and secured prosperity for years to come.

Governments will always be tempted to choose short term recurrent expenditure over long term capital expenditure. The Minister who announces an infrastructure project rarely gets to preside over its opening. Infrastructure Australia's national audit, followed by the national priority list, will break this 3-year mindset. The government sees our infrastructure agenda as an enduring reform which will exist well beyond current circumstances.

Getting down to work

Whilst the infrastructure priority list is critical, in the meantime, the government is progressing our nation building agenda. In the Budget, we brought forward expenditure on election commitments and announced new planning money and feasibility studies on potential projects. This morning I joined with the Prime Minister in Townsville to turn the first sod on the Port Access Road. This \$190 million project could generate as much as \$10 billion in economic activity for the North Queensland region. Yesterday, I was in Gladstone and Mackay announcing infrastructure funding for these booming regional centres. The Townsville Port Access Road is a practical example of smart government investment having a significant multiplier effect on the economy. It has been talked about for 30 years.

Kevin Rudd announced it in 2007 as Opposition Leader and now, in conjunction with the Queensland government, we are delivering it.

Even before Infrastructure Australia began its work, we began pushing for transport policy reform through the Australian Transport Council. The Australian Transport Council has had three meetings to advance transport reforms that have been left on the shelf for many years. Many of the constraints on the current transport system are the legacy of different jurisdictional approaches to transport regulation. This inconsistent regulation places restrictions on the transport sector's capacity to move people and freight as efficiently as a modern economy demands. The Productivity Commission found in 2007 that improvements to the efficiency of the road and rail freight transport industry, including more streamlined regulation, could deliver as much as \$2.4 billion to annual GDP. The constitutional compromises made by the founding fathers more than a century ago are today creating real and significant disadvantages for the economy: higher prices; higher business costs; and fewer export dollars.

Commonsense dictates that in a country of just 21 million people, one consistent set of transport laws and regulations is the position we should be aspiring to. Let me give you some examples of the areas where reform is needed. Australia has seven rail safety regulators, three rail safety investigators and different rules in every state. The European Union and the United States each have one.

It is extraordinary that in the twenty-first century, trains are required to change their staffing ratios as they cross borders. There are more than 50 pieces of legislation and subordinate legislative instruments pertaining to maritime safety along with eight independent maritime safety agencies. States do not automatically recognise maritime qualifications granted in another state. Different standards for commercial boat building apply in each jurisdiction. When truckies cross state borders, they are subject to different laws and have to put up with different frameworks for their vehicles' access to the roads. That's why the Australian Transport Council will be recommending to COAG in October that it give in-principle support to progressing a number of policy initiatives to move Australia towards a truly national transport framework. These include a single national system for heavy vehicle regulation, registration and driver licensing; a national system for maritime safety regulation; and the establishment of a National Road Safety Council. Separately, ATC will be continuing work on a proposal for a national rail safety regulator and investigator.

Tonight I announce that the Rudd Government has allocated \$4.5 million in this financial year to meet the costs of the detailed work involved in accurately assessing the implications of proposed changes on industry through regulatory impact statements. This work

will involve a thorough investigation of the costs, benefits and possible options for reform, providing a clear path to take these reforms forward. The work we are undertaking with the states and territories, under the COAG umbrella, is helping to break down the 'blame game' which has afflicted our federation for far too long. Much of this transport reform will inevitably focus on our major cities, where congestion is more acute.

Major Cities

The Rudd Government is engaging the Commonwealth in our cities. This reflects our strong belief that the success of our cities, in large part, drives our economy. Approximately 70 per cent of our population lives in cities. And that 70 per cent is delivering around 80 per cent of Australia's economic activity. The Major Cities Unit of the Commonwealth government will be located within Infrastructure Australia here in Sydney. It will focus attention on three objectives. Firstly, *productivity* – reducing urban congestion and improving our freight networks so that people and goods can move more efficiently. Secondly, *sustainability*, ensuring that planning assists in the critical task of reducing carbon pollution and securing our water supply. And thirdly, *liveability*, linked to the first two objectives but remembering that there is indeed such a thing as society and that community participation and access to services is critical.

We want to cast our eyes over the ways in which our cities operate and assess them against these three objectives. Our cities must learn from each other and from overseas cities, while still retaining their own unique characteristics. There is a real opportunity here to make some small changes in our major cities to deliver big benefits. Many of these initiatives involve infrastructure provision, particularly improvements to public transport and road network design. However, much of the reform is broader than just infrastructure. It is about encouraging flexible work hours to avoid the rush hour peaks on our urban networks. It is about more distributed work centres to avoid concentrations in city centres. It is about transforming old industrial suburbs to greenhouse friendly city developments. It is about undertaking urban renewal projects in older housing estates.

Commonwealth re-engagement in our cities is also a necessary component of the whole-of-government response to climate change. It is in Australia's long term interests to start the transition to a carbon constrained economy. Climate change must be a key consideration in the design and functioning of our cities and urban planning issues.

Conclusion

Infrastructure development is no longer a second order issue without a voice in cabinet, and without a dedicated commonwealth

agency. The Rudd Government has made modernising our nation building infrastructure a top priority because we understand the critical role it plays in driving higher productivity and greater prosperity. This is not economic reform for its own sake; it is a means to an end. We must never forget that infrastructure delivery impacts on the everyday lives of all Australians. It affects the price they pay for fruit and vegetables at the local supermarket. It determines whether there is enough water for their garden and electricity to power their homes. It impacts directly on the quality of their lives.

It is indeed a tragedy that many working parents spend more time commuting to and from work than they do at home with their kids. The Rudd Government is determined. Determined to get the infrastructure right. Determined to reform the Federation. Determined through Infrastructure Australia to ensure that long term nation building receives more community support than short term political decision making.

If we don't change the dynamic so that no future government can disregard infrastructure investment, then it will be the community that suffers. That is why the Rudd Government is passionate about pursuing our nation building agenda.

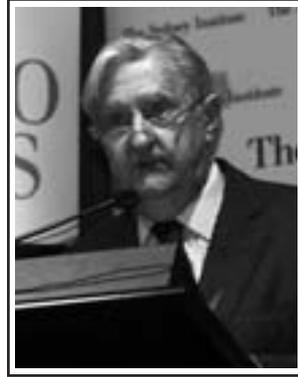
FUNCTIONS - 2008



Photographer: Alfonso Calero



Peter Costello



Peter Coleman

Photo - Alfonso Calero

The Hon Peter Costello, Member for Higgins and former Federal Treasurer has been a prominent figure in Australian politics for over 18 years. As Australia's longest serving Treasurer and Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party from 1994-2007, he fought in five elections, introduced the GST and presided over important regulatory changes in the financial system. Peter Coleman is a former politician, journalist and author. *The Costello Memoirs* [Melbourne University 2009] delves into these, and countless other, political achievements and intrigues, offering a frank insight into the Liberal Party machine and Howard-Costello government. The Hon Peter Costello and Peter Coleman, as co-authors of *The Costello Memoirs*, addressed The Sydney Institute on Wednesday 1 October 2008.

THE COSTELLO

MEMOIRS
PETER COSTELLO

If I have a criticism of our side of politics it is that it doesn't take history or ideas seriously enough. And you only have to get into the business of writing books and reading reviews of your books to realise that most of the reviewers and most of the writers come from the left side of politics. There aren't many on our side engaged in this activity. And I thought for that reason it was important that someone on our side of politics – the centre right of politics – should actually take the time to write something of the history of our government before it was written for us. I wanted to tell it before it got re-written.

The re-writing of history really began on the day after the election. I watched Mr Rudd and Mr Swan try to tell the Australian public how bad the Australian economy was when they were elected – how inflation was so high and, poor them, they had inherited an economy that was growing beyond capacity. They have changed their tune somewhat. Now that there is financial instability around the world – something I warned of before the election – they are emphasising how well Australia is placed compared to other countries. It apparently doesn't cause them to ask who strengthened it and who prepared us for these challenges. But we will take the compliment even if they didn't intend it.

Over the last 40 years, governments have changed infrequently in Australia and you can see recurring patterns when they do. I remember the change of government in 1975 when Fraser defeated Whitlam. Australia was suffering from double digit inflation, unemployment was rising, the economy was souring – there was a reason why the public turned on, and defeated, the Whitlam Government. In 1983 Australia was in the midst of severe drought and recession when Hawke defeated Fraser. The economy turned into a potent issue in the hands of the Opposition. It was a major factor for electors to vote out the Government.

I would say it was much the same in March of 1996 when the Keating Government was defeated and our own government, led by John Howard, was elected. We had been through a deep recession,

unemployment was still over 8 per cent in 1996, interest rates were higher than they are today, the Budget was in deep deficit. I think the public would have gotten rid of Keating earlier – in the 1993 election – had it not been for a stroke of genius on our side of politics, that conjured up a series of policies which made it virtually impossible for swinging voters to vote for us. As a result we lost the unlosable election. But the swing voters were ready to avenge themselves by 1996 when we won by a landslide.

So how do you explain the November 2007 defeat of the Howard Government? As I write in this book we had been through an “Age of Prosperity”. This had been the longest period of economic growth in Australia’s history – net household wealth tripled in 11 years from 1996 to 2007. Unemployment had fallen to 4 per cent. We were at a position of full employment. Interest rates were lower when we were voted out of office than when we came into office. We had balanced the Budget, we had paid off all net government debt. And, if I were looking to take the recurring pattern, the 2007 Election doesn’t fit it, it doesn’t fit the analysis of 1975, 1983 or 1996.

So this is the question I ask in the book: How is it that a government which had created such a period of prosperity – whose economic record was the envy of the world – was voted out of office in November 2007? And the book is my attempt to answer that question. In my analysis it wasn’t that the public was angry with the government, it wasn’t that the public felt the government had failed. But the public wanted change. And that’s why I would pair this election with 1972 when the McMahon Government was voted out of office after a long period of Coalition rule. My view was, and is, that in the lead up to the 2007 Election if the Liberal Party didn’t give the electorate the change it wanted the electorate was going to give the government change it wanted. In the end it did that emphatically, voting us out of government and, unfortunately, voting John Howard out in his own seat of Bennelong.

And the lesson that I draw from that, a lesson I hope the Liberal Party will take to heart, is that a political party like a business, like a charity, like a school, has to focus on succession planning. Any organisation that wants to live beyond one chief executive or one leader, no matter how good they are, knows that they have to focus on succession planning. We mismanaged our succession planning, we mismanaged our leadership transition, we were caught at the end of November 2007 with an electorate which had stopped listening to the government – a government which it thought had had a long run and was nearing the end of its time – and an electorate which wanted change.

The Labor Party has figured this out. When the New South Wales electorate stopped listening to Bob Carr he stood down in favour of

Morris Iemma. The public may now realise how hoodwinked it was by this leadership transition and the “fresh face” but it managed to give the Labor government in New South Wales another term. Beattie did the same in Queensland standing down in favour of Anna Bligh. In Victoria, Steve Bracks has just done the same in favour of John Brumby. Gallop in Western Australia stood down for Carpenter. Lennon stood down for his successor Bartlett in Tasmania.

The Labor Party has much more a culture of the party than the Liberal Party. Individuals will stand aside for the good of the party. In the final chapter of my book, I say that the Labor Party has the cult of party, the Liberal Party has the cult of the leader. And there are historical reasons why that is the case. But the cult of leadership has not always served the Liberal Party well. And it certainly hasn't served it well in recent years where it now finds itself, apart from the recently elected government in Western Australia, out of office in every state and territory and at the federal level.

I have a chapter in my book on leadership, and obviously that's the one that has excited most of the press. I trace the leadership discussions, the manoeuvrings between John Howard, myself and others from December 1994 through John Howard's 64th birthday in 2003, to the Athens declaration after the 2004 Election, to the APEC Meeting in September 2007. I describe the week of the APEC meeting here in Sydney, almost exactly a year ago, as a “week of madness”. This was Australia's largest ever diplomatic event. Here in Sydney we had the President of the United States: George Bush; the President of China: Hu Jintao; the President of Russia: Vladimir Putin. We have never had a President of Russia come to Australia before and over three successive days our senior ministers had meetings with each of those leaders – Bush, Hu Jintao and Putin. And during those meetings we were discussing Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq. We were discussing terrorism and greenhouse issues. I remember vividly a dinner at Kirribilli House with George Bush where I discussed with him the US sub-prime crisis then only beginning to emerge in September of 2007.

And whilst these face-to-face meetings were going on with John Howard and his senior ministers, the moment they finished the senior ministers were meeting, at the Prime Minister's request, to decide whether or not he should vacate his office. We were in parallel universes – with our foreign guests we maintained the façade that it was business as usual – under Howard for the long term – but the ministers themselves had concluded he should go within the week.

It illustrates to me how much of politics is conducted at the shop front window level to the public whilst real decisions are being made out the back in the workshop where it is all being put together. Bismarck, the Chancellor of Germany, once said: “There are two

things you should never see – one is how sausages are made and the other is how politics is made.”

In our government, which commenced in March of 1996 and finished in November of 2007, there were three people that were in the Cabinet for the whole period – John Howard, Alexander Downer and myself. I was there on day one and I was there when it all went down. And it was a very long period. Because the three of us were in that government for the duration, Howard became the second longest serving Prime Minister in Australia’s history, Downer became the longest serving Foreign Minister in Australia’s history and I became the longest serving Treasurer in Australia’s history. In fact, in delivering 12 Budgets, I have delivered more than 10 per cent of the federal Budgets in the whole of Australian history. Now people say that’s a great accolade. Another way of looking at it is to say that I’d have been better if I had got myself out of that job before I delivered 12 of them!

It was an extraordinarily productive period, at least in the economic sense. I am very confident about the judgement of history. I think when the history of this period is written it will be judged one of the greatest economic periods that we have ever experienced. It was certainly the longest period of continuous economic expansion that we have ever experienced. It was the greatest accumulation of household wealth that we have ever experienced. We recovered for the first time since the 1960s and the early 1970s to a position of full employment. In fact, by the time the government was voted out you began to hear a phrase you hadn’t heard in Australia for 30 or 40 years – labour shortage. Our opponents think this is a bad thing. They criticise our government because there were skill shortages. Nobody was talking about skill shortages back in 1996 when we were elected. They were talking about job shortages. And labour shortage was something that re-entered the Australian lexicon. Under our government, after 10 years, we had more jobs chasing people rather than more people chasing jobs.

I also try to recount in the book some of the amusing ways in which politics and personalities interacted. I do that because I want people to actually read the book. There was an editorial published in the *Asian Wall Street Journal* yesterday on my book which is headlined: “A-How-To-Run-An-Economy-Manual”. Now that’s a very kind thing for the *Wall Street Journal* to say about my book. But how many people will buy it if they think it is “A-How-To-Run-An-Economy-Manual”? I want to tell you it is much more interesting than that title would imply.

For example I will never forget when I went to Canberra to do my first Budget in 1996. We had gone through a whole election campaign being told the Budget was in balance. Two days after the election I

was told that wasn't the truth. In fact the Budget was around about 1½ per cent of GDP in deficit. The first term of our government would be dominated by efforts to try and get the Budget into balance, something that Australia hadn't experienced for quite some time.

I flew up to Canberra with Tanya, my wife, to deliver the Budget and my mother came around to look after our children. My son Sebastian was nine years of age at the time. And when the time came to deliver the Budget my mother, his grandmother, said come and watch TV, we will watch Dad deliver the Budget. And Sebastian, at the age of nine, said: "Nah that's boring." She said, "Oh no, it will not be boring. It is very interesting. Dad will be speaking. You will be interested to hear what he has got to say." "No, that's boring," Sebastian said. She said, "Well you haven't seen it so how do you know it's boring?" And Sebastian aged nine said, "I went into his study yesterday and I read the speech. It was on his desk."

I recounted the story publicly. Sure enough, a year later on the day before the Budget the phone rang at home. So I answered it. "It's Laurie Oakes here." "Oh, g'day Laurie; how are you?" Oakes said: "I was wondering if I could speak to Sebastian. I want to ask him if he read any speeches on your desk yesterday?" Of course interwoven with all of these events are the personal stories of many of my colleagues and some of the humorous anecdotes of what actually happened. The press have obviously focussed on leadership issues, but the book is much more serious than that. It tells the story of our fiscal history, how monetary policy got made, the story of the GST and the difficulties of implementing it.

Some of these achievements are taken for granted now and no one would suggest for a moment reversing them. But they were hard fought at the time. And introducing the GST, where we changed the price of three billion goods and services on one night, was a reform of mammoth proportions. In fact, unbeknown to me, I started grinding my teeth in my sleep at night worrying about the implementation of GST. My dentist prepared a gold crown for one of my damaged teeth. And when I went to the dentist to have it fitted he pulled out the gold crown and looked at it and started laughing. And he said, "Oh, the technician has got a sense of humour." And I said, "Why is that?" And he said, "The technician who made the crown has engraved some initials on it, it reads G – S – T." He then stuck it in my mouth. He said "If we ever need to identify you from dental records we'll know who it is. You're the one with GST engraved on his teeth." And that gave me great confidence. If I ever die in an accident somewhere out there is a gold crown which will identify me and only me.

We went through a financial crisis at the end of 1997 where we had the Asian financial and economic collapse. I will never forget it. I had to go into work on Christmas Day 1997 to authorise a one

billion dollar loan to Korea which had run out of foreign reserves. The Korean government was appealing to its citizens to donate gold jewellery so it could build foreign reserves. People began queuing to donate their gold jewellery to the Korean government. I have often mused about that – imagine asking Australians to donate their gold jewellery to the government to save the Australian economy. Do you think we would get queues outside the Tax Office?

But I learnt a few lessons coming out of that financial crisis – how important financial regulation is and that is one of the reasons why we set up our regulatory system with the Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority – APRA. It is one of the reasons why we had much tighter supervision of credit standards than the United States throughout that period and it is one of the reasons why we began the great task of paying off Commonwealth government debt.

And the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, regularly says (listening to him may be an effort, but listen to him) – when he talks about the reasons why Australia should be insulated from the worst excesses of the current financial instability – that we have got a good regulatory system. He is right, it wasn't always like that. It was put in place back in the late 1990s. Kevin Rudd says we have well capitalised and profitable banks – we do. It wasn't always like that. Those of us who have been around a long time remember banks getting into quite considerable trouble in the 1980s. He should go on and say we don't carry any government debt which makes us different from the United States with a debt to GDP ratio of 50 per cent.

I would rather go into a financial crisis with no debt and no interest payments than a \$9.6 trillion debt as the US government has whilst they try and finance another bail-out package of \$700 billion – another \$0.7 trillion – to add to their current debt ceiling of \$9.6 trillion. It gives you a bit of strength you see. But it wasn't always like that. And I try and explain the decisions that we made to put that position in place.

I will never forget one incident from the 2007 election campaign. I was being trailed by media and cameras wherever I went and I turned up at the Ashburton Primary School in Melbourne. The school principal had deputised a child from each grade to ask me a question. So we started off with Grade 6 and the student got up and said, "Mr Costello can you use a computer?" "Oh well, yes I can, yes, yes." Next question: "Mr Costello, what football team do you barrack for?" "Oh I barrack for the mighty Bombers." Next question: "Mr Costello do you have any children?" "Yes I have three children." We got right down to the youngest class – the kindy class – and, in front of the whole school and unbeknown to him in front of the whole press pack of Australia, a cute little boy grabbed the microphone and said, "Mr Costello, my name is Rourke and I want to know who made cactuses?"

Well it was the question of the campaign. Didn't the press have a field day? The banner headline in the *Sydney Morning Herald* the next day was, "Mr Costello are you cactus?" And I use that to explain the 2007 election campaign in a chapter entitled "Going Cactus". I describe how we went cactus in the 2007 election campaign. It should have come as no surprise to anybody. Every poll for 18 months had said that the Coalition was behind. There were 50 polls in a row – Nielsen, Newspoll and Galaxy – 50 polls in a row said the government was going to be defeated. I have never seen anything like it in my political lifetime. At some point in 2007 we were 16 points behind. John Howard used the word "annihilation" to describe our prospects. We ended up better than that. But the closest we got that year was on the election day itself.

It is a book that also acknowledges failures. I think there were failures of our government. I think we got reconciliation wrong. If we had made a positive movement on the symbolism of reconciliation earlier we would have prevented the polarisation that went on and dogged the government throughout nearly ten years. If the purpose was to prevent an apology from ever being given or to avoid legal liability it didn't work because it's been done anyway. If we'd have taken hold of the issue earlier on and dealt with it, it would have been better. The state Liberal premiers by and large did that. I think we failed on a Republic. I don't think the Republic issue will go away. The Liberal Party should have grabbed it and used it to introduce a model with which it was comfortable rather than leave that to other hands. This will prove a very difficult issue for the Liberal Party to handle in opposition – much more difficult to handle in opposition than in government.

I have tried to write as objectively and as openly as I can about some of those failures. It has been almost a year since the defeat of the Coalition in November of 2007. Normally, when political parties lose an election they do an analysis as to the reasons why. I believe an analysis has been done but I am not sure who knows about its findings. I am not sure if anybody in the Liberal Party has yet seen it. And you don't want to waste too much time in federal politics because it is a three year term and we are nearly one third through it. This book may be the first serious analysis as to why we lost. The Party has to come to grips with that before it starts rebuilding and positioning itself for the 2010 election. It is my contribution. I try and do it as objectively as I can. I try to analyse the reasons for our loss because if you don't make the right diagnosis you won't prescribe the right treatment. If we have a false diagnosis as to why we lost the election we may try all sorts of things but a treatment which doesn't address the illness is no treatment at all. And that is why I think it is very, very important that our party comes to grips with that.

Let me conclude by summarising the economic record one other way. In 2007, in Canberra, I hosted an official dinner for Lee Kwan Yew. Lee Kwan Yew was Minister Mentor in the Singaporean government. He is, I think, one of the great regional leaders. He has been intimately involved in the development of his country from its beginning. He sat down at dinner and started talking about the Australian prime ministers he had dealt with starting with Sir Robert Menzies. He has had a long engagement with Australia. And when the dinner finished I said to Lee Kwan Yew, "Minister Mentor, do you recall saying in the 1980s that Australia risked becoming the poor white trash of Asia?" He replied, "How could I forget? Every time I meet an Australian I am reminded of it!" I said, "Well, what is your view now?" And he said, "You have changed. Your country is in a different place now." And we are different. We did change. We changed a lot, and we made the country much stronger economically.

We are no longer the economic pariah of the region. We are seen as one of the strong economies of the region. Australians' attitudes towards themselves changed as a consequence of that. And if this book can tell something of that story then it's been well worth doing.

WRITING THE

COSTELLO MEMOIRS

PETER COLEMAN

You may think it remarkable that Peter Costello and I ever managed to co-write these memoirs. The book is in part a personal statement, an autobiography, and good autobiographies – I don't mean celebrity autobiographies written by ghosts – are usually the heartfelt work of one person only. Co-authorship is possible, and we did it, but it is at times difficult and touchy. Not perhaps as difficult as, say, co-authoring a poem or co-composing a concerto. That's almost impossible. But difficult and rare just the same.

But *The Costello Memoirs* is not only autobiography. It is also political history, or journalism and polemic – where co-authorship often works well. A year or two ago, I co-authored a biography of a controversial economist, Heinz Arndt (with Selwyn Cornish and Peter Drake). It is a life-and-times story – not unlike *The Costello Memoirs*. The co-authors of that biography collaborated easily. That emboldened me to take on collaboration with Peter Costello.

How did it happen? The story of the book begins early this year when several of Peter's friends, colleagues and family, including me but more particularly his wife (my daughter) Tanya, were urging him to place on record his account of his momentous years in public life from, say, the dramatic or melodramatic Dollar Sweets case through to the electoral catastrophe of 24 November 2007. It would be an insider's story and a contribution, a major one, to political literature. Louise Adler of Melbourne University Publishing added her authority and enthusiasm to the idea.

But Peter wasn't so sure. He felt a certain modesty. He had written many speeches and addresses over the years of several thousand words but never anything longer. He had never written a book. To turn out 140,000 words in a few months was a big ask. This is where I came in. Louise Adler thought I should be able to help. I had written a few books. I had spent some years in state and federal politics and knew something of the splendours and miseries of parliamentary and ministerial life. I was an admirer of Peter Costello. We trusted each other. So we talked over Louise Adler's suggestion and decided to

give it a go. We had first to settle on some ground rules. I do not mean anything signed and sealed. You don't *need* formality when you have trust. But we agreed on a rough division of labour, a timetable, and a program of meetings in Sydney, Melbourne or Canberra whenever we needed more than telephones, faxes and emails.

We soon fixed on the main themes. That was the easy part. Then we wrote, discussed, debated, edited and re-wrote each chapter as we worked our way through the narrative. You will be able to pick out a paragraph here and there and say that was obviously written by Costello and that by Coleman - especially if you have an eye or an ear for that sort of thing, but it won't always be easy.

The co-authorship worked. Peter had few complaints about my part in the final draft. And I did not even consider quibbling about what Peter had to say about his term as a governor of the IMF, or amending what he had to say about personal matters. This is his story, his memoirs, not mine.

I did not want to emulate that famous German scholar who edited the prose works of Goethe, the great poet. At one point in one essay, Goethe wrote: "With her, for the first time in my life, I really fell in love." The scholar immediately added a Teutonic footnote: "Here Goethe was in error."

There were some unresolvable differences of opinion. I am a true-believer federalist who does not share Peter's centralist hostility to the states. I also have more reservations about the republic than he has: I am a paid-up member of Les Murray's republican branch of Australians for Constitutional Monarchy. But these and other points of continuing disagreement are small details in the big picture the book paints - the Age of Prosperity and Peter Costello's role in it. I had no wish or reason to press these disagreements.

In any case he was persuasive enough for me to reconsider my own positions on some matters. For example, Peter supported the Reconciliation Walk and the Apology to the Aborigines for their dispossession and related grievances, while I was sceptical about the lasting value of such symbolic gestures. But I came to see merit in his argument that some symbolic gestures such as an Apology have their own potency, especially when combined with practical measures, such as the Northern Territory Intervention. I commend Chapter 11 to you, the one titled "From Mabo to Mal".

I should add I have read with some bemusement headlines and stories in the press about poison pens and revenge attacks. I'm here to say that this is tendentious, wrong-headed and wrong. As a co-author I know what I wanted to do and I know what Peter wanted to do - that is, state facts, correct errors, and present Peter's point of view - fairly and where possible in a good-humoured way. Any poison or revengefulness is in the eye or the mind or the pen of the beholder.

There were indeed some occasions in early drafts where I expressed myself more caustically than Peter thought just and reasonable – in judgments on the Government’s defeat in November. He persuaded me to temper my language. And please note that whatever criticisms the book makes of John Howard, it is also generous to him, some may say overgenerous. For example, in an interview quoted in the book Peter Costello describes him as – “with the possible exception of Sir Robert Menzies” – Australia’s greatest Prime Minister.

There were some other difficulties. Peter and I had some problems with prose style. Politicians and writers are chalk and cheese. I used to be a politician but I have spent 20 years purging myself. A good writer is allergic to obscure language, but a good politician knows that there will be times when obscurity, whether instinctive or calculated, will be useful. It helps to buy time and keep options open until the right moment. It is sometimes an essential tool. You get into the habit of it.

This sometimes made for a certain tension, but Peter Costello, in prose as in politics, is not predictable. His style – and fluency – changed during the writing of the book. In the beginning he would provide notes – rough, detailed notes – which I would add to other raw material and transmute into a chapter or two. But he quickly developed the writer’s knack. He soon began delivering chapters that called for minimum input from the co-author.

There’s no doubt that history will judge Peter Costello as a Treasurer rather than as a stylist. But in the course of our co-authorship he became a writer, a good one. He will *not* be as diffident as he once was when he signs up with MUP for the next volume of his memoirs, whether they be about Federal politics or some other calling. And he won’t be looking for a co-author.

A couple of weeks ago when we were launching this book in Canberra, one critic – the novelist and clairvoyant, Thomas Keneally – prophesied that *The Costello Memoirs* will not be read in 300 years’ time. He may be right. But in the mean time I recommend it to you. Peter and I are proud of this book. We await your sentence.



Photo – Alfonso Calero

Ann Genovese

Dr Ann Genovese is a Research Fellow at the Melbourne University Law School and co-author of *Rights and Redemption: law history and indigenous peoples* with Ann Curthoys and Alexander Reilly. *Rights and Redemption* investigates how the courts have made use of historians as expert witnesses, and how the colonial past has been framed and understood by the courts. This work examines the intersection between history and law during the era of the Howard Government, especially in relation to Indigenous rights and the place of Aboriginal people in the national story. Ann Genovese addressed The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 7 October 2008 to discuss the role of history in Australian judicial thought.

HISTORY IN JUDICIAL

THOUGHT: AUSTRALIAN LAW AND HISTORY AFTER MABO

ANN GENOVESE

Since the decision of *Mabo No 2*, in 1992, history and law have been forced to have a very public conversation in Australia. The High Court of course decided in that case that native title exists, although only in instances where an Aboriginal community can demonstrate that it has a continuing, unbroken traditional connection with its land since colonisation. From a legal perspective, the decision was controversial for its novel interpretation of the common law. Prior to *Mabo* the legal position, as expressed in 1971 in *Milirrpum v Nabalco Pty Ltd*, was that the common law did not recognise in any way pre-existing Indigenous rights to land in a settled colony. The decision therefore overturned what had been the settled legal position on the consequences of colonisation for over 150 years. In this way, *Mabo* was not only about a change in law, but an updating of the history upon which the law was based.¹

The public conversation about law and history, and the nation, which flowed after *Mabo* was premised on this point. The High Court had referred in their judgments, alongside international law, and English and Australian precedent, to the work of historians; in particular (but not solely) to the published work of Henry Reynolds. Reynolds of course had been both personally supportive of Eddie Mabo in his claim against the State of Queensland, and had also been researching the alternative version of the idea of *terra nullius* in his historical scholarship throughout the 1970s and 1980s, which was of assistance to the claim. It is important to remember here that the 1970s and 1980s was a time of flux in indigenous politics, and also in historical scholarship about indigenous and settler contact. In the 1968 Boyer lectures, WH Stanner had famously declared that there was a “great Australian silence”² about our past in relation to the experience and treatment of indigenous Australians under the settler colonial project. Over the coming decade, Stanner’s challenge to us as a nation as to how we thought about race relations was influential in inspiring a new generation of historians of Australian history, who

were committed to shattering that silence, and writing indigenous experiences back into our view of nationhood.

This historiographical development also coincided with the end of the assimilation era, assimilation being a policy that Stanner had identified as impossible, as it forced Indigenous identities to be legally remade. This conflation of ideas and reshaping of policies meant that in material terms history and politics were purposively combined in Australian public discourse about race from the 1970s. As Robert Manne has argued, “A deepened historical consciousness concerning their dispossession played a vital part in the granting of land rights, in the creation of national representative Aboriginal political structures, in the acceptance of native title, in the attempts to write a treaty between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians and, when this failed, in the struggle for reconciliation”.³ This historiographical consciousness was, in other words, imbricated in political change, and finally met up with common law, and then legislative reform, because of *Mabo*. The nature of the histories of the nation that took account of indigenous perspectives was however deeply challenging to many. Reynolds’s work in particular became the centre of a firestorm of more generalised debate, about the validity and objectivity of historical scholarship, and the nature of methods involved in understanding the past pertaining to the present.⁴ That debate has been central in what we know think of as “the culture wars”, and also in relation to how we view Australian history more generally, especially as it is taught in schools.

But *Mabo* was also influential in other ways that often stood aloof from, or happened in parallel to, public discussion about the history wars and cultural ideas about methodology and national identity. That influence is of course in the courts, where this recent engagement with ideas of past, present and authority started. That story is the one we track and think about in our book, *Rights and Redemption*. It is a story about the relationship between law and history as disciplines. It is also a story about how that relationship, as it has played out in litigation about indigenous claims for justice over past acts, has been bounded by rules and ideas of law, and what those considerations contribute to our understandings of the nation in the present.

A starting premise for us in writing the book was to understand better the dissonances between law and history as disciplines, and then to examine in a very systematic empirical way what those dissonances mean for procedural justice. If nothing else, the litigation brought after *Mabo* showed quite clearly that the long-standing assumption by the legally trained that law and history are closely related needed some interrogation. This assumption is based on the idea of mutually shared practice: both law and history are interested in what happened in the past; both are interested in the truth; both

collect and accumulate evidence and assess and analyse it; both use a mix of documentary evidence and eyewitness testimony; and both evaluate competing and contradictory accounts of the same events and situations. Many lawyers cannot therefore see any difference at all between law and history; they frequently assume that the historian's practices and professional ethos are identical with the law's own.

There are several reasons for this. Before *Mabo* history had of course appeared as a tool in judicial thought and had particular functions, in common law and in judicial decision making. It had been useful in Australian law in constitutional cases, or in statutory interpretation cases more generally, as an extra-legal resource. Principles of decision making legitimately require judges to look at reading speeches, or parliamentary debate, or constitutional conventions, to assist in clarification of the meaning and purpose of laws.

Another way that law made use of history was through the doctrine of judicial notice. This doctrine enables judges to have a license when hearing cases to not require specific forms of evidence to be presented by the parties in some issues, on the basis that they are quite capable of using what amounts to their general knowledge to make a finding of fact. In Australia, a famous example of judicial notice applied to history occurred in the *Australian Communist Party v Commonwealth* (1951). Justice Owen Dixon uttered the well-known justification of the use by judges of matters of general history known to educated people in the society in which they operate; these are the "basic facts of history" and the use by the court of "accepted writings" by "serious historians". The Dixon axiom about what kinds of history (as written by historians) is acceptable to law is important. It shows that for law, there is a belief that historical knowledge is of a non-specialised nature. It also suggests that thinking historically is usual, and also technically proscribed. This both demonstrates and reinforces the assumption that the historian's practices and professional ethos (if "serious" enough to "avoid polemics") are identical (and transposable) with the law's own.⁵ As such, history as practised by historians is somehow identical to history as practised by lawyers, and that historical approaches that stand outside the purview of traditional ideas of what law considers to be historically sound (basically, common law evolutionary models, documented through the archive of judgments) could be excluded. In short, it suggests that the legally trained think that history written by professional historians is dispensable because of their own expertise, not just as lawyers, but as *legal historians*.

The understanding of legal history as a particular form of historical practice is an important part of understanding why law and history are not as closely related as they at first appear. History

is taught and understood in law school as internal to the law itself. This remains the case, even today. Despite some important incursions from critical legal historians, who have attempted since the 1980s to encourage law to view history outside of itself as relevant, law remains wedded to the maxims about legal history laid down by FW Maitland, back in 1911. These explain why the Dixon axiom remains so consistent. Maitland argued that there is a fundamental difference in logic between legal practice and historical research, “what the lawyer wants is authority and the newer the better, what the historian wants is evidence, and the older the better”. Legal historians, in other words, are committed to an objectively provable past, to seek out the evolution of meaning, the “true” intent of the common law. This search Maitland tells us, somewhat pejoratively, is to the historian a “process of perversion and misunderstandings”.⁶ Historians however would probably agree. Within history, unlike law, there has always been debate about the idea that facts are objective. The question of interpretation, the idea that the past is not simply declared through reference to the official archive, has engaged and been problematic for historians since Thucydides and Herodotus. For example, EH Carr in 1961 argued famously that the process of archival work and historical practice is necessarily selective, and an act of interpretation, and as such the past can not be known in a way that is conclusive or gives rise to an original meaning.

There is, of course, substantial disagreement amongst historians over these issues. The point, perhaps, is that few would think it outside the domain of history to emphasise the role of interpretation, point of view, language, and narrative in arriving at judgments about what happened in the past, or how it happened. A key result of this difference is a boundary as to what “real” legal history looks like and should do. The process of “doing legal history”, in the view of Maitland and those that followed, is so circumscribed that it is probably anathema for “ordinary” historians to undertake its research. History for law then is very much centred on where law’s own history can be known: the common law itself, archival documentary sources, official government archives. The idea that knowledge about the past could be found in the margins of those documents, of what was said about the documents, when searching for interpretations of the past, were missing in law’s use and jurisprudential understanding of history.

The function of history in law, and the past in jurisprudence, has however undergone a fundamental shift internationally, as history began to play a new role in litigation post World War 2. This has created some procedural and judicial challenges based on law and history’s intellectual and disciplinary differences. Claims for justice have increasingly since the 1950s been brought by groups who have

been excluded, eliminated or colonised by states in the past. This has necessitated the inclusion of historical evidence at trial that speaks to the present, and which relies on archives and arguments external to the law. These legal claims are necessarily specific to their national setting, and range from discrimination cases in the United States such as *EEOC v Sears* and *Brown v Board of Education*; war crimes and Holocaust-related cases in Israel, France, Canada, and Great Britain; and in Indigenous land, and stolen children, claims in the US, Canada, a New Zealand, and of course, a whole range of litigation in Australia precipitated by *Mabo no 2*.⁷ These cases force a different kind of disciplinary exchange between law and history, past and present, and tell unique stories about individual nation states. But these cases share similarities as well, as regards the difficulties identified by the historians who are either called to give evidence on the context of the nation's past, or whose research is used for this evidentiary purpose.

