



Photo - David Karonidis

Quentin Bryce

Quentin Bryce retired from her position as Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner in 1993 and now runs the National Childcare Accreditation Council. As a human rights lawyer Quentin Bryce has a long association with women's and children's issues. Quentin Bryce spoke for The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 7 June 1994.

LIFE AFTER SEX

DISCRIMINATION

Quentin Bryce

Life after sex discrimination! It's especially nice for me to see my mentor, role model, source of inspiration, courage and support, Susan Ryan sitting right there in front of me. Anne gave me this title and I was attracted to it by its free wheeling sound. I'm grateful to her because it's caused me to pause and reflect a little, something we have less and less time to do living with what Hugh Mackay has identified as "The Last Straw Syndrome", rushing from one thing to the next.

Last week a "head hunter" was having a look at my CV. It was one of those discussions where there was no real meeting of the minds. He remarked in a rather pejorative way, "A rather unusual career pattern." Slightly defensively I gabbled on about it being pretty typical for a middle aged Australian woman juggling career aspirations and family responsibilities, a patchwork of compromises, good fortune and hard work.

But my career has been atypical in many ways. The best thing about it looking back is that I have always worked in areas to which I have a strong personal, social and political commitment. And it has had a pattern to it, when I look at it, if not a pathway. A pattern of decades and half decades with some very difficult transitions from time to time.

My close association with the Sex Discrimination Act began some years ago well before my appointment as Sex Discrimination Commissioner. It was through the work that Susan Ryan, then Senator Ryan, was doing on what was called the "Ryan Bill" on the Opposition benches.

In 1984 the Federal government moved to open the Women's Information Service in Queensland which was part of the Office of the Status of Women in the Prime Minister's Department. That step was taken in recognition of the fact that there were no programs and policies for women at a State level in Queensland at all. Women weren't getting access to the information about Commonwealth programs and policies to which they were entitled and wanted.

I moved through the first major transition in my career. It meant

leaving university life after a decade or so and spending some time in private enterprise, getting a magazine off the ground – *Portfolio*. I took up the position of Director of the Women's Information Service with a small team of women. And what a wonderful time we had. Our role was to establish the service and to deliver information to Queensland women on Commonwealth programs and policies. The most important of those at that time was the Sex Discrimination Bill (as it then was), the Affirmative Action Bill and of course the international instrument which underpinned both of those – the United Nations Convention to Eliminate all Forms of Discrimination against Women (Cedaw).

They were extremely controversial measures at that time particularly in Queensland. Taking information to Queenslanders meant being involved in some amazing gatherings, wild occasions. Hundreds of people came to meetings in places like Longreach which was where I grew up. People drove for miles and miles to come and hear the good news and the amazing claims that were made at that time, just ten years ago, about what these proposed reforms would mean. There seemed to be a great focus on nuns and babies. That the legislation was going to rip babies from their mothers' breasts and force nuns out of convents. It was referred to as the Ryan juggernaut and in various derogatory and overtly sexist language.

I make those points because now, ten years later, behaviour and attitudes have changed and how they have changed! But what a lot of convincing we had to do to get most people, very many people, to even have an open mind and to find out what these policies were actually about. Everybody had a view and everybody had something to say. What they had talked about was what was appropriate for women and how they should live their lives. What was their proper role in Australian society? These debates went on at every level, particularly in the churches.

One of the high points of my career was being asked by my local priest to give, what I describe as a sermon, in my own church – in St Lucia in Brisbane. The priest was totally nonplussed by the extraordinary misinformation campaign all against The Cedaw Convention. The ABC came along to televise my "sermon" and I don't think there's ever been so many people in that church before or since. It put my status up in the neighbourhood no end; they were a little bit more polite about feminists after that.

I remember very well the first complaints that were brought under the Sex Discrimination Act. Queensland women, who'd had no access to anti-discrimination remedies, had been waiting for Commonwealth legislation under which they could seek redress.

The very first to use the legislation were some golfing women who'd been treated very badly by the men at their golf club. They could actually play golf at the weekends, after dark and that was about

all. For women who were in the work force it was an overt form of sex discrimination. The Keperra Golf Club women were ready the day the Act was proclaimed on 1 August 1984, with their complaint beautifully framed. It went to a public hearing. Just that step by that group of women (who could certainly never be described the way I have been on many occasions as a hairy legged Stalinist, etc, etc) was responsible for changing the practices in golf clubs and for bringing about equality of opportunity for women golfers to enjoy their sport and participate in competitions.