In Australia, this became very obvious once the *Native Title Act*, (the legislative response to the *Mabo* decision) passed in 1993. The Act of course required claimants to justify their ongoing connection to their land, which that meant for the first significant time in Australia, that history as a form of evidence (as opposed to a device in common law reasoning) was important. But when historians started appearing as experts in these cases many of them have found the experience confronting. For a start, historians were inexperienced in adversarial trials. Compared with anthropologists (who had been dealing with the restraints law's rules placed on their research since the introduction of the *Land Rights Act* 1975), historians really were at sea when they moved from debating issues of the colonial past at seminars and moved into the courtroom. They had real difficulty in coming to terms with the fact that in order to maintain the rule of law, the practice of law must remain committed to discovering, to the best of its ability, a resolution to a conflict through verifiable, objective fact-telling. The need for fairness, impartiality, consistency, and the authority of the judiciary in an adversarial system necessitates the codification of evidentiary practices, to assist in the adjudication of which facts can be adduced in a legal dispute and how those facts may be presented. This means that there are rules and restrictions surrounding the nature of evidence, who can bring it and how it can be used. Many of these restrictions relate to experts. Witnesses, when giving evidence, are not permitted to offer opinions or inferences. The exclusion of opinion evidence, as Justice RD Nicholson has noted, is commonsense, because "by any stretch of the imagination, not every opinion could satisfactorily be accepted as proof of the fact asserted by the opinion".⁸ Expert evidence acts as an exception to this rule,

experts being allowed, in theory, to give their opinions and assert inferences from what they know.⁹

Historians were however ill equipped when it came to meeting these kinds of requirements, because of the very nature of their profession's commitment to contextualise the past, to understand gaps in archival sources, and to question the interpretive origins of a range of different materials. They were unused to cross examination, and unused to the way the rules of evidence *made* them give firm conclusions about the past, and made them draw a distinction between "fact" and "opinion". This was very hard for historians, especially those who understand the subjective choices required in selecting or prioritising sources and interpreting those sources to tell a story. Historians also felt annoyed, that lawyers did not see them as "expert" say in the same way they did for other experts. Anthropologists, for example, because of the painful experiences learned over those 20 years in the Land Rights model of litigation, had more or less come to terms with how their profession should organise and present itself as experts. This did not mean there were not bitter and fundamental dissonances between anthropology and law too, as the Hindmarsh Island case shows.¹⁰ But the point is they were seen as distinct fields of expertise. The long held assumptions about history in law really seemed to count against historians being able to assist in meeting requirements under the *Native Title Act*. The common reaction, and a reaction common to historians in similar cases in other jurisdictions, was to feel that history itself was 'on trial'.

It is those tensions that were debated by historians, and in the media and community, following several decisions which seemed unjust to indigenous people, as the law did not allow in evidence which told of their lived past experience, and which was in the form and intellectual scope of history. The most famous of these, in public discussion were the *Yorta Yorta* case, and the *Cubillo* case (to which I will come back): both of which highlighted in a very public way the very real problems for indigenous parties wishing to use the law, and for historians as experts in these cases, on either side of the adversarial trial.¹¹ The real problem was how lawyers and judges understood what history could be. Australian legal history, as far as cases involving Indigenous parties are concerned, is about absence, about what is not available. Indigenous Australian visibility and representation in "official" sources is both completely structured by what the Government wanted to record at the time (which may not give a full picture of their circumstances in the ways it would for non indigenous Australians) and also structured around the absences of indigenous peoples in the official past too (through problems related to citizenship and policies between states). If the legally-trained interpret history through the lens of legal history and its abundance of documentary

source materials, and as something that requires no particular expertise to interpret, this has negative impacts for Indigenous people. The reasons for this are that indigenous litigants will never find easily the evidence to satisfy law as it often does not exist in documentary form, or is partial or subjective. The lack of any authoritative evidence becomes a problem for law too, as it moves the law away from its desire for objective legitimacy. But in 1994, these were tensions that seemed invisible to most lawyers who would have said to the historians “this is a case with boundaries, we must preserve the rule of law, we must be clear about what is determinative of the past and what is not, we cannot afford to have a wider ranging academic debate, because this case must be determined within the limits of law to be just”.

There was then, in Australia, from the mid 1990s, an epistemological chasm between law and history, that cases about treatment of indigenous peoples by the state exposed. I, and my co authors, began research in 2001 which tried to understand that chasm. We came to it from a variety of backgrounds. Ann Curthoys is an historian, who has been writing on these issues for 30 years, and whose book about the Freedom Ride, in which she took part, might be familiar to many. Alex Reilly is a legal academic focused on questions of good governance through the law; and I am a strange hybrid, a legal academic with a PhD in Australian history. Taking the high profile indigenous rights claims cases in the Federal Court as our archive,¹² our method was to consider not only the judgment but the files themselves, in order to investigate systematically the ways in which historical evidence is admitted, excluded, and rebutted under the Federal Court’s rules of evidence and procedure. We also considered the ways in which historical evidence is then weighted and interpreted by judges in decisions. A series of interviews on the law/history relationship was conducted in some of the cases with the litigants, the expert historians, the lawyers, and the trial judge. Analysing these interviews, we compared the assumptions and ideas about interpretation and use of history by historians with those of lawyers, to understand better the impact of both disciplinary perspectives on indigenous people themselves. This enabled us, in a bi-partisan fashion, to draw conclusions concerning the most beneficial strategies for the use of history in litigation involving indigenous parties, in order to achieve the most just, and efficacious, legal outcomes.

We worked very closely with the Court on the book: their support and understanding of the questions we wanted to ask reflect in part the great strides that have been made in the developing Native Title jurisdiction since *Yorta Yorta*. That case, which we discuss in the book, set the parameters of how history and law in Native Title, as a new and growing jurisdiction, could operate.¹³ The Court have also worked very closely with indigenous communities to ensure a more

sensitive and culturally aware approach to the presentation and taking of evidence, at the same time remaining within the boundaries set by Australian rules of evidence and the expert witness guidelines . The Native Title story is a unique narrative about the development of challenging new directions for Australian law, and is very much about the hard work and good will of many – on both “sides”, as well as in the court itself – who work in that practice area to guarantee fairness and procedural justice.

The book is not however just about Native Title, we looked at other cases too. Perhaps the *Mabo* case had alerted Indigenous people to the possibility of redress through legal means, but the legal sphere became very important in the pursuit of Indigenous claims for justice in the 1990s, and historians were central to challenging (or upholding)the official record of law and government which was the base of contested evidence in many of them. The other cases that were heard around this time, the late 1990s and early 2000s, that we looked at were: a case in which Aboriginal claimants sought a warrant for the arrest of the Prime Minister John Howard and others for the commission of genocide (*Nulyarimma v Thompson*); a case seeking compensation for Aboriginal people removed from their families as children (*Cubillo and Gunner v The Commonwealth*); a case brought by one group of Indigenous people against another concerning their entitlement to stand in elections for the since-abolished Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (*Shaw v Wolf*); and a case concerning the attempts by a group of Aboriginal women to prevent the building of a bridge at Hindmarsh Island in South Australia on the basis that it disturbed areas of sacred significance to women (*Chapman v Luminiis No 5*). The nature of the access we had to these cases has enabled us to give close readings of very publicly known decisions, and these stories, which became stand alone chapters in the book, were rich, varied, legally challenging, and important to our recent past.

I am happy to talk about some of those in question time, but thought, to give a flavour of what our book is about, and how it questions and tries to understand the relationship between law and history that I have sketched out, I would talk briefly about just one of them. I have chosen *Cubillo v Gunner*, known as “the stolen generations case”, because the public debate around the case, and the general basis for the claims, are common knowledge to most in the community. What I want to try and focus on here in the time left is how the historical evidence worked, and how ideas that law has about history, and vice versa, can have genuine impact on the outcome of case at trial. A key evidentiary aspect of the case was how the removal polices should be assessed. Was the policy of removal and assimilation, as the litigants argued, contested and administered beyond the scope of legislative authority at the time, or was it a lawful

and benign reflection of the prevailing social and legal mores of the 1930s-1960s in Australia, as the defence contended? This question of the nature of contemporaneous standards was a question about how the law uses and views the past. It was the specific question which the expert historians, who were engaged by both the litigants and the Commonwealth, were asked to address in expert reports. There were three historians who prepared expert reports in this case, Dr Ann McGrath and Dr Peter Read for the applicants, and Dr Neville Green for the respondents. All three had written extensively on Aboriginal history and government policy, Ann McGrath especially on the Northern Territory, Peter Read on the Stolen Generations, and Dr Green on government policy in Western Australia.¹⁴ A comparison between the treatment of the evidence and reports of Green and McGrath illustrates how the narrow frame law provides for history worked.

The approach Green employed – carefully analysing all available primary documentary sources – was of great value to the Commonwealth’s case. Green’s fundamental reliance on the primary sources as elucidating a verifiable account of the policy’s practice enabled him to view the available documents as complete and authoritative. The report could be utilised with ease by the Commonwealth’s legal team. It did not open itself for speculation, as it centred solidly on documents declaring their intent, and was not subject to legal objections based on the distinction between fact and opinion. Dr Green’s report was also uncontested by the claimant’s solicitors.

In contrast, Dr Ann McGrath did not approach her historical report as a process of trying to objectively document and comment upon accepted fact. The sources she uses diverged from the policy archive both legal teams prioritised when preparing their preliminary documentary lists for initial pre trial discovery. She cited, for example, popular Australian literature of the period, such as Mrs. Aeneas Gunn’s *We of the Never-Never* (1907) and May Gibbs’s *Snuggle Pot and Cuddlepie* (1918), to demonstrate how particular attitudes towards Indigenous Australians were popularised. She also discussed counter positions, discussed in newspapers of the time, and importantly in autobiographies such as *If Everyone Cared* (1977) by Margaret Tucker, former removed child and outspoken critic of the policy of removal. She also included visual images and film. For example, she included a photograph of aboriginal mothers being “taught” by white nurses how to care for their children, and discussed and interpreted this in the context of the negative inferences contained within assimilationist policies. The photograph illustrated, she suggested, that the policy was considered “of benefit” to Indigenous people as they were fundamentally incapable, by white standards, of caring for

their own. She also included references to the film *Jedda*, produced in 1955, which was critical of assimilationist rhetoric and practice. McGrath established therefore a counter-historical suggestion to the assumption that the assimilation policy and its effects were acceptable by standards of their time.¹⁵

The Commonwealth had many objections to Ann McGrath's expert report. Their central and primary objection to the report's admissibility was however that it did not meet the basis rule, which requires that experts set out or establish the facts they assume or assert. In so doing, they also argued that historians like Ann McGrath were not doing anything "expert", and by using newspaper sources, books, or film were doing nothing more than providing materials able to be discounted as hearsay: unverifiable opinions of others. Justice O'Loughlin ruled to exclude the report, but did allow McGrath to give oral evidence. This took three days, during which McGrath was subject to intense scrutiny about her opinion and historical methods generally. Justice O'Loughlin ended up having no trouble with Ann's professionalism, despite the best intentions of the Commonwealth. But he could not get past the idea that for law there was a preferred hierarchy when it came to viewing evidentiary materials that examined things that had occurred long ago. The hierarchy of weight to be given to forms of evidence which construct the past, when the case reached the full trial ended up being, despite these efforts of historians: a) the law (the ordinances, and existing precedent on similar facts and legal issues); b) documentary sources or official archive; c) cross examinable witness statements (not hearsay); d) oral history (potentially hearsay); and e) expert reports that context to what decisions and patterns of authority may have been exercised. The opening left for contextual readings of the administration of the *Ordinances* was therefore limited.

Cubillo and Gunner's claim failed, in no small part because Justice O'Loughlin held that no duty of care in regard to Indigenous children removed from their families could be imposed on the state directly. He stated: "*at the relevant times*, there was no general policy in force in the Northern Territory supporting the indiscriminate removal and detention of part-Aboriginal children, irrespective of the personal circumstances of each child". This conclusion was ultimately open to Justice O'Loughlin because of his privileging of the concept of "contemporaneous standards" proved through "official" sources. The judgment of the Full Court of the Federal Court was handed down 2001, and the appellants were, again, unsuccessful.¹⁶ Another "stolen generation case", that of Bruce Trevorrow, was however decided by the South Australian Supreme Court in 2007. We think about that case too in the book, and compare it to *Cubillo*. Although the outcome for Mr. Trevorrow was successful, the historical archive he needed

to rely on was, in comparison to that of Cubillo and Gunner, in tact. It seems then that the ways history can be adduced by law in these cases will really determine whether they succeed or fail, limiting their jurisprudential scope and impact.¹⁷

Our book took seven years to write. Partly this is because of the nature of this kind of research. To do it properly, and to work closely with both courts and indigenous peoples, takes time, in building trust, mutual respect, and to be careful to observe protocols, both cultural and legal. It also takes time to sift evidentiary material, to read carefully, to test against the claims and assumptions of two distinct professional and disciplinary lenses. But an artifact of that extra time was that our book ended up having an extra purpose. We set out to write an exploration of history – as a field of study in interaction with law – but in the end we actually researched and wrote a history of our own. *Rights and Redemption* is then, in part, a history of a little over a decade of engagement between law, history and indigenous litigants, from the early 1990s to the early-to-mid 2000s.

In that double context (the exploration of the law/history chasm in litigation, and a broader history of Australia through that litigation) we had a range of conclusions. Some are really practical, for example technical questions for lawyers about how they interact with and use expert historians. Some, however, were broader. One concerns the ways in which law and history intersect in this book, through exploring the value of court records as historical archives. The process of research really changed how we thought law itself was producing history, and what kind, because of the nature of these cases and the questions they asked. We had a real sense of the law producing a different kind of archive, and the value of that archive for recording Indigenous accounts of the past, and so on. The authority of the court as a repository for history is something that Indigenous people recognise, here and elsewhere. In Canada, Indigenous litigant Dora Wilson said after her experience in native title trial:

Our oral history... now it is in black and white for everyone to read. Evidence that was given in the courtroom, thousands of documents, over thirty thousand documents, that were used as exhibits in this case. Maps. Everything you could think of. Genealogies. Letters that were written by our people in earlier days fighting this. All sorts of goodies in there are on record, and that is a real win for us as far as I am concerned. There is something positive there. Our history is on record.

The archive produced by and for the law is, of course, uncertain. Neither party in the kinds of postcolonial disputes essayed in this book can be sure the existing archive, nor the archive now being created in the court, will work consistently for it. Still, it is important that it is there. These ideas about the court as an archive helped us when thinking about a title for the book. In our interview with

Lorna Cubillo, she told us: “We have a dreadful history [but] we have ...to embrace the past too. Australia has to learn about the land and its people, the first Australians. ...I agreed to go to court because I wanted the story to be told.”

We took a cue from that, and from the courage of all the litigants. They made it very clear that to maintain faith in justice is important, for all of us, and that redemption is possible, through law, for the nation’s past. This is not redemption in the proportion of successful claims, or the amount of land successfully claimed as native title, though there must be at least some success to maintain faith. Instead, we chose the title because we believe that indigenous people showed us that redemption is possible through mounting a claim, in the growth of understanding of judges, in the responses to failure in cases such as *Yorta Yorta* and *Cubillo*, and in the maturing relationship between law and history.¹⁸

Endnotes

- 1 See Chapter 2, *Rights and Redemption* (2008) for full discussion of Mabo No 2
- 2 WEH Stanner (1969) *After The Dreaming; black and white Australians – an anthropologist’s view*, (Boyer Lectures 1968), Australian Broadcasting Commission, Sydney . This is discussed in Chapter 1, and also Chapter 6, *Rights and Redemption* (2008)
- 3 Robert Manne (2003) “Introduction”, in *Whitewash: On Keith Windschuttle’s Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, (ed. R. Manne), Black Inc., Melbourne, 1-13, pp 2-3
- 4 See discussion of this debate in Chapter 2, *Rights and Redemption* (2008)
- 5 Dixon J in the High Court case of *Australian Communist Party v Commonwealth* (1951) 83 CLR 1, at 196; and Chapter 4, *Rights and Redemption*, pp 85-87
- 6 See discussion Chapter 6 *Rights and Redemption*, pp 140-143
- 7 See discussion Chapter 1 *Rights and Redemption*
- 8 Justice RD Nicholson, “The Use of History in Native Title”, *Early Days*, 12:3 (2003)
- 9 See discussion of impact and effect evidentiary rules on native title, Chapter 3 and 4, *Rights and Redemption*
- 10 See discussion of the case, and the comparisons between anthropologists and historians in Chapter 7 *Rights and Redemption* (2008)
- 11 See Chapters 3 and 6 respectively, *Rights and Redemption* (2008)
- 12 *Mary Yarmirr & Ors v Northern Territory of Australia & Ors* [1998] 1185 FCA; *Ben Ward & Ors v State of Western Australia & Ors* [1998] 1478 FCA; *The Members of the Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Community v The State of Victoria & Ors* [1998] 1606 FCA; *Hayes v Northern Territory of Australia* [2000] FCA 671; *Masig People v State of Queensland* [2000] FCA 1067; *Clarrie Smith v State of Western Australia* [2000] FCA 1249; *Mark Anderson on behalf of the Spinifex People v State of Western Australia* [2000] FCA 1717; *The Ngalakan People v Northern Territory of Australia* [2001] FCA 654; *Rubibi Community v State of Western Australia* [2001] FCA 1553; *Nangkiriny v State of Western Australia* [2002] FCA 660; *Kennedy v State of Queensland* [2002] FCA 747 (13 June 2002); *Chapman v Luminis Pty Ltd (No 5)* [2001] FCA 1106; *Nulyarimma v*

Thompson [1999] FCA 1192; *Buzzacott v Gray* [1999] FCA 1525 (3 November 1999); *Edwina Shaw & Anor v Charles Wolf & Ors* [1998] 389 FCA (20 April 1998); *Anderson v Wilson* [2000] FCA 394 (5 April 2000); *Cubillo v Commonwealth* [2000] FCA 1084. The following cases were initially included in the sample for full analysis, but were excluded as they subsequently went to appeal during our data collection stage. They were subsequently analysed from the judgment only: *De Rose v State of South Australia* [2002] FCA 1342; *Daniel v State of Western Australia* [2001] FCA 223.

- 13 See Chapter 3, *Rights and Redemption* (2008)
- 14 Ann McGrath, *Born in the Cattle* (1988), Peter Read (1999); Neville Green, *Broken Spears: Aborigines and Europeans in the Southwest of Australia* (1984) and *The Forrest River Massacres* (1995).
- 15 See discussion in Chapter 6, *Rights and Redemption* (2008) , pp146-155
- 16 *Ibid.*, pp159-161
- 17 *Ibid.*, pp 157-166
- 18 Conclusion, *Rights and Redemption*, pp 219-230



Photo – Alfonso Calero

Sandra Hall

Sandra Hall is a writer, film reviewer and author of *Tabloid Man* [HarperCollins 2008], which tells the story of Ezra Norton, one of the key media figures of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. Norton's newspapers, *Truth* and its stablemate the *Daily Mirror*, successfully adopted and promoted a muckraking style that established the Norton brand of tabloid journalism as an institution. Yet, for someone who profited from others' scandals, Ezra Norton was an unusually private man. Sandra Hall addressed The Sydney Institute on Monday 20 October 2008 to uncover the tumultuous life and times of Ezra Norton.

EZRA NORTON

- HIS LIFE AND TIMES

SANDRA HALL

I look back sometimes marveling at how casually I went into this book. I'd just about finished a novel and thought it'd be kind of nice to have a project which got me out of the house to do some research. I didn't realise it was going to keep me occupied for the next five years. It was curiosity that got me going – that, and a lifelong fascination with tabloid newspapers.

I was 16 when it was started. That was when I went to work on *The Sun* as a copy girl, straight from school. From then on I was hooked. I got my cadetship 18 months later. Not that I was any good at the job. Far from it. I lived in terror half the time, dreading the prospect of being sent on some story where I'd have to door knock people and ask them obnoxious questions. My idea of a perfect working day was to sit in the office and eavesdrop on other reporters who did know what they were doing... Most of them were great characters. And quite a few have found their way into this book.

Ezra Norton was just a name to me at that stage. By then he'd sold his papers – *Truth* and the *Daily Mirror* – and he'd retired. He'd never been as well known as the Packers or the Fairfaxes anyway. Always a bit of a mystery man. I knew he was the son of the notorious John Norton. I knew about *Wild Men of Sydney*, Cyril Pearl's very witty and very scathing account of John Norton's career. And I'd vaguely heard that Ezra had tried to have the book banned. Which seemed the height of hypocrisy, coming as it did from someone who made his fortune out of exposing other people's scandals – via *Truth*. Then a little later, through my friendship with the journalist and poet Elizabeth Riddell, I learned a few more things about him.

Her newspaper life began when she was hired by the Norton press in New Zealand and brought over to work on *Truth* in Sydney. And it was the beginning of a great career. During World War II, Ezra sent her to work in his London bureau, and later she went on to New York to open an office for him there. Which was really something if you think that *The Sydney Morning Herald* was still declining to employ women as news reporters as late as the 1960s.

So there must have been something to Norton, I thought. Then I forgot about him for another 20 years. By then some great books had been done about Australian newspaper tycoons. Gavin Souter, Bridget Griffen-Foley and Paul Barry had done definitive books on the Fairfaxes and the Packers. There'd been a biography of Sir Keith Murdoch. And his son, Rupert, seemed to spark a new biography every few years. But absolutely nothing on Ezra. And that was strange because his retirement was the catalyst which sparked the breakthrough in Rupert Murdoch's early career. Murdoch made his entree into the Sydney market by taking over the Norton papers. So I got going and it wasn't easy. But it was fascinating.

First up, I found that the late Richard Hall, another journalist and no relation, had made a start on a book about Ezra. Then he'd set it aside to work on something else. His agent, Rose Creswell, as executor of Dick's estate, kindly gave me access to his papers in the National Library and that was a great help. The stumbling block, however, was Dick's handwriting, which was only occasionally legible. Tantalising glimpses of Ezra's early life emerged, then the trail would go dead in a sort of spidery dribble. But I did get some valuable clues and they became a touchstone for stuff I'd eventually get from other sources.

The key to understanding anything about Ezra, I discovered, was his childhood. John Norton put his family through hell. For a start, he was a relentless self-publiciser – usually through *Truth*, which he helped establish in the 1890s. He didn't found the paper. It was the baby of two other rowdies in the NSW parliament – William Willis and Paddy Crick, who later got into trouble in the New South Wales Land Scandals. But Norton put some money into the paper and became its editor. He was a genius as a newspaperman – when sober. But more often than not, he wasn't. Sober, that is. And during his drinking binges he was likely to do anything. He was in the office firing his revolver in the air shortly before he himself was fired by Willis and Crick.

Needless to say, he didn't go quietly. He and his former business partners took to suing one another and the litigation went on for the next three years. Their brawls became a great source of entertainment to the rest of the Sydney press. But, without Norton, *Truth* started to flounder and, to cut a long and very confused story short, Norton eventually got control of the paper and made it his own. In every possible sense. He used it to turn himself into the hero – and villain – of a mythology which kept *Truth*'s tens of thousands of readers enthralled for 20 years. Between 1896 and 1916, he used the paper to advance his political career, champion his favourite causes, castigate his enemies and indulge his biases – which embraced racism and anti-Semitism. He claimed to have invented the word, “wowsers”, and he

chronicled his daily routine in his Open Letters, which might cover anything, starting with what he had for breakfast.

When I first began researching *Tabloid Man*, I thought I'd briefly summarise all this. It had already been well covered in *Wild Men of Sydney* and Michael Cannon's book, *That Damned Democrat*, but once I got into *Truth's* archives and started reading, I just couldn't stop. Much of what I read dealt with Norton's rocky marriage to Ezra's mother, Ada. He was often violent towards her and she left him several times. Yet the marriage endured for 18 years – a kind of *folie a deux*, I think. Because Ada did fight back. I think her temperament was as theatrical as Norton's. How else could you put up with the fact that your husband publicised your marital rows by running accounts of them in his own newspapers? At one stage, Norton gave over page 5 of *Truth* to successive episodes in the drama. We think the soap opera was invented only 50 years ago but, let me tell you, John Norton thought of it long before that. He even had a standing headline for these stories. They ran under the heavily sarcastic line: "John Norton's 'Appy 'Ome".

One particularly lurid episode in the series centred on Ada's row with her maidservant, Mary Byrne, a rather large and brawny Irish woman. Ada was living away from Norton at this stage, in Edgecliff Road, Woollahra, with Mary. One night they had a huge falling out and Ada's mother, who apparently was no wider than one of Mary's arms, got in the way. Well, the ensuing brawl raised the neighbours and *Truth's* following report was headed: "Mary Bangs Ada with Boot". Nonetheless, Ada eventually went back to Norton. The marriage lasted for another 14 years. Then when finally she did sue Norton for divorce, he had the court proceedings covered in full. Again in *Truth*.

Ezra was 18 at the time and he went with his mother to court everyday. Yet even after all that, I think he had a conflicted view of his father. Norton seems to have been one of those people who have a carrot-and-stick approach to parenthood. One minute he'd be abusing Ezra. Then he'd sober up and write him fulsomely affectionate letters – as a result, Ezra was still defending him decades afterwards. Refusing, in fact, to accept his alcoholism. Which again was extraordinary considering the fact that Ada and Ezra found that they had been disinherited when Norton died in 1916. Most of his wealth had been left to Ezra's nine year-old sister, Joan. Fortunately for them both, however, Ada's lawyers had influential connections. Thanks to their intervention, the New South Wales parliament hurried through its new Testator's Family Maintenance and Education of Infants Bill, designed to assist spouses and children in precisely Ada's and Ezra's predicament and Norton's will was overturned. So there were

abundant reasons why Ezra should have developed such a fetish about his own privacy.

But it did make it hard for me, his would-be biographer. He left no diaries, no letters. Not even any public speeches. He'd do anything to avoid making one of those. When his horse won the Melbourne Cup, he stayed in Sydney. If he'd gone to accept the Cup himself, he would have had to make a speech. He was not exactly a quiet man, however. The journalists who worked for him could testify to that. He inherited his father's love of the colourful curse and the air often turned blue during one of his so-called "boning-and-gutting sessions". These were the post-mortems conducted after a mistake had been made. Anyone who'd laid so much as a finger on the offending piece of copy was called in and given a blast. He was also a remarkably quick learner. I could find no evidence that he spent much time at school; a few years at Scots College, perhaps even less, when he was very young. The headmaster at the time was the Reverend Aspinall who abhorred the larrikin element in Sydney society and would certainly have been no fan of the Nortons. It's very clear that Ezra had an extremely hard time at the school. He was bullied and he hated it. And, as far as I could find out, he didn't go to school again until he was 21. This time it was Waverley College, which he did enjoy. Apparently it wasn't uncommon for young men of his age to be at the school. Some had been in the workforce and had come back to get better qualifications. And a bit later there were ex-soldiers coming back to catch up on the education they'd missed. Yet this period at school doesn't really explain how he could step so easily into the role of newspaper proprietor. Because in 1922, at the age of 25, he took control of *Truth*.

Norton was not a writer. There were no more Open Letters. Nor were the paper's editorials written by him but they did reflect his views. And in many respects, they were not so different from his father's. *Truth* had always been seen as a working man's paper and it remained that way. It offered a gamey mix of crime, divorce, sex, sport and a rather more pragmatic form of populism than the old John Norton brand. A few traditional themes persisted. The paper's unabashed racism was one of them. It also went on exposing medical quackery. But Ezra had other passions, as well. He hated cruelty to animals, he was obsessed with cleanliness – he mounted a series of public health campaigns – and he fervently supported a ban on the export of merino sheep. This was to protect the Australian wool market. So he was a strong-willed character and an idiosyncratic one.

There were plenty of anecdotes about him. And I was lucky enough to find those who could talk about them. I heard a lot more about his obsession with hygiene. He liked his office doorknob polished with disinfectant after anyone had dared touch it with dirty

hands. I heard about his fear of flying, and his superstitions. He once paid for a passenger liner to be laid over in Sydney Harbour for 24 hours just because he wouldn't travel on Friday the 13th. And I heard about his long-running feud with Frank Packer which climaxed in 1939 with a fist fight in the Members enclosure at Randwick race course – more of that in a minute.

But I guess the book is as much about Ezra's times as the man himself. This is partly because he was so elusive and partly because his papers really did mirror the mood of working-class Australia during the decades when he was at his most powerful, from the 1920s to the 1960s. He really started spreading his wings in the late 1930s. *Truth* had suffered a bit of a dip during the Depression. But so did a lot of other Sydney papers. It was a highly competitive scene and a few of them folded. *Truth*, however, was never in any danger of that and after the Depression was over it really thrived. So much so that Ezra turned his thoughts to the afternoon newspaper market.

At first he was frustrated. The outbreak of war brought newsprint rationing and his fellow press tycoons lobbied the government to block his plans.

Frank Packer became a particular enemy. The two men had already made a practice of sniping at one another. Packer's bigness and loudness would have made him an irresistible target in the eyes of Ezra. As I said, he was famously irascible. But Packer's *Telegraph* fired the first shot by making fun of *Truth*'s equivocal stance on the war. When Poland was invaded, the paper had said Danzig was no concern to Australia and the Poles and the Germans should settle things between themselves. Then shortly after that, it completely changed its mind. By then Eric Baume had been hired as its chief war correspondent in Europe and Baume had declared he was going to France to the Maginot Line. If he couldn't get there as a correspondent, he thundered, he was going to put on a uniform and go as a soldier. "What this country needs," he said, was "more hate. More hate for the Hun."

Well, the *Telegraph* was highly amused by these fulminations and made great play of the contrast between them and what *Truth* had been saying just three weeks earlier. Then *Truth* published a mocking story about Packer. Packer had objected to a photograph of himself that *Truth* had been going to run – and I must say that it did emphasise the largeness of his ears and he didn't like it at all and had sent another one in its place. Ezra gleefully had both pictures published with the headings, "Approved" and "Disapproved" and ran a story explaining what had happened.

The upshot of all this sniping was the punch-up at Randwick where Packer actually got the worst of it. He was much bigger than Ezra and he'd been an amateur boxer. But Ezra had a couple of

minders with him. Some reports say that they stepped in to break things up. Others say that they simply joined in. Anyway, Packer emerged from the fray very much the worse for wear. After that, he had no hesitation in joining the other proprietors in their efforts to stop Ezra getting his new afternoon newspaper. And, for a while, they succeeded. The government knocked back his newsprint allocation the first time around. But by 1941, after some very shrewd political manoeuvring, Norton had what he wanted. And the *Daily Mirror* was launched as a very serious competitor to the existing Sydney daily, *The Sun*. It also ushered in a new era. For the next two decades, the cry the newsboys used – “*The Sun* or the *Mirror*?” – came to be as familiar to Sydneysiders as the clatter of trams. And the papers’ competing crime reporters would often behave as outrageously as the confidence men they wrote about. Photographers put on white coats to get into hospital wards. Reporters snatched family photographs from crime scenes, and Ezra himself gained a reputation for toughness among those editors and reporters unfortunate enough to be subjected to those “boning-and-gutting sessions”.

I had to stop myself digressing at times. At one stage, in trying to draw a picture of Sydney in the 1920s, I came dangerously close to devoting half a chapter to the invention of the labour-saving kitchen. And if you want to find out where that fits into the narrative, I’m afraid you’ll have to read the book. Then there were the characters who crossed the Nortons’ paths. Baume was one, of course. I had a lot of fun researching his war time career. He set up the *Mirror*’s London office in a suite at the Savoy. Bob Raymond, who went on to have a great career as a documentary-maker, worked for him there in his early days in journalism and he wrote a wonderful memoir of what it was like. Baume made many of his contacts in the bar downstairs and would sometimes bring them up – elegant figures in evening dress – to show them how a newspaper worked. It all came to an abrupt end when Ezra finally settled down one day to examine Baume’s expense account.

I thought I’d read everything there was on John Norton when I went to the Mitchell Library one day and discovered a cache of his letters which had never been published. I still remember how it felt to untie the ribbon on the folder and see those pages with Norton’s very black and very strong handwriting, no problems with legibility there. The letters had been written to a woman called Lala Fisher, one of the literary identities of the day who was obviously very astute. And she must have had a lot of charm, as well, because she managed to remain friends with both Nortons – Ada and John – when relations between them were at their most poisonous. She even tried to play the role of peace-maker at one stage. And, luckily for me, the diatribe Norton let rip in response was in the letters.

The same week, I had another breakthrough, as well – thanks to a very generous journalist called John Flower. He gave me access to a treasure trove of papers dealing with the flamboyant H.D. McIntosh. I don't know how much you know about McIntosh who was otherwise known as "Huge Deal". He first achieved fame as a boxing promoter. He built the Sydney Stadium and then went on to buy newspapers as well as setting himself up as a theatrical entrepreneur. He ran the Tivoli circuit for a while. In the course of all this, he made and lost several fortunes. He was also rash enough to borrow money from Ezra's 22 year-old sister, Joan, just after she came into her inheritance. Big mistake – Ezra made him bankrupt in revenge for that one.

Norton's career as a press baron ended in 1958 when he sold out and retired. Television had arrived, He was worried about his health and he wanted to ensure a secure future for his young daughter, Mary, and his wife, Peggy. There was, too, his passion for horse-racing. His horse, Straight Draw, had won the Melbourne Cup the year before.

I'm told some biographers fall in love with their subjects. This didn't happen to me. But I did find the relationship very rewarding, for what it told me about the Australia I grew up in and what it told me about tabloids then and now. For the Norton legacy does persist. A year after his retirement, Rupert Murdoch, then a fledgling newspaper tycoon based in Adelaide, made his entry into the Sydney and Melbourne markets by buying up the Norton papers. And 50 years later, echoes of the Nortons' stridently populist style can still be discerned, I think. Certainly there have been many reminders of John Norton's agin' the Establishment sentiments in Murdoch's London papers, *The Sun*, and the *News of the World*. In other ways, however, the tabloid landscape has changed completely.

In the old days, society maintained certain taboos. Adultery, divorce and homosexuality were frowned upon – which only intensified their fascination to so-called respectable citizens. This is why a paper like *Truth* was able to flourish. Now there are no taboos. Instead the pendulum has swung the other way. And there's a voyeuristic pressure on celebrities to expose much of their lives to the public gaze. Mistakes are made and mulled over; pop stars appear on TV chat shows talking about kicking their drug habits. And the act of confessing their sins is supposed to make them more endearing to all of us. So it's all very different from the ethos at work in the Nortons' day. Yet, in a sense, things have come full circle. After all, no one pursued the confessional approach more eagerly than John Norton.

Just before I finish, I'd like to read a brief passage from the book to give you the flavour of Ezra's personality. To set the scene, after the *Mirror's* launch he moved out of the *Truth* and *Mirror* building near Circular Quay and set up near here in Hosking House in Penfold Place, which is where these events occurred:

To many of those at Hosking House, working for Ezra was like dealing with a bear whose occasional moments of playfulness were as unsettling as his explosions. They both feared and enjoyed him. More indulgent were the women in the office, who tended to see his amenable side. This was the Ezra who didn't swear and made sure that sick or injured employees received the best medical care as well as convalescence on full pay: the Ezra who paid for Nancy Gunn's son, John, to be educated at a private school and helped the widow of an employee killed in accident by paying off her mortgage.

Anecdotes abounded. His love of animals was known to everyone. There was the day he came back to the office after his customary lunch at Prince's, leading a stray dog he had found in the street. And there were some Norton eruptions which would be remembered for years to come.

One morning, the buildings' lift was taking an unusually long time to arrive when Ezra walked in with his chauffeur and was forced to join the group already waiting. When at last the lift came, he shouted at the driver, demanding to know where the bloody hell he had been and the driver, who worked for Penfold's, not Truth & Sportsman, explained that he had been carrying rolls of paper from the top floor and there had been no room for the passengers. Unimpressed, Ezra continued shouting until eventually the driver, too, lost his temper. "Walk up the stairs, you bastard!" he yelled, and slammed the door in Ezra's face.

Left no alternative, he stamped up the stairs and for the next six weeks, refused to use the lift. Then one morning, he stepped inside as if nothing had happened and cordially asked the driver to take him up to his office.

Most of these stories had an element of farce, although at the time, it was barely discernible to those who were part of the action. One example was the payroll incident. The company had a weekly payroll of 20,000 pounds – a substantial sum in the 1940s – and its distribution involved a strict routine. The money would be withdrawn in cash from the Commercial Banking Company in Martin Place and brought back by car in a large tin box covered in a canvas slipcover. It would then be put into pay packets and returned to the bank until payday.

Essential to this ritual was the presence of one of the company's directors. He would travel to the bank in the car with two men from the pay office and the cash – armed with a pistol kept especially for the job.

On this particular occasion, the pay office clerks and the available director, who happened to be deaf, came downstairs to find that the car was not in its usual place. Spying one of the company's fleet of Dodges parked nearby, they headed across. The director got in, turned off his hearing aid and sat, gazing idly at the traffic. The cash box was loaded and the clerks were just about to get in when Ezra arrived and furiously ordered them out of his car.

By now an audience was gathering but the director, who was still looking the other way, remained oblivious until Ezra leaned in and yelled in his ear. The director jumped and explained that they had assumed the

car was for them – a serious tactical error. Seizing on the word, “assumed”, Ezra pointed at an approaching tram and said: “If you assume it’s going to stop and you go out and stand in the middle of the tram tracks, you’ll go arse over tits.” Then, warming to his theme, he noticed the bulge of the pistol the director was carrying in his pocket and added a cautionary note about “his bloody arse” being blown off if the gun fired accidentally.

He and his driver then got into the car and left director and pay clerks standing in the midst of the city with 20,000 pounds. Shortly afterwards, he calmed down.



Photo – Alfonso Calero

Jenny Macklin

The Hon Jenny Macklin is Australia's Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. She entered parliament as Member for Jaga Jaga in 1996 and became Shadow Minister for the Aged, Family and Community Services, and has been a central figure in debates that affect some of Australia's most disadvantaged ever since. She strongly advocated the continuation of the Northern Territory Emergency Response following its review on 13 October 2008. On Tuesday 21 October 2008, the Hon Jenny Macklin addressed The Sydney Institute to outline a new social policy approach that aims to make welfare and service provision fair, responsive and supportive.

AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL

POLICY – BACK IN BUSINESS

JENNY MACKLIN

I would first like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the Cadigal people. And I would also like to thank The Sydney Institute for inviting me to share the vision I have for the social policy direction of this government.

Over the last week, we've seen the key role that social policy can play in maintaining our nation's economic security. Decisive economic leadership in this unprecedented period of financial turmoil is essential – because a strong economy delivers jobs, prosperity and social stability. Families and pensioners – not your traditional economic levers – have been central to the government's early and decisive response to the global financial crisis.

But good social policy is also vital to prepare Australia for future challenges. An ageing population means we need to build a sustainable retirement income framework. We need to deliver a modern set of family policies, including paid parental leave, putting the best interests of children first. This requires reform to tax and family payments. We must develop new social inclusion strategies so that more Australians can work and participate in community life. And we must continue sound, evidence-based policy interventions that close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Under the Rudd Government, social policy is an equal partner with economic policy. But it hasn't always been like this. One of the great aspects of my job has been the sense of excitement and expectation about this government's social policy. Recently I was at a conference in Sydney where people spoke openly of their relief at finally having a government that "gets" social policy. Of course, supporting people through difficult times is vital. But equally important is anticipating and preparing for the shifts that will drive the social and economic life of the nation.

Done properly, social policy is about increasing participation and productivity. Let me assure all of you here tonight, that for this government social policy is part of the currency of a strong, prosperous country. Just last week we saw how social policy can

intersect with the economy. The government's \$10.4 billion Economic Security Strategy uses social policy levers to strengthen our economy. And gives financial support to families, first home buyers, carers, pensioners, veterans and people with disability.

There are complex social policy challenges as we build a modern Australia. How to provide a secure social safety net which balances adequacy and fairness. How to deliver services which encourage participation, promote independence and increase people's ability to provide for themselves. To achieve this we must have an innovative and flexible system – with the ability to respond to the rapid and complex changes in the lives of individuals and families. Inherent in this is the interplay between social security payments and services – the two levers that drive our social security system.

Social policy goals need to be achieved through access to payment based support and targeted services to meet the complex needs of individuals. And the delivery of payments and the services must take into account the different circumstances of the people they're trying to help. They shouldn't just fit the institutional frameworks from which they've developed. Pensioners understand that the delivery of payments through the government's Economic Security Strategy is part of our commitment to long-term reform of the system. The payments last week are just the first step.

The government is determined to do the hard work to get the reform process right. We will deliver a new system that is sustainable and underpinned by the principles of fairness and decency. This will be done in the context of the next Budget. But the review goes beyond those who interact directly with the social security system. The magnitude of government spending on social security means all Australians have a stake in this review. Pensions and related payments being considered in the Pension Review represented expenditure of \$41 billion in 2007-08 – nearly 15 per cent of the government's total expenses. The age pension alone is the largest single piece of government expenditure. Millions of people and their families rely on income support.

- Single aged pensioners who rely on the pension entirely and are doing it tough coping with rising cost of living pressures.
- Carers of sick children or ageing parents who are trying to juggle work and care responsibilities.
- People with disability who need flexible, practical arrangements so they can participate in work and community life.

Currently, almost two million income support recipients are living in households reliant on income support payments for more than 90 per cent of their household income. Almost 60 per cent of income support recipients have private income of less than \$20 a week. One-third have no private income at all, and this rises to around half for

people on Disability Support Pension and carers. Households that are heavily reliant on income support also have relatively few assets. For example, most report they have savings of under \$1,000. A new report by the OECD on income distribution and poverty, released just this evening, shows how we compare. Australia has the fourth highest relative income poverty rate for people aged 65 and over in the OECD – 27 per cent of the population, and an increase since the mid-1990s of 4.6 percentage points. By contrast, in most OECD countries, poverty rates for seniors have declined significantly. For singles over 65, the income poverty rate in Australia is 50 per cent. This is the third highest in the OECD, compared to the OECD average of 25 per cent.

As a prosperous nation, we must do better. Our down payment on pension reform recognised the particular plight of singles, and was set at two thirds of the combined couple rate which is more in keeping with the relativities in other countries and the realities of life for single age pensioners here in Australia. A government that dismisses the importance of getting social policy right does so at a great cost. One need only look to the previous government's bungled welfare to work strategy. In 2005 they said their narrow approach would move people from the disability pension and into work. Yet I am advised by my department that the Budget forecasts for the cost of the disability support pension will rise by almost \$3 billion over the forward estimates.

This is evidence, if anyone needed it, that getting it right on social policy is not an optional add-on, especially in times of global economic uncertainty. To put it plainly: get it right and it's a positive for the economy, get it wrong and the Budget bottom line takes a hit. The lesson is that taking a simplistic approach to social policy does not work. Our response must be well thought out and responsive.

Getting it right won't be quick or easy. But understanding the disability support pension and its complex composition is critical. It calls for a sophisticated policy approach, with a better understanding of the factors that cause reliance on social support and ways we can support people. Just six weeks ago the government took a commonsense approach. We will allow people on the disability support pension to volunteer to look for work without risking their pension in a new capacity assessment. It's early days, but my colleague Employment Participation Minister Brendan O'Connor tells me that we are already seeing an modest but promising increase in disability pensioners seeking employment assistance through the Disability Employment Network. And to encourage increased participation, Brendan O'Connor and my Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities Bill Shorten are working on new approaches through a national mental health and disability employment strategy.

Encouraging participation means recognising that this is a complex issue. For example, people who suffer episodes of mental ill-health need the flexibility to move in and out of the workforce. Carers, too, need a flexible approach which takes into account their caring responsibilities. They need individually structured care packages that help them participate in community life and the paid workforce. Caring for the people they love, their around the clock duties make an enormous contribution to the economy – frequently at huge personal cost. Substantial financial hardship, reduced education and employment prospects, lower levels of health and wellbeing, depression, chronic grief or anger are part of life for many carers. Add to that the challenge of balancing caring responsibilities and work, and it's no surprise that only 39 per cent of primary carers are in the paid workforce, compared with 68 per cent of people who are not carers. Yet half of all primary carers provide 40 or more unpaid hours of care per week – the equivalent of a full-time job.

Let me take a minute to put a human face on this. Helen Johnson is a carer with a severely disabled 15 year old son, Ben. She also cares for her 80 year old father who is deaf and has chronic obstructive airways disease. Remarkably, she participates in the workforce as much as she can. Her husband works full time. She would probably work more if she could, but when it comes to support for Ben the system fails her. Helen is happy about the support her dad receives – a \$45,000 Extended Aged Care at Home package which funds a full range of medical and complementary services as well as respite. But for Ben, who has far more complex medical needs and requires far more care, she gets very little. Helen doesn't understand why she gets a comprehensive package for her aged dad but can't find the same support for her severely disabled son. She worries constantly about his future.

That's why the Australian government has embarked on a disability reform agenda, with the states and territories. For the first time we will introduce national tools to identify service benchmarks; allow people to plan for their changing needs; identify people at risk; and work towards a consistent program and service delivery. This reform has been a long time coming. Our disability reform agenda is focused on responding to the individual needs of people with disability, their families and carers. Reforming how our funded services can better meet their specific needs. At the same time we can also look at how other models of provision can complement government's efforts. This approach balances individuals', and their families', desires to be independent and have a better standard of living with the support they need.

The challenge is also to look beyond our traditional levers of payments and service. There are innovative ways of providing for long term care and support of people with profound disability. One idea

presented at the 2020 summit was the concept of a National Disability Insurance Scheme for people who experience a catastrophic event during their lifetime. A recent Senate report on special disability trusts showed that when the program was established in 2006, it was envisaged the trusts would support 5000 people with profound disability over four years. Two years on and there are only 262 beneficiaries of 33 trusts. The concept is there, but it's not working properly.

These are ideas, innovative models of support, and are worthy of consideration as we think about future provision for people with disability, especially profound disability. To help in this task, my Parliamentary Secretary has convened a Disability Investment Group, chaired by Ian Silk. The group will provide options for increasing private sector involvement and investment in the funding of disability services and related infrastructure. Their work is progressing well. These ideas will help complement the reform direction for government services, and facilitate individuals and families in providing extra support where they can. Reform to make the system more responsive and fairer is long over due.

Which is why we are reforming eligibility requirements for Carer Payment (child), to help the 19,000 carers who look after children with severe disabilities or medical conditions. These reforms overhaul the existing restrictive assessment process for the payment, so that it's based on the level of care required rather than rigid medical definitions of profound disability. This new approach puts the needs of the person being cared for at the centre of decision making. This style of approach, used here for a payment, needs to be replicated across service delivery.

What our carers need is a mix of payments, services, respite and in home support. And the recognition that carers, most of them women, are limited in their capacity to accumulate superannuation savings. This is a disadvantage shared with many other Australian women whose working lives are often interrupted by raising children and characterised by low wages. Disability is just one of the social policy challenges facing this government. We are determined to reform the entrenched policies of the last decade and replace them with support and services tailored to individual needs.

Increasingly, social policy needs to help people cope with change and upheaval in their lives – to support them through different and difficult periods. So it's essential that our support structures are smart enough, and flexible enough, to deal with the modern reality of lives in transition. For families, many of these transitions are predictable, an inevitable part of the life cycle. Having a baby, going back to work after the birth of a child, raising children and kids leaving home – although these days when they leave isn't quite so predictable. Anticipating and planning for these life-cycle events requires modern

social policy. Take, for example, our commitment to paid parental leave. Not only does it reflect our child-centred approach to family policy, it encourages women to maintain their connection with the workforce – essential for our economy as the population ages. It's also in the best interests of children because we know that the early months and years are vital to giving kids the best start in life.

Of course other transitions and changes can't be anticipated. They can be sudden and potentially catastrophic – divorce, illness, the loss of a job, a serious accident. What's essential is a flexible, targeted approach which responds effectively to individual need. When families hit difficult times and their income is suddenly reduced, of course they will need income support. But that's just the beginning of the story. To get back on track, families often need more than financial support. For example, to get their affairs in order, they could benefit from financial counselling. That's why we are providing \$3.5 million in funding for 41 community and local government organisations to continue delivering Commonwealth Financial Counselling services – part of a \$10 million package over the next four years. And we are expanding financial counselling services into high need areas.

I've spoken so far about one side of the social policy equation. That's the government's responsibility: to make sure support is adequate; that it encourages participation and promotes self-provision. But social policy is a two-way street. On the other side of the social policy equation there must be personal responsibility. The requirement for personal responsibility figures prominently in the development and delivery of our programs and services. It's central to our child-centred approach to family policy. For the first time the Commonwealth Government is developing a National Child Protection Framework to tackle the shocking levels of child abuse and neglect in this country. With the States and Territories we are working to build the framework to use every possible measure to protect children. Importantly, we recognise that parents and families have primary responsibility for caring for and protecting children and our framework is structured to reflect this.

One key element to the framework will give State and Territory child protection authorities the power to recommend that Centrelink quarantines family payments. This will make sure payments are spent in the interests of children, and not on alcohol, drugs and gambling. Meeting basic parental responsibilities is a reasonable expectation to place on families. Welfare payments should serve the interests of children. If that's not happening, the government will drive reforms to make sure it does. Measures of this kind are controversial but they are necessary for a very simple reason. Financial levers work. We need only look at the huge increase in immunisation rates following the introduction of the Maternity Immunisation Allowance and the requirement that parents

had their children immunised in order to receive the Child Care Benefit, to see how effective financial incentives are.

Immunisation coverage due at two years of age increased by almost 30 per cent in just under a decade. In the Northern Territory there have been positive results since the introduction of income management. Many women in remote communities are telling us that income management means they can buy the essentials, food and clothes, for their children. Linking personal responsibility to financial reward can change behaviour. It's why we have extended income management in Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory and why income management is part of the Cape York welfare trials. And it's why the government is piloting income management and schools attendance measures in a number of sites around Australia. We are preparing trials in Cannington and Kimberley communities in Western Australia and will announce others shortly.

And it's why payments like the Baby Bonus are being re-structured in the best interests of children. Currently, income managed recipients of the Baby Bonus in prescribed Indigenous communities have 100 per cent of the Baby Bonus income managed and paid in instalments. These decisions are not always popular but we will continue to make them to protect Australian children. They are a key element of an ambitious agenda to use social policy to increase personal responsibility and responsible parent behaviour. We need to challenge long held policy shibboleths and use social security and payment levers as a way to confront high levels of dependency on welfare support and to tackle unacceptable levels of abuse. It is clear that social policy must adapt and respond to the rapid pace of change.

Change that is increasingly complex and demanding. Change that has implications for all Australians. Comprehensive structural, social and demographic change demands ongoing agility and responsiveness from policy makers. What's needed is a re-think of our social support structures to make sure they are up to the task of supporting people through transition periods, increasing participation in the economy and realising the full potential of all Australians. This is what we are doing. Getting our social policy settings is about fairness and the Australian way of life. And it's about steering a course for future security and prosperity.

Social policy is the currency of Australia's future, and Australia is back in business.



Photo – Alfonso Calero

Christine Milne

Senator Christine Milne is the Greens spokesperson on Climate Change. The Greens vote has strengthened recently, due to disillusionment with the two major political parties at both a State and Territory level, along with increasing concern among ordinary Australians that climate change and severe droughts need drastic and immediate action. The Australian Greens now hold the balance of power in the ACT government and the Australian Senate. Senator Christine Milne addressed The Sydney Institute on Monday 27 October 2008 to discuss the way forward for the Emissions Trading Scheme in the context of twin global meltdowns of climate and finance.

GREEN POLITICS,

THE BALANCE OF POWER AND THE GREEN NEW DEAL

CHRISTINE MILNE

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this evening about “Green Politics, The Balance of Power” and the twin global meltdowns of climate and finance. There has never been a more critical time to be a Green and there has never been a time when the philosophy and experience of Green politics – based on 40 years of environmental, social justice, peace and democracy campaigning – has been more important. The decisions that will be made in the next five years are crucial for the future of life on Earth.

In acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting, the Eora people, I want to reflect on how their enduring message – that a physical, emotional and spiritual connection to the land is central to well being – is resonating widely. People everywhere are simultaneously reaching the same conclusion amidst the collapsing ecosystems in which they live from the Murray Darling to the Arctic, from Tuvalu to the Maldives. They want to maintain their connection to country. They yearn to get back in touch with the Earth’s realities.

As we speak, Australia and the world are in meltdown, teetering on the edge of political, economic and environmental tipping points. Whichever path we choose, the world will never be the same again. In the coming decades, either we will have successfully reshaped our political and economic structures and be heading towards a new healthy, happy, prosperous and safe future with an environment under repair and a strengthened civil society, or we will have chosen to stick with the current model which is reshaping our environment and climate in ways that will lead to system collapse, huge population movements and widespread conflict. The choice is ours – we can make a change for the better, but we have to make it now.

Victor Hugo once said, “There is nothing so powerful as an idea whose time has come.” The idea that is swirling around the planet right now is that the solution to the financial collapse is the same as the solution to climate change. To rescue ourselves socially, politically and economically, we need to invest heavily in healing and repairing

the Earth's ecosystems and in the transition to a net carbon zero economy. As Sir Nicholas Stern said last Thursday, "Now is the time to lay the foundation for a world of low carbon growth."

Last week in London there was a call from the United Nations Environment Program and Deutsche Bank, backed by the governments of Germany and Norway, for a global "Green New Deal". Echoing Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal to lift the USA out of the Great Depression, a "Green New Deal" seeks to rebuild the global economy based on four pillars: renewable energy, energy efficiency, clean alternative transport and protection of ecosystems. In order to achieve this, we need a massive injection of funds into education and training to take full advantage of human innovation and ensure that we have a workforce and a manufacturing sector ready to make it a reality. In terms of protecting ecosystems, UNEP Executive Director, Achim Steiner, noted that logging costs the world over \$2.5 trillion a year in lost ecosystem services such as clean water and air, stopping soil erosion and storing carbon. This is more than the \$1.5 trillion the economic crisis has so far cost.

A Green New Deal would stop logging our old growth forests and value the carbon they store, as well as the biodiversity they shelter. It would help farmers and indigenous people in remote communities be the best possible land stewards, bringing together protection and productivity on the land in a way not seen in much of the world for centuries. A Green New Deal would help redesign our cities around urban villages, linked by fast, convenient and safe buses, trains, trams and ferries. We would all be healthier and happier in cleaner cities, exercising more and spending more time with our families and communities. A Green New Deal would use guided research, development and commercialisation funding, alongside industry support policies such as feed-in tariffs, to bring renewable energy onto the market fast. It would work with communities and local governments to pre-permit the best sites for renewables development and take the energy grid out to them. It would roll out energy efficiency upgrades to our entire housing and commercial building stock and drive low emissions industrial alternatives to today's biggest polluters.

With a Green New Deal, I agree with Al Gore that it is both necessary and possible for us to build a new zero emissions energy network, based on energy efficiency and renewable energy, in just a decade. If that seems impossible, think how fast mobile communications technologies, which now dictate every aspect of our lives, have leapt onto the scene. Back in 1989, when I first ran for the Tasmanian Parliament, I was the only candidate to have a mobile phone – and it was so large that it took up most of the boot of my car! No-one had email. Just a decade ago, mobiles and email were less

widespread than renewable energy is now. Who would have thought even a year ago with the collapse of the car industry that Australia would be aiming for a plug in electric vehicle network by 2012.

The Green New Deal is not a new idea. It has been at the heart of Green politics since the beginning of the environment movement in the 1960s. It was central to the Greens Business and Industry Strategy published in 1992 as a recipe for transforming the Tasmanian economy from a resource based to a knowledge and information-based economy prioritising protection of the environment and promotion of our unique high quality food and beverage products. It was central to *Re Energising Australia* which I released in early 2007 as a transformative proposal for the Australian economy.

So why has it taken a financial crisis and not the environmental crisis to allow this idea to burst through to the surface of political debate as it has now done internationally, even if it has not yet done so here? What has been holding it back? The answer is simple. By the 1960s when we realised that the Earth is a finite planet, governed by a complex system of feedback loops and ecosystems and with a finite ability to provide resources and to absorb wastes, we had already invented political, social and economic systems which were underpinned by the opposite assumption, namely that our finite planet has infinite resources to sustain an infinite population and can absorb unlimited wastes. Unlimited economic growth, coupled with increased energy consumption and ongoing increased resource use and pollution were and remain the hall marks of the modern economic systems and were and still are vigorously defended by those individuals and nations who have benefited.

To admit that the system in its current form is ecologically unsustainable and that new economic, social and political tools and models need to be developed and applied is to admit that the world needs to change dramatically. Change delivers winners and losers and, as Machiavelli once said, "There is nothing more difficult to handle, more doubtful of success and more dangerous to carry through than initiating change. The innovator makes enemies of all those who prosper under the old order and only lukewarm support is forthcoming from those who would prosper under the new. Their support is lukewarm partly from fear of their adversaries, who have the existing laws on their side, and partly because men are generally incredulous never really trusting new things unless they have tested them by experience." *The Prince*, 1514. Sound like the ETS?

The tug of war between those who want to change the basic assumption and those whose vested interests rely on no change being made is the history of Green politics for the past 36 years. Greens around the world have been developing policies and models designed to overcome the disconnection between this constructed world of

traditional politics and economics and the real world of nature and natural ecosystems for decades. As the ecological crisis deepened, Green politics with its strong philosophical underpinnings started to appeal to greater numbers of people. Just as the Labor Party in the early twentieth century grew out of the need for justice for working people and their representation following the exploitative Industrial Age and the shearers strikes of the 1890s, so too the Greens have grown out of the excesses of environmental destruction and injustices wrought by industrial capitalism in the last 30 years of the last century. Whereas traditional politics is in denial about the problems that exist, the Green Party is proposing solutions. This is hardly surprising since we have been thinking about these issues for 30 years. We are developing new ways of governing the relationship between people and nature so that it becomes genuinely ecologically sustainable. This means changes to economic thinking and transformative new economic tools and financial mechanisms. No less than a change to the economic system is needed, and the current financial crisis is the opportunity to do it.

But, as Machiavelli warned, it will not be easy. Just as Labor began with a few individuals being elected and then achieved a balance of power and then opposition and government, so too it will be for the Greens. We are on our way to government. But not before Labor, Liberal and Nationals combine to do everything in their power to thwart the rise of the Greens. They are different only by degree. None advocate or want systemic change. Interestingly, in 1924, Vere Gordon Childe in his *How Labor Governs* observed, "The Labour Party started with a band of inspired idealists and degenerated into a vast machine for capturing power but did not know how to use that power when attained except for the profit of the individual." The community understands that now. It is why we have personality politics substituting for philosophical difference. It is why Grant Hackett can say that he wants a political career but has not decided which party he wants to stand for. This says more about the two old parties than it says about Grant Hackett.

The world's first Green party, the United Tasmania Group, was formed in Tasmania in 1972 and the turmoil at the time was part of my political awakening. Its Charter, *The New Ethic*, remains as insightful now as it was then in formulating a new social contract which was global in its thinking, "United in a global movement for survival," and which had at its heart environmental sustainability and the nurturing of values consistent with justice, equal opportunity and peace. The UTG was followed in 1975 by the Values Party in New Zealand and then Petra Kelly, following a visit to Australia, took the ideas to Europe where she formed a Green Party in Germany and contested the European elections as a Green.

I am always amused when I see commentators saying that the Greens have broadened their policies to appeal to a greater number of voters. In reality, the party was founded on the four pillars of ecology, social justice, peace and non violence and participatory democracy and the party throughout the world has advocated these values for the past 36 years. It is only now that a wider audience is listening, facilitated by the ability of the new media to communicate directly with constituents. The Greens are the only truly global party at the beginning of this century. At the first Global Greens conference held in Canberra in 2001, we adopted a Global Greens Charter and at the second Global Greens Conference, held in San Paolo Brazil this year, a decision was made to establish a Global Greens Secretariat which we hope will be hosted in Australia.

The party is contesting elections in more than 70 countries of the world from Columbia where Ingrid Betancourt was our Green Presidential candidate when she was kidnapped, to Russia where Greens are actively prevented from running, to Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, most European countries, and the Americas and New Zealand. We have over 300 national MPs and tens of thousands of state and local government representatives. We have held ministries in several European countries including the German foreign Ministry and the French Environment Ministry and we currently hold three Irish, three Finnish, four Czech and one Latvian ministries. Green parties are forming in our region with the latest being in Indonesia and Fiji. Green candidates are in touch with each other, and parties are talking about policies and political experiences. At the UNFCCC conference in Bali last year for example there was a get together of Green Party MPs from around the world to discuss the state of the negotiations and it was valuable for me to talk to them about what was really happening in Australia behind the hype surrounding the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.

At the national level, the Greens have 21 state and territory MPs and now have representation in every State parliament and in the ACT. We have five Green Senators and are close to breaking through again into the House of Representatives especially in the seats of Melbourne, Sydney and Grayndler. At local government level we have more than 100 local government councillors around the country. There is a great deal of interest in how we will use political power, how we will govern – responsibly and with courage and commitment to system wide change is my answer. We will not make the same mistakes as Labor did. We are not after power for power's sake. We are seeking power to transform the way we live, to make a happier, healthier more sustainable world for us and for future generations. We have 13 Private Members bills in the Senate now. We stand by our policies, our commitment to transparency and community engagement. Our

political record is a distinguished one across the country. As former Liberal leader in Tasmania, Bob Cheek said of us, “At least they were true to their word, which is more than you can say for a lot of politicians.”

I have been part of the balance of power on three occasions. I was part of the Labor Green Accord in Tasmania between 1989 and 1992, I was Leader of the Tasmanian Greens in a balance of power with a Liberal minority government between 1996 and 1998 and I am now in the balance of power in the Senate. During the Accord, the Greens brought about several great reforms including the introduction of Freedom of Information legislation. We also doubled the size of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area in negotiating the Accord. Significantly, the Greens supported the Field government in addressing the near bankruptcy of the State. The most fiscally responsible periods of government in Tasmania have been during minority governments. The majority Liberal government of Robin Gray had driven the Tasmania into a parlous economic situation and the Labor Green Accord had to turn it around. It was a difficult period of protests and unrest as the public service was slashed and public spending was cut. The Greens never wavered from the task. Nor did we do so with the Rundle Government when again we had to rectify the reckless spending of the Groom majority Liberal government.

With the Rundle Liberal minority government, the Greens achieved gay law reform, gun law reform, an apology to the Stolen generation, the only Liberal government in the country to do so, and a vote for the republic leading up to the Constitutional Convention. It was a socially progressive period but we were unable to achieve environmental outcomes because Liberal and Labor voted together against any moves to protect marine or terrestrial ecosystems. This dynamic of the old parties voting together to stop ecological solutions is common to both Liberal and Labor minorities and is of concern as we approach the emissions trading legislation. Where old politics looks at the economic meltdown and the planetary meltdown as two separate political challenges, the Greens see an opportunity to deal with two aspects of the same problem simultaneously and to rebuild our economy for a cleaner, safer, fairer and more prosperous world.

Old politics takes each individual problem and seeks to solve it individually. Because of this approach, the solutions chosen frequently make other problems worse, and obvious alternatives which would solve multiple problems together are missed. The emissions trading scheme proposed in the government’s Green Paper is an obvious example. Instead of looking at the underlying goal of the scheme – to reduce greenhouse emissions and therefore prevent catastrophic climate change – they decide that those who will bear the costs

must be compensated through the allocation of free permits or cash payments. Because of the resulting chaos, with threats from polluters that they will relocate offshore unless they get the most compensation possible, they decide we also need a slow start and a weak target. In a misguided attempt to make the system easier to deal with, they undermine its very purpose.

The Greens, on the other hand, see the coordinated solutions, enabling us to look at the problem with optimism. Our emissions trading plans would make “compensation” not about free permits or cash handouts, but about helping reduce emissions. We would reduce the carbon costs people and companies face by reducing their carbon emissions. We would auction all permits – ensuring that the biggest polluters get the biggest price signal – and use a significant proportion of the revenue to improve energy efficiency across the board, extend our electricity grid to renewable energy hot-spots, build new busways, train lines and cycleways. Industrial energy users might get accelerated depreciation or other help meeting the up-front capital costs of new, more efficient plant. So a Greens-designed emissions trading scheme looks at where problems arise and seeks to deal with them in ways that create positive feedback instead of friction. With this kind of scheme design, there is no need for slow starts or lax targets. We can aim as high as we know we need to go given the urgent threat of climate catastrophe, safe in the knowledge that our social and economic support mechanisms are also helping achieve the goal of the scheme instead of undermining it.

The politics of climate policy and the balance of power in the Senate are challenging. The government has the opportunity to green up its policies with our support or it can brown them down with the Coalition. At this point, I am concerned that the Rudd Government wants the latter course – and the community is certainly getting that message as the opinion polls reflect. There is a real possibility that the government, while feigning concern, will be happy to blame the coalition for a weak target as it perceives that such a price will make it less politically painful at the 2010 election. At the same time the government will try to blame the Greens for being too ambitious. This is politically risky. Our targets of a 40 per cent reduction on 1990 levels by 2020 and net carbon zero as soon after that as possible are the targets that the scientists tell us are necessary and they are also the targets that will build competitive advantage in jobs, skills and innovation in the carbon constrained world. After all, JFK did not put a man on the moon in a decade by prevaricating about whether America could ever do so.

There are also the complementary measures of energy efficiency, renewable energy (particularly the gross feed-in tariff, EASI, Farming Renewable Energy) and the protection of native vegetation to be

considered. The Rudd Government and the Coalition must engage on these issues as these measures are the ones that will deliver real greenhouse gas reductions. This is where the Coalition can step up and do a David Cameron and leap-frog Labor or deal itself into irrelevance. If Labor refuses to move on these critical issues it cannot meet any real reduction in emissions. It is rapidly reaching the point where the community is throwing down the gauntlet to the Liberal and Labor parties on the urgency of climate change and the opportunities that a Green New Deal entails. There is a very real prospect of a major political realignment with the Nationals in decline, the liberals in flux and Labor disappointing its voters. The community is beginning to take on Ted Turner's message: "Either lead, follow, or get out of the way" and the election of four Greens in the ACT is symptomatic of things to come.

It is worth noting that when no party has all the power, every party shares the balance of power. Seven cross benchers can do nothing alone. When the conservatives are in minority government a combination of Labor and the Greens can force progressive social reform either by use of numbers or by use of political strategy. But when Labor is in minority it is difficult, but not impossible, to achieve either social or environmental reform as the conservatives oppose both and do not create the space for the government to move. This is where oppositions have to be held to account. Therefore any environmental reforms have to be agreed as part of the negotiations to deliver government.

If the Greens have been so responsible, why have we had to withstand all the advertising by Chambers of Commerce and the old parties about the need for majority governments to deliver stability? Why have we had to withstand the efforts of shadowy groups like Tasmanians for a Better Future who refuse to say who they are or who funded them in their attacks on the Greens. Stability for them means no parliamentary scrutiny or donations disclosure and no public input or unrest. Majority governments can and do do backroom deals and rubber stamp them with their numbers in the parliament whereas minority governments bring the issues to the floor of the House and generally better legislation and outcomes follow. It has been minority governments which have shone a light onto the backroom deals of majority governments. It is no wonder that industries like the logging industry in Tasmania and property developers in NSW love majority government. They like things just as they are. It is why they combined with the Liberal and Labor Parties in Tasmania to change the electoral system to try to get rid of the Greens. They did not succeed but instead destroyed the Tasmanian parliament and the people's democracy. Now the island state is torn apart by corruption and incompetence. It is a salient lesson nationally. I have

no doubt that, as the Greens make their way nationally, there will be similar attacks on democracy. However, as in Tasmania, they will not succeed. They have been overtaken by global imperatives.

So, in conclusion, the Green Party is here to stay. Our collaborative ways of working, our belief in co-operative politics and our ecological ethic are aligned to the challenges of the times. We are prepared to work with the other parties to secure better outcomes as we have done for years, most recently with the luxury car tax and the Medicare levy. We have the solutions to address the problems of the time and we are confident that we will be given the chance to implement them. As Einstein said, you cannot solve problems with the mentality that created them. The Greens have a new way of looking at the world. We provide hope that things can be different and that is why we are the politics of the future.



Photo - Alfonso Calero

Carol Baxter

Carol Baxter is the author of *Breaking the Bank* [Allen & Unwin 2008], which tells the compelling tale of how an audacious group of convicts committed the largest bank robbery in Australian history. Aided by the local community of Sydney because they had targeted “the gentlemen’s bank” of the self-anointed nobility, the robbers eluded apprehension in spite of the large rewards offered by desperate bank directors and the best efforts of government officers to send them to the gallows. Carol Baxter addressed The Sydney Institute on Wednesday 29 October 2008 to discuss law, crime and society in colonial Australia.

SKULDUGGERY IN

EARLY SYDNEY
CAROL BAXTER

Societies get the crime they deserve. It's an interesting thought – challenging, even confronting when we consider our present society. Of course, there aren't the same emotional overtones when we think about crime in the past. Indeed sometimes we can even delight in a crime, and it is such a crime from “the bad, bad days of Sydney's past” that I am going to talk about tonight.

What sort of crime did a penal settlement deserve, particularly one largely populated by thieves and surrounded by the infrastructure of commerce? A bank robbery? Absolutely. What's truly astonishing is that, in such a settlement, it took a decade for a bank to be robbed! The method used, the amount stolen, the political and social backdrop and the consequences both for the perpetrators and the community make this crime one of the most fascinating in our colonial period. Yet until I wrote the book, the story of the Bank of Australia robbery was not well known among Australian historians and the broader community. Before I talk about the robbery, let me cover the historical backdrop – quickly, simplistically, just to set the scene as any good storyteller should do. Many of you will have a thorough knowledge of Australian and British history so please bear with me as some others won't.

England in the 1700s and early 1800s was having trouble with its crooks. There was a general consensus that England didn't want a state run police system like the French, one that contributed to the excesses of the French Revolution. So policing was little more than a pseudo-pension for old men, the “Charley's”, who had little interest in venturing out of their warm boxes and catching crooks.

The victim basically had to catch the perpetrators, call the authorities, and finance the prosecution. Naturally, most thought that it simply wasn't worth it, particularly if they were the victims of theft and had retrieved the stolen goods. So the onus fell on the judicial and penal systems, which focussed upon punishing criminality so harshly that it would (hopefully) deter both the habitual and would-be criminals. In the words of one contemporary English judge:

If you imprison at home, the criminal is soon thrown back upon you hardened in guilt. If you transport, you corrupt infant societies and sow the seeds of atrocious crimes over the habitable globe. There is no regenerating a felon in this life. For his own sake, as well as for the sake of Society, I think it better to hang.

England's gentry and legislators didn't understand that crime is only partly a function of personality, and is largely a function of social environment. They believed that society had a criminal class beneath the "honest poor", comprising crooks who imbibed criminality with their mother's milk, who were too lazy and greedy to work hard, who instead chose the easy way out, of resorting to vice. Of course, the gentry didn't want to admit that a society that failed to support the poor and needy, a ruling class that exploited the masses for its own profit, was largely responsible for the crime it suffered. It was easier to blame the crooks. Over time, the Bloody Code came into being, some 220 crimes punishable by death. You could be sent to the gallows for killing a person, for killing a rabbit, for cutting down a tree in an avenue – but not in a street. Why? Because the "avenues" were the portals into the gentlemen's estates, whereas the streets merely housed the plebs. And who, of course, dictated the legislation?

Even the authorities realised they couldn't hang all of Britain's crooks, that this was a bit excessive. That's where the King's mercy came into play. Naturally, however, England didn't want reprieved crooks back on its streets, so banishment became an effective alternative – convict transportation. Of course, when the upstart American colonists refused to receive any more of these choice British exports, the government had to find somewhere else to send them – New South Wales, about as far from home as it was possible to send them. And initially it worked. Transportation to Botany Bay was considered by some such a truly terrifying punishment that, in the early years, one group of convicts rejected the offer of reprieve and asked to be sent to the gallows instead of Botany Bay. Much to the clergy's horror!

Many convicts had only seven year sentences, so what was to be done with them when their sentences expired. Britain didn't want them back and definitely wasn't going to fund such a lengthy sea voyage. The ex-convicts needed jobs and an income in the colonies so they wouldn't be a continued drain on British coffers, and the colony itself needed produce and self-motivated workers; the serving convicts were not exactly eager to do their duties. So the colonial authorities began granting land to time-expired and emancipated convicts, and if you've ever examined statistics relating to land value appreciation for the last millennia you will see how land is one of the stepping stones to wealth. Some convicts did indeed become extremely wealthy, the Simeon Lords and Samuel Terrys, the Kables and Underwoods.

Gradually, the message seeped back to Britain that transportation wasn't a dreadful punishment after all and could instead be a ticket to wealth. Commit a crime and get yourself transported, the message whispered, and you'll be much better off in the penal settlements than you could ever be in England. And it was true.

This wasn't exactly the message Britain wanted sent to its criminal fraternity. And when the authorities received word about Governor Macquarie's attitude to the convicts? Well!!! Macquarie was of course a man before his time in his treatment of emancipated convicts – indeed a man before our time! – and those who proved their worth were invited to his dinner table. Britain wasn't happy at all and despatched Commissioner Bigge to determine whether transportation still served as an effective punishment, and to examine Macquarie's "ill-considered" treatment of the convicts. Bigge reported back negatively about both issues. Eventually Britain decided to send a governor to reintroduce the concept of terror into penal servitude: Lieutenant General Ralph Darling, a military autocrat, the most conservative governor ever in New South Wales. And it was during Darling's administration that the Bank of Australia was robbed – and by convicts, no less.

In my previous book, *An Irresistible Temptation: the true story of Jane New and a colonial scandal*, I talk about the political effects of the decision to appoint Darling, the clash between the conservatives who supported Darling and the liberals, men like William Charles Wentworth. The backdrop to *Breaking the Bank* covers the social politics of the day, the upstairs-downstairs of colonial society. The robbed bank was not the "people's" bank, the nickname given to the Bank of New South Wales (now Westpac) founded in 1817, but the "gentlemen's" bank, the Bank of Australia, founded in 1826.

Imagine if you and your friends had some spare money to invest, wanted to profit from an economic boom, and decided to set up your own bank. You searched around and found a building to house the bank with a suitable basement that could be turned into a vault. Would you then go to the local parole office and get a paroled prisoner to build the vault for you? I don't think so.

The Bank of Australia's managing director, Thomas Macvitie, didn't have much choice. Half of the colony was convicts or ex-convicts – thieves, mainly – and their ranks provided most of the artisans that had turned the penal settlement from a hotchpotch of unsightly tents scattered around the roughly-cleared banks of Sydney Cove to the bustling harbourside town of Macvitie's day. The most skilled stonemason in Sydney was a convict named Thomas Turner, the overseer of the stonemason gang. Macvitie employed him to

reinforce the walls of the vault, with stone blocks weighing 200 or 300 pounds. It was a decision he would later regret.

So, do you think Macvitie knew that a sewerage drain ran immediately next to his bank vault? And do you think Macvitie knew that his prize stonemason had also overseen the construction of the said drain? Thomas Turner kept his knowledge to himself for a couple of years, well aware that suspicious eyes would focus on him if the bank was robbed. But he used the time to perfect a clever plan, one that he eventually disclosed to an ex-convict, a shoemaker. He also told him that he would need the services of a skilled blacksmith to make the necessary tools. The shoemaker and his crony invited a man named William Blackstone to join their little band. Turner told the men to use a broom and a piece of string to measure the distance from the drain grating to the front wall of the neighbouring building (owned by none other than Sydney's ex-chief constable!). Then they were to make their way down to the Cove and climb into the almost man-size entrance of the combined sewerage and storm water drain, walk back up the drain to the grating, measure out some distances and start digging.