Other landmark decisions from my home state that I remember well concerned sexual harassment. I look back and think about the titillation of the media by those complaints. Now it's widely recognised in this country that sexual harassment is a human rights issue, that it is a form of sex discrimination, that it is a debilitating, humiliating, embarrassing experience and that it's not to be tolerated.

The first Sex Discrimination Commissioner, my predecessor Pamela O'Neil, had the particular purpose of keeping the Sex Discrimination Act out of the courts and of seeing that in those early phases it was given the opportunity to work away quietly in order to become established. She was very successful in this purpose. She skilfully conciliated many complaints. That's where the strength of the Act lies, that it takes a conciliation approach to complaint handling.

In terms of keeping out of the courts I've been less successful indeed. I've been there myself. Perhaps the contribution that I was able to make in the five years I was in office was to make the legislation better known and better understood, working towards having the Act more widely accepted in the community and responding to the challenge of getting information about the legislation, about what it could do, about what it stood for, to those who were most affected by discrimination, to the most disadvantaged in our community.

In those five years at the Commission we handled 3000 complaints and two major inquiries – one into sex discrimination in over award payments and another reviewing the permanent exemptions in the Act.

Another highlight was the Shout Campaign – the sexual harassment campaign addressed to young women. I know it is still empowering young women, assisting them to stand up and speak out about their rights when they are being affected by that debilitating form of sex discrimination.

However, the most significant contribution that the legislation has made, is making and will continue to make (as well as handling the complaints, responding to incidents of sex discrimination, from men and women on a one by one basis but also on a group basis) is in its powerful symbolic role. We have, in Australia, a statement that says that it's unlawful to treat people unfairly because of their sex, their

marital status or their pregnancy. When we're measuring the number of complaints and trying to analyse the effect of the legislation, to evaluate it, it's not about head counting or numbers. I believe that we have just touched the tip of the iceberg in terms of the incidence of sex discrimination. For the tens of thousands of people who are treated unfairly because of their sex, who don't choose to seek a remedy because it is very difficult to do that, there is, across this country a law that says it's not on. There is a law that tells you that you have a right to a legal remedy.

The Act stands as a symbol, as a source of courage and support when you are being treated unfairly. Some don't even want to talk about discrimination when it affects them. It takes time often to admit to yourself what is really happening. It is in this symbolic role that the Act's strength and power lies. We cannot underestimate the role that it's played in changing behaviour and attitudes. It's a source of endless debate whenever we're looking at any social legislative measures particularly in human rights areas – what is the proper role for the law? Should the law lead or follow public opinion? But ten years after the introduction of this great reform, we can agree that there is significant change in behaviour and, I believe, in attitudes as well.

I remember very well my last day as Sex Discrimination Commissioner writing a major decision on a matter I'd sat on as a hearing commissioner in the race discrimination area. I had a difficult time leaving it all behind in a way. I feel a little self-conscious talking about my work there, now that there is a new incumbent – Sue Walpole. It's her responsibility, her role and her challenge now and it's for her to be the spokesperson on the Act. But some of those difficulties of leaving my colleagues and the challenges there, were attended by another great milestone in my life, turning 50 at a time I was asking what's next in my career? As I got on with packing my bags and papers I thought of how every time I left a job I'd go through those same processes. I've never unpacked any of the boxes. Occasionally, in the cellar in my house, a leaf will drop out of one of them. I noticed one of these recently from my days on the National Women's Advisory Council. I looked at it and I thought how brave and bold we used to be, and was reminded that I am older and hopefully wiser.

After that I took some space (the first time in my working life) for full-time family activity and embarked on the great managerial exercise of organising our daughter's wedding. I found it fascinating to see this contemporary girl wanting to have a very traditional celebration of a very special family occasion. It caused me to reflect a little on the differences and similarities between our aspirations and hopes with a generation between us.

In many ways I suspect they are the same; wanting it all, career, family, participation in social, economic, cultural and political life,

wanting to have it all and assuming she could do it all. But what a different world she's embarking on with all these aspirations. For me there was a marriage bar. Married women had to resign. There were none of the things like maternity leave and equal pay. When I started work the person beside me was earning a third more than I was because he was a different sex.