Over a few Saturdays in August and September 1828, 180 years ago last month, the men tunnelled through nine feet of bricks, rubble and stone. Finally on Sunday 14 September 1828 they pulled out the cornerstone. The slimmest of the bank robbers slid through and began pushing out tins and bags of coins and notes. £14,000 worth. Did they have any idea how much they had stolen before they heard about it in the newspapers? Most of them were illiterate and would have struggled to make such a calculation.

So how much was £14,000? Using a wages conversion – since they stole the money rather than earned it – the conversion works out at around \$20 million in today's money, a truly amazing haul. The community loved it – as can be expected from a penal settlement of thieves. The bank directors were aghast; the governor irate. What message would this send to the boatloads of convicts regularly being offloaded onto Sydney's shores, the criminal fraternity in England, the government officials who had assigned him the role of reintroducing terror into penal servitude? Rewards were offered but the community kept quiet. The rewards were increased; still the community kept quiet. To the convicts, ex-convicts and small settlers, this was the ultimate slap in the face to the government as well as the self-anointed nobility who had profited from the convicts' labour.

The bank directors had a clever idea for getting back their money. They informed the community that everyone must bring any Bank of Australia notes to be exchanged and to state when they acquired each note and from whom. Now, if you picked up your own wallet and looked inside, I am sure that you would be unable to say when you had

received a particular note and from whom. But it is important to put it in perspective. Average wage today – \$50,000 plus. Largest bank note: \$100. Average wage then – £50-ish. Largest bank note – £50. I am sure that if you looked in your wallet and saw a \$50,000 bank note, you would be able to say exactly when you received it and from whom.

Now this was all very well, but in a community of thieves, it wasn't just the bank robbers who would struggle to account for their possession of certain notes. 'I broke into Joe Bloggs down the road last Wednesday night and stole it' – would anyone be foolish enough to admit to such a form of acquisition? Moreover, many community members weren't keen to assist the bank directors recover their money, or the authorities capture the thieves. Not only did they want a slice of the booty themselves, they had their additional grievances against the bank directors who were among the exclusives thwarting their wishes to regain the rights of Englishmen: freedom of the press, trial by jury, even representative government. The gentry hadn't done themselves any favours among the broader colonial community and they were paying for it.

A black market began in Bank of Australia notes, and those foolish enough to attempt to exchange stolen notes found themselves in serious trouble. The robbers were not that foolhardy. Ironically, however, it was their greed and stupidity in the years following the robbery that led to their downfall – fortunately for us, or we would never have learnt the full details. Suspicion had fallen on three of the five robbers immediately after the robbery. Foolishly, they'd left their tools in the drain, and the then Chief Constable had looked at the cleverly crafted metal tools, thought of Sydney's more able and criminally-inclined blacksmiths, and immediately recognised the work of Blackstone. When they discovered that he had missed a muster on the day of the robbery, one that as a serving convict he was obliged to attend, it was the excuse they needed to lock him up again and try to pressure the information out of him.

Blackstone had managed to pass his bundle of notes to a receiver before being taken into custody so he knew that he had a fortune waiting for him when he was released. He too kept quiet. The authorities shut him away in the *Phoenix* hulk for a year until his original sentence of transportation expired, when they had to release him. He immediately went to the receiver's house and found that the man had moved – to a much nicer house in a more salubrious part of Sydney! Blackstone demanded his money. The receiver fobbed him off, again and again. He approached the ringleader who said that he'd been robbed and had lost most of his share. One of the other bank robbers was in gaol on another charge, one dead and only one wise robber had taken his proceeds and run. Blackstone's efforts in the robbery had gained him nothing. Two months later, the reckless

opportunist rumbled a man in the dark (so-called “highway robbery”) and lost half his shirt in the process. He was caught and sent to the dreaded Norfolk Island penal settlement. Before sailing, the bank’s chief robbery investigator approached him and advised him to reveal all, but Blackstone demurred. A year later, after being brought back to Sydney to serve as a witness in a murder trial, the chief investigator approached Blackstone again. This time he caved.

All was revealed at the trial three years after the robbery: one robber pitched against the others. The plan, the tunnelling, the rock smashing down onto one of the robbers’ hands leaving the ex-chief constable’s floorboards exposed, the scout bumping into some constables as the robbers followed clutching bags of booty, the time spent locked up when the suspicious authorities tried to get them to talk, the ultimate betrayal. But the authorities faced a serious problem. Highway robbery was a capital crime and under British law those convicted of committing crimes serious enough to warrant a death sentence were considered to have disgraced themselves, to be untrustworthy and ineligible to testify in a court of law. But without Blackstone’s testimony the robbers would go free. Naturally the defence lawyers objected to the admissibility of Blackstone’s testimony on these grounds. The courts, however, had found themselves facing this problem before and, to enable justice to be served, had been forced to adapt the law to their own circumstances, allowing “felon attaints” to testify. When the robbers were convicted, the defence lawyers raised the objection again and the judges ruled two to one against the objection, Chief Justice Francis Forbes providing the dissenting vote. One of the lawyers suggested that the case should be put to the King in Council for his decision. Naturally, the Sydney justices didn’t want the government legal officers back in England, who had no comprehension of the difficulties they faced in a penal settlement, making such a ruling. They decided to sentence the men to Norfolk Island for life, rather than to the gallows. Blackstone was released from prison with a pardon and the rewards, but he still hadn’t learnt that his skills as a blacksmith far outweighed his skills as a thief. Two years later, he was on a boat to Norfolk Island to join the friends his testimony had sent to this hell-hole.

In researching a story like the Bank of Australia robbery, I begin with a tiny seed and have no idea what it will grow into. In this instance, I picked up the seed while researching Jane New’s story (my first book). A petition for mercy mentioned that she had provided the bank directors with information about the bank robbery however it didn’t specify what information or even which bank robbery. So I worked back from that date, looking in the Sydney newspapers for details of the robbery. I was astonished when I stumbled upon the first references and gradually discovered its magnitude. The size

alone made me realise that this was a great story. Tunnelling through a sewerage drain made it truly juicy. I then found that chapters had been written about the robbery in compendiums of crime, most of them poorly researched, as it turned out. Yet no one had attempted to tell the full story of the robbery or set it against the social backdrop, which makes this extraordinary story even more interesting. As I followed every lead, I discovered more drama than I could ever have imagined, including numerous convict escapes, a shipwreck and the Norfolk Island mutiny.

While the bank robbery itself makes a great story, I have a more comprehensive agenda in writing true historical crime. First of all, I try to find previously untold stories rather than repeating the same old, same old: Mutiny on the Bounty; Ned Kelly, etc. Telling new stories provides an opportunity to add to the body of knowledge. I've been fortunate that Allen & Unwin have allowed me to document the results of my research in the form of an annotated time-line for each of the protagonists and for the robbery itself. Documenting the sources in this way allows me to leave out a lot of the excessive detail that bogs down the narrative. It also allows anyone else with a particular interest in the robbery or one of the perpetrators to follow the paper-trail, saving them from reinventing the wheel. Moreover, ever heard the phrase: unsubstantiated history is mythology? If we can't follow the paper trail, how can we determine the accuracy of a particular work? Additionally, I like to use these great Australian stories to tell the story of our history, to slip it in the back door, so to speak. After reading my first book, a friend quipped: "I learnt all about Australian history – whether I wanted to or not!"

Australians, generally, have little knowledge of our colonial past and the education system is largely to blame. The syllabus-makers evidently consider that teaching nine-year olds about convicts, explorers and the gold rush is enough to cover the political, judicial, economic, social and cultural foundations of our nation. It's as if our colonial past is considered unsophisticated and unimportant, worthy only of a young child's syllabus. Perhaps it is a hidden hangover of British imperialism and attitudes to the dominions that we became worthy of notice only in the twentieth century when we became a nation and stepped onto the world stage. Moreover, the history taught in schools can be so dry, having lost the drama and excitement of the events themselves, or of the historians' efforts in discovering the information and solving the mystery. Because that's what historians are: detectives, jigsaw puzzle players. Yet many students fail to learn this lesson because their schools don't offer them the opportunity to practice history, to learn or use the skills that historians use. Students of chemistry undertake chemical experiments, students of geology examine rocks, students of music listen to and play music, students

of English read texts, but many history students only study bland secondary source reference books that communicate no sense of the historians' actual efforts in piecing together information from original records to prepare such a history, or of the drama and excitement of the hunt or of producing something new.

So many transcripts and facsimiles of original records are now available on the internet or on CD-ROM that a practical history unit is feasible, particularly within the context of our early colonial past. Students would be doing exactly the sort of research I do – on a smaller scale, of course – and think how much fun rambunctious teenagers would have researching an infamous bank robber who tunnelled through a sewerage drain, for example. Yet they would still be learning about our history in doing so, as my stories show, and in ways that would imprint themselves in their memory much more effectively. Because many students are bored by the history they are taught at school, as adults they have no interest whatsoever in reading a “history book”. Yet the story of a major bank robbery or a sex-scandal, in the case of my first book, or a murder, like my soon-to-be-completed third book, has a broader appeal. To increase the appeal, I use a lighter style and, where possible, allow the story to read almost like fiction, although let me assure you that my books are not fiction or faction, as I explain in the Author's Note.

Which brings me to a new point. Did any of you read the interesting article “Birthstain has become a badge of honour” in this month's *Australian Literary Review* magazine? It was about the seismic shift in community interest in the convict period as reflected in the number of convict books published this year, and mine was one of the books discussed. Except that I didn't “invent the dialogue to push the story along”, as the article said (the *ALR* is publishing my letter to the editor in next month's issue to set the record straight). The significance of this article, however, is that even many historians don't seem to realise that history doesn't need to be written as faction to be exciting and dramatic and have the immediacy of fiction. It just takes considerably more work: in background research, in examining character, in perfecting the prose, as Peter Cochrane talked about earlier this year in his Sydney Institute session on “Biographical Narrative.”

There's even more to my agenda, however. History isn't just a vehicle for telling the stories of the past. Arguably, the true value of history lies in its resonances for today, in the lessons we can learn for personal and community growth, even in the tax dollars we can save as a society. One of the powerful themes in *Breaking the Bank* is that of crime and punishment, a subject of continued interest today.

So what is crime? We find it easy to slip into the habit of thinking “us versus them”, that criminals are those who commit theft and

rape and murder whereas we are “good” people, the noble, the fortunate. But crime is whatever society and the legislators decide it should be. I’d be willing to bet that all of us would have been guilty of committing at least one crime in our lives: parking illegally, speeding, taking office stationary, using work time to check personal e-mails or make personal phone calls, failing to list all sources of income on a tax return. While most readily dismiss such “crimes” as unimportant, minor breaches of rules that are “meant to be broken”, in the past some of these breaches would have sent us to the gallows.

What of the crimes we see today as legally and morally abhorrent? Wife-beating, for example: in the past it was not only condoned, it was legislated – so long as it wasn’t too brutal! The “droit de seigneur”: the local lord’s right to take a virgin’s maidenhead on her wedding night. The sexual abuse of children – we’ve had a few too many recent examples of failures by the guardians of our morals to consider that that is adequately dealt with, even today. As for murder, think of the gentlemen’s “duels to the death”, that rarely led to prosecutions and almost never to convictions. But poach a rabbit ... ! Yet even theft was sometimes not a crime. Incredibly enough, there was a three-month window during Governor Darling’s administration – that is, the governor sent to the colony of thieves to reintroduce the concept of terror into penal servitude – when there was no law against theft. All of the prisoners convicted during that period had to be set free, much to Governor Darling’s horror, and chagrin as he himself was responsible for the error. Criminals are only criminals if the law declares them to be.

So if we look at a story like *Breaking the Bank* and think about crime and punishment in the years of our foundation, there are some profound messages for us all. Most of the convicts transported to Australia buckled down and behaved well. Why? Not because they were evildoers and transportation served as an effective punishment and deterrence, but because in the colonies they were warm and well-fed, with jobs and opportunities. Their environment changed; their needs changed. And it’s amazing how having possessions of your own changes your attitude to crime. It’s also amusing to see ex-convicts prosecuting and suing those who tried to swindle or steal from them. While personal characteristics do underlie criminality to some extent – these can be good as well as bad. We look back at the transportees and their social circumstances and realise that most of them were merely guilty of having an incredibly strong will to survive. They did whatever it took and if it meant committing acquisitive crimes for the sake of survival, or even becoming prostitutes or professional criminals, they did so either because they had little choice or had weighed the benefits and found law-abidingness wanting. We can see

it in the US today; low base wages might produce low unemployment statistics – they also produce high crime rates.

And what about punishment and deterrence? When we look back to the past, to the protagonists in *Breaking the Bank*, we can see that the robbers had all faced the courts at least once before deciding to commit the robbery, had already faced the possibility of their own death sentence, had watched friends and acquaintances being executed. They knew from personal experience that stealing goods worth more than £5 was enough to send them to the gallows. Yet they still decided to try to steal a fortune from a bank vault. Harsh punishments do not deter criminality. Yet it's a lesson we don't seem to learn. When I was working on *Breaking the Bank*, I heard a news announcement one day, a reference to the problem of kids throwing rocks onto roads. The government announced that they were going to introduce 25-year sentences: not for actually hitting a car and hurting someone, just for throwing the rocks. The same news bulletin reported that a couple of drunks brawling in a pub killed an innocent bar-tender and received a three-year sentence. I shook my head in despair.

Then, just a couple of weeks ago, I had a lengthy wait in a doctor's surgery and, to pass the time, I picked up a newspaper lying next to me which happened to be the *Daily Telegraph*, a newspaper I hadn't looked at since I worked for News Limited a couple of decades ago. I flicked through the pages and came across an opinion or editorial piece calling for a return to capital punishment. The author claimed that the majority of the population are crying out for it. I was horrified. This is the twenty-first century. Why are people calling for nineteenth century solutions? It brought to mind the words from the barbed pen of *Punch* magazine in the 1840s: "We hire the hangman to preach the sanctity of human life." Surely, if our community had a better understanding of our own past history as a penal settlement and the issues of crime and punishment, we wouldn't hear calls for a return to capital punishment. Perhaps then we might hear the community demanding that we try to solve the problem before it happens. While I'm no criminologist, in writing books like mine, I have to try to understand the character and motivations of the protagonists, without being able to question them about their lives and personal history. Background reading is essential and, naturally, as I'm writing about criminals, I've read a lot of criminological texts.

Did you know that there are psychometric tests that can be performed on eight-year-olds that have a high predictive value for criminality, not because these children have a criminal gene, but because of the unfortunate combination of their psychological profile and social environment? Instead of talking about reintroducing the death penalty and throwing such a large proportion of our tax

dollars at policing, the legal system and the prisons, wouldn't it be better to direct some of the money towards pre-empting the problem? We wouldn't need to test all children; studies have shown a high correlation between teachers' assessments and potential criminality as suggested by the test results. The funding? Well I remember hearing, also while working on *Breaking the Bank* last year, about \$120 million of our taxpayers' money on a certain industrial relations advertising program and thinking how much DOCS could have achieved with that money.

Clearly, a book like *Breaking the Bank* is an important vehicle for communicating history, and for thinking about the present and future in the light of the past. But it's also a light-hearted look at a truly audacious and outrageous Australian crime – a better story than told in many a novel or Hollywood movie. And researching and writing such a story is not only fun, it is exciting, challenging and truly rewarding. I doubt if there is anyone in this room who isn't already interested in our fascinating past. If my books help inspire others with my passion for Australian history, then I will feel that I have truly achieved what I have set out to do.

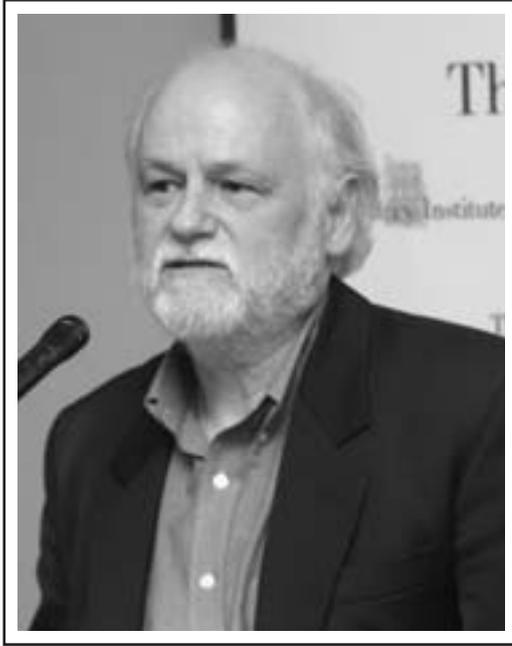


Photo – Alfonso Calero

David Day

Dr David Day is an historian and author of several biographies of Australian Labor prime ministers. His latest biography is that of Andrew Fisher who served as Australia’s Prime Minister for three terms in the early years of the Commonwealth government. In *Andrew Fisher (4th Estate)* David Day writes of Fisher’s massive nation-building program, which included the establishment of the national capital, as well as the establishment of the Commonwealth Bank, old age pensions and a transcontinental railway line. Andrew Fisher is best known for his staunch and costly commitment to Britain in the Great War, “to the last man and the last shilling”. On Wednesday 5 November 2008, David Day addressed The Sydney Institute on Andrew Fisher’s life and times.

ANDREW FISHER

AND THE "AUSTRALIAN SPIRIT"

DAVID DAY

Today is an historic day for the world, with the first black American elected as president of the United States. It is an historic time in Australia as well. It is 100 years since Andrew Fisher first became prime minister and 98 years since he became the first Australian prime minister with a majority in both houses of parliament and the first socialist prime minister to be elected anywhere in the world.

Fisher served for three separate terms, occupying the office of prime minister for four years and ten months, which is longer than John Curtin, Ben Chifley, Gough Whitlam or Paul Keating and about the same amount of time as Alfred Deakin. Yet there have been no biographies of Fisher. For most of the last century, his reputation has had to rest on the jaundiced opinions of his political opponents, both Labor and conservative, and the assessments of their biographers.

A more balanced assessment of Fisher and his political achievements was provided by the Queensland historian, Denis Murphy, who wrote the entry for the Australian Dictionary of Biography. He described Fisher as "one of the most successful Australian politicians", with a "legacy of reforms and national development which lasted beyond the divisions that [his successor Billy] Hughes left in the Labor Party and in Australia". Murphy was planning to write a full biography of Fisher and had done considerable research to this end. However, he was diverted into writing a biography of Bill Hayden and also became an active participant in politics himself after being elected to the Queensland state parliament. Then, three years after the ADB entry was published, Murphy died tragically at the age of just 48. It took some time before another biographer took on the task of writing Fisher's life. The professor of journalism at the University of Wollongong, Clem Lloyd, began his research in the late 1990s but was cut short on New Year's Eve 2001 when he died from a massive heart attack while working on the book in Gympie. I took on the task a few months later, with some sense of foreboding.

What I want to do today is assess some of Fisher's political achievements and explore the ways in which he used his position as prime minister to promote a greater sense of Australian identity and nationhood.

After emigrating from Scotland as a young man in 1885, Fisher was elected to the Queensland parliament in 1893 and played a prominent role in the state Labor caucus. It seemed that he might one day be leader of the colony. But he lost the subsequent election and was out of parliament for three years during which time other MPs came to the fore. Although returned to parliament in 1899, and serving as railways minister in the short-lived Labor government of that year, his focus was elsewhere. He was a firm supporter of federation and planned to stand for the new national parliament, winning the election handsomely in April 1901.

Fisher served in the first Labor government, led by Chris Watson in 1904, which lasted less than four months. The following year, he was elected as deputy leader and in 1907 replaced Watson as leader. Two years later, in November 1908, Fisher became prime minister of a minority government as the result of the shifting allegiances within the parliament, rather than through a popular vote. His main aim in power was to retain office until the following election, so that Labor could finally win a popular mandate as a majority government.

Fisher's plans were dashed by the Dreadnought crisis in Britain in early 1909, which prompted imperialists to call for Australia to contribute a Dreadnought battleship for Britain's navy. There were huge public meetings throughout Australia and strong editorials demanding that Fisher support Britain's navy in the North Sea rather than press ahead with his plans for an Australian navy to protect the country from the rising power of Japan. In an act that prefigured Curtin's refusal in the Second World War to send troops to Burma, Fisher resisted the pressure and purchased instead three torpedo destroyers to form the first echelon of an Australian navy. The issue prompted the anti-Labor forces to join together in May 1909 and oust Fisher from power. Their victory was short-lived.

At the 1910 election, Fisher led the Labor Party to an historic win that saw a single party control both houses of parliament for the first time since federation. Fisher became the first socialist prime minister elected to power, not only in Australia but in the world. And he set about with a will to enact Labor's platform. He wanted, he said, to make Australians "the happiest and most prosperous people in the world". The following three years saw more legislation passed than in any previous period.

Fisher's political achievements included the following: old age pensions; maternity allowances – to cut infant mortality; an immigration program; a land tax to break up large estates and encourage closer settlement; workers compensation for

Commonwealth employees; establishment of the Australian Capital Territory and the naming of Canberra; a takeover and development of the Northern Territory; the Commonwealth Bank; an Australian currency; a trans-continental railway linking Adelaide and Perth; the Royal Australian Navy; an Australian air force; compulsory military training; and the removal of Pacific Islanders from the sugar industry.

However, Fisher wanted to do more. He wanted to expand federal powers through amendments to the constitution. He wanted power over trade and commerce so that he could implement the policy of New Protection, by which manufacturers paid higher wages in return for tariff protection. And he wanted the ability to curb and even nationalise monopolies. Twice he went to the people with referendum proposals, but was defeated both times. The second time, he had the vote to coincide with the 1913 election, hoping that it would ensure its victory. Instead, he found that the opposition to his proposals helped to cause Labor's defeat at the polls. Undaunted, he was determined to try again so that Labor could make its political aspirations a reality. He was convinced that Labor was in the ascendant and was set to become the natural party of government. How could it be otherwise when Labor was the party of the people, while their opponents represented the so-called "money power"?

Many of Fisher's policies were directed towards enhancing the effective occupation of the continent and were driven by an abiding fear of a Japanese invasion following the Japanese victory over Russia in 1905. Like many Australians, he was acutely conscious that they were recent arrivals in a lightly inhabited continent and that if they could not demonstrate to the world that they were making productive use of its land and resources they would be vulnerable to a challenge to their occupation. Fisher was intent on creating the conditions that would boost Australia's population, both through natural increase and immigration, and in boosting its ability to defend its own shores.

Australia was caught in the predicament of being part of an empire whose main rival, Germany, was in Europe, while Australia's feared enemy was in the north Pacific. Should they protect Britain in the hope that Britain would also protect Australia? Or should they concentrate on protecting Australia's own shores? If they did the latter, how was it to be done with Australia's small population? Fisher could never devise an adequate solution to this dilemma that continues to obsess us. Despite Fisher's move in 1909 to establish an Australian-based navy, and his preoccupation with Japan, he became increasingly concerned to prepare Australia for participation in a European war. This was particularly so after he went to London for the 1911 Imperial Conference and was secretly informed by the British government that Australia should prepare for a war against Germany, which was expected to occur by 1915.

Apart from the practical measures that Fisher introduced to build up Australia's defences, he was also anxious to encourage a sense of Australian identity and nationhood. At the time of his great electoral triumph in 1910, he told a meeting of female clothing workers in Brisbane that they should think of themselves as "part of the nation" and urged them to "cultivate a national spirit". He wanted Australians to think of themselves firstly as Australians, rather than the inhabitants of a particular state and he was highly critical of attempts by state governments to retain their pre-federation status vis-à-vis Britain. It was a time when state premiers still saw themselves as the equal of the prime minister in status. Of course, a sense of Australian identity had been developing ever since the arrival of the First Fleet and it was given added impetus by federation and the creation of a national government. But it took time for the federal government to assert its supremacy over the states and for a national identity to assert itself over state or imperial identities.

Fisher helped to encourage a national identity in several ways: Firstly, by the creation of national institutions such as the Commonwealth Bank; the Royal Australian Navy; and a national army, with all males required to undertake military training; the transcontinental railway, with other railways planned to link Adelaide with Darwin and an inland railway between Adelaide and Brisbane; and a national capital on a grand scale, set safely behind the great dividing range. Secondly by the construction of national edifices, the monumental buildings constructed for national institutions, such as the Commonwealth Bank and the GPO, both in Sydney's Martin Place, and the most monumental of all, Australia House in London.

Thirdly there was an encouragement of a national sensibility. Fisher used the services of perhaps his closest friend, the artist Hugh Paterson, to re-design the Australian coat of arms, which did away with the Cross of St George that dominated the old design. Rather than replacing it with the Union Jack, as some wanted, the new Coat of Arms had the emblems of the states on the shield, surmounted by the Commonwealth star. It also replaced the motto, "Advance Australia", with "Australia", and embellished the design with sprays of wattle. Fisher stipulated that the coat of arms had to feature on the new Australian currency. It was going to be in the handbags and wallets of most Australians and brandished in pubs and shops across the nation. In 1913, Fisher replaced the former colonial stamps with an Australian stamp. Rather than the head of the king, the stamp featured a kangaroo on a map of white Australia, with the single word, "Australia", emblazoned across the top.

Fisher also established an Art Advisory Board and a Historic Memorials Committee to encourage Australian artists to paint national scenes and portraits of historic figures and events. The board

was chaired by Hugh Paterson, while the secretary was Fisher's own secretary, Malcolm Shepherd. The board was entrusted with the decoration of Australia House. Fisher imposed a tariff on imported European paintings to encourage people to patronise Australian artists. His government also gave lucrative commissions to artists of the Heidelberg School, which Fisher also patronised himself, hanging some of their paintings in his St Kilda mansion. Fisher also planned to have an Australian coinage minted in Australia, and to change the Australian flag. However, Deakin got in first and introduced coins minted in Britain and embossed with imperial rather than Australian sentiments.

Ironically the greatest impetus for a national spirit occurred during Fisher's last prime ministership. But it occurred in the gullies of Gallipoli. This caused Fisher to put aside his misgivings about the British management of the campaign and to embrace the fighting as a nation-building exercise. How could he do otherwise after memorably committing Australia to support Britain to its "last man and last shilling"? As the first wounded soldiers arrived from Gallipoli, he joined with Hugh Paterson and the Victorian Artists Society to organise a "Pageant for Australia" on 30 July 1915, which was dubbed "Australia Day". Patriotic floats were paraded through Melbourne streets with scenes from Australia's history, minus the convicts and the Aborigines, and culminating in cars carrying wounded soldiers, followed by the daughters of Fisher, Pearce and Paterson, dressed in white and gold to represent the states and one girl wreathed in laurel and dressed in green and gold to represent the nation. Fisher also brought back the remains of General Bridges, the Australian commander who had been killed at Gallipoli, who was given a massive funeral in Melbourne before being buried at Duntroon in Canberra.

It was this drive to create a sense of Australian nationhood, rather than any great attachment to empire, that caused Fisher to mute his opposition to Gallipoli and the senseless waste of Australian troops at the Dardanelles. While recognising the nation-building possibilities of Gallipoli, the disastrous campaign helped to convince Fisher in October 1915 to resign as prime minister and accept the more lucrative and secure position as high commissioner in London, where his mind was gradually clouded by the dementia that would eventually kill him.

Fisher had layers of identity, which were complementary rather than clashing. He was a passionate Ayrshire Scot who traced his ancestry to William Wallace and ensured that his first son was born on Scottish soil. On emigrating to Australia, he became a staunch Queenslander before moving to Melbourne in 1901 and becoming an ardent Australian. He nevertheless retained sufficient attachment to Britain and the empire, such that he lived the last thirteen years of his life in London and chose to die there.



Photo – Alfonso Calero

Tanya Plibersek

The Hon Tanya Plibersek is Australia's Minister for Housing, Minister for the Status of Women. Elected to the House of Representatives in 1998 as Member for Sydney, she played a crucial role in the Australian Labour Party's shadow ministry in assuming portfolios in Work, Family and Community, Youth and Early Childhood Education, Housing and Women. On Thursday 6 November, Tanya Plibersek addressed The Sydney Institute to discuss persisting obstacles to gender equality and to share the government's vision for contemporary women's policy for the twenty-first century.

WOMEN AND MEN

- A NEW CONVERSATION ABOUT EQUALITY

TANYA PLIBERSEK

A couple of nights ago, while I was out working, my little boy got to watch a World War II movie with his Dad for the first time. My husband said Joe was pretty interested in the tanks, but what really struck him was something quite different. “Where are all the women, Dad?” Joe’s view of the world is that men and women are essentially equal. He is used to seeing women as both carers and earners. He expects women to be everywhere – equal partners in all of life’s joys and sorrows, including war.

Today, Julia Gillard is our Deputy Prime Minister, Julie Bishop is Deputy Opposition Leader and Quentin Bryce is our Governor General. Nearly 30 per cent of Commonwealth parliamentarians are women, and nearly half of Labor MPs.¹ Most young women and men have a good range of life choices, and do not feel particularly constrained by stereotypes. Australia consistently hovers around the top of the multi-national league charts on measures of women’s empowerment². Many women have achieved high office, good pay, significant influence. Why, then, the need for a women’s portfolio at all?

The days when all women were – as a group – automatically disadvantaged are behind us, thanks to the enormous effort over generations of many inspirational women, feminists, here in Australia and around the world. But just as Barak Obama’s wonderful win yesterday does not spell the end of African American disadvantage overnight, the fact remains we cannot yet say that equality has been won. Not when so many women are stretched between paid work and caring obligations, unable to perform any of their many roles as well as they want.³ Not when women earn 84 cents for every dollar men earn.⁴ Not when the number of female board directors in ASX Top 200 companies has decreased from 8.7 per cent to 8.3 per cent over the last two years.⁵ And not when nearly half a million Australian women suffer violence each year.⁶

I have made improving economic security and independence; reducing violence; and ensuring women's voices are heard at all levels of decision making the three priorities for my first year as Minister for Women. These challenges remain, and they'll continue to be a focus for my portfolio until we see some significant improvements, but I think there is a next step that we need to take, a new conversation we need to have. We need to give more men the opportunity to be more active fathers and carers. And in each of these areas we need a much stronger partnership between men and women to achieve our goals.

Why we should care about equality

Greater equality economically and socially between men and women is good for us all. It's obviously good for women, and despite the fact that men might have to share some of the better jobs, I'd argue it's good for men too. Most importantly, it strengthens our nation. Because inequality harms us all. Women benefit from equality with better life opportunities, greater independence, higher incomes. Arguments are sometimes made that modern women are under pressure to be "superwomen" – balancing high achieving careers with the same levels of care for children, partners and parents that their mothers were able to provide full-time.

This juggle is difficult, and as Barbara Pocock⁷ describes it, there are hidden costs for mothers, fathers and families of how we live and work now, but the bottom line is that women have opportunities now that their mothers and grandmothers didn't dream of. Better work life balance isn't achieved by limiting women's career opportunities. In fact, life is just made more difficult for women concentrated in low paid industries, or without economic resources of their own. Greater equality also benefits men.

Limiting women's employment opportunities through discrimination, inflexible workplaces or social expectations also limits men's opportunities to become equal parents and hands on nurturers. Improving women's choices and earning capacity reduces pressures on men to be sole breadwinners. There is a solid body of evidence that gender equality is good for the economy as a whole. As *The Economist* magazine pointed out in 2006, women's economic participation has been fundamental to recent economic growth. *The Economist* said, "Forget China, India and the Internet: economic growth is driven by women".

In Australia, the increased participation of women in the workforce – from 43 per cent in 1976 to 57 per cent this year – has been one of our most significant social trends.⁸ Access Economics has predicted that boosting women's participation even further could realise an increased national output of \$98.4 billion by around 2040.⁹ Microcredit has reached more than 130 million people worldwide

– about 90 million of these people were among the world's poorest when they took out their first loan. Of these poorest, 80 million were women.¹⁰ Most microcredit goes to women because they're more likely to repay loans and more likely to use a greater proportion of household income for the benefit of the whole family. Providing these women with a way to make an income for the first time is a way out of poverty for their family and their community, and when done on a large enough scale, has an effect on their nation.

Improving economic outcomes for women

The government has a strong commitment to improve economic outcomes for women. By the time women and men graduate from university, women are already faring less well than men. Research shows that male graduates are commencing employment on a median salary of \$45,000 while female graduates are starting work on \$3,000 less.¹¹ In fact a couple of weeks ago we heard that little girls start life receiving less pocket money than little boys.¹² The pay gap hovers at around 16 per cent and indeed the mining boom saw a widening gap, especially in WA. This disadvantage widens over the life course.

While many women can rely on their husband's or partner's retirement savings, it is a reality that many women cannot.¹³ In 2005-06 average retirement pay-outs were around \$136,000 for men and about half of that – \$63,000 for women.¹⁴ We see too many women with too little superannuation and facing a tough outlook for their old age.¹⁵ For women who spend their lives caring for family members – children, the elderly or those with disability – there can be significant economic consequences. That's not to say we shouldn't do it.

Caring is one of the most valuable things we can do – that's why it should not be a ticket to life long poverty. Equally, it shouldn't be the only option available to women – forced on them because combining work and caring is too difficult and there's no one to share the task with. And the rewards of caring for children and family members shouldn't be denied to men either because they are expected to fulfil breadwinner roles on their own. There will always be families that choose a more traditional split – just as my parents did. That's their right and their business. My contention is that it shouldn't be the only model available to families, and it shouldn't be forced on them through a lack of childcare, or decent jobs for women. Better sharing of unpaid caring work and paid work would benefit us all. It is time for Australia to rethink the way we support women and men to both work and care.

The government recognises its role in meeting this challenge and is responding.

- We are reforming workplace relations laws to deliver a system that is fairer and more flexible for working parents – and a

House of Representatives Inquiry is undertaking a thorough investigation into how we can improve pay equity.

- We have asked the Productivity Commission to examine paid maternity, paternity and parental leave and better ways to support families. The Commission has produced a draft report which will be finalised early in 2009.
- The Sex Discrimination Act is being reviewed to ensure that it is effectively addressing discrimination and harassment.
- We are improving the accessibility, affordability and quality of child care and have established an Office of Work and Family.
- We are reviewing the tax and pension systems to optimise their capacity to deliver assistance to those people who need it the most, including for the significant number of single aged pensioners who are women.
- We are also reviewing participation requirements for those on pensions and parenting payments and considering whether there are better ways of balancing the increased participation of parents with their family and community responsibilities.

Each of those initiatives is a building block in a strategic government response to help women secure their futures. In Australia today, more than two out of five working women have part-time jobs, enabling many women to stay in the workforce and manage their caring obligations.¹⁶ But part-time work should not have to spell career suicide. Importantly, men must also feel able to work part-time and still be taken seriously at work. We want flexible workplaces, with good and secure jobs, for both men and women. Caring at home doesn't mean achieving less at work – many employers will tell you that their most productive employees are the ones that have to be out the door at 5.30pm to make it to childcare – but it does mean allowing both women and men to contribute to their full potential in workplaces with high degrees of flexibility and trust.

Reducing violence against women

The second challenge is to reduce violence against women. Domestic violence and sexual assault have been with us for millennia, but it should be our aim to eliminate these crimes. The Prime Minister said that, "Violence against women is the great silent crime of our time." He also said that, "It is my gender – it is our gender – Australian men – that are responsible." The Prime Minister is a great supporter of the White Ribbon Day campaign, and its philosophy that men should be "not violent; not silent."¹⁷ The White Ribbon campaign operates on the assumption that if we are to reduce domestic violence and sexual assault, Australian men have to be actively involved in doing it.

Nearly 70 per cent of women who are murdered are killed by an intimate partner or a member of their own family.¹⁸ Each year thousands of women are horribly and brutally injured, physically and emotionally, in their own homes. Before coming to office, the government committed to taking a national approach against violence and sexual assault. To develop this strategy, we brought together a group of experts and community leaders – the National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women. The National Plan will enable all levels of government and the community to:

- better support victims of violence;
- ensure that the legal system is effective; and
- reduce violence in future generations.

Ensuring women's equal place in society

Very few people ever tell me equality between women and men is not something Australia should aspire to. One hundred and twenty years ago there were no women in parliament and very few women in public life. At that time, the Australian suffragette Louisa Lawson created a unique voice for women by launching *The Dawn* journal. She wrote: “The life and work of every woman is just as essential to the good of the community as that of every man...Why are her rights less than her brothers’?”¹⁹

It's hard to find anyone these days that would argue with that proposition in theory, and yet we still haven't hit our targets on equality. Increasing women's representation in government, business and other areas of the community is a necessary step to true equality and to reaching our full potential as a nation. While our parliamentary representation has increased since the days of Louisa Lawson and early suffrage campaigners such as Vida Goldstein, I hope and expect one day that men and women will each make up roughly half of our parliaments.

I mentioned earlier the low rates of women on boards. More worrying, though, is the fact that the proportion of women in line for executive management positions has decreased from 7.4 per cent in 2006 to less than six per cent in 2008 in ASX200 companies.²⁰ These are the positions that produce the future CEOs and top executives. Obviously this is a worry for individual women, but it's also not good for business. Mike Smith, Chief Executive Officer of ANZ summed up this issue last Tuesday at a Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) lunch by saying: “We have to build and leverage our employee diversity to maximise our business opportunities within the markets we are operating in. Put simply, it's about ensuring that your people represent the community that you are serving.”²¹

Representation of women on government boards is at 34 percent.²² This is a lot better than the private sector but not yet equal and more

needs to be done. I have directed my Office for Women to increase its work in supporting Australian government boards and decision-making bodies appoint more highly qualified and highly competent women. The Australian government continues to work with and seek the views of women through formal consultative structures like our national secretariat system and new approaches such as the Rural Women's Summit held this year in Canberra, but the very existence of such structures is an admission that women's voices and role in decision-making aren't yet equal with men's.

This is also true in Indigenous communities where interventions against violence, the sexual abuse of children and other issues have often shown differences of opinion between Indigenous men and women. Indigenous women are often the ballast in their communities, but not always the first point of contact for outsiders seeking to consult. The vital role that Indigenous women will play in closing the gap underscores how important it is to hear Indigenous women's as well as Indigenous men's voices.

Engaging men to achieve true equality

Our fourth challenge is probably the one that will require the most difficult conversation between Australian men and women. I believe we need to allow men a much greater role in caring. A recent research report indicated that most of the time Australian fathers are with their children, the mother is also present. Of all the household care performed, fathers only do about ten percent alone, in sole charge of children.²³ A UK survey of fathers found that most of them enjoyed going to work because it gave them a break from their children.²⁴

Lion taming is easier than looking after a handful of kids. But women are prepared for the responsibility from birth: they're given dolls to play with; younger kids to mind; and the role model of their mothers. And yet it still feels strange the day someone hands you a baby and sends you home from hospital. Good parenting is learnt by observation and practice. It's no wonder many men and women feel intimidated at first. The only way past that is to jump right in, learning as you go and asking for advice as you need it.

Long work hours make that impossible for many men. Do we want to live in a society where men rarely spend time with their kids? The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children found that nearly two thirds of fathers thought they had missed out on taking part in home or family activities because of work responsibilities.²⁵ Remarkably, one out of every three full-time working Sydney fathers spend more time commuting than they do with their children each week, according to Australia Institute research.²⁶ If families separate, the downsides become more apparent. Sole parents, who are mostly women, have to juggle an increased child care load at the same time as a decreased

income. Women with little workforce attachment often find themselves in particularly difficult financial circumstances. This can create long term joblessness and poverty for women into old age. Too many men find that they lose touch with their children, and unless there has been violence or abuse in a relationship, that's not good for kids and it's not good for dads.

We've had a national debate about shared parenting after divorce, but shared parenting before divorce is a matter of chance. A new generation of fathers is seeking the opportunity to play a more active role in family and community life,²⁷ but the numbers of men able to work part time to better share the care of young children is still small,²⁸ with many workplace cultures and expectations not supportive of family-friendly arrangements for fathers.²⁹

Conclusion

I hope we're at the beginning of a new era of community discussion around gender equality. We need to discuss openly how both women and men can have a full family life and a career. We need all business leaders to talk about the changes and benefits in their organisations as more women take on more leadership positions. And, we need men to speak up and condemn violence against women.

Community debate – supported by government action – has seen enormous changes in attitude and behaviour in past decades. Smoking rates are down; seat belt wearing is up; drink driving is down; sun sense is up. The government has a role to support the Australian community to have another look at some of the unconscious and unexamined attitudes and behaviours that prevent us from achieving true equality between women and men. Anne Manne summarised this modern challenge by saying, “We will truly have equality when women no longer have to make impossible choices. When they are everywhere in public life and when both men and women are respected for their contribution to love's never-ending labour.”³⁰

It is time for men and women to work together and deliver a gender equality that benefits us all.

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Photo – Alfonso Calero

Michael Abrahams-Sprod

Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod is an author and historian of Jewish History and Holocaust Studies. In 2007, he was awarded a doctorate from the Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies of The University of Sydney for his thesis, *Life under Siege: The Jews of Magdeburg under Nazi Rule*. Michael Abrahams-Sprod addressed The Sydney Institute on Monday 10 November 2008 to outline the continuing relevance of *Kristallnacht* (Night of the Broken Glass), the state sanctioned anti-Jewish riots staged by the Nazis on 9-10 November 1938 that heralded the imminent systematic persecution of Jews throughout Europe.

BROKEN GLASS,

SHATTERED LIVES: THE RELEVANCE OF THE REICHSKRISTALLNACHT TODAY **MICHAEL ABRAHAMS-SPROD**

From 1933 onwards the Jews of Germany had weathered the ferocious Nazi storm. Subjected to constant degradation, humiliation and impoverishment, both physically and psychologically, the majority continued to live their lives as best they could; a great number hoping that things would or could improve for the better. Immediately following the *Anschluss* (Annexation) on 13 March 1938, the Jews of Austria were subjected to the same measures. After the Nazi ascent to power German Jewish communities were subjected to a constant barrage of anti-Jewish measures, designed to make their lives as difficult as possible, whilst simultaneously attempting to strip them of their dignity. In the early years of the regime these measures culminated in the Nuremberg Laws of September 1935, which officially and legally stripped German Jews of all legal rights.

On the night of 9–10 November 1938, the Nazis unleashed the greatest pogrom against the Jews of Germany and Austria since the Middle Ages. Derisively belittling the terrible events that had taken place, they dubbed it *Kristallnacht*, “The Night of Broken Glass”. This pogrom revealed to the world the savagery and barbarism of the Nazi regime, yet that fateful night also lays bare the hollowness of the world’s indignation. The pogrom struck like lightning, suddenly shattering everything it touched, shocking those who suffered it. Although it represented the intensification of the political disenfranchisement, economic strangulation and social segregation that had begun in 1933, no one expected the widespread violence – a pogrom of the sort connected only with Tsarist Russia. The public manifestations of Jewish life in Germany and Austria stood covered with broken glass. The demolition of synagogues symbolised the end of public Jewish life in Germany and Austria.

It was the deportation of Polish Jews from Germany – many of them resident in Germany for generations – that sparked the incident

that led to the November pogrom. Germany expelled 17,000 Polish Jews on 27 and 28 October 1938, sending them to the Polish border. Poland denied them entry. They languished in a no-man's-land between the two borders, in the cold and without food and shelter, while their families and communities became more and more desperate. The deportation of the Polish Jews, usually mentioned only as a prelude to, and then overshadowed by, the November pogrom, sent shock waves through the entire Jewish community in Germany.

As the deportees languished in the cold, the young Herschel Grynszpan, whose parents and sister were amongst them, was driven to despair. He shot Ernst vom Rath, a diplomat at the German Embassy in Paris. The Nazis used the death as a convenient excuse to launch their largest pogrom to date. Organised by the government and Nazi organisations and supported by mobs, the attacks began in the early hours of the morning of 9–10 November 1938. The Nazis presented *Kristallnacht* as an upsurge of violence by an enraged population, an unplanned pogrom which the authorities could do little to contain. It remains quite clear that this event was a tightly controlled exercise that was government-initiated. The first “spontaneous demonstrations” of the night occurred in the provinces of Hesse and Magdeburg-Anhalt in the town of Dessau, the home of the man who symbolised what had become known in the post-Enlightenment era as the German-Jewish symbiosis – Moses Mendelssohn. The city of Magdeburg was also home to one of the esteemed associates of The Sydney Institute – Gerry Levy AM – a gentleman, whom I am both proud and privileged to call both my mentor and friend. He also witnessed the barbarity of the events to be discussed this evening.

During the twenty-four hours of the pogrom at least 7,500 shops, 29 warehouses and 171 houses were destroyed; 191 synagogues were razed by fire and a further 76 physically demolished; 11 Jewish community centres, cemetery buildings and similar buildings were torched and another three gutted; at least 30,000 Jewish men, often humiliated and beaten, were arrested and thrown into concentration camps. The approximate figure of deaths was at least 236, among them 43 women and 13 children, with more than 600 permanently maimed. Hundreds more died in concentration camps during the ensuing months. Homes, which had previously felt safe, were transformed into nightmares of smashed furnishings now matching the smashed lives of their occupants. In the wake of the pogrom Jewish women attempted frantically to free their men, repair their homes, and help their families flee for their lives.

Some of the most barbarous incidents occurred in Austria and the Sudetenland, newly absorbed into the *Reich* and anxious to show their strength of allegiance. For the Viennese, however, it was necessary

to try especially hard, for they had had their own pogrom earlier in the year, in the days and weeks immediately following the *Anschluss*. According to witness William L Shirer, the behaviour in Vienna was akin to “an orgy of sadism”. Many Jews were attacked with iron bars and suffered broken limbs, and at least eight were actually beaten to death. While this was occurring there were some 50 attempted suicides by Jews in Vienna, no fewer than 21 of them successful.

In the wake of this pogrom the vast majority of Jews no longer suffered any delusions about their future as Jews in Germany and Austria. The storm that had been weathered up until the pogrom had manifestly taken a disastrously deadly course. To endure the now exceptionally dangerous and potentially lethal conditions would be an impossibility. Given the events and ensuing circumstances the majority of Jews sought emigration at almost any cost and to anywhere willing to accept them. This massive pogrom had galvanised the Jews of Germany and Austria into action. For those in concentration camps, the only way out was proof of readiness to emigrate. For those not in camps, the magnitude of the violence influenced their decisions. It was only after the pogrom that Jews were finally convinced that they faced physical danger. The realisation that Jewish life in Germany and Austria, as they had once known it, had come to such a tragic end was uncontested.

Kristallnacht was a critical transition point and a blueprint for what was to come. It was a transition because it represented a massive escalation of persecution. For many historians it also represents the end of the first stage of the Holocaust, or *Shoah*, as it has become known in Hebrew, and the relevance of this event as a turning point shall be discussed presently.

The relevance of the *Reichskristallnacht* today

Kristallnacht is now some 70 years in the past. If we look at what was to come after it, that is the industrial extermination of six million Jewish men, women and children, it appears as little more than a signpost on the long road to what we now call the Holocaust. However, we continue to memorialise this event with very good reason, as it marked a significant turning point in Nazi policy; a radical shift from what had gone before and an emerging blueprint of what was to follow. This is, in my opinion, why *Kristallnacht* is most relevant to today, and shall be the subject of this presentation. Secondly, I have always been, and shall always continue to hold the position, that it is essentially through the testimony of survivors of the Holocaust that one comes face to face with the personal, rather than the clinical view of this period of history. For the entire Nazi period, if one were to rely solely on archival material to reconstruct events, it simply would not be possible to do so. However, in incorporating the use of survivor

testimony as historical evidence, not only does this often corroborate the archival evidence, but for many events this evidence is in fact the only major source from which to reconstruct past events.

Of tantamount importance also is the fact that through these survivor testimonies one gains access to the private world of these people and their experiences. It is in this respect that the important role and immense value of using survivor testimony as historical evidence cannot be emphasised enough. For this very reason we are most fortunate to still be able to access and learn from survivors of the period. Thirdly, and finally, on a personal level I am quite convinced that if we do not remember and commemorate, then who will? However unfortunate, the grim reality is that there are those who seek to alter historical fact, as evidenced repeatedly in both public and private discourse, and we have a responsibility to those murdered and to our progeny to guard and to transmit the historical record with vigilance.

In examining the circumstances surrounding *Kristallnacht* one is confronted with the question, why did the government escalate persecution in 1938? As previously discussed the triggering factor was the shooting of vom Rath in Paris. To arrive at an adequate explanation we need to look back as far as 1933. When Hitler came to power he immediately set about removing Jews from areas of influence: the arts, newspapers, education, medicine and the Public Service. His aim then was to exclude them from public life and force them to emigrate. Apart from the boycott in early 1933, these restrictions were introduced not by violence on the streets, but by decrees and legislation. Hitler's main concern in these early years was to deal with unemployment and to build a strong economy. Despite his attack on Jews he was careful not to undermine businesses that were vital to economic expansion.

Up to 1936 there were still many Jewish banks, department stores and Jewish directors in major industrial corporations. The cattle trade was still partially in Jewish hands until 1936. There were still 5,000 Jewish physicians in public practice. Jews were still studying at universities. Indeed, the emigration figures declined in 1935, 1936 and 1937 from a high in 1933–1934. Hitler had made public statements about finding a solution to the “Jewish Problem”, which involved separation of Jew and “Aryan”, with a degree of autonomy for Jews within Germany. Whilst this was deeply problematic, implying a reversion to pre-emancipation Germany, many Jews saw it as manageable, perhaps only for a short period until Hitler would lose office. The pressure had been incremental, building up in a series of steps. Jews continued to adjust to the restrictions by turning inward to family and community.

In 1937 Hitler began to plan seriously for a war of expansion. This would be for *Lebensraum* (living space) in the east and a bulwark against what he defined as “Jewish” Bolshevism. Out of these plans came a process of radicalisation in many areas of government and policy. Göring was put in charge of a Four Year Plan to prepare the country for war. Part of that plan was to force Jews out; if they would not go voluntarily, then expulsion was considered. As early as 1937 Eichmann had suggested in an internal memorandum that pogroms were the most effective way of accelerating emigration. Jewish assets, however, had to be preserved for Germany – the Four Year Plan under Göring had factored into its calculations a massive “Aryanisation” of Jewish property.

Vom Rath was shot dead in Paris on 9 November. Hitler heard the news whilst he was attending the Old Fighters’ Dinner on the fifteenth anniversary of the Beer Hall *Putsch*. In fact, it has been repeatedly argued that Hitler may have heard it earlier that day, which makes his actions even more calculating. He immediately left the dinner after exchanging words with Goebbels, where he was heard to say: “The SA must have their fling.” It was Goebbels who then made the inflammatory speech to the party *Gauleiter*, and it was they who organised what was to follow. The instructions went out in the evening at 10.30 pm and by midnight groups were being organised to begin the actions. One SA group reported formally: “The whole operation is to be in plain clothes and is to be over by 5 am.” The orders to the Gestapo were precise. In addition to Jewish public buildings, businesses and apartments could be destroyed by the SA, but looting was to be prevented. Jews, especially wealthy businessmen, were to be arrested and sent to concentration camps. Over the next few weeks they were to be released if they could show that they had “Aryanised” their assets and had departure tickets.

Let us now consider this event’s results and consequences, and why this pogrom remains so relevant. For the sake of brevity I shall not discuss the contentious subject of the bystanders. However, I would, nevertheless, like to make the observation that the reaction of the onlookers varied, and the more accounts one reads, the more confusing the picture becomes. On 12 November a meeting of the Nazi leaders, Goebbels, Heydrich and Göring was held, and the pogrom its subject. At the meeting a representative of the German insurance industry argued that the reputation of the industry depended on paying out claims for damages, whether made by German or Jewish owners. Göring’s solution was that all insurance payments on properties owned by Jews were to be made to the state. In addition, a one billion *Reichsmark* fine was imposed on the Jewish community.

Other suggestions made at this conference were put into effect within weeks. Jews were ordered to clean up the destroyed synagogues. Swift new regulations increasingly segregated Jews. They could no longer own or drive cars, and theatres, cinemas and sporting stadiums were closed to them. Jewish children were finally excluded from public schools and all Jews were removed from the welfare system. Valuables were confiscated and Jews were increasingly moved into so called *Judenhäuser* (Jew houses). It was also agreed that Jewish policy henceforth would come under the control of the SS. Finally, the government closed down the elected Jewish roof body and replaced it with a new organisation called the *Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland* (“National Association of Jews in Germany”, a compulsory organisation for all Jews in Germany established by the Nazi regime on 4 July 1939, whose officers were appointed by them). The main tasks of the *Reichsvereinigung* were to maintain social welfare and educational programmes from privately raised finance and to organise emigration. Raul Hilberg has described the *Reichsvereinigung* as the model for the *Judenräte* (Jewish Councils) of Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe. The Jewish community was reduced to utter compliance with orders and directives.

Many Jews had clung to their homes, however, after the pogrom, there were very few who did not accept that they would have to leave. Tragically, there existed increasing numbers of elderly and impoverished Jews who could find no refuge. The *Reichsvereinigung* was the main organisation that provided assistance to those who remained behind.

Kristallnacht was a critical transition point. It was a transition because it represented a massive escalation of persecution. What had gone earlier had been a slow step-by-step process. Although the end result was political powerlessness, economic strangulation and complete social segregation, people had time to make adjustments. But now regulations and decrees had turned into government-initiated physical violence. The realisation that such fearful events could have no limits was demonstrated for the first time at *Kristallnacht*. *Kristallnacht* was also in some respects a blueprint, as concentration camps, which had originally been used to punish criminals and opponents of the regime, were now extended to take Jews, and not because they were offenders but simply because they were Jewish.

Kristallnacht was also an example of how Nazi government worked. The long range goals, the broad policies were Hitler’s, defined in his speeches and writings. The implementation often emerged out of the contending ambitions of the party leaders, each trying to outdo the other in order to find favour with Hitler. For the government, the lesson learnt from *Kristallnacht* was that terror could be escalated without any real opposition either from nations or from the cultural

and moral authorities within the nation, namely the universities and the churches. Whatever isolated opposition there was within Germany, it could be controlled. But the government also learnt another lesson – that public violence in the streets of Germany was difficult to limit. The German people may have stood by, but rampaging violence and destruction of property were offensive to the social norms of ordinary Germans. Henceforth, the persecution of Jews reverted to official decrees. When Jews were “transferred” or “resettled” to the East in 1941–1942 they received notification to assemble at holding centres with their luggage and were then quietly shipped out. Violent public roundups were the exception. The policy of extermination was taken away from the public eye and transferred to the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy had the potential to kill, not hundreds as in *Kristallnacht*, but millions, and it did.

For many, *Kristallnacht* represents the end of the first stage of the Holocaust. The demolition of synagogues in Germany and Austria symbolised the end of public Jewish life in those countries. The second stage of ghettoisation began tentatively, but immediately after *Kristallnacht* when Jews were excluded from all public venues and herded into *Judenhäuser*.

When the Nazis seized power in 1933, 500,000 Jews, or about one per cent of the population, lived in Germany. Nearly 150,000 Jews, 30 per cent of the population in 1933, emigrated by November 1938. The pogrom of *Kristallnacht*, and the subsequent German policy of forced emigration hastened the exit of another 150,000 Jews. The outbreak of war severely limited the availability of transportation and in effect halted further departures. At the time of the *Anschluss* in March 1938, approximately 185,000 Jews lived in Austria; 170,000 in Vienna alone. Under the pressure of terror some 120,000 Jews left Austria by the time war broke out. Another 6000 left by the end of 1939.

According to the historian Lucy Dawidowicz, of the estimated 240,000 Jews who still lived in Germany and Austria on the eve of the Final Solution, 90 per cent, or 210,000 of them, perished.

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Tim Fischer



Jeffrey Grey

Photo – Alfonso Calero

Soon after the outbreak of the First World War, John Monash was appointed commander of the 4th Infantry Brigade of the Australian Imperial Force. During his meteoric rise through ranks of the military, he commanded troops at Gallipoli, Messines, Broodseinde, Passchendaele, Amiens and led a succession of victorious campaigns which culminated in the breaking of Hindenburg line in 1918. Monash was admired for his intellect, meticulous planning, articulate communication of what was expected, and his ability to extract the best from his staff. The Hon Tim Fischer AC, Ambassador-designate to the Holy See and former leader of the National Party, is writing a book on John Monash. Dr Jeffrey Grey is a Professor of History at the Australian Defence Force Academy and author of *A Military History of Australia* [3rd Edition 2008, CUP]. Tim Fischer and Jeffrey Grey addressed The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 11 November 2008 to discuss John Monash.

AN OVERDUE SALUTE:

JOHN MONASH OF JERILDERIE AND MELBOURNE

TIM FISCHER

It is a privilege to speak at The Sydney Institute on the ninetieth anniversary of Armistice Day or Remembrance Day, and I salute the fallen of War, in many ways nothing can match their brave deeds.

As one who has finally had time to do some research these last 18 months, in relation to our military history, it is a delight to speak at The Sydney Institute with its key role nationwide in dealing with our past, present and future. In this paper, I seek to examine the various careers of John Monash: is he Australia's greatest general; and, on both outright merit and comparative merit, did he deserve the rank of field marshal?

Ninety years ago the Great War, the so called "war to end all wars", World War I came to an abrupt end, in fact on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918. Actually, some diggers in the 45th Battalion on the Western Front, including Private Edward Lynch who wrote the Somme Mud diaries, received no clear cut declaration and went off to do two hours bayonet training that afternoon, entraining near Amiens the next morning to head east. They only began to relax when they saw newspapers declaring "WAR OVER" and detailing the celebrations of Armistice in London and Paris. Suddenly, the War that many had expected would continue into the summer of 1919 was over and Lt General Sir John Monash had played a key part in bringing about the turnaround on the vital Western Front throughout 1918, especially during July, August, September and early October.

It cannot be said that Lt General John Monash, Australian Army Corps Commander, single handedly provided the winning leadership, but it can be said he played an extraordinary key part and made a huge contribution to victory at Hamel by way of prototype holistic battle method and then at Amiens through to Mont St Quentin, and smashing through the Hindenburg Line. Let me turn to four quotes that must spark interest in relation to the man who was the son of Prussian Jewish migrants, Louis and Bertha Monasch – later the "c"

was dropped and so the name was anglicised to Monash. ((Dare I say, how dare they, given my surname!))

British PM Lloyd George wrote, “Monash was, according to the testimony of those who knew well his genius for war and what he accomplished by it, the most resourceful general in the whole British Army.” Likewise the prime minister that followed Churchill in 1955, Anthony Eden, reputedly said of Monash, “There was no greater soldier in World War One.” Field Marshal Montgomery of El Alamein, who served with distinction in both World War I and World War II, said that if Monash had replaced Douglas Haig as Commander in Chief (in early 1917), that “World War I would have ended one year earlier”.

Last year, through *Herald Sun* intermediaries, I asked Dame Elisabeth Murdoch if her husband Sir Keith Murdoch (a severe critic of Monash at times) ever spoke much about Monash. The reply was short and direct, “No but you know something, that Monash had a mistress.” This I might add was a fact well known. Sir John, when he became a widower, wanted to marry his mistress in the 1920s.

Time and space does not allow a comprehensive coverage of the whole story of Monash. There are excellent biographies, including those by A J Smithers, Geoffry Serle and Roland Perry, and I acknowledge these sources. Monash was born in Melbourne on the 27 June 1865 and started school in Richmond. In 1875 he moved to Jerilderie. Eventually his teacher at Jerilderie Primary School, William Elliott, said he could teach this boy no more. Monash always described his Jerilderie experience and schooling as providing “the foundation of my career”. Soon enough, after perhaps meeting Ned Kelly in the main street of Jerilderie, (on balance I think the meeting happened before the bank raid in February 1878 – the Bank of NSW office was just 140 paces from the Monash home), John Monash returned to Melbourne and a couple of years later was equal dux of Scotch College. Ultimately he went on to Melbourne University and, after a few setbacks, graduated in Law, Arts and Engineering. It is said his mother had a big positive influence on his early studies.

Meanwhile, he had enlisted in the militia or CMF, the part-time non regular Army, not yet the Australian Army. Also, he launched into engineering, setting up a joint business with J T N Anderson, which pioneered new concrete methodology. He built many bridges of renown, from helping with the Princes Bridge Melbourne to designing and building key bridges at Benalla, Bendigo and beyond. He returned to the Riverina in 1896 and 1897 to give expert evidence in a case about irrigation water at Urana, where he represented the downstream irrigators of the Billabong system against the powerful Coonong Station McCaughey family. In less than a year the case went on appeal to the NSW Supreme Court and the brilliant presentation

of Monash and his expert evidence won the day. Interestingly enough, this advocacy and win by Monash caused the Sir Samuel McCaughey family to move their irrigation activity north, including to the famous Torale Station on the junction of the Warrego and Darling rivers, a station now owned by the Australian taxpayer, purchased by the federal government in the dry spring of 2008.

October 1914 saw Monash take his final pre embarkation leave, with his daughter Bertha and friends, at Mt Buffalo before catching a train on the 14 October 1914 from Porpunkah near Bright to Melbourne. A few weeks later, he was leading a convoy across the Indian Ocean to the War. The convoy included a Japanese destroyer as escort since both Japan and Italy were on the Allied side in World War 1. Monash went ashore at Gallipoli one day after the first landings. He learnt much during the disastrous Dardanelles campaign and the August offensive and repaired to Egypt for retraining in December 1915. On the 25 April 1916, Monash initiated the first "in the field" Anzac Day service, falling in the Brigade for a parade and short service, followed by a sports carnival and, as it was a hot day, allowing all a swim in the nearby Suez Canal. Then it was on to the Western Front and the dreadful stalemate battles that dominated 1916 and 1917. Monash survived as a brigade commander, later promoted to head up the Australian Army Corps. It was not until the 4 July 1918 that he finally was given command and orders to conduct an actual battle, from start to finish. It was the Battle of Hamel, often overlooked, which is worth studying to understand the brilliance of Monash, who deliberately chose the 4 July to give the American soldiers a sense of pride.

A thousand soldiers from the 33rd Division of the US Army, formed from the Illinois National Guard and known sometimes as the "Prairie Division" swept into battle alongside 7000 Australians, on the 4 July 1918 at Le Hamel. These valiant soldiers had received last minute training from the battle weary Australian diggers. A total of 8000 in number then assembled and crept up to the start line for this extraordinary battle with one objective, to take the village of Hamel and surrounding plateau from the German Army. On this ninetieth anniversary, it is time to revisit and review the key battles of Hamel and Amiens, on the Western Front, especially Le Hamel. Now is the time to recognise Hamel for what the battle was. Not only did it represent absolute holistic precision in battle and a series of various firsts, it really was the "Great proto-type Turning Point Battle of the Western Front".

Hamel ushered in the greatest five weeks of changed fortunes on the Western Front when, 90 years ago, John Monash was at his very best, leading the way to victory over the German Army in his sector, pushing hard (some say too hard) as part of and with the help of Allied

forces. After this vital five weeks of push through, the Germany Army never again moved forward in World War I. They were broken in spirit and broken apart on the ground. In fact, after the Battle of Amiens on the 8 August, the German leaders von Hindenburg and General Ludendorff talked not only of the black day of the whole war, but were resigned to defeat and started to seek terms for an Armistice. Within three months, the Great War, during which millions were killed, was at last over.

So what was so special about the Battle of Hamel? To begin with, it was the very first time that US troops engaged in a major offensive set piece battle in the Great War. This was the first real taste of attack on the Western Front by these very keen, but also very green, new arrivals from Illinois. US General Pershing preferred that his troops went into battle under American command, however inexperienced that command might be. But the Australian General John Monash had strongly objected to pulling out the embedded 33rd US Division troops especially when ordered to do so the night before the battle. So an original 2000 element was reduced to 1000. General Pershing was soon very proud of that 1000 after victory was obtained.

Secondly, it was the first time a second generation of improved tanks had been used in an embedded or integrated way, with prior training between each tank crew and their allocated infantry platoon or company. The tanks played a protective and an offensive role, but also helped with heavy machine gun ammunition resupply, boosting the effectiveness of the machine gun crews. Thirdly, General John Monash was determined to follow an holistic approach. He was an Australian militia general who was an experienced successful engineer, a lawyer as well but one who objected to the British generals approach to the waste of lives of troops in unprotected charges. On one occasion, the dreadful 1 July 1916, in a mad and tactically bad charge around the Somme ordered by British General Rawlinson, 20,000 of his own were killed in battle – all killed in one day and for no gain.

Monash believed in using all modern weaponry and resources available, including the fledging RAF with their light spotter aircraft, to afford maximum protection to the last minute for his attacking troops. He planned a co-ordinated artillery barrage, that precisely every four minutes moved the barrage 50 yards forward and so the infantry could utilise the barrage to swarm up on the enemy trenches. Finally Monash broke every rule of then British Army protocol, by holding wide ranging conferences with all key officers, including officers down the ranks, to ensure not only that the Battle Orders were drawn up in an holistic way, but also that the Battle Orders were truly understood by all elements involved in the attack. The planning included the logistics of serving a hot meal before the attack to some

8000 hungry mouths, located just short of the German trenches and within range of their deadly artillery.

So it was that Monash wrote in his diary that if all went to plan, the battle would take exactly 90 minutes. In fact, it took 93 minutes and the new trench line was established well east of the village of Hamel. The combined American and Australian troops swarmed forward at 0310 am on the 4 July 1918 and took Hamel. They achieved their objective by 4.43 am, a brilliant, well planned attack with far fewer casualties than normally expected from a big battle.

General Sir John Monash of Jerilderie and Melbourne is by far Australia's greatest general. Nothing has matched the outright merit he displayed on the Western Front. The great cavalry leader and commander Sir Harry Chauvel and, more recently and briefly, Peter Cosgrove have come close. Monash is rarely recognised as our greatest general, in part, because he was of the Jewish faith and of Prussian descent. And he was a colonial, too old for some, but in particular because he was militia; no Duntroon, Sandhurst or West Point training as an officer for him. So often he was looked on as an outsider who became an insider.

The great Battle of Hamel – “great” in the sense of its proto-type role – should be accorded its proper place in the history of the USA, Australia and even Great Britain. Sadly, the Imperial War Museum Western Front gallery, at Bedlam London, and Pershing Park World War 1 Narrative Plaque, just near the White House, ignore both Monash and the Hamel Battle. The Australian War Museum in Canberra remains inadequate on Monash as well. It is also worth noting that the new Hamel Memorial, dedicated on the 8 November 2008, does not include an image of Monash. The old one did. And whilst the Monash dimension is picked up in the associated narrative plaques, Monash by degrees has been air brushed.

Hamel showed the old brigade of senior British generals that there were smarter and better ways of mounting attacks, involving respect and strategic protection for the lives of the allied soldiers involved. To digress, Canada's Sir Arthur Currie was also a trail blazing general on the Western Front, and the Canadian and New Zealand forces were up there bearing the brunt, along with the British and eventually the US forces. As Peter Pedersen has pointed out in his writings, Monash was an inspiring innovative leader, but he was one of several key leaders, and his Australian Army Corps was greatly helped by those forces alongside, doing their best. UK Major-General J.E.B. Seely said of Currie that he had an almost fanatical hatred of unnecessary casualties, adding that Currie was the man who took most care of his troops. Seely did not write of knowing Monash, having been ordered home in May 1918, but the same description might also be applied to Monash.

The Monash tactics at Hamel quickly became well known and were greatly admired and utilised in the push forward to the big battle of Amiens on the 8 August. The rest is history as many of the German units caved in along the frontline. Roland Perry has highlighted in his writings that this was especially so when there were aggressive battle hardened Australian diggers pushing forward. Hamel, and all that unfolded under Monash on the Western Front between the 4 July and the 11 November 1918, made Monash stand out general or, in fact, lieutenant general. It was great success against the odds. And Monash valued and protected the lives of his troops as a first principle of battle strategy.

Let me now make a clear cut set of statements, the first in line with the recent statement by the Foreign Minister Stephen Smith when launching "Great White Fleet to Coral Sea": 1) John Monash of Jerilderie and Melbourne was Australia's greatest general in World War I, and one of the finest generals in that dreadful war; 2) John Monash of Jerilderie and Melbourne was Australia's greatest militia general ever, and one of the world's greatest militia general ever and 3) John Monash of Jerilderie and Melbourne should have been Australia's first field marshal, in terms of absolute merit and also comparative merit.

The reasons for this will emerge more fully in a book I hope to write before the Centenary of Gallipoli, but my conclusions centre around the decision of Prime Minister Billy Hughes to make Monash the head of the "Repatriation Operation" of the AIF in late 1918, but deny him promotion from Lt General to (full) General at that time. This meant Monash spent most of 1919 working flat out in London, but at a rank one step short of being eligible for promotion to Field Marshal. Significantly there were four field marshals created in the year 1919. The momentum was there and by any comparative yardstick or baton Monash measured up equal to or better than at least one of the four: Sir Edmund Allenby, Ferdinand Foch, Sir Herbert Plumer and Sir Henry Hughes Wilson. Australian Prime Minister Hughes had effectively blocked Monash from being the fifth field marshal of July 1919 by failing to promote him to the eligible rank of (full) General. In my view, General John Monash's World War I contribution exceeded the contribution of Henry Hughes Wilson. Had Monash been a (full) General, at least in 1919, then when James Scullin became prime minister in 1929 and initiated one step in rank promotion for both Monash and Sir Harry Chauvel, in the case of Monash, he would have gone from general to field marshal on the 11 November 1929. Rank does matter, then and now. It mattered to John Monash who resented being kept one rank down the scale after all he had done, as much for his troops, as for himself. It matters now as this

goes to the core of why Monash is air brushed or too often spun out of the history of Australia.

I would observe that the Australian government and Australian parliament has the powers to provide “One step in rank retrospective promotion” to General Sir John Monash, albeit a capability to be exercised with the greatest of caution, but one that could be considered between now and 2015 or 2018, key World War I centenary years. A simple three clause Bill could, firstly, suspend any provisions in Defence legislation which would preclude providing “Posthumous one step in rank promotion”, secondly, specify General Sir John Monash as promoted effective 11 November 1930 and, thirdly, contain miscellaneous provisions and amend Letters Patent if need be. A reference to an all party federal parliamentary committee might be a useful start point to considering the proposition, I would emphasise if posthumous promotion is kept to one step in rank, then it is a finite and limited precedent. Posthumously promoting John Monash would right a wrong, in fact many wrongs, but it is for others to decide this, in due course and with due care.

All in all I salute John Monash as not only a great general but as an Australian of renown who deserves a higher place in the history of this nation. Monash made mistakes, including at Gallipoli, but he learnt from his mistakes. After returning from England, Monash became head of the Victorian State Electricity Commission and led the way with the development of brown coal power at Latrobe in Gippsland. He travelled in Australia a good deal, at one stage meeting Albury City Council and also being warmly greeted by thousands at the Centotaph in Sydney. With Sir Henry Parkes, the Reverend John Flynn of the Inland and Nurse Vivian Bullwinkel, to name some, he was one of the founders of the national spirit of Australia, he was a very special nation defender and nation builder, perhaps even our greatest Australian ever.

So all in all the Western Front was a key set of chapters in the building of the nation state of Australia and John Monash, the key outstanding leader of the A.I.F that helped bring about victory. I salute the man who should have been our first Field Marshal, but who was shamefully dealt with by then Prime Minister Billy Hughes

JOHN MONASH:

TWO VIEWS JEFFREY GREY

The history of the First World War has been mired in a prolonged adolescence that at the popular level at least shows few signs of further development. The Great War, as perhaps it should still more properly be known, was the defining event of the twentieth century that profoundly influenced not only the politics and economics of Europe and the wider world, but definitively shaped its culture as well. So many layers of interpretation, distortion and accusation have been piled on each other across nearly a century that it is difficult now to get to the truth not only of what happened, but of what people alive at the time thought about it all as it occurred rather than through the distorting lens of memory.

The history of the war in the English-speaking world can be divided into a series of broad phases. The solemn mixture of grief and pride that followed the Armistice and characterised much of the 1920s gave way to bitterness, recrimination and, among senior political and military figures, an unedifying attempt to assign and apportion blame for the war and its conduct (sometimes designated “the battle of the memoirs”). This phase coincided with the onset of the Depression, the growing realisation that the “war to end wars” had in fact been but the first round of a massively destructive European civil war, the second round of which would be even more destructive, costly and disastrous than the first, and concern in Britain about a further “continental commitment” alongside the French.

The third phase may be said to have taken its cue from the well-known stage play (and subsequent film), *Oh What a Lovely War* (1963), characterised by one of its creators as “one part me, one part Liddell Hart, the rest Lenin!”¹ Together with the shallow but best-selling book by Alan Clark, *The Donkeys* (1961), these two works and a number of imitators set back serious scholarly enquiry for a generation.² The almost lone voice and heroic scholarship of John Terraine found a wide audience through the path-breaking BBC documentary series *The Great War* (1964), for which Terraine had principal writing credit, but until the wave of mostly young scholars

beginning in the early 1990s,³ the standard interpretations of the Great War, and of the Western Front in particular, owed far more to emotion, prejudice and the interwar attempts by David Lloyd George to shift responsibility for the conduct of the war onto Field Marshal Douglas Haig and his senior commanders than it did to serious scholarship, analysis or, tellingly, contemporary evidence.

In Australia the historiography of the Great War was long dominated by the official historian, C.E.W. Bean. The twelve volumes of the official history (fifteen if you include A.G. Butler's medical history, which came under Bean's purview), set the tone for interpretations of the war, such as they were, before the advent of interest in some aspects of the subject by university historians beginning in the mid-1960s. Bean's work was supplemented by a small legion of battalion and unit histories and by some other memoir literature as well. The bitterness that increasingly characterised interwar writing in Europe was more muted in Australia, perhaps because the major vehicle for war reminiscence in this country was non-fiction rather than the novel or the fictionalised and dramatised memoir. (The war poetry of Vance Palmer provides an exception here, but should be contrasted with the writings of C.J. Dennis. Disenchantment was not the dominant mood in Australia). The growth of universities after the Second World War, and of university history departments and a postgraduate research student population, led to the gradual emergence of a scholarly, critical historical literature on Australia and the war. Much of its focus, in keeping with the anti-Vietnam War agitation that formed part of its context, was on the home front, the conscription referenda and social history. The war itself was frequently left out, or at best left to the official history.

One area in which there was growth among university based and trained historians – albeit largely concentrated within the Department of History in the Faculty of Military Studies at RMC Duntroon – was in the area of military biography and studies of senior command and leadership. The late A.J. Hill marked the beginnings of serious modern military biography in this country with his elegantly written and exhaustively researched study of Harry Chauvel in 1978,⁴ and through his hands passed several of the next generation of leading military historians: pre-eminently, David Horner, together with Chris Clark and Peter Pedersen, a subsequent biographer of Monash.⁵ Hill also set himself against the restatement of “digger orthodoxy” that Bean had founded and that a young Bill Gammage had re-established with his phenomenally successful *The Broken Years* (1974 and numerous subsequent editions), by suggesting that not only did all virtue not reside in the other ranks, but that it was generals who won battles, and wars.