But perhaps the differences between the opportunities and the hopes of my daughter and me are not as extraordinary as they were between those of my mother and me. Women are certainly doing things my mother would never have imagined, things that many people still have never imagined. I remember my very last aeroplane flight while I was still Sex Discrimination Commissioner. I was sitting in the front seat of the plane. The man next to me embarked on the usual conversation and told me he never discriminated against anybody. Then he assured me that he would never travel in an aeroplane with a woman pilot. Well, God be praised! We were sitting there, in the front seat, and in *she* came and entered the cockpit right in front of us. He didn't get off the plane. But he didn't say anything else about women's roles or sex discrimination.

Very often we spend time measuring the changes and improvements in the status of women by looking at those outstanding achievements of women pioneers, the first pilot... We must celebrate them, women who have gone into areas where once they were never found. I hope that my daughter and other feminist colleagues, will spend more time focusing on the status of women at the opposite end, the women at the bottom, the poorest people. That's the real measure of the status of women at an international and a national level – how has the status of the poorest person been increased?

Some of the most important news I've heard in the last few days was about the success of programs and policies that have been targeted to single mothers and to women living in poverty. The poorest people in this country, as they are in every country, are women on their own bringing up the next generation. Research released at a recent national work and family conference from a Dr Harding, reveals that the number of women living in poverty below the poverty level has dropped dramatically – a very significant landmark.

Recovering from the wedding, I spent some time in South Africa. That was a little over a year ago. It was an extraordinary experience having the opportunity to be involved with women from a number of countries around the world who were invited to South Africa to talk to women there about the development of strategies for their equal participation in the new South Africa. I had the great privilege of meeting Nelson Mandela. He lived up to all the expectations that one might have had about him as a human rights activist. As one always does at international meetings I was struck by how strong the bonds are

amongst women around the world. No matter what our experiences are politically, socially or economically, women can quickly, after discussion and debate and sharing ideas, get down to the nitty gritty of planning and learning from each other's experiences.

In July last year I took up my present position as Chair and Chief Executive of the National Child Care Accreditation Council. It was a position I took up with great gusto. I couldn't think of anything more important than working towards improving the quality of care for children in long day care centres in Australia. It's a plain human rights issue to me. It's an issue that speaks about ensuring that children have access to the very best experiences in child care. For me it was going back to where I had started, in many ways, as a children's rights activist. I've never been able to resist being an advocate for children. I was a little put off by the warnings that I'd had about this job.

I knew some of the background of the quality improvement and accreditation system because I've always been interested in child care. It's an essential ingredient to equality of opportunity. You can't participate in the community if you don't have access to child care. I'd followed the developments - the growth in the number of government funded places, the extension of funding to the private sector, the work of the early childhood professionals from around the world and in this country - in increasing our awareness and understanding of how crucial the first five years are. We learn more in that time than in any other five year period of our lives. These factors, plus the hours that more and more children are spending in long day care, have thrown the issue of the quality of care into sharp focus. It has been estimated that many children are spending nearly as much time in long day care as they spend in the whole of their primary and secondary schooling. If you add up the hours it's estimated that more and more children are spending about 12,500 hours in long day care.

The Commonwealth Government announced its intention to establish an accreditation system for long day care when it extended child care assistance (fee relief as it's generally known) to the private sector. It costs \$600 million. The usual processes pertained. The Crawford Committee was set up, chaired by Mary Crawford, with representatives of the child care industry. Its brief was to look at what sort of accreditation system Australia should have. That was followed by the interim National Accreditation Council, headed by Jane Singleton, who carried out an extraordinary range of consultations with the industry, with parents, with people in the private and the public sector and with unions, academics and researchers. They were asked what sort of accreditation system they wanted. The result of those processes was the drafting of a handbook which is the centre piece of the system. It's a handbook of 52 principles setting out indicators and standards for quality care. The process involved reflects a quality

assurance system with which many of you would be familiar in other businesses, industry and professions. Out of that process came the establishment of the National Child Care Accreditation Council which I chair. I am also its Chief Executive Officer.

As I said, I took up this job with much enthusiasm. I certainly had to find out about a few of the dragons I'd been warned about. I set about establishing the Council, finding accommodation, staff... It's a great and exciting challenge to be given the opportunity to set up a new national program in an area to which I have a strong personal, professional and political commitment.