Bean set out, self-consciously, to write “democratic history” in which the focus was upon ordinary men in extraordinary circumstances: privates, sergeants and junior officers. His approach remains arguably the dominant theme in Australian historiography of war, and not just of the Great War. Bean himself has little to say about command and staff issues above the tactical level, or about logistics, training, doctrine, and the emerging operational level of war that were the keys to victory and defeat, then and now. He had little real interest in senior officers or senior staff officers, and his influence has largely seen them relegated to the margins, especially of popular history.

Of no senior officer in either world war is this *less* true, however, than of John Monash. Monash himself had published his own account of the Australians’ campaigns on the Western Front in the final months of the war,⁶ while one of Bean’s collaborators, F.M. Cutlack, published an extensive edition of Monash’s wartime correspondence in 1934.⁷ Monash also wrote regularly for newspapers and service journals until his death in 1931. Writing was the habit of a life time with him, and he left extensive private papers at his death, probably the largest collection of any military figure in Australia’s history. These formed the basis of Pedersen’s scholarly study of Monash the soldier, and of the magnificent full biography written by Geoffrey Searle and published in 1982.⁸ Since then there has been at least one further lengthy biographical treatment, together with several shorter works.⁹ In addition, a major university in Melbourne was established in his name in 1961. (Aside from Curtin University in Western Australia, the only public tertiary institution in this country named for a twentieth century figure.) It is difficult to argue a serious case for the neglect of Monash as an historical figure. The suggestion that he is “the forgotten Anzac” is, frankly, bizarre.

Monash himself once argued that most men get rather more or rather less than they deserve. The observation was made in respect to gallantry decorations and consequent recognition, but is valid more generally, I suggest. As a corps commander in the last six months of the fighting in France, he received promotion to lieutenant general (the appropriate rank for the level at which he commanded) and numerous honours and awards. In the *Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, due to appear in its second and greatly expanded edition this month, I wrote of Monash in summary that “his reputation as Australia’s greatest field commander is secure”, and I feel no need either to resile from or further embellish that judgement.¹⁰ The self-serving declarations of Lloyd George notwithstanding (and one should not take *anything* Lloyd George says on the subject of generalship at face value), in 1918 Monash was one corps commander out of 17 on the Western Front alone, and one of the most junior.¹¹ His Canadian contemporary, Arthur Currie, was at

least as well known and vastly more experienced, having succeeded Byng in command of the Canadian Corps in April 1917. Nor should it be forgotten that Chauvel had been promoted to lieutenant general and taken command of the Desert Mounted Corps in Palestine in August 1917. Monash's virtues, whilst considerable, were not unique, and nor was his position.

Monash retired from the army in 1920, but was accorded promotion to full general in 1929 at the same time as Chauvel who, in the interim, had been Inspector-General and Chief of the General Staff for much of the 1920s. In this position Chauvel discharged genuinely strategic functions and tended professional military advice to government in an era of fiscal parsimony and conflicting strategic options; for all his abilities, Monash never functioned at the strategic level.

Both were distinguished soldiers and distinguished Australians, and each received the honour and recognition appropriate to their time. Their reputations need no enhancement by us, and their achievements will readily survive the silliest attempts at subsequent embellishment long after the events.

Endnotes

- 1 Brian Bond, *The Unquiet Western Front: Britain's Role in Literature and History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 59.
- 2 In addition to Bond, *ibid.*, see Alex Danchev, "'Bunking" and Debunking: The Controversies of the 1960s', in Brian Bond (ed.), *The First World War and British Military History*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.
- 3 The best known and most prolific of these would be Gary Sheffield, Professor of War Studies at the University of Birmingham and whose work is well summarised in his *Forgotten Victories: The First World War: Myths and Realities*, London: Headline, 2001. He might number in his ranks historians such as Dan Todman, Peter Simkins, John Lee, Robin Neilland and Gordon Corrigan and numerous others. The Australian historians Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson likewise have done much over a twenty year period to insert serious scholarship into the study of the war on the Western Front.
- 4 A.J. Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse: A Biography of General Sir Harry Chauvel, GCMB, KCB*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1978.
- 5 P.A. Pedersen, *Monash as Military Commander*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1985.
- 6 General Sir John Monash, *The Australian Victories in France in 1918*, Melbourne: Lothian Book Publishing Company, 1920.
- 7 F.M. Cutlack (ed.), *War Letters of General Monash*, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1934. These were republished in a new edition in 2002.
- 8 Geoffrey Serle, *John Monash: A Biography*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1982. The book is now in its third edition.
- 9 Roland Perry, *Monash: The Outsider Who Won a War*, Melbourne: Random House, 2004. Other examples include A.J. Smithers, *Sir John Monash: A Biography of Australia's Most Distinguished Soldier of the First World War*, London: Leo Cooper, 1973, E.W. Perry, *The Military Life of General Sir John*

Monash, Melbourne: Royal Australian Historical Society, 1954, 1958, Sir Bernard Callinan, *Sir John Monash*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1981. Monash has also been the subject of numerous shorter journal and newspaper articles, too numerous to list.

- 10 Peter Dennis, Jeffrey Grey et al, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, 2nd rev.ed., Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- 11 J.M. Bourne, 'The BEF's Generals on 29 September 1918: An Empirical Portrait with some British and Australian Comparisons', in Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (eds.), *1918: Defining Victory*, Canberra: Army History Unit, 1999, 100.

FUNCTIONS - 2008



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Photo – Alfonso Calero

Chris Bowen

The Hon Chris Bowen is federal Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Competition Policy. In his view, the Liberal Party has been walking two contradictory paths of liberalism and conservatism since its inception – a contradiction that disadvantaged the party in the election of 2007. Chris Bowen addressed The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 18 November 2008 and explained why Labour should capture and secure those Liberals who want a party ready to tackle the great issues of social justice and inequality.

RECLAIMING

LIBERALISM FOR THE LEFT: SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

CHRIS BOWEN

Thank you for the opportunity of speaking tonight.

There is a certain pattern to the development and refinement of the philosophies of Australia's political parties. Following a defeat, a political party whether it's Labor or our opponents goes into a period of reflection and introspection. The defeated political party wonders why the Australian people rejected them. They review their beliefs, with a view to modernising their core principles, to take into account developments that occurred while they were in office. This is often a healthy process. The winning party, on the other hand, gets on with governing. The Ministers become loaded down with the tasks of administration. Books on the philosophy of the party dry up. And there appears to be little reason for introspection any way. The formula works, elections are won.

While eminently understandable, this pattern certainly has its risks for the governing party. Mainly the governing party's philosophy will become stale and will not be modernised and rejuvenated, particularly over a long period in office. This is something we are alive to. In our short time in office, the Prime Minister has made several speeches about our governing philosophy, governing from the "reforming centre" and my colleague Craig Emerson, in a speech to this Institute has laid out his views on our philosophy, which he terms as Labor being "market democrats".

The thread running through these expositions of our philosophy is our determination to govern from the centre. It's particularly appropriate that we continue to discuss and modernise our political philosophy in light of the 2007 election. In this election, many people voted Labor for the first time. It was a diverse cohort of first time Labor voters. Young people worried that the Howard Government was singularly unconcerned about the challenge of our age: climate change. Workers, who while impressed with the economic good times that coincided with the Howard years were angry with the diminution of their rights at the workplace and even angrier about the diminution

of their children's rights. And people looking for a political party which governs from the centre. A party which respects the rights of individuals and cares passionately about social justice and equality of opportunity.

People who could be described as small 'l' or social liberals. People who were derisively described by some in the Howard Government as "doctor's wives". Some see this type of view as an inner city phenomenon. In my experience, people looking for this type of leadership are spread throughout the country. People who were disillusioned with the Howard Government as no longer governing from the centre, no longer caring about the individual and always being contemptuous of matters of social justice.

In the 1970s and early 1980s, as Labor struggled its way back to federal office, and as the Cold War continued to rage, Labor thinkers were engaged in a fierce battle as to whether we were to be a party of democratic socialism or social democracy. Despite the fairly obvious joke that this was akin to the battle between the Judean Peoples Front and Peoples Front of Judea, both these philosophical frameworks fail to adequately describe the way of modern Labor. Social liberalism, on the other hand does. Social liberals are the heirs of John Stuart Mill, who argued for the protection of individual rights against an over reaching government, but who also argued that: "A government cannot have too much of the kind of activity which does not impede, but aids and stimulates, individual exertion and development."

Social liberalism recognises that for an individual to obtain true freedom, to live to the most of his or her potential, social justice must be at the forefront of a governing philosophy. In order to fully celebrate the individual, we need not only to ensure political freedom, but economic and social freedom. For example, the freedom of people from disadvantaged backgrounds to reach their full educational potential. This strand of liberalism rejects the notion that government involvement in the economy and society to achieve more equal outcomes is both ineffectual and ill advised.

Being a social liberal means recognising the powers and benefits of markets. It does not mean believing in the form of government which is most indifferent to the ills of society. You may be surprised to hear a minister in a Labor government referring to liberalism, even social liberalism as his guiding political philosophy. But the view of liberalism as a philosophy of the right is almost an uniquely Australian phenomenon. And in any event I will argue that the Liberal Party of Australia has relinquished its right to be viewed as a truly liberal party.

In Britain, the home of liberalism, the liberal philosophy is seen as of the left. The radical reforms of the early twentieth century were pioneered by courageous Liberal governments. Asquith and Lloyd

George, who introduced the People's Budget of 1909 and reformed the House of Lords when the Upper House blocked these left wing efforts at redistribution, were radicals, opponents of privilege and left wing activists of their day. They recognised that if they were to promote the individual, they needed to tackle the squalor and rancid class structure which restricted millions of individuals to poverty. They were firmly in line with radical liberal thought.

Take the views of the early liberal thinker L.T. Hobhouse who argued: "the struggle for liberty is the struggle for equality." Lloyd George's 1909 budget introduced old age pensions and confirmed progressive taxation as a permanent feature of Britain. He argued that this budget was: "a war budget...for raising money to wage implacable war against poverty and squalidness." And the two authors of the biggest economic and social innovations of the twentieth century, John Maynard Keynes and William Beveridge, were both avowed British Liberals, even though it fell to Labour Governments (and in the case of Keynes conservative governments around the world as well) to implement their plans.

Today, the modern British Liberal Democrats outflank the Labour government from the left. It is not just in Britain that liberalism is synonymous with progressive causes. In the United States, of course, the term "liberal" is regarded as an effective insult by conservatives. In Canada, the Liberal Party is the main party of the Left, being responsible for most of the social reforms in Canada this century, and is in communion with progressive parties such as British and Australian Labor.

Following the recent Canadian election there is speculation about a possible merger between the Liberal Party of Canada and the more left wing New Democrats. In fact, looking around the world at comparable developed countries, it is only really Japan that together with Australia has a "Liberal" party as the mainstream party of the right. And in Australia, as I say, the Liberal Party has, in my view, removed itself from contention as genuinely liberal party.

Moderate Liberals are fond of telling us that Robert Menzies, faced with the choice of name for his new party, chose the nomenclature "Liberal" over the perhaps attractive "Conservative" used by the equivalent British party. It is arguable, however, whether Menzies ever had a strong claim to the liberal mantle, being responsible for the only attempt in Australian history to limit people's political freedom by banning a political party. But, putting this aside, if Australia's main right wing party was ever truly liberal, this era has long passed.

John Howard revelled in the title of being the most conservative Liberal Party leader ever, and governed firmly in the conservative tradition. On any objective analysis, the foreign and refugee policies

of the Howard Government were not as liberal as those of the Fraser Government. As former Howard Government Chief of Staff and disgruntled Liberal Greg Barns has argued: “the title of Liberal Party is now a total misnomer. There is nothing liberal about the Howard-led party. It is a conservative arrogant machine that....has shown a cavalier disregard for the key tenets of liberalism – freedom of thought and the primacy of human rights.” Small ‘l’ liberals had their preselections regularly challenged. Talented moderates who survived preselection like Bruce Baird, Marise Payne and Petro Georgiou languished on the backbenches while less talented right wingers flourished. But the conservative tilt of the Liberal Party has outlasted the Howard era.

Here in NSW, the biggest branch of the party is controlled by the conservative religious right, for whom freedom of choice on many issues is an anathema. The Liberal Party in Queensland has merged with the National Party, Australia’s most illiberal party. The Nationals believe in single desks and in agrarian socialism. They oppose freedom in social issues. Moderate Liberal Party members around the country should be very nervous indeed about moves for a nationwide merger. And now the Liberal Party has a leader who professes traditional liberalism as a cause, but who finds the most objectionable part of the Federal Budget, the measure to give low and middle income earners the choice as to whether to take out private health insurance by removing a tax impost.

The small ‘l’ liberal rhetoric has not been matched with policy reality. In the Liberal Party the 50 year battle between conservatives and liberals has been decided. The conservatives have won. True liberals now find their most comfortable home in the ALP. An examination of Labor governments over the past 30 years shows a strong streak of liberalism. At the state level, Labor governments in the 1970s and 1980s swept away years of conservative restrictions. The Dunstan and Wran Governments led the way in promoting the liberal agenda, introducing anti-discrimination, equal opportunity and homosexual law reform. Neville Wran himself described his legacy in these terms: “The state’s economy was if anything, stronger, its laws more liberal (in the best sense of that word).” Federally, the Whitlam Government ended conscription and made university education free. Economically, Whitlam cut tariffs by 25 per cent. But perhaps the most unsung achievement of the Whitlam Government was giving the then Industries Assistance Commission responsibility for identifying the economy wide costs of protection. The Commission had, until that point, been charged with establishing the appropriate level of protection to promote sectoral growth. The Whitlam Government changed the mandate of the Commission so it became a powerful voice for liberal microeconomic reforms.

The economic reforms of the Hawke and Keating years hardly need repeating. Floating the dollar, trade liberalisation and micro-economic reform. All with an eye on the social wage and social justice. Liberals are well known for their belief in the power of the market. Liberalism has never been about unfettered markets: regulation is needed to facilitate more perfect information and deal with market failures. Belief that markets can only work with regulation to ensure lack of domination by monopolies has been a core element of liberalism. The distinction between the Tories and the Liberals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Britain the golden age of liberalism, was that liberals were pro free-trade and anti-monopoly.

This way of thinking is directly descended from Adam Smith, who wrote in *Wealth of Nations*: “People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the publick, or in some contrivance to raise prices.” I do think Adam Smith was being a bit harsh on business. There are times when business gets together without conspiring towards monopoly and collusion. However, I agree that strong regulation is necessary to ensure vigorous operation of the market.

This is firmly in line with the thinking of the Rudd Government. Adam Smith wouldn't have called it competition policy: but that is exactly what he was talking about. Competition policy is something that hasn't received adequate attention in Australia since the National Competition Policy reforms of the mid 1990s. When Kevin Rudd rang and invited me to be the first Minister for Competition Policy in Australia's history, he told me he'd like to see this area receive more attention. Thus, the reforms of the last 12 months – rejuvenating the Trade Practices Act to deal with predatory pricing, criminalising cartel conduct and regulating creeping acquisitions.

All reforms necessary to deal with the evils that Adam Smith identified two centuries ago. To make sure that markets operate through vigorous competition for the benefit of consumers. There is a difference between being pro-business and pro-competition. It is an important distinction. We are both. Of course, as I indicated earlier, being a social liberal is not just about economics. To have a commitment to individuals being fully able to participate in society requires a commitment to social justice as well. Of course, the key difference between the Labor Party and the conservatives is our commitment to social justice.

When I joined the Labor Party at the age of 15, I'd be the first to admit my political philosophy wasn't fully formed. But as a Western Sydney public school boy, I had a gut feeling, an intuition, that there were opportunities being denied me, being denied all of my peers – because we came from the wrong side of the tracks. Because our

schools, as good as they were and as dedicated as the teachers were, were under resourced. Because our area did not receive the same investments in education, public transport and health, we were not able to reach our full, individual potential. I was instinctively drawn to the Labor Party as the party which cared about our area, and therefore cared about me as an individual and about my family and friends. At the time I wouldn't have described this as social liberalism. The theoretical construct came later. And while I have grown naturally more cynical than that pimply boy who joined the Smithfield Branch of the Labor Party in 1988, I still regard the Labor Party as the only party in Australia that can approach social justice matters with the necessary vigour. With a passion to ensure that every Australian, every last individual Australian, can live life to their full potential. There is still plenty to do.

Any country, in which the 25 per cent of young people who come from lower socio-economic groups make up only 15 per cent of university students, while the 25 per cent of young people from higher socio-economic groups make up nearly 40 per cent of university students, still has a long way to go. That these figures are slightly better than in the US or the UK may be encouraging to us, but means little for those young people who miss out on reaching their full potential. It is, of course, not necessary to go to university to lead a full and meaningful life. But it is an undeniable case that hundreds of thousands of young people are missing out on living up to their full potential. And most wouldn't even know it. I also didn't realise when I was 15 that, in many respects, my fate and that of my friends had perhaps already been determined. I hadn't read the studies which make it clear that an individual's life chances are so closely linked to their development and nurturing before they go to school.

That's what makes our commitment to early childhood education so important. That every four year old should have the opportunity for a pre-school education is vitally important. Schemes which give kids from disadvantaged areas a head start to get into university have their place, but they also divert us from the main game. I prefer schemes which ensure that no head start will be needed in years to come. Of course, in Australia, no discussion of social justice and equality of opportunity can be complete without a discussion of the status of our indigenous people. The facts and figures speak for themselves.

- The life expectancy of indigenous people is estimated to be 17 years lower than that of the Australian population;
- In 2006, indigenous students were half as likely as non-indigenous students to continue to Year 12;
- In some states the infant mortality rates for indigenous children are two to three times higher than the total population of infants.

There is a huge gap to be closed. The Rudd Government, and Kevin Rudd personally, are committed to closing it. The road will be long, but I can tell you that there are few issues that the Rudd ministry is more dedicated to than this. And Jenny Macklin is devoting all of her very considerable talent and energy to the challenge. We all know that the old collectivist solutions of throwing more money at health, housing and welfare won't solve the problem. More money is needed, but it is not enough. The indigenous population needs policy settings which encourage them as individuals. This is what Warren Mundine and Noel Pearson have been talking about. This is the sort of approach that Kevin Rudd, Jenny Macklin and the government have embraced. The social justice ethos of social liberals and of this government is actually quite simple. Search out the barriers to people's complete fulfilment, and knock them down.

A social liberal should not rest until a boy from Western Sydney or a girl from Weipa have the same capacity to fulfill their dreams with hard work and sweat as boy or girl from any other part of Australia. This is not a short term challenge. Perhaps as Ben Chifley would say, it is a light on the hill. But it is one which marks a distinction between true liberals, and those who claim to be liberal simply because they belong to a party of that name. Of course, social liberalism must adapt to emerging challenges and current challenges, drawing on an enduring and underlying philosophy.

One of the founders of liberal thought, Jeremy Bentham, saw the fundamental challenge of public policy as maximising the happiness of the majority. In some respect, happiness is a quaint term, not a term you read in government briefing notes, or certainly not a term I read in my briefing notes from the Treasury or the Australian Tax Office. But in a world where so many are struggling with depression and so many are struggling with suicide, perhaps the Benthamite interest in happiness is something we should rekindle. This is of course very much not an issue of party politics. But those of us concerned about the capacity of individuals to achieve all they can be need to be alert to emerging challenges like depression.

Individuals can't live to their maximum potential in society if they are dealing with an all encompassing fog of depression. A frightening number of Australians are so overtaken by depression that they take their own lives. Today, seven Australians killed themselves. Tomorrow it will be the same. More Australians will take their own life this year than will die on the roads. A full one quarter of all deaths of men aged between 20 and 34 in Australia are self inflicted. Governments can fund more programs, and we are. Nicola Roxon has announced the development of a National Suicide Prevention Strategy and a suicide prevention pilot program. But more important is the role we can all

play as leaders to remove the stigma of mental health, depression and suicide.

Organisations like Beyond Blue, Inspire and Lifeline have done a good job in putting this issue on the agenda. But more needs to be done. Deaths from cancer and the road toll have been dramatically reduced in recent decades by a concerted societal action to do so. And similar societal action in relation to depression and suicide needs to be tackled as a nation. Depression and suicide will always be with us, but as a nation and society we have to tackle this curse, which is stopping thousands of individuals living life to its full potential.

To conclude, in 1913 it was said of the Australian party system: “The Australian Labour Party does not even call itself a socialist party. Actually it is a liberal-bourgeois party, while the so-called liberals in Australia are really conservatives.” I never thought I’d have the opportunity to quote Vladimir Lenin to The Sydney Institute in approving terms. The ALP is not and should not be a bourgeois party. But the other elements of Lenin’s analysis have proven to be correct (although he clearly didn’t mean the descriptor as a compliment!)

Conservatives in Australia have attempted to create a false dichotomy, arguing that a party that cares about how membership of a class, ethnic group or gender impacts on an individual’s life chances, undermines respect for the individual. I argue that the contrary is the case. Only a party that cares about the factors that impede an individual’s ability to live to their full potential can truly be seen to care about the individual, can truly be seen as a liberal. Accordingly I argue that Labor is the home of the genuine Australian liberal. One the one hand you’ve got a modern Labor Party committed to equality of opportunity – and giving a hand-up to those individuals who are suffering or who were born into poverty. Against that you’ve got an ever-conservative Liberal Party that has purged itself of wets or small ‘l’ liberals in its determination to occupy the right of Australian politics.

It is nigh impossible for one to claim that the Liberal Party is still the keeper of the tradition of Alfred Deakin. The fight against inequality and for social justice is what inspired the creation of Labor. These are the qualities that attracted me and many other members to the ALP. As a social liberal in the Labor Party, I can tell you that it is a very welcoming home. Immanuel Kant once said that the objective of society must be that each individual deserves respect and to be treated as an end and not a means. Only a party with a true commitment to social justice can fulfill Kant’s objective. It now falls to Kevin Rudd and Labor to turn that theoretical vision into policy reality.

FUNCTIONS - 2008



Photographer: Alfonso Calero



Photo – Alfonso Calero

Don Watson

Don Watson is a former political speech-writer to Paul Keating and author of *American Journeys* (Random House 2008) which details a 13,000 km journey he made across the USA. As the US approached the historic presidential election of 2008, Watson returned to witness small town America in election mode. To add what he saw in Ohio to the big picture of *American Journeys*, Don Watson addressed The Sydney Institute on Thursday 27 November 2008 and commented in a wry and provoking way on the enigma of US culture.

AMERICAN JOURNEYS –

AFTER THE ELECTION

DON WATSON

I'll start with this poem by Walt Whitman, who I know can be a bit fruity, but I'll try to do him justice. He wrote this in 1884, after the election of Grover Cleveland for the first time:

If I should need to name, O Western World, your powerfulest scene and show,

'Twould not be you, Niagara – nor you, ye limitless prairies – nor your huge rifts of canyons, Colorado,

Nor you, Yosemite – nor Yellowstone, with all its spasmic geyserloops ascending to the skies, appearing and disappearing,

Nor Oregon's white cones – nor Huron's belt of mighty lakes – nor Mississippi's stream:

—This seething hemisphere's humanity, as now, I'd name - the still small voice vibrating - America's choosing day,

(The heart of it not in the chosen - the act itself the main, the quadrennial choosing)

Now for weeks, for years, in fact immediately after the last election and the one before that, the great concern among Americans, particularly of the Democratic persuasion, was that America couldn't run an honest election to save itself. It has the most arcane and even ludicrous voting system. Each state does it in its own way. They can't guarantee the integrity of the voting machines, which were sold in large numbers by a treasurer of the Republican Party. The queues were miles long; lawyers needed to be on hand to oversee the voting and stop electoral officials turning away voters at 5pm when they'd been in the queue since 1pm. On the day of the election this year, on 4 November, the first item I heard on national public radio was of a university in South Carolina whose computer had been broken into, and a letter had gone out to all the staff and students under the provost's signature saying voting would be tomorrow – Wednesday – for Democrats.

So Whitman's optimism in this – at least as things seemed a fortnight before the election – felt misplaced.

Now as you probably know a condition of US citizenship is optimism. It comes hard to people like ourselves – disappointed optimists at best, pessimists more likely. I spent five weeks in the US before the election and met lawyers and academics and trade union officials and teachers and barmen and baristas and barflies, illegal immigrants and all sort of people. And I only met, in all that time, one pessimist – and he was a marathon runner so I thought he was not really a true sample. That constant padding along those streets without pavements got him down.

I admit that some of these optimists were pessimists about some things, such as the voting system. The notion was quite common that they – and as “they” varies from state to state and county to county it was hard to say precisely who “they” were – “they” would somehow rig the election. Something nefarious would happen. Or if not this, then they said that they had no purchase on these matters, or that it was in the hands of God – this was also common. But confront them with the data, pointing to at least the comparative decline of the United States – things like the trade imbalance, the massive deficit, the wars that may yet prove unwinnable and that consume billions a month, the failing education system, the fact that it has, for some years now, as I understand, consumed 6 per cent more than it produces. That worries them, when you tell them that. The low wages, the declining infrastructure, the failing health system or the *failed* health system. What is generally seen as the corruption, by lobbyists, of the democracy; the massive income gap. All these things, whether they were familiar with these statistics or hearing them for the first time, they found rather startling, but they still said: “I’m an optimist.” America, cactus it is not. It will never be cactus. And the man who had run 100 marathons in his 57 years and eight 100 mile races and thought it **was** cactus was married to an optimist – even though she had been teaching kids, those who needed special education, for 26 years in a west Appalachian elementary school – to be an optimist after that takes some doing.

Whence the optimism comes I don’t think anyone quite knows. It’s too easy to put it down to ignorance, because lots of well educated Americans are optimists too. Too easy to say it has some connection to the widespread belief in an afterlife – you’ll find sceptical Americans are optimistic too. Optimism transcends education, culture and religion. I sometimes think they would hate Osama Bin Laden a little less if he didn’t look like such a pessimist.

In 1932, Will Rogers said: “The one thing I know about America, is that it’s liberal... it ain’t nothin’ if it ain’t liberal.” A fortnight ago that sounded wildly anachronistic, a voice from somewhere, perhaps, that hadn’t been heard since Michael Dukakis. No one would have said such a thing. The Clintons were careful not to talk about

liberalism. Now, suddenly, after the election it seems less quaint. Maybe America is liberal again – whatever liberal means. The term has been rather distorted in recent times. Rather like “socialist” – wherever Sarah Palin and John McCain went, especially Sarah Palin, Obama was referred to as a “socialist”. About as unlikely an appellation to somebody from outside as you could think of. But there you are. The other thing worth keeping in mind, as a liberal American pointed out to me, is that in all that time since Dukakis went flying out the door, the United States has never been much more than a few hundred thousand votes away from a liberal administration anyway. And in the last few years it was just a skerrick of votes.

For the last two and a half weeks of my pre election travels in the US, I ended up in a place called Zanesville, Ohio. I don’t know what attracted me to it – perhaps Zane Grey, who came from there. It was named after a forbear of his, Ebenezer Zane, who got there in 1797. If you look at Zanesville now, and remain an optimist, then you are a *serious* optimist. I decided to go to Ohio because Ohio was the crucial state in the last election. You will remember that the exit polls were showing on the afternoon of that election that the Democrats were home and hosed – and then Ohio turned, and no one has ever quite worked it out. There are conspiracy theories but the most likely thing is that a whole lot of evangelicals came out as a result of some useful Rovean politics, and voted in numbers the Democrats hadn’t predicted. So Ohio was interesting to me. I was going to go to Michigan, but in the time that it took to fly from here to there McCain pulled out of the Michigan race. He just gave it up. And then I was going to go to Wisconsin and it went the same way, and a number of states just fell away for the Republicans. So Ohio became the crucial state. I also went because I met a barman in a hotel in New Orleans whom I really liked, and he came from Ohio. He was the sort of old-fashioned common man American that is hard to find these days.

Ohio is really several states within one, a bit of everything. The north you might think of as part of Pennsylvania; it’s Cleveland and it’s Democrat. The south is Cincinnati and has a bit of Kentucky about it; and it’s Republican. Columbus is where the Midwest begins. And Columbus has a bit of everything in it. No one really knows what to think about Columbus except that it’s in industrial decline. There are parts of Columbus that are very depressing, even to an optimist. Zanesville is 60 miles east of Columbus which makes it West Appalachian. You can actually see where the ice age has ended, where the glaciation ended and the moraine has been pushed up. Zanesville sits in there, although a lot of Zanesvillians possibly don’t know this because Zanesville, I understand, is a creationist town. If you’re south of the city borders you may teach evolution so long as a parent doesn’t

complain. Zanesville is rather like the way it was settled, it's sort of West Virginian.

There are towns in those Appalachian hills that are so bleak, you can barely stand to look at them. They are coal towns and they have just faded into darkness, even among the glorious autumn leaves of the Appalachians. But not only was Zanesville settled from West Virginia, it was settled from Connecticut, by a bunch of Connecticut Presbyterians who established themselves on the other side of the river and formed part of the underground railway. They were led by the Reverend Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe's brother; there's a lovely connection with Mark Twain and a whole strand of liberal American opinion, if you like, there. The old Presbyterian church still stands, though it seems to be occupied largely by one of those new religions, called "the Vineyard". The priest I spoke to chewed gum and blew bubbles while he was talking to me, sitting in the front pew. I liked him a lot. He wasn't like any Presbyterian minister I'd met. Anyway, the town was divided fiercely between these two camps: the pro-slavery, rough-necked West Virginians in Zanesville proper; and the anti-slavery, stiff-necked Presbyterians in Putnam on the other side of the river and they often used to meet on the bridge which crosses the Muskingum River and, we are told, had physical showdowns.

It's a town of 26,000; in its heyday it was 40,000 and was declared by, I think *Life* magazine no less, one of the "model American cities". It has a most beautiful downtown area: a grid, four storey buildings, magnificent churches, two Catholic near-cathedrals, one founded by German Catholics, the other by Irish, one block apart. Many, many churches and spires. It's empty, this downtown. There are people there but you hardly ever see them. The lights change but there's no traffic to speak of. It's a strange place now. Everyone hopes it may one day revive but it may never. It's cut through by not only the river but the I70, the Interstate that runs east-west, West Virginia in one direction, Columbus in another.

In October 2008, Zanesville was declared by *Forbes* magazine the American city seventh most likely to fall away completely: the seventh most vulnerable city in America. Another way of measuring Zanesville's position in America now is by market segments which are measured 1 to 210. New York is 1; Zanesville is at 205. It's right down the bottom. So Zanesville is fabulous American history but in the last quarter century it's a history of decline. It makes you think about what America has failed to do to get itself going again in the last 25 years. There is 18 per cent poverty in Zanesville. The first person I met in the Democratic headquarters there was a middle aged woman who actually wept tears within ten minutes of meeting me; she just told me what it was actually like *feeding* the children, people who come in from the hills, hungry. Eight and a half per cent unemployment.

Some shocking, old divisions remain in the place; racial divisions – there’s still a chapter of the Klan in Zanesville, not that I saw any. There are two militias in Muskingum County. There is an attitude to education that makes life very difficult for teachers – a large number of parents simply don’t want their children to be better educated than they were. Susan Orlean wrote an article in a recent collection of books about the American states in which she describes that dark, quasi-religious attitude to everything. There is a sort of spooky side to the area. But I love the joint, I might pick up one of those cheap houses.

So this division, this Putnam/Zanesville division continues in various forms, and as you stay there you unravel certain stories about the place. Like why the ice-cream parlour is always closed on Mondays. It’s been there since 1948, it’s like a replica of old Zanesville: men in bow ties, serving ice-cream made on the premises, huge sundaes and that sort of thing. It closes on Mondays because it opened the same year as the skating rink, whose managers decided that black people could skate on Mondays. So Tom’s Ice Cream Bowl closed on Mondays, because Tom didn’t want such people coming into his shop – and it’s remained so ever since: Tom’s long gone but Tom’s Ice Cream Bowl is closed on Mondays. It’s long out-lived peoples’ memory of the reason why. This, in a sense, paints a darker picture of Zanesville than most Zanesvillians would expect you to paint.

The Mayor is a man named Howard Zwelling, known as Butch. Now, Butch is an optimist. He took me out to see the new distribution centres on the outskirts of Zanesville: Avon has got a massive thing, Dollar General; Time Warner has got a call centre out there; Wendy’s make some 200 million buns there every week, or did he say a year? They all pay about eight or nine dollars an hour. And as Butch is telling you how things are going so well you find yourself thinking: how can a country revive itself on eight or nine dollars an hour? How can the most powerful country in the world be a low-wage economy? How can they accept that as good enough? It seems incredible. But such is the power of their optimism that you just put it to one side. You wonder what is it that makes this country still believe in itself, when in so many parts there are reasons for doubt.

One of the reasons, if you just sit there for a little while, is that the rituals of American life are so powerful. In five days there I heard the same man sing *The Star Spangled Banner* three times on public occasions. You’re hard put to do that anywhere else in the world. The same bloke. He just sings *The Star Spangled Banner*. He did it at a Celebrate America concert which had Johnny Cash’s niece, Kelly Cash, singing, along with Miss Ohio; he did it at a scale replica of the Vietnam Memorial which is touring the country, where buglers played Taps and it was a terribly moving ceremony, and a man who’d been in

prison with John McCain in the Hanoi Hilton spoke, very movingly. You realise it's not just reaffirming the bonds between Americans with these rituals – they actually affirm the ideal of America in a daily sort of way. They run deep and they come naturally to them.

I chose to go to Zanesville because I thought it might represent something at the core of American political life. I thought it might be representative of the places that would decide the outcome of the election: who would be the next President of the world, effectively. It was gratifying when the Lieutenant Governor of Ohio turned up after a couple of days, and on a grassy slope in front of a few Democrats said that the world was watching Zanesville, that it was places like Zanesville which would decide the result. He even said they were watching in Indonesia – and he named other places but he didn't name Australia and I kept quiet. On that same day John McCain came to Zanesville. He spoke in a school gymnasium with about 2000 people in it. I'd seen him about ten days before in New York, at the Al Smith Dinner in the Waldorf ballroom, to which I happened to score a ticket. Some of it was broadcast on television around the world. McCain was brilliant, absolutely brilliant, he had a terrific speech. But what was really outstanding about him was that he is such a natural comic. He goes for jokes. You can see that he likes what is bizarre in people, or what will confront them. He later appeared on *Saturday Night Live* and was tremendously impressive. He could be a stand up comic; he has such natural timing and is so attracted to what's funny. Obama also spoke at this and he did well but he didn't have that natural flair as a comedian, though he meant to be funny at this event which happened to raise \$5 million for charity in one go. They were \$500,000 short at half-time but they raised it in no time at all.

By the time McCain got to Zanesville, which was about ten days before the election, his stump speech had really become awful – a kind of disgrace – it was sad to watch I thought. Even by stump speech standards it was almost content-free. We don't expect much in the final weeks of the campaign, they just go on saying the same things over and over. But McCain's had become a dreadful thing. The content was an attack on Obama who had said, in a loose moment, that he wanted to redistribute the wealth. McCain kept saying "redistribute the wealth" as if this were an appalling thing. And what was odd was that his audience, substantially comprised of very poor people in camouflage gear, struggling people who had actually been taking redistributed wealth for a very long while, booed in unison when he said, "he wants to redistribute the wealth". As if to say, don't give any to us, we don't want it. It's dirty money.

But what was more striking about it was what McCain built his speech around. He built it around his war record, which is undeniably impressive although he was fairly reckless with planes. But what

happened to him in Vietnam is appalling beyond all imagination and there was something Roman about the whole thing. Here was this returned, valiant warrior, who so obviously couldn't raise his arms over his head because of the things that had been done to him. His whole performance was characterised by these short stabbing motions with arms that he can't get over his head. But it was almost as if someone had got to him and told him "whatever you do, don't be yourself". It didn't seem to me as if McCain wanted to – he'd never done it before – get a ride on his war record. Yet quite a long while before the end of the speech he was saying, "I carry the wounds of war, I've been tested, I know how to fight." He even said at one point that he knew how to win a war, which was something Sarah Palin first said. But the more you tried, the harder it became to think what war it was that he won. A lot of poor people have connections to the military – it's one place they can go – and McCain was playing to that audience. Nevertheless, it felt like an empty speech. And there was something about the heavy metal that didn't ring true either. He went in with heavy metal and went out with Johnny Be Good.

Outside, a man was selling badges saying *Not Made in China: Handmade by Americans*. Joe the Plumber badges, great big ones.

Obama didn't come to Zanesville although the Democrat camp was rather hoping that he would. But the marathon runner told me he wouldn't come there because it would be too dangerous. Obama had come much earlier in the campaign, but for whatever reason he didn't return. He went to Columbus on the Sunday before the election and attracted a crowd of 60,000 people, sort of standard for him wherever he went. There were queues literally for miles.

What was interesting about Obama's speech was that he seemed determined to keep the emotional level down. It was obvious all through his campaign that he didn't want to seem like the angry black man, it was really important not to. People kept hearing bits of Martin Luther King in his speech but I couldn't hear any. I heard one line – "there's a righteous wind blowing at our backs" – but apart from that it seemed to me that he kept preacherly rhetoric out of his speech and made it much more cerebral. As if he were thinking all the time: it's better to get an idea planted in their heads than a feeling because an idea will direct them. The thing is to get them to vote, to get them to work for me, not to get them feeling mad or passionate. And he maintained that admirably to the end.

It was certainly the tone of the debates where people like Maureen Dowd, who's not always the most acute even if she is the funniest observer, wanted Obama to go for the jugular. But he didn't need to. It was more effective to sit quietly and let McCain get angry than to get angry himself. So people went away feeling rather like a football team does when the coach tells them to take it one week at a time. You

know, don't get worked up, just go and vote. He had a wonderful line in the last two or three weeks of his campaign where, whenever he would mention something evil that McCain had done or that the Bush Administration had done, and therefore perforce McCain was attached to it, the crowd would boo and Obama would say "don't boo: vote". That was a very clever line and he did it every time. It became a kind of standard routine and the television ran it again and again.

Between 2006, when I travelled around the States, and 2008 several things had happened. Fox News' Bill O'Reilly had aged and was starting to sound tired. And even Sean Hannity, who is much younger, was sounding tired too. A new outfit called MSNBC had become an aggressively liberal television station with young people on it like Rachel Maddow and Keith Olbermann, who mock Fox. It had become the other side of Fox. It was compulsory viewing for a lot of middle-America to watch MSNBC and the Comedy Channel and Jon Stewart. David Letterman had suddenly become a terrible liberal. McCain had a blue with Letterman when he told him a lie and didn't turn up to his show. Letterman spent a week drubbing McCain every day until McCain finally had to go on. He did well when he did but it was still a mess.

It's extraordinary how great political campaigners have their day. Throughout this campaign it felt as if Karl Rove had capsized. Everything that had always worked for the Republicans in the previous eight years was gone. The idea of the Rovean genius suddenly began not just to fade, but to turn inside out. The whole tenor of the American media had changed. And suddenly Obama looked like the cool person, which is what you need – cool. McCain looked like the man who was jerky and angry and out of control. Everything he did turned to dirt, really. Everything went wrong. And of course the thing that went most wrong was the financial crisis. Politics is such a mad game that one could still say without the financial crisis maybe McCain might have won. Or the race might have been much closer, who knows. But among the things McCain had to contend with was the spectacle of Alan Greenspan, in front of a House committee which looked totally startled, as he said, "It was all wrong; for 40 years I've been wrong. My ideology was wrong." Henry Waxman sat there looking completely nonplussed; the game was up. This makes it very hard for a candidate who is connected to the mob holding the particular horrible can of worms. It makes it very hard for him to separate himself from them. Oddly enough it was only ten days before the end of the campaign that McCain got his line out, saying "you're not voting for George Bush, you're voting for me." Why he didn't say that at the beginning I don't know.

On the one hand, it was an outstanding operation by Obama; he barely made a mistake and ran a phenomenally well organised

campaign in the field. On the other hand you think, well, who knows, without the financial meltdown, he might have lost. But you have to go on what you've got, and Obama's operation was mind-boggling, even in Zanesville. He had probably ten times more of everything than John Kerry had had. He had ten times more field organisers, he had ten times more volunteers, he had ten times more precincts to mine for votes, ten times more neighbourhoods to mine, he had more people organising those neighbourhoods. He put a net across the country and he was going to drag up every voter he possibly could. The ambition was to first get them to vote and then to get them to vote Democrat; to say they were going to vote Democrat, then to get them to the polls.

So what had started months before only ended at five or six o'clock on voting night when organisers identified people who hadn't voted and phoned them, offered to pick them up, drive them to the polls, whatever. In Zanesville, the campaign brought in two highly educated young women, which was a smart thing to do. Firstly they were very professional, and secondly, because they came from outside, they by-passed the inevitable local jealousies and pecking orders, the local organisation didn't tear its own throat out. In a stratified community with the memories that communities have, it was an inspired tactic.

I met a Jewish liberal from Brooklyn who had been away for 40 years. He came back to canvass for the last three weeks. He went around knocking on doors where he'd never gone before, having dogs set on him and people shout at him and not knowing whether he was going to face a shotgun or not. Nevertheless he did it. There were women in their eighties who remembered FDR and the New Deal, whose husbands had worked in WPA schemes. And there were people who didn't remember Ronald Reagan. There was something about watching old ladies, on the last night of the election, ringing up people and getting the phone slammed down on them and just sighing, and picking up the phone to ring the next one – it was tremendously impressive, whatever side of politics you happened to be on. So much so that you felt the day after the election these people were going to sit around and say “well what are we going to do next?” Suddenly they had hundreds of people who were able to do one thing. It reminded me of those burghers of Chicago who decided to stop the river running into Lake Michigan, turned it around and ran it south so that now it runs into the Gulf of Mexico, because it didn't suit them having it run into Lake Michigan. When a city does something like that, it inclines them to think they can do the next thing. That mix of idealism and pragmatism in America is tremendously powerful. I don't know what the Obama volunteers did the next day but they may have decided to clean up the Muskingum river, which could do with it. Or maybe they'll single-handedly revitalise the downtown, get it going again.

Sarah Palin energised the Republican base – but she also energised whole communities across the country, whole cities, whole states for Obama. And the more Palin energised, the more McCain fossilised, because she looked like all the energy and he looked more and more like an add-on. As time went on, Palin just ran around the campaign in a way that, if I'd been McCain, would have had me looking for the poison.

Election night was a great moment – to be in that hall was something unforgettable. The Democrats didn't carry Muskingum County but they did halve the Republican margin down to 2,900 votes and they were already thinking "next time we'll get it". There were scenes of unimaginable happiness; there were old black people in the room who never thought this could ever have happened. There was a sort of wonderment about the place. It was quieter in the restaurant next door – the Republican restaurant. It was great that the two were together – it was the best restaurant and the best party, it seemed to me, going on at the same time.

It all was remarkable for many reasons and I've been trying to think, ever since I got back, about what it was that really got me. Obama's speech was almost lost in the moment, and what a great speech it was. But there was also a terribly poignant moment at the beginning when McCain – the real McCain – came out and did absolutely what was necessary at that time. It must have been incredibly painful but the real McCain actually appeared in that final speech, in quietening the base that Palin had turned into a slightly angry mob.

The moment, though, tended to bury what an amazing bit of speechmaking Obama's was. I don't think I've ever heard a speech as good and I doubt that I ever will. I suppose it comes down to three things that have struck me since. One is the overwhelming sense of can-do that was in the room. That all these people had done this. They hadn't been working in Michigan, they hadn't been working in the easy states. As the man from Brooklyn said – he was 60 – I could have sat around with all my liberal mates and watched this, and whinged if Ohio fell and made the same remarks as Obama's one mistake, when he talked about all "these people out there, with their guns and religion". The Brooklyn liberal could have sat there and done that but instead he went back to Zanesville and worked on the campaign.

In its good old days, Zanesville had 160 Jewish families and there were three synagogues operating. Today the synagogues have become community centres. There are now just 25 or 26 Jewish families in Zanesville – a sort of symptom of the decline of the place. But, the day after the election, it was as if America was a place where anything could be done. It just leapt over everybody else. Everyone had been

saying that America's had it; Europe's better; Australia's better. Suddenly, in one go, America did the whole lot. They've got a black President, a black family in the White House, astonishing. And you felt that it was just as Walt Whitman said it was in 1884.

At the airport, coming home, Fox News was still on. I'm sure there was dust all around the screen but you could tell that the management hadn't yet realised they could turn them off. A whole era had just ended in a flash. I wouldn't say the culture wars are dead, but what it did feel like, and I realised this was the most enjoyable thing of all, was that we were standing watching a 47 year old speak to the world. For me, I thought the great thing about this is, I don't have to listen to my own generation anymore. It was fantastic – I was listening to a younger generation. I don't have to listen to liberals saying all the same thing they've been saying for 35 years, and the Right saying all the same things. This was the most liberating moment of the lot.

So, to bring all this back to where I started. In one stroke, all that optimism that has seemed incomprehensible, and always has seemed incomprehensible to me in the States, when the place *is* in such dire straits all that became comprehensible. You actually thought, "Well, they're right", the optimists. When you ask, "How are you going to turn the problems around?" they say, "We will." They don't give any good reason. I don't want to sound too much like one of them, but the whole thing demonstrates why American optimism has a basis in fact.



Anne Henderson



David Bird

Photo – Alfonso Calero

In 1931, amid popularist sentiment and rallies of tens of thousands of disillusioned citizens, Joe Lyons, who had resigned from the Scullin Labour government, and his wife Enid became the spearhead of an anti-Labor citizens movement that saw the formation of the United Australia Party with Lyons at its head. After the election of December 1931, Lyons became Australia's Prime Minister and remained in office until his sudden death in office on Good Friday, April 1939. Dr David Bird is the author of *J.A. Lyons, the "Tame Tasmanian". Appeasement and Rearmament in Australia, 1932-39* (Scholastic Press, 2008), which charts Lyons' dual approach of "strength with conciliation" at a time of escalating international crisis. Anne Henderson is the author of "Joseph Lyons" in Michelle Grattan's *Australian Prime Ministers* (New Holland Press 2000) and in 2008 published *Enid Lyons: Leading Lady to a Nation* (Pluto Press 2008). David Bird and Anne Henderson addressed The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 25 November 2008.

JOSEPH LYONS

– A PRIME MINISTER FOR MODERN TIMES

ANNE HENDERSON

November 2008, a time of global financial meltdown, is an appropriate time to discuss the contribution of Australia's tenth prime minister, Joe Lyons, who saved Australia from financial ignominy as acting treasurer in the Scullin Labor government in 1930 and who won office as a conservative a year later and guided the nation through the Great Depression from January 1932 until his sudden death in office in April 1939.

Lost between, on the one hand, the record of his conservative colleague Robert Menzies who went on to found the Liberal Party and, on the other, Lyons' former Labor colleagues who from 1931 proclaimed him a "rat", Joe Lyons has had a rough deal in the history books. As his devoted wife Enid Lyons, a writer and successful politician herself after her husband's death, once opined, Joe's reputation in history was all too often recorded by his rivals or enemies.

Yet, this was not the prime minister the electorate saw in Joe Lyons, easily Australia's first modern leader. Taking office at a time of technological advances in radio and audio visual communication (film), Joe Lyons brought a small revolution to the Antipodes as the first Australian prime minister to exploit modern communication advances to his benefit. A tactically astute politician, Joe Lyons was a master at winning elections. As Prime Minister he won three successive elections in economically difficult times.

Having endured the constraints of being a federal politician from the island state of Tasmania – phone connection with the mainland came only in 1936 and as premier in the 1920s, he endured many Bass Strait crossings by ferry – as prime minister Joe Lyons made forceful use of film, air travel, telephone and cable in a way that echoes the revolution in new political communication today of You Tube and cyberspace. This was extraordinary for a person born in 1879, who came close to missing out on a basic education.

The son of an Irish born mother and a father with Irish born parents, Joe Lyons began with an anti-British establishment outlook, inherited from his family. He later experienced working class desperation, when his father Michael plunged the family into penury after losing a fortune in one bet on a Melbourne Cup in the late 1880s. Thanks to a couple of maiden aunts, sisters of his mother, Joe Lyons eventually finished his schooling after cutting scrub at the age of twelve. He took up teaching, beginning as a humble monitor teacher and later training at the fledgling Hobart teachers college. It wasn't surprising, after arguments with the education department, that Joe Lyons chose the Labor Party when he decided to stand for state parliament.

Something of the politician Lyons would become has recently come to light in a small relic of Joe Lyons' early adulthood. His answers to a popular questionnaire, a sort of character game among friends, recently surfaced in Hobart. I am indebted to Joe's grand daughter Mary Pridmore for this artefact. It says much of what Joe Lyons saw as important even before he entered parliament. For me, the most revealing answer is to the statement "My idea of misery" which he gives as "being unpopular". For a modern politician that's very apt. His other answer "Omnia vincit labor" or "work conquers all" is also a fitting aspiration for a modern politician.

That Joe Lyons was Australia's first modern prime minister can be demonstrated in three fundamental features of his political life. He was a consensus man whose approach to government was as an efficient manager rather than any sort of ideological mission; he was a believer in the important role of women in public life; and he saw Australia as his home, believing Australia should be a Pacific power with the right to act unilaterally in its relations with its Pacific neighbours. You will recall that until 1942, when the Statute of Westminster was proclaimed, Australia was tied to Britain in its external or foreign affairs.

Consensus politician and manager

Joe Lyons was indeed an unusual personality to reach the top of a man's world in the 1920s and 1930s. His qualities of self-effacing good humour, endearing in a personal sense, were unfamiliar in most who achieved high office. Lyons preferred conciliation – or what we would term today "consensus" – rather than confrontation. In this he was "modern", especially as we witness the daily reporting of one or another summit or "G" meeting of national leaders to negotiate outcomes. Even the Lyons unfaltering belief that peace could be negotiated has a familiar modern ring.

As premier of Tasmania, 1923–28, Lyons faced financial difficulties he could not solve merely by budgeting better. Tasmania

had minimal population growth and its isolation and limited sources of income did not favour economic growth. In 1923, the state was in financial crisis, its interest payments on debt amounting to half the government's revenue. Lyons' first step was to appoint an advisory council of businessmen to investigate ways to improve Tasmania's income. Ignoring party differences, he began negotiations with conservative prime minister Stanley Bruce for a better deal for Tasmania in the distribution of federal funds – and he succeeded. Enid Lyons would later write of how Joe “conferred with pastoralists, industrialists, trade unionists, farmers and businessmen” which, she added, disproved the view that Labor only governed “in the interest of its own supporters”.

This pragmatism marked Joe Lyons out as other than simply a party man. Neither fish nor fowl, Lyons perhaps belonged in a later generation. But his middle way foundered in the state election of 1928 when party divisions came back to haunt him and he was accused of losing the state election for being too close to the opposition. Later in federal politics, as acting treasurer in the Scullin Labor government, Lyons stood against tribal unity in the matter of renegotiating a loan due to British bankers in December 1930. Federal caucus meetings at the time had degenerated into mayhem – Warren Denning, a member of the Canberra Press Gallery, wrote of how in spite of the double padded doors separating the party room from the lobbies in Old Parliament House, “so terrific became the tumult at times that all Parliament House was aware of it”.

In this atmosphere, with bitter opposition from Labor's radicals, including John Curtin, but with eventual support from Prime Minister Jim Scullin in a cable from London, Lyons campaigned with Nationalists such as Robert Menzies and Melbourne financiers led by Staniforth Ricketson to raise far more than the £28 million needed to refinance the loan. The Lyons way was managerial and pragmatic rather than blind loyalty to the tribe. It was no accident that when Lyons headed up a new political party – the United Australia Party – with the conservatives in 1931, that the new party structures were loose and barely defined.

Australia, as nations across the world did, emerged slowly and painfully out of the Great Depression. Yet the Lyons approach of prudence and avoiding inflation while running deficits proved far more successful than the New Deal of Franklin D Roosevelt. As Professor Niall Ferguson told Geraldine Doogue on ABC Radio (22/11/09), the New Deal was much less an economic success than a political success. While Australia let wages fall, the US increased them and by 1937 was reporting a surplus while the unemployment queues stayed long. There was another major US recession in 1937, while Australia was showing an economic come back by 1934. Joe Lyons

also preached peace through negotiation, while increasing military spending for home defence. This also proved beneficial to recovery.

Lyons' consensus approach saw him court various groupings, all quite separately, from financiers and operatives who had overseen the formation of the UAP, to businessmen such as Keith Murdoch, his cabinet colleagues and various other networks from his local party supporters to international leaders and their diplomatic offshoots. All the way to his involvement in the advice sought by Prime Minister Baldwin in handling the king's abdication in 1936 to the controversial Munich Agreement of 1938 when Joe Lyons saw himself as of crucial importance to Chamberlain's last minute negotiations with Hitler and Mussolini to stay the onset of war. Over the years of Joe Lyons' time as PM, the use of cables, even from ships, and the telephone across the globe brought an immediacy to global contact never before possible at such a great distance.

Joe Lyons and the role of women

The old school of analysis always concluded that Joe Lyons, more open to his feelings than the average male of his day, was the tool of a masterful wife. This was simply an "old school" myth created by an old boys' judgement prevalent in assessments of husband/wife relationships where a wife took a public role. Today Joe and Enid Lyons would be called a "power couple" – a recognition of the fact that where a wife underpins a political husband (both privately and publicly) it does not mean a controlling force (wife) behind a public voice (husband). This Lady Macbeth sort of view is no longer trotted out when describing Michelle and Barack Obama, Bill and Hilary Clinton or Tony and Cherie Blair. Joe and Enid Lyons were no different.

Lyons' tussle with radicals in the Labor caucus in 1930 and 1931 led his opponents to imply he ran from the heat of the Cabinet kitchen when he abandoned the Labor Party in early 1931. In fact, Lyons was a tough and steely negotiator who relished the networks and power of politics. His desertion of Labor and eventual link up with the conservatives was simply a move ahead of his day. Lyons was a man of the centre – the position of all successful Labor leaders since 1941. But the Lyons style could not work in the 1930s within a Labor Party split by extremist fancies.

From his earliest campaigns for a seat in the Tasmanian parliament in 1909, Joe Lyons recognised the importance of women voters. Moreover, he was never threatened by the success of his much younger wife Enid at a microphone; he would throw her into the fray of his campaigns whenever he could. In 1925, while Premier of Tasmania, Joe Lyons pushed his wife to stand for the seat of Denison when Labor needed to take votes off an independent woman

candidate. At the time, Enid had seven very young children – one a baby of eight months. She stood for the seat and almost won. In the multi-member Tasmanian system, Enid Lyons' votes contributed greatly to the Labor Party's narrow victory at that election.

At the time of Joe's break with the Labor Party, the onset of the Depression and the divisions within Labor alongside its inflationary approach to getting the economy moving saw the rise of citizens groups comprising tens of thousands of concerned voters. In April 1931, Joe and Enid Lyons became the personalities that led these groups across the south east of Australia after a series of public gatherings at which both Joe and Enid Lyons spoke. So successful was Enid – with Joe's encouragement – that Robert Menzies advised her to merely give the vote of thanks when they got to Sydney as he worried she would take from the importance of Joe's appearances. But Joe Lyons wanted his wife on the podium – she attracted votes.

As the prime minister's wife, Enid Lyons came to the Lodge in February 1932 with a reputation for being a public figure in her own right. Her time at the Lodge over the next seven years was constantly broken – as she travelled the country both alone and with her husband. Lyons took her with him to speak in the campaign to stop Western Australia from seceding in 1933 and on a speaking tour of Queensland shortly after – she was pregnant with her twelfth child at the time. In their travels abroad in 1935 and 1937, Enid was a star; she spoke at functions, wrote columns to send home for Keith Murdoch's press and occasionally contributed to the British press. Joe Lyons revelled in her success.

Australia – Pacific nation

It has been forgotten how it was Joe Lyons, recalling Alfred Deakin's suggestion of a Pacific pact, who in 1935 initiated the idea of an Australian-US Pacific non-aggression pact. Not Ben Chifley or H V Evatt who seem to be given credit for initiating the idea that led to the ANZUS treaty.

Unlike Deakin, who had invited the Great White Fleet to Australia in 1908 against the better judgement of London's Colonial Office, Lyons took his Pacific pact idea to the White House. It is now forgotten that Joe and Enid Lyons stayed at the White House (the Lincoln bedroom perhaps, so desired by Hollywood celebrities when the Clintons lived there?). The visit was indeed a friendly one in July 1935 and celebrated by Lyons' appearance on the cover of *Time* magazine. Lyons put the idea for a Pacific non-aggression pact to Franklin D Roosevelt as they yarned into the night after dinner – an obvious rapport quickly developing between these two liberal democrats.

The proposal came to nothing as Cabinet rejected it on Lyons' return to Australia – but Roosevelt was warm to the idea and also offered to accord any Australian commissioner to Washington the recognition of Ambassador. This latter suggestion was subsequently vetoed by US Secretary of State Condell Hull as too complicated. Lyons' attempt to establish an Australian embassy in Washington, however, had almost been achieved when he died. His successor Robert Menzies went ahead with it shortly after taking office. Richard Casey, faithful supporter and colleague of Lyons, became the first to head up the mission.

Joe Lyons was a spent and exhausted prime minister by the beginning of 1939; his sudden death from a heart attack in April said much about the toll his years of negotiating difficult decisions had taken. His unrelenting belief in the possibility of negotiating peace would, in the end, defeat him. Yet there is much for students of modern times to learn from the leadership of Joe Lyons.

JOSEPH LYONS

– *TAME TASMANIAN*
DAVID BIRD

Joseph and Enid Lyons seemed fated to be joined in posterity, as they were in life. The coincidence of the almost simultaneous, separate publication of two biographies of husband and wife, my own work and that of Anne Henderson, has already been noted by several reviewers. Perhaps Lyons' "fat uxorious face", as one Sydney journalist so unflatteringly described it in 1927, is still smiling at this conjunction.¹ Dame Enid too felt the vitality of their connection, but did not seem to have the same emotional dependence. In mid-1931, after Lyons had crossed the Rubicon and left the Labor party, he expressed regret to his wife about having prematurely left the movement he continued to love, as caucus had begun to shift back towards the centre: "You see," he told her, "I needn't have done it." Enid Lyons would have none of this regret. She noted: "I straightened him out."² I imagine, if there is an after-life, that she is still doing so.

It is a great pleasure to talk about the life and times of Australia's tenth Prime Minister, Joseph Aloysius Lyons; the "Tame Tasmanian" (as *Time* magazine labelled him in 1935).³ Let me begin by offering an *apologia* for what I call "biographical attraction", that is the affection that a biographer⁴ either has from the beginning of his or her task, or that which generally develops during the course of such a project, for it is unusual to find biographers who confesses a dislike of, even hostility for, their subject (as Kershaw did with *Hitler*). It is of course necessary for a biographer to maintain a certain distance from the centre of their attention, but a certain empathy is difficult to avoid.

I was first drawn to the career of Joseph Lyons in the course of research at my *alma mater*, the University of Tasmania. Here I researched his term as Premier of his indigent state 1923-28, when he guided what the Sydney journal *Table Talk* contemptuously referred to as "the dinghy of state". He did so with a measure of success, advised by a woman whom the same journal termed the "half the Premier" and in a display of consensus politics that was not repeated and then, federally, until the Hawke years of the 1980s. I was struck at that time, and still am, by the notion that Lyons' achievements were little known

and under-appreciated – understandable enough when addressing the microcosm of Tasmanian politics, but not so when examining his federal career from 1929 and especially his prime ministership 1932–39. One recent observer of President George W. Bush suggested that he has been “under-underestimated”. Time will tell, but with Lyons time has told and negative judgements have often been made in the academy and elsewhere, judgements that have marginalised him as “a relative unknown from the potato-plots of north-western Tasmania” and as “a parish-pump politician except when he was an appeaser of fascists”.⁵ Lyons’ achievements, however, have been passed over with undue disregard, as his widow Dame Enid fretted they would be during the four decades in which she survived him. Today I want to talk chiefly about two of them – his achievements in foreign and defence policy – in appeasement and re-armament in the years 1932–39; for Lyons was not only an active participant in the formulation of early Australian foreign policy, and a pioneer of appeasement well before Neville Chamberlain and other better known appeasers, but he was also a re-armer of staggering proportions; the more surprisingly so because of his alleged pacifism. My extended research soon found important reasons to resurrect his reputation, for Lyons emerged as a Prime Minister who was active as *de facto* foreign minister, which was not so much of a surprise to me, but, what was an entirely unexpected turn of events, was his emergence as an active *de facto* defence minister. So, let me summarise Lyons’s achievements in foreign affairs and defence matters; in appeasement and re-armament.

In matters of external affairs, I was soon able to see where Lyons attempted to transfer the consensus politics for which he was reputed in Hobart and Canberra onto the international stage through the policy of appeasement and that this was an area which had been almost entirely overlooked in the historiography, lost in the fog of war that had transformed the term “appeasement” into the grossest of political insults. There were, of course, many international difficulties facing Australia in 1932 – the chief one was the regional threat posed by Japanese aggression on the Asian mainland, in Manchuria. East Asia was then referred to as the “Near North” by those Australian politicians and opinion-makers interested in and conscious of regional affairs. Over the years there have been those who have claimed pioneer status, or at least a seminal role, in turning Anglo-Australian eyes towards Asia, some with foundation, others wholly spurious.

Whatever these claims, the Lyons administration played its part in sharpening such a focus and in an altogether less conducive atmosphere than that of today. Although well-read and thoughtful, Lyons neither spoke nor read any foreign language and certainly not the Asian language then in vogue, Japanese, but he was a good listener. The chief advocate of Asian, or at least Japanese, understanding in his

first cabinet was that of John Latham, who as Minister of External Affairs in early-1934 headed the first Australian diplomatic mission to “our” region, the so-called Australian Eastern Mission. Latham later called it an “experiment, but I think the experiment succeeded”.⁶ Its origins are obscure, but Lyons was at its forefront and the initial suggestion was that he ought to lead it. He declined to do so, for obvious reasons (he was Treasurer as well as Prime Minister) but he clearly regarded it as a significant diplomatic initiative, as a “good-will” mission, especially in its focus on Japan. There had been no prior consultation with Whitehall on this diplomatic initiative, to the chagrin of the Foreign Office which was forced to rely upon *The Times* for details. It was not an economic delegation, but rather the first act of Australian (even British, in the broader sense) appeasement in that it sought to determine the Japanese criteria for a settlement of the Manchurian dispute with China.

Appeasement was defined by Lyons as a process of face-to-face negotiations between statesmen (not diplomats), of appreciating “the value of getting to learn something of the other fellow”.⁷ Once the “other fellow’s” position was determined, it was then the task of the appeasers, again the statesmen, to find ground for compromise, room for consensus. This was the process that had brought great political success to Lyons as Tasmanian premier and had brought him into the Lodge in 1932 as the man of compromise – it was his old practice of consensus on the international stage. And Latham certainly succeeded in determining the other fellow’s point of view during the course of his 1934 mission – the Japanese wanted the *de jure* recognition of their control over Manchuria; nothing more, nothing less. This was in itself not problematic to Lyons and Latham – as Jay Moffat, the US consul in Sydney (the closest thing to an ambassador) observed in October 1935: “I have yet to meet an Australian who opposed Japan’s Manchurian policy or desired to see Japan out of Manchuria.”⁸ The problem was to secure British agreement, British diplomatic initiative (Australian diplomacy being essentially non-existent) to establish what Latham called “a formula” for a settlement in Manchuria, as Britain was still far from accepting the premise on which appeasement was based – that of open, honest negotiation with even an aggressive power.

British policy in 1934 was still that of “cunctation” as the Foreign Office so delightfully described it (from the Latin *cunctari* – to delay), a policy of waiting for the right opportunity for modest engagement with a foreign power in the hope that improved relations would thereby result.⁹ This was the passive, proto-form of appeasement – of waiting; appeasement was the next step up, of opening negotiations – a step that Whitehall was not prepared to undertake until Chamberlain became premier in June 1937. Meanwhile, back in late-1934, Lyons

was left holding the baby of Latham's Manchurian "formula" following the resignation of his External Affairs minister in October. The Prime Minister himself now acted as if he were the joint external affairs minister and soon as if he were the *de facto* minister at the expense of the incumbent Senator George Pearce and in later years of the indestructible Billy Hughes. The Lyons agenda was now full-blown regional appeasement directed at Japan and her Manchurian "fetish" as John Latham had also called it.

Lyons was not without his own thoughts on Latham's "formula" and he first aired them in London in May 1935 at a prime ministerial summit. After noting that in Manchuria, Japan had brought "order out of chaos", he put forward his solution: "Would it not be possible to follow a rather different line from that adopted previously, to negotiate some sort of pact of security for all the nations bordering on the Pacific Ocean?"¹⁰ His comments fell upon deaf ears and the proposal was devastatingly demolished by British politicians and bureaucrats who, amongst other things, were contemptuous of the idea of dominion diplomatic initiative and wary of the idea that there could be any divergence between the regional interests of Britain and a dominion such as Australia.

But the "little Aussie cunctator" (as one reviewer of my book recently labelled him) was not discouraged and soon took his proposal to Washington, raising it with FDR in July 1935 and receiving a more positive response. By 1937, Lyons was ready to present a more concrete proposal to the Imperial Conference for a "Pacific Pact of non-aggression". By now, he had secured the endorsement of the new British premier, Neville Chamberlain and both prime ministers saw it as a component of what they called "wider appeasement", that is appeasement applied both in East Asia towards Japan and in Europe towards Italy and Germany. This is not the place to detail the fate of Lyons' Pact, but it is worth stating that Lyons never abandoned the proposal, despite the many obstacles that were placed in its path, and was on the verge of further pursuing it through the appointment of a special envoy at the time of his death in April 1939. Its slow progress had already stimulated him to establish an Australian diplomatic service, with appointments mooted in Washington and Tokyo, although Lyons died before he could use these avenues to pursue the matter further. Menzies was to take the credit for the establishment of this diplomatic service after April 1939, despite having opposed the proposal with some vigour for the past four and a half years, but the appellation of the "father of Australian diplomacy" belongs to the man who had already fathered a dozen of his own little Australians. The Lyons pact died with its author, as no doubt the Rudd proposal for an Asian-Pacific regional agreement will pass away with our incumbent Prime Minister and probably for the same reasons – vagueness of

detail; the indifference, or hostility of major powers; the absence of Australian diplomatic clout; the continuing perception that Australia is “different” from other polities in the region.

While Australia made the only attempt at appeasement in East Asia, it was not inactive at promoting European appeasement although here, again, there was the inevitable dependence upon British diplomatic activity in the absence of the home-grown variety. Lyons was especially keen for Britain to mollify Italy and to retain her within the Entente circle (it must not be forgotten that, like Japan, Italy had fought on the Allied side in the Great War). If the cost of retaining Italian friendship was the sacrifice of Abyssinia following the invasion of October 1935, then so be it. It was with the greatest reluctance that Canberra agreed to the League of Nations policy of sanctions against Italy for this act of aggression and it was with the greatest delight that Australia was the first dominion to abandon the policy a few months later at the conclusion of the East African war. This proved to be the last time that the Lyons government was prepared to countenance measures that it regarded as obstructive to international good-will (that is appeasement) and as damaging to Australian trade – thereafter Lyons refused to consider sanctions against anybody for any reason, however horrified he became about German domestic policy and about Japanese atrocities in China.

Lyons felt especially comfortable with talking to the “other fellow” when the conversation was with Mussolini. He twice visited Fascist Italy and was graced on both occasions with an interview. The “Tame Tasmanian”, like many others, was impressed with Mussolini’s personality and very taken with the domestic achievements of the fascist administration, including with the ardour of a number of Australian students at the Fascist Party’s college of propaganda. He remained a persistent lobbyist for an Anglo-Italian Agreement, which was eventually brought into force in 1937, and which Lyons believed could serve as a model for something similar in East Asia. Such an agreement in the Mediterranean was the more necessary in these years, because of the rise of Nazi Germany and here again, Lyons served as a strident advocate of Anglo-German *rapprochement*.

When Germany remilitarised her own backyard of the Rhineland in March 1936, in breach of the Versailles *diktat* of 1919 and of the more recent Locarno pact in 1925, Joseph Lyons was amongst the first to remind Whitehall of the injustices of Versailles, of the absolute untrustworthiness of the French and of the harmlessness of Germany’s claims. He advised Britain to accept talks on Germany’s conditions and even offered Attorney-General Menzies, *en route* to London, as a mediator. Baldwin rejected the first proposal with contempt and ignored the second (Menzies was forced to wait another

twenty years before he was given another opportunity to be an international mediator, during the 1956 Suez crisis).

The next European crisis, that of the Austro-German *Anschluss* (union) in early 1938, presented a difficulty for Australian appeasers. On the one hand, they were not discomfited with the idea that Hitler should complete the task begun by Bismarck of unifying the German-speaking peoples. Neither Lyons nor his wife could even spell the name of the Austrian chancellor von Schuschnigg, let alone trouble themselves with the recent history of inter-German rivalry. Lyons had excluded Austria from his two European tours in which he met Italian, French, Belgian and Irish politicians – the only Austrian he attempted to meet was a lapsed one, Adolf Hitler, in June 1935, but that *rendez-vous* was cancelled at the last moment, to Dame Enid's continuing chagrin. The only fly in the ointment of *Anschluss* for the Australian appeasers was the likely hostile response of Italy, for Lyons still concerned himself more with Italian friendship than with that of Germany. Mussolini, however, solved the problem by soon accepting the *Anschluss*, no questions asked, thereby leaving it clear for Lyons to advocate an immediate recognition by the Empire of the new order, even before the voters of "Greater Germany" were able to endorse the expansion of their borders by the dubious plebiscite of April 1938.

But more was to follow in this *annus horribilis*, when Hitler soon wished to incorporate the German speaking regions of Czechoslovakia, the Sudetenland. Again, central European history meant little to Lyons and his ministers. Earle Page as Deputy Prime Minister had already expressed his view in London in the previous year – if the Germans wanted the Sudetenland, then why not give it to them? From the Australian point of view, it was simply not worth fighting for – Lyons had already told Jay Moffat that Australia would be most reluctant to fight for anything east of the Rhine and it should be remembered that he had twice visited the Australian war graves of northern France and Belgium and been deeply moved on both occasions.

Throughout the Czech crisis of September 1938 Lyons brought these sort of "far away country of which we know nothing" perspectives to the debates in Whitehall and he did so by three means; through the intermediation of High Commissioner Bruce; through direct PM-to-PM cables and, most importantly, through telephone diplomacy which he pioneered and employed to great effect. Necessity is the mother of invention and Treasurer Lyons had allowed in the 1933/34 budget for the extension of a submarine cable to Tasmania; thereafter, whether in Devonport or Canberra, he was in touch with the world. Lyons was delighted when Chamberlain agreed to meet Hitler in person in the course of September 1938 (he had long advocated such meetings, a seminal component of appeasement), but

when those meetings appeared to have failed and “X-day” (the day that the German ultimatum to the Czechs was due to expire) loomed in late-September, Lyons employed the telephone to call Chamberlain from his bed and to suggest the last-minute intermediation with Hitler of Mussolini, the German leader’s closest, perhaps only, foreign friend. It worked. At about 7.30am (British Summer Time) on the morning of 28 September 1938, Lyons and Chamberlain together composed the text of two cables that were despatched to Rome and Berlin later that morning. The final texts were almost word-for-word those of the notes that Chamberlain took during the course of that telephone conversation.

In later years, Dame Enid claimed that she had urged her husband to ring Chamberlain and encourage him to utilise Mussolini. I have found her to be a generally reliable historical source and my own research has, I believe, conclusively demonstrated that Joe Lyons was as much responsible for this “last-last” initiative as Chamberlain later called it, as was the British prime minister himself. Lyons certainly believed himself to be due some of the credit for the subsequent Munich Pact which was seen as having saved the peace. Many contemporaries, and some later historians, unaware of the details of these telephone calls, were puzzled by his claims. This was the climax of Lyons’ peacemaking. He was immensely distraught at the failure of Munich, although prepared to abandon conciliation only “for the time being” and angered by Britain’s unilateral guarantees offered after March 1939 to eastern European nations such as Poland and Rumania. His final act of telephone diplomacy was to urge Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, not to give guarantees to such “unstable” countries, but to no avail.¹¹ Even Mussolini, whom he admired to the end, abandoned him, for on the day that Lyons died in Sydney, Good Friday 7 April 1939, Italy invaded Albania and thus slammed the door, still ajar, on her old connections. Benito Mussolini was, however, the first foreign leader to offer condolences to the widow.

Yet, appeasement and a muscular diplomatic policy were only one side of the coin; the other was rearmament. In November 1938, Lyons had noted that appeasement equalled “strength with conciliation”.¹² The strength was rearmament – Australian rearmament went hand-in-hand with appeasement from late 1933 and they were seen by their Australian practitioners as two branches of the same tree, intended for simultaneous application in order to prevent war and to maintain security: “*détente* and defence” could co-exist. Such a co-existence would have been impossible for a pacifist; Joe Lyons was not a pacifist, although his wife often gave a good imitation of one. He had been the leader of the Tasmanian “No” case during the conscription referenda of 1916/17, as Labor Opposition Leader, and he supported a series

of peace motions towards the end of the Great War, but he had also supported his wife's amended motion at the May 1918 state party conference in Hobart to the effect that Australia ought not to become involved in "any war unless Australia be directly attacked".¹³ This amendment expressed the defence outlook maintained by the Lyons couple for the next two decades – anti-militaristic, yet tempered with the realisation that Australia may need to fight for her self-preservation and must, therefore, be prepared. In British historiography, this attitude is known as "pacifism". If my book is remembered, I would be satisfied if it were so for having reintroduced into historiography those two subtle terms; "cunctation" and "pacifism".

The rearmament that pacifism accepted as necessary and wise was implemented from September 1933. There were five such programs in the Lyons years (a sixth was mooted before Lyons' death) – each was of wider range and, by 1939, of staggering proportions given the size of the federal budget and the economic stringencies of the time; the first was in September 1933; the fifth in December 1938. The unlikely "General Joseph" (the term of abuse periodically employed by his Labor opponents) presided over the largest peacetime expenditure *per capita* in Australian history. As I recite the estimates and objectives of each program remember that the entire federal budget was in the vicinity £100 million *p.a.* throughout the 1930s – so that any figure quoted in millions of pounds equates to much the same percentage of the federal budget.

This first rearmament program (September 1933) made clear the government's intention to increase naval expenditure and to allocate the bulk (two-thirds) of future budget surpluses into an extraordinary trust account purely for defence purposes. It was anticipated that by 1933/34 some £4 million of accumulated surpluses would be so allocated and the end result would be the modernisation of a number of Leander-class cruisers (including the ill-fated HMAS *Sydney*) within an Australian flotilla of four cruisers, five destroyers.

The second program (to span December 1935-June 1936) furthered this increased naval expenditure, including the further refitting of cruisers and destroyers. It also turned its attention to the other services, calling for the modernisation of Army equipment and the resurrection of the RAAF (moribund in 1932 and close to dissolution) through the acquisition modern aircraft, including new squadrons of reconnaissance bombers and amphibious aircraft. The reputed pacifist told an Adelaide audience in April 1936: "It [re-armament] may cost millions and you will pay those millions cheerfully. First things first, and nothing comes before defence."¹⁴ Further budget surpluses, he said, were to be allocated to the Defence Department, whose expenditure would average £6.5 million *p.a.* In fact, by 1936/37 it had surpassed £8 million.

The third program (the “New Programme” of August 1937) brought that level of expenditure even higher, to some £9 million *p.a.* So alarmed had those Australian ministers returning from the London Imperial Conference of June 1937 been by the Britain’s relaxed attitude to rearmament that for the first time, Lyons accepted the need to employ deficit spending for defence purposes and he soon announced a 16 per cent increase in government borrowing in 1936/37, with a total loan commitment of £15.4 million. This pleased Billy Hughes, who had long advocated deficit spending for defence, but the political opponents of “Honest Joe”, including Labor and their new leader, John Curtin, now began to see him as something of a militarist in sheep’s clothing. Labor, still tempted by fantasies of isolationism and fixated on issues of local defence, soon had much more to oppose. During the October 1937 election, Lyons was able to boast with accuracy of six budget surpluses allocated to defence and of increases since 1933 that had surpassed £31.5 million, including expenditure of £11.5 million in the last year. “Both figures,” he accurately noted, “are records in peace expenditure for any corresponding period.”¹⁵ The Prime Minister seemed especially pleased with the eight-fold increase in RAAF spending, the arm on which Labor had concentrated its attention during their election campaign. Lyons for his part had made no excuses for his profligacy in that campaign and had promised the voters more of the same, including the development of a local aviation industry and the development of munitions (the “fourth service” as he chose to call it).

Joe Lyons prided himself on keeping his electoral promises (“Deloraining” as it was known after the Tasmanian town from which he delivered his state and often federal election speeches) and this was no exception. Within months of his electoral “hat trick”, the details of the fourth program (March-April 1938) were announced. The “New Programme” of 1937 was now expanded to stretch until 1941, at a revised cost of £43 million in the following triennium. The RAN was still to receive the greatest share (£15.9 million), but the gap was narrowing, and for the first time the RAAF allocation (£12.5 million) exceeded that of the Army (£11.6 million), a startling transformation for a service that was moribund in 1932. The RAAF was now to consist of 17 squadrons (an increase of nine), making up 200 first-line aircraft, including, to the chagrin of the British, types that were to be manufactured locally (by the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation) according to American designs. Overall defence spending was now set to increase under this fourth rearmament program from some ten-and-a-half per cent of the federal budget (1937/38) to just under fifteen per cent (1938/39). Treasurer Casey thought it beyond the funding capacity of the federal treasury.

But Lyons was not finished yet. The fifth program (December 1938) was a “stunner”, in Casey’s description, but one demanding that Australians “pawn our shirts to try to ensure our security”.¹⁶ The earlier, anticipated triennial sum of £43 million was now to be increased to £62.5 million (the entire national budget constituted only £98.6 million in that fiscal year). Australia was even to have its own mini-Singapores (Darwin and Port Moresby) and to be brought to a state of “war readiness” by 1940/41. These were unprecedented figures in peacetime and “more than the utmost the country could afford” according to Lyons in private.¹⁷ The Australian rate of military expenditure now equaled almost 18.5 per cent of all government spending; British rearmament in 1938 consumed 7 per cent (£358 million sterling). Only Nazi Germany spent more, at 25 per cent. This was re-armament with a capital R and the figures alone are an absolute rejoinder to those who still insist that our nation was left unprepared by an administration that pursued appeasement at the expense of security. In the months before his death, the UK High Commissioner Whiskard noted that Lyons had worked himself into “some kind of desperate anxiety about the defence of Australia against Japan”.¹⁸ This desperation had now led him along every avenue in the pursuit of peace, except one. There was to be no conscription. I have told of Lyons’ battle against the reintroduction of Militia conscription elsewhere; it was his last political victory and one of his finest.

What then were the real achievements of this unassuming man? Lyons’ reputation has diminished over the years, for he failed as an international peacemaker and without his moderating chairmanship the party he founded, the United Australia Party, soon dissolved into a warring rump. His ultimate personal consolation was that he had helped to prevent social dissolution in the period 1930–32. Yet, in this estimation of himself, as Dame Enid so often observed, he was unduly modest. Although many of Lyons’ grander aspirations, like the Pacific Pact, remained unfulfilled in 1939, he had nevertheless guided the nation through difficult times and increased its international profile as a regional power firmly focused on Pacific affairs, not the least in Washington, where the informal defence assurances he had gained from FDR in 1935 were soon made concrete. On the other side of the Atlantic, when it became evident that Britain could not, or would not, adequately absorb Australia’s point of view, then Lyons had taken the final steps towards Australian diplomacy; an enduring achievement. Lyons had been tardy in taking this step and perhaps unduly cautious, but this truly was an instance of better-late-than-never.

Despite the failure of appeasement, Lyons had also left the nation well down the path of rearmament in readiness for more dangerous times. This was not quite the legacy he would have liked and he had continued to hope that soon there would be a “peace dividend”

– a time when the peace of the world was sufficiently secured for the immense funds being spent on armaments to be diverted to social services. Nevertheless, this frustrated peacemaker had fulfilled his ambition of 1935: “I have gone through stirring times, full of worries and anxieties, but I found it fascinating all the same and as time goes on and it all becomes a part of history, it will be something to have played a part in such a critical period.”¹⁹ The “Judas” of 1931 had avoided the rope and survived to spend his 30 pieces of silver – he spent them on rearmament.

Endnotes

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Photo – Alfonso Calero

Gabrielle Gwyther

Dr Gabrielle Gwyther from the Social Justice and Social Change Centre at the University of Western Sydney has long been investigating the demographic and political complexities of Sydney’s western suburbs. In her essay for *The Griffith Review*, “Cities on the Edge”, she examines the aspirational nature of many fringe estates in the west of Sydney. Harrington Park, 50 kilometres south west of Sydney, is one such estate where people are happily middle class and with a strong sense of community. Amid the many negative reports of “Westie” Sydney, something else is happening and has been for decades. Dr Gabrielle Gwyther addressed The Sydney Institute on Wednesday 3 December 2008 and explained why the fringes of a city are also its future.

THE LIFESTYLES WAR

AND THE “ASPIRATIONALS” OF SYDNEY’S WEST

GABRIELLE GWYTHYR

I have no doubt that Kath and Kim are partly responsible for the media interest in my essay *Once Were Westies*, published earlier this year in the *Griffith Review*.¹ Research based, it seemed here was evidence that Kath and Kim might really exist in the expanse of new housing on the fringes of Australian cities. The essay introduced the reader to Stacey and Glenn (real people, fictitious names), who no doubt disappointed those expecting “bogan” stereotypes. A quintessential “Aspirational” couple, Stacey and Glenn moved into their substantial double storey, blonde brick and tile home in 1998. They lost money on their first home located adjacent to a public housing estate in Campbelltown, and thought that Harrington Park near Camden would prove a more secure investment.

The term “aspirational” is not my term. It entered the political lexicon earlier this decade to describe a seemingly new constituency on the urban fringe of Australian cities. If we have to call this group something, Acorn’s less judgemental, geodemographic classification “flourishing families” (well off working families with a mortgage)² or perhaps the Mosaic³ classification, “suburban optimists” would be more appropriate. At least these categories are based on rigorous statistical analysis rather than on moral values.

Developed by the Fairfax family on the late Sir Warwick Fairfax’s Poll Hereford stud, Harrington Park is a contemporary master planned community (MPC) intended, according to promotional material, to be a benchmark estate “for the future growth of western Sydney”. Harrington Park is located within the Liberal held, Federal electorate of Macarthur some 50 kilometres south-west of Sydney’s central business district. Between 2000 and 2003, I spent a number of months interviewing residents of Harrington Park as part of a study into community formation in this and other master planned estates in western Sydney.⁴ Harrington Park essentially comprises second and third home-buying, middle- to higher-income families of Anglo-Christian mores, occupied in white-collar service jobs or as

self-employed tradesmen. Work wise they are generally excluded from the global economy or are bit players in it, and their local, community based interests inevitably reflect this. Most residents grew up in Sydney's western suburbs although there are some interlopers from the "Shire", attracted by the new housing and the peculiar belief that Camden is not really a suburb of south-west Sydney.

Harrington Park is a low-density estate of large, detached houses, some master-built rendered examples, but most project homes with features cherry-picked from bygone architectural styles: prim Georgian facades, Victorian fussiness, Queen Anne turrets, Federation finials, and the occasional shady, over constructed Californian porch. With the provision of obligatory water tanks, front gardens are meticulous and lawns hold pride of place. There is an absence of domestic satellite dishes which proliferate in the more multi-cultural suburbs of Sydney's south-west. Restrictive covenants prevail here.

The estate's formal entrance is impressive with a wide, curving road stretching past tended agapanthus gardens, parks and lake. Street scaping, particularly along the main thoroughfares, provides a formal feel with mature, deciduous trees dominating. It has well-resourced playgrounds and sports facilities, including a picket-fenced cricket oval, and a network of well maintained walkways, bike trails and picnic grounds.

In her mid thirties at the time of interview, Stacey was friendly, energetic and confident. Although she described her household as being "chaotic", she actually appeared to be in masterful control of her domestic, social and business arrangements. Stacey liked to chat. Her language skills drew attention to her lack of education and "working class" roots. Her father was a builder and her father-in-law worked in a railway workshop. Stacey left school in Year 10 and went to work as a secretary. Her husband left school in Year 9 to take up employment with a tradesman. Glenn was a good looking man in a Manpower sort of way. With a glass of "good red" in hand, he talked to me with friendly familiarity, the way tradesmen do, peppering his sentences with my name. Like his wife he appeared very confident about his social position and content with his lifestyle and achievements.

The couple worked long hours (Glenn often worked a 14 hour day) but were financially rewarded, earning over \$150,000 a year from their air-conditioning business. Prior to purchasing this business they worked for others, gaining the skills and experience they would need to operate it. Like all the residents I interviewed, "hard work" was the couple's core value. It is a value that has been passed on to them from their own parents, and one which they hoped to pass on to their young son. As Stacey put it: "I want him to learn to do a decent day's work for a decent day's pay. We were both brought up that way. Nothing we've got was ever handed to us. We worked bloody hard for everything."

The couple's "pulling ourselves up by our bootstraps" imagery was common amongst the residents I met with in Harrington Park. Residents were keen to tell me of their success through toil, determination, resourcefulness and sacrifice. Rather than perceiving themselves as prosperous people, having ridden the crest of a buoyant economy, property appreciation and easy access to finance over the boom decade, they perceived themselves as merely "average Joe Blows". The self-made imagery also alluded to residents' general attitude towards people receiving social security, although they distinguished between the disabled (the deserving poor) and unemployed bludgers (the undeserving poor). As Jenny, another resident of Harrington Park, married mother of four and part-time worker explained:

We've had to work very hard for what we've got. We've never been given anything. So everything that we've been able to achieve, we've been able to achieve together. And not through handouts or inheritance or anything like that. It's been through sheer blood and guts really... Too many people wanting to have everything for free and "the government owes me". I think that attitude doesn't achieve anything. You know. And let's face it; a lot of people do feel like that. The government owes them. Why should I work? I'll just spit out all these children and the government will pay for them.

Welfare aside, the Harrington Park residents I interviewed and observed were generally a kind and generous lot, given to helping each other with landscaping, child minding and downing the odd beer or two over the back fence. They greeted each other when out walking and neighbours attended each other's pasta nights. Parents put great effort into raising good citizens. They volunteered at their children's schools, at sporting clubs and local tree-planting days. They encouraged their children to take up formalised, extra curricula activities lest they fall in with the wrong crowd.

Harrington Park residents worked hard and their confidence stemmed from their identity as self-made people. Success was established through the passing on of family and work values rather than through education. One mother, raising two teenager children on her own, exemplified this distinction. Marion, a 42 year old resident of Harrington Park, was a senior executive in a large corporation located in western Sydney. She would get to work by 4.45am each morning in order to be home by 3pm to start her "second shift". Marion had risen to the top of her field through hard work rather than through education. She explained: "I know people who have the same position as me in other corporations, and most of them have big degrees attached to their names. But in saying that too, I've worked hard and I've studied hard, although I haven't gone and done any tertiary, furthered my tertiary training."

Marion sent her children to a local private "grammar" school for the values it professed, rather than for educational advantage:

My eldest son turns 15 in March. He is growing up and I have not had one problem with him. He's got really nice friends, and the parents of those friends... They're great kids. They're not disrespectful. And I think the school has a lot to do with the fact that my son is growing up to be a really nice young man... Whereas I look at my girlfriends who have put their children through the state system and they're just having nightmares. Terrible.

When I asked Marion what aspirations she had for her children's future she explained: "I'm not overly fussed. Like, I don't push the fact that because they go to a private school I want them to become doctors or lawyers... Whatever career choice they make I'll be happy and support them 100 per cent." Believing so strongly in self-sufficiency the residents of Harrington Park were proud of their material achievements and despised people perceived to be society's slackers and freeloaders. They were a fairly homogeneous group who shared a common set of values, outlook and social experiences. They reminded me very much of the "moral middle class" described by Judith Brett in her analysis of the Menzies' years:^{5:7}

The middle class is best understood as a projected moral community whose members are identified by their possession of particular moral qualities, political values and social skills.

The "moral qualities" of individualism, self-sufficiency and the self-made – symbolised most powerfully through the ownership of status housing – and their loathing of unions, the unemployed and welfare recipients locates the aspirationalists firmly within the camp of Menzies' "forgotten people". John Howard recognised this and for a time, until the fragility of contemporary ideological arrangements intervened, was able to gather them up into the Liberal Party fold.

It is no coincidence – in Sydney at least – that the development of greenfield master planned communities from the early 1990s paralleled the rise of Liberal voting hot-spots intense enough to turn formerly solid Labor electorates into swinging seats. In 1996 the fringe electorates of Macarthur in Camden and Lindsay in Penrith fell to the Liberals with the latter falling back to the ALP in the Ruddslide of 2007. On the Central Coast the electorate of Dobell fell to the Liberals in 2001 and back to the ALP in 2007, and in north-west Sydney, Greenway was wrestled from the ALP in 2004 and remains in the hands of the Liberal Party. Political analysts have argued amongst themselves about the significance of the aspirationalists to Australian politics.⁶ But as we know, elections are usually won and lost on a mere handful of seats.

Western Sydney has always had its “moral middle class”. Its members, however, were spread relatively thinly through electorates, enabling the traditional party of “the worker” to be etched deep into the psyche and landscape of the region. The growth of master planned communities (MPCs) on Sydney’s urban fringe has provided the moral middle class with a space of their own. Perhaps, more importantly, MPCs have given this group a reason for not following the well worn trail of successful Westies out to the “leafy” suburbs of Sydney’s north and south.

The MPC is the development apparatus through which high land values and development costs on the urban fringe are packaged up and marketed to higher income purchasers. From a socio-spatial perspective the MPC is the conduit for creating determinedly middle class suburbs out of what were previously considered lower-income areas befitting first-home buyers and that low-brow archetype, the Westie. The attraction of the MPC for the aspirationalists is the expectation of physical and social segregation, together with economic, cultural, and ontological security. Protected from the anti-social character of nearby public housing estates, and migrant incursions into their childhood suburbs, the new MPCs support the desire for like-minded residents to express their social power as a status group.

The aspirationalists’ success, however, is contingent on wider social and economic opportunities and constraints, such as support for working mothers, the cost of housing finance, the provision of public infrastructure (particularly in regard to transport) and employment opportunities.⁷ Importantly, these concerns guide and tune the aspirationalists’ pragmatic political antennae – confounding political analyst in the process.

Interestingly, for all their effort and toil, the aspirationalists are a ridiculed lot; disparaged as ignorant, middle-class wannabes, lacking in taste, covetous and as far as the academic Clive Hamilton⁸ is concerned, insatiable. There is a sense too, that like their Westie predecessors the aspirationalists are not a particularly smart lot, easily “gulled”⁹ and “duped”¹⁰ into misrecognising their real class interests. Their suburbs are described as “barren”,^{11: 170} their homes are mocked as “McMansions”¹², and the weight of responsibility for the nation’s fetish for plasma TVs and SUVs is placed squarely on their shoulders. Inner-city, terrace dwelling architect and social commentator Elizabeth Farrelly has made a career out of admonishing the aspirationalists and their values, writing for instance: “If we want to sprawl our cities across the landscape, live in a McMansion, drive an SUV, leave the lights or the hose or the TV on all night, we do precisely that. It may cost, us or the planet. But it’s our right to make that choice.”^{13: 166}

It is difficult to understand why the aspirationalists attract so much derision. Why are the attributes of hard work, drive and wealth creation held so highly in the privileged suburbs of Sydney's north and east, yet held to ridicule when practised by the aspirationalists of Sydney's west? More intriguingly, why do Sydney's privileged citizens hold the aspirationalists to a higher standard of moral behaviour than they hold themselves? Take for instance effort and ambition. Usually regarded as positive attributes, when employed by aspirationalists they become "grasping" and "greedy"¹⁴. Where substantial homes and water guzzling gardens of Sydney's leafy suburbs are recognised as symbols of success, in Sydney's west they are considered sprawl, wasteful of space and utilities, and an aesthetic blight on the landscape.

While clinging to their Harbour side homes, beaches and cooling sea breezes the residents of Sydney's east condemn the affection aspirationalists have developed for air-conditioning and in-ground pools. Despite their proximity to the inordinate concentration of publicly subsidised cultural facilities, residents of the inner-west snigger at the proliferation of home-theatres in Sydney's outer-west. Greenhouse gas production, growing carbon footprints and urban sprawl are laid at the feet of those wasteful, materialistic aspirationalists!

From the 1960s the disparaging of western Sydney, most notably through the portrayal of the delinquent "Westie", facilitated the development of a rhetorical relationship between working class culture and place that remains to this day. The classic Westie circa 1970 was an indigent, uneducated, uncultured character of Anglo-Celtic origin living in the vast, seemingly homogenous flatlands to the west of the city. The checked flannelette shirt symbolized the attire and vandalism, cheap drink and hotted-up cars the behaviour. "Westie" became a rhetorical device to designate the "other" Sydney:¹⁵ a region spatially, culturally and economically different from the more prosperous and privileged Sydneysiders of the north and east. Stereotypes, derision and taunts kept the residents of western Sydney politically disempowered and culturally, economically and spatially contained.

The Westie pejorative struggles these days to compete with an increasingly complex mix of identity politics, youth subcultures and ethnicity. In fact, the term is more likely to be used as a positive source of identity by western Sydney residents themselves, than to be used by outsiders as a term of abuse. Nevertheless, confirming and reaffirming western Sydney as the "other" established it as a chimera against which the rest of Sydney could positively and confidently appraise itself.

The aspirationalists challenge this status quo. Their use of status oriented material acquisition challenges the perceived entitlement of Sydney's privileged residents to unrestrained consumption. Their

petrol guzzling, four wheel drives and large, air-conditioned houses with countless down-lights and wide-screen TVs challenge the unfettered claims of the privileged to the world's dwindling supplies of energy. The aspirational's enthusiasm for values-based private schooling challenges the claims of the privileged to a better-quality education, and their political clout challenges the monopolisation of political influence. Perhaps most importantly, however, their master planned "privatopias"¹⁶ challenge the apparent right of the privileged to segregate themselves away from the "other" in status-orientated, spatial utopias.

On further consideration the disparaging of the aspirational's seems to be a response to this group violating the assiduously constructed image of western Sydney by attempting to move beyond their allocated socio-economic position. A form of social pincer movement by the upper-middle class, on the one hand it is the reaction of Sydney's "concrete caramel materialists"¹⁷ who glare down Parramatta Road towards the damage "massclusivity"¹⁸ has inflicted on their strategies for status distinction. Concrete caramel, according to Andrew West, refers to the style of fortress housing that Cruise Captains point out on their tours of Sydney Harbour, but which are also scattered throughout the suburbs of the inner west, and concentrated in the east and north. Such housing, West argues, indicates a character that craves privacy but which feels compelled to advertise economic success and status through flamboyant housing, cars, holidays and water craft. Materialists themselves are driven by intense competition: "to make partner in a law firm... to get their kids into trophy private schools"^{17:6} and most importantly, to keep ahead of those suburban aspirational's.

On the other hand it is the priggish response of West's uber-educated, small "L" liberal, "white weatherboard culturalists". Also identified as Peter Saunders¹⁹ "opinionators", Brett's⁵ "progressive" middle-class and Howard's "elites", the "culturalists" continue to resent ten years of a constituency of 'ordinary intelligence and taste' being fêted by Howard and his dry-pressed Liberal government.

In his 1942 "Forgotten People" broadcast, Menzies spoke of the moral "middle class" as that constituency "ground between the upper and nether millstones of the false class war". Some 60 years later this constituency is again being *ground* – but by a different war – a war of self-righteous privilege between the Labor leaning "culturalists" and the Liberal voting 'materialists'. That is why ultra-culturalist Farrelly is comfortable censuring the material taste of both "the good burghers of Balmoral *and* Kellyville who [apparently] can no longer see any horizon, but only into each others' marbled, gold plated ensuites".²⁰ The current global economic malaise will no doubt arrest the lifestyles war for a time.

Nevertheless, the disparaging of the aspirationalists by both columns in this war continues the well worn strategy of reducing the vibrancy, creativity and complexity of western Sydney down to the monotonous and mundane. This has ramifications for the residents of western Sydney. It affects the amount and type of infrastructure and services both governments and corporations are willing to invest in the region, restricting residents' opportunities and potential in the process. It is time for the condescending attitude to the lifestyles and values of the people of western Sydney to be replaced with a more generous, enlightened understanding of the disparate communities within the region. Now that would be a *moral* victory indeed!

Endnotes

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John E Rielly

Dr John E Rielly served for three decades as President of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations and was a consultant to the National Security Council in the White House in 1979-80. He is currently an Adjunct Professor of Political Science at Northwestern University, USA and a Visiting Professor in the Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies at the University of California, San Diego. In an address to The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 16 December 2008, John Rielly examined President Obama's approach to US foreign policy and questioned whether his new administration would pursue a new agenda.

THE FOREIGN POLICY

OF THE NEXT AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION

JOHN RIELLY

It is a pleasure to join you here and I wish to thank Gerard Henderson for the invitation. Under the leadership of Gerard and Anne Henderson, The Sydney Institute has earned a world class reputation. I am honoured to speak on its platform.

I will begin with a brief summary of the policies enunciated by Senator Obama, then comment on the policy orientation of recently appointed top officials, and end with my own evaluation. As announced, my topic today is the foreign policy of the next American Administration. Until several weeks ago I would have said the Obama administration. Today I am tempted to say the Obama-Clinton administration. Senator Obama began his campaign for the presidency by highlighting his opposition to the American military intervention in Iraq. Both in the primary campaign for the nomination and during the November election, he stressed his differences with both Senator Clinton and Senator McCain. He went on to proclaim, “I don’t want to just end the war, but I want to end the mindset that got us into the war in the first place.”

It was Obama’s early and consistent opposition to the war that catapulted his presidential candidacy forward and was decisive in his defeat of Senator Clinton in the Democratic nomination contest. When President Bush proposed in late 2006 to add 30,000 American combat troops in a “surge” which hopefully would reverse a rapidly weakening military position in Iraq, Obama was firmly opposed. Instead, drawing on the bipartisan Iraq Study Group report in January 2007, Obama proposed a strict 16 month deadline for withdrawing US combat troops by the end of March 2008, a position denounced by both President Bush and Senator McCain. By the time Senator Obama visited Iraq in mid-July 2008, it had become clear that the American troop reinforcements had helped reduce sectarian violence and greatly improved both the military and political situation. To Obama’s delight and the chagrin of Bush officials, Iraqi Prime Minister Al Maliki announced to the world that Obama’s timetable

was the right one and the more quickly the US forces withdrew from Iraq the better. One result is that Obama, who opposed the war all along and predicted its failure, appears to be benefiting from the war's vast improvement. Thus his withdrawal timetable today looks less risky than before. And lately he has hinted at greater flexibility, paying more attention to conditions on the ground.

Senator Obama has continued to insist that the main battle against terrorism lies in Afghanistan, not Iraq, and therefore more US troops should be shifted from Iraq to Afghanistan. He has further argued that the US has been too timid in pressing the Pakistan government to pursue Al Qaeda more aggressively. If necessary, US forces should not hesitate to pursue Al Qaeda suspects inside Pakistan. He has stated that our goal is to build a democratic Afghanistan. Thus Obama appears to favour even deeper involvement in Afghanistan than President Bush.

While acknowledging that US military forces might have to be increased, Obama has emphasised the importance of diplomacy and a lesser reliance on military force. An important reason why Robert Gates was reappointed as Secretary of Defense was his support for greater reliance on diplomacy and development, calling for a greater allocation of resources to the State Department and the Agency for International Development, if necessary reallocating funds from the Defense Department. Obama has indicated a willingness to negotiate with top leaders of adversary states, including Iran, Cuba and North Korea.

His views on Iran are conflicting. While willing to negotiate with Iran's leaders, Obama has continued to insist that Iran not be allowed to acquire a nuclear capability, and if diplomacy is not capable of preventing that, "all options are on the table". At the same time he has reappointed as the Secretary of Defense Robert Gates who is widely recognised as the principal opponent in the Bush Administration of military action against Iran.

In criticising the Bush government's unilateral decisions, Obama has placed a high priority on multilateral action and on restoring good relations with allies. One of the biggest challenges for the next President, he has argued, is restoring the reputation of the US which has come to be regarded as an illegitimate pariah nation by much of the world. He has identified global warming as one of the most important global issues and sharply distinguished his position on climate change from Bush, advocating a market based cap-and-trade system to reduce carbon emissions world wide. On trade, he has advocated revising the NAFTA Agreement and insisted on higher environment standards. His pronouncements during the campaign indicate that he is considerably less committed to free trade than either Presidents Bush or Clinton. Whereas Bill Clinton championed

globalisation, both Senators Hilary Clinton and Obama sharply criticised it during the campaign.

On NATO expansion Obama has been less aggressive than Bush and more passive in his support for Georgia's current leader. Nevertheless, in order to avoid appearing "soft" on Russia during the campaign, he has supported future NATO membership for Georgia. Obama is more inclined than President Bush to support purely humanitarian interventions. Strongly influenced by advisors like Anthony Lake, Susan Rice and Samantha Power, Obama has supported a stronger US intervention in the Dafur crisis in the Sudan.

In evaluating the positions of Senator Obama and President Bush on foreign policy issues, it is clear that on many, they see the world differently. Both focus heavily on the threat of terrorism. But Bush sees Jihadist warriors imbued with Islamic extremism as the pre-eminent threat to the US. Obama speaks of the more specific threat of Al Qaeda, and while acknowledging the importance of Islamic extremism, concludes that it is a far less dangerous threat than the US faced for four decades when American cities faced the threat of destruction by Soviet nuclear weapons.

Obama appears to be comfortable about the arrival of a multipolar world in which countries like China, Russia, Brazil and India play a more powerful role. On China he seems likely to pursue the policy of co-operation and engagement which the Bush Administration ended up following. He has warned against the danger of overestimating threats to the security of the US, as best exemplified by our invasion of Iraq. He is more willing to engage the leadership of non-democratic nations hostile to the US, like Russia, China and Iran. While wary of the expansionist tendencies of a resurgent Russia, he supports efforts to integrate Russia as well as China into the world economy, and rejected Senator McCain's proposal to expel Russia from the G-8.

Like President Bush, Obama has pledged to defend the security of Israel. Bush originally warned Obama about endangering Israel by his willingness to negotiate with Iranian President Ahmandinijhad. While the Bush administration in its first term refused to negotiate with Iran, attacking it as part of the "Axis of evil" and publicly advocating "regime change", it changed during the second term on the question of negotiation. It then joined the Europeans in multilateral negotiations and this summer sent an Undersecretary of State to participate in direct negotiations. Thus Bush has moved closer to Obama's position on Iran than the reverse. Negotiating with North Korea is another area where Bush and Obama have moved closer together.

One of the sharpest differences related to the Iraq war remains over the pace of withdrawal of American troops. President Bush would continue to give General Petraeus wide latitude in setting force

levels in Iraq, rejecting any fixed deadlines. Obama's deadline for withdrawing American combat brigades requires a timetable that is twice as fast as that contained in the American Iraqi accord reached several weeks ago which stipulates that all troops will be withdrawn by 2011. Although Senator Obama has not repudiated his timetable, I have the impression that he will be sensitive to circumstances on the ground in Iraq. In the end the differences on this issue may not turn out to be as great as previously foreseen.

Another area where the Bush government and Obama disagree is on the maintenance of many of the 63 American military bases in Iraq for an extended period. The Bush Pentagon is strongly in favor; Obama has pledged to remove them within the withdrawal period he has stipulated. He has recognised that the presence of an American airbase inside Arabia became a magnet for anti-American groups, whether Islamic or nationalist in orientation. The Maliki government has indicated its strong opposition to permanent bases.

Obama's most dubious policy relates to American policy in Afghanistan. Afghanistan could become the quagmire for Obama that Iraq has become for Bush. Obama has advocated devoting more troops and more economic resources to fight the US/NATO war against a Taliban which he believes continues to shelter Al Qaeda terrorists. There are, however, a number of Talibans. For example, one Taliban group is a politico-religious movement composed of members of the main Afghan ethnic group, the Pathans, whose principal desire is to take back control of their country from the corrupt government which the US has installed in it. While some Taliban groups are linked with Al Qaeda, others are not and are considered to be open to negotiating with NATO forces. Even the Bush Administration in its waning months has come to recognise this. General David Petraeus, Commander of the Middle East/South Asia theatre, has recently sanctioned negotiations with selected Taliban leaders. More and more Afghans have come to the conclusion that a government installed by a foreign power – or maintained in power by foreigners, cannot acquire legitimacy. The Karzai Government is widely perceived as having forfeited its legitimacy.

The new American government will undoubtedly continue the effort to find and capture Osama Bin Laden and al-Qaeda. But they are mobile and can quickly move to another country. It is increasingly unclear whether fighting a war which is destroying much of Afghanistan, steadily eroding the stability of Pakistan, as well as killing American and other NATO soldiers will reduce the threat of terrorism. Deepening our involvement in Afghanistan is likely to increase the tension between American and Pakistani armies on the frontier and strengthen fundamentalist Islamic forces because of resentment of civilian casualties caused by American attacks inside

Pakistan. In October 2008, a leaked diplomatic cable from the British Ambassador in Kabul predicted that the US and NATO will lose the war against the Taliban, a view echoed by the British military commander there. We are seeing once again an example of where the more foreign troops are sent into a country like Afghanistan or Pakistan, the more nationalist outrage is intensified and the more support there is for the Taliban efforts to expel the foreigners.

In a wide-ranging interview in early December, General James Jones, the newly appointed National Security Adviser, stated that sending more troops to Afghanistan will have little effect unless progress is made in strengthening the legitimacy of both the central and regional governments in the country. Nor will the increase in troops make a difference unless they change their role and their tactics. Instead of carrying out aggressive operations which lead to massive civilian casualties, they need to retreat to a training and advisory role. And they need to learn to respect the Pashtun tradition in which honour is the key.

An even greater illusion, shared by both Obama and Bush, is that the US can install democratic political and societal institutions in Afghanistan. The most radical aspect of the Bush foreign policy was its stated intention not only to create a democratic Iraq but to transform the whole Middle East into democracies. In his 2006 State of the Union Message, an allegedly conservative President Bush stated that our ultimate goal is “eliminating tyranny in our world”. This contradicts directly the long held conservative critique of social engineering – how social planners could never control behaviour or deal with unanticipated consequences. If the US cannot eliminate poverty in the US, cannot guarantee a stable financial system, or cannot raise student test scores in Washington DC, how does it expect to bring democracy to a part of the world that has never known it and is increasingly anti-American as well? Is democracy theoretically possible in a country like Afghanistan? Certainly. But possibility is not a likelihood. Culture may not be destiny, but culture plays an important role in making possible certain kinds of institutions. The challenge of creating democracy in Afghanistan makes Iraq look like Switzerland. President Obama would do well to focus most of his efforts and American resources to nation-building at home.

Another policy area where the new president should ignore campaign rhetoric and reverse policy is on the question of NATO membership for Georgia. When Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev agreed to a unified Germany that would remain in NATO, President George W Bush promised him that NATO would not expand into the Warsaw Pact territories. President Clinton initially promised Boris Yeltsin the same but later reversed policy on NATO expansion. In the decade after the Soviet Union disappeared in 1991, Russia became

a failed state. The US treated it as a failed state, like it might treat Nicaragua. NATO expanded eastward to include Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. The George W Bush administration installed radars in Poland and the Czech Republic, and lobbied hard in December 2007 to place Georgia and the Ukraine on a fast track to membership in NATO. All of these were considered provocative by a recovered Russia now led by a Putin Government determined to use its energy based economic power to resist encroachment on its “near abroad”. Russian President Medveyev has since announced Russia’s intention to station missiles in Kaliningrad. One of the first decisions that new American government should take is to cancel any plans to place radars in Poland the Czech Republic.

After Georgian President Saakashvili sought to reassert Georgian control over the disputed territory of South Ossetia and saw his military forces crushed by Russian forces, his supporters in NATO countries confined their response to diplomatic protests. Since Article V of the NATO Treaty requires that all members automatically respond to any military incursion on the territory of another member, most leading members of NATO have indicated they are not prepared to offer military guarantees to Georgia which they have no intention and no reasonable possibility of honoring. The bottom line is that they are not prepared to go to war with Russia over Georgia. For the foreseeable future, NATO membership for Georgia is dead. Rather than encourage further illusions by Georgian leaders, the new American administration should encourage Georgia to develop a special arrangement with the European Union that would give them economic advantages and involvement in an important multilateral framework. Such an arrangement would not appear threatening to Russia. As Canada and Mexico have long recognised, geography is destiny. Georgia must acknowledge the same and learn to get along with Russia.

Although Senator Obama and President Bush have sharply disagreed on many issues, Obama has indicated support for what Bush has called a “freedom agenda”. Obama has stated that, “America’s larger purpose in the world is to promote the spread of freedom”. He added “we can hold true to our values and in doing so advance those values abroad”. Hopefully in pursuing that freedom agenda, Obama will rely less on military force and avoid the excesses of American’s unilateral role of the past decade.

The policies which will actually be followed in office will be determined in part by the orientation of the top officials in the new government. After eight years of neo-Wilsonian triumphalism, many had hoped for a return to the realism demonstrated by such American leaders as James Baker, Brent Scowcroft and George H W Bush, as well as President Harry S Truman and Dean Acheson in an earlier period. Of those appointed so far, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates

and National Security Advisor General James Jones appear to reflect the realist tradition. The appointment of Senator Hilary Clinton as Secretary of State and Susan Rice as Ambassador to the United Nations signals a return to giving priority to democracy promotion, human rights protection and humanitarian intervention. A recent article in the *New York Times*, based on unnamed sources in the Obama circle, indicated that nation-building will be high priority, even if the military role would be reduced.

But America's role in the world in the coming decade will be determined as much by its economic performance as by its military and diplomatic prowess. Here the key actors in the new administration, Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner, Chairman of the White House Economic Policy Council Larry Summers, and Chairman of the Financial Crisis Advisory Board Paul Volcker are all champions of government intervention in the economy at home and of free trade and globalisation abroad. All are likely to strongly resist the protectionist stance taken by both Senators Obama and Clinton during the campaign. Here in Australia, where trade issues are of critical importance, you can experience some relief that these three champions of open markets and globalisation will occupy these key positions.

As the new president focuses on the American role in the twenty-first century, hopefully he will recognise that in many societies today, political legitimacy is a function of performance not process. China does not have a democratic government, but its government is viewed as legitimate by 90 per cent of the population. Hopefully, Obama will understand that the notion of a single sustainable model for national success – the American model – does not resonate with a majority of people on the planet.

In the multipolar world that it will inherit in the twenty-first century, will the new American government re-examine how and why the limited, specific and ultimately successful postwar American policy of “patient but firm and vigilant containment of Soviet expansionist tendencies ... and pressure against the free institutions of the Western world” (as formulated by George Kennan at the time) has over a period of six decades turned into a vast project for “ending tyranny in our world”? As American columnist William Pfaff has asked, will the new administration confirm or alternatively re-examine the claim that the US possesses an exceptional status among nations that confers upon it special responsibilities, and exceptional privileges in meeting those responsibilities. It is of course almost a heresy to suggest the US does not have a unique moral status and role to play in the affairs of the contemporary world. However, even Francis Fukuyama, a recovering neo conservative and Bush supporter, has acknowledged in a recent book that American economic and political

policies rest on an unearned claim to privilege, that the American “belief in American exceptionalism is one that most non-Americans simply find not credible”. He further concludes that this claim is not tenable since it “proposes an extremely high-level of competence: which the country does not demonstrate”.

Our experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, one might think, may inspire a degree of caution if not an aversion to future efforts to apply the American model to make the world safe for democracy. One might think that not only this most recent experience in state building, but the experience in Vietnam, would have taught us the lesson that rarely can the US successfully state build for anyone else. In diplomatic style, the Obama administration will represent change. On issues like torture, rule of law, multilateral diplomacy and the role of the United Nations, profound change will be evident. On many issues of policy, including terrorism, the Middle East China and India, continuity is likely to prevail.

In the coming decades, the US will continue to be a pre-eminent power, if not always the predominant power. While American leadership in the world will continue to be needed for decades, the recent financial crisis should remind President Obama that in this “Post American World”, as Fareed Zakaria has labelled it, American hegemony is over, and the twenty-first century will not be an “American Century”.

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