Our first job was to edit the handbook and to go about the usual things attached to a task like this of an information campaign, a community awareness campaign. I had no idea what was going to be the response to this handbook. I was involved once again in an extraordinary sort of campaign that reminded me of some others I'd been involved in in times past. It was a loony tunes thing where, because the handbook wasn't available, the old forces of darkness who were small in number but very noisy, made some amazing claims about banning Santa and banning Christmas carols - all the sorts of things that were supposed to be set out in the handbook. It was a last ditch effort by some people who are opposed to a quality improvement and an accreditation system for child care. It was very stressful in the office of course. It's always instructive to remember that children's rights campaigns have been just as controversial as campaigns for equality of opportunity and equal status for women.

Twenty years ago we were trying to open up hospital visiting hours so that parents could be involved in health programs and policies for their children. You would remember when parents could only visit their children for an hour on a Sunday afternoon, the idea being that children were upset when their parents left so it was best if parents didn't come at all. Taking on matrons, health ministers and nurses with a group of other parents to open up hospital practices and procedures and to have parents and professionals working together when children were ill and they desperately need their parents, was memorable indeed.

I remember being in a hospital with my son when he was ill. The only way I could get information in those days was to bend over the great high counter when there was nobody around to see what they had written down. My son's progress report had "this woman is a trouble maker" written all over it. If only they had known I was on my very best behaviour. Of course these days parents are involved every day in hospital decisions and they also participate in the care of their children in hospital.

The campaign to get seat belts for children was seen by some as an outrageous idea and an incursion on people's civil liberties. The

reaction was how dare you tell us what to do with our children in motor cars and so on.

I'm pleased to be able to say that the accreditation system is really moving along very well now. The handbook came out; it went through the Senate. I got to know the Greens and the Democrats extremely well. The voting was close which I find extraordinary when what we are talking about is good quality care for Australia's children.

The good news is that the registration system opened on 1 January 1994. Already over 75 per cent of Australia's long day care centres have registered with the system. It's a victory that belongs to the centres themselves. The system is not about policing or inspecting. That's not our role at all. Centres carry out their own assessment of their quality, their standards. They measure what they're doing themselves. There's an important role for parents in this system, which is going to be important for parents and for the industry encouraging them to be involved and to become better informed about quality care issues. I hope that the system will play a constructive role in bringing the industry together, in getting rid of the divisions and the hostilities which took me by surprise even though I had been warned.

The part of my job that I enjoy of course is visiting child care centres. There's 3000 of them in Australia and I've been to many. What I've learnt is that every one of them is unique. They respond to the needs of their families and their communities in the same way that my children's long day care centre was doing 25 years ago.

Just a little while ago I went to visit my children's centre in our neighbourhood and marvelled to see the same woman who was there for my baby Tom Bryce (now aged 20) at the front door greeting the families. I was interested to see that there was another visitor, a man from Japan who'd lived in Brisbane. His children had asked him to take some photos of the centre as it was a part of their lives they remembered with affection.

This caused me to reflect on how important the role of the centre is in the life of a family. I have the warmest memories of my experiences as a mother, of the advice, support and the caring that those women professionals showed to me and to my husband in developing and nurturing our family. We had five under seven at one stage. We enjoyed a partnership between parents and professionals that was indeed a constructive one. In the Year of the Family we should celebrate such partnerships because they are vitally important for more and more Australian families.

The work that is done by people in long day care has been too long unrecognised. People don't know what goes on in long day care centres. Everyone has something to say about childcare but few really understand that it's about a lot more than minding children. It's about planning a program, it's about working to see there's a developmentally

appropriate program that will ensure that the individual needs of each child are met, that each child has every opportunity to reach her potential. A good program recognises that each child is unique. It's very much a human rights issue that lies at the heart of it all.

So I hope, while I'm in this job, that I can make better known in the community the contribution that these remarkable childcare professionals make to Australia's future. I certainly get a lot of advice from the children. They're just as instructive as the man on the aeroplane. A three-year-old stared up at me recently. I could feel her eyes boring into me as I was talking to the director. And as soon as I stopped she looked at me and said, "You wear too much make-up." Another asked me, "Where are your babies?" And I said, "They're all grown up." And she said, "But who's minding them?" I said, "Their father." She looked at me with an exasperated sigh. I knew that she was thinking - doesn't she know anything about childcare?

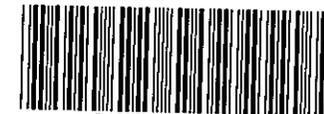
So I'm back to where I started. Being an advocate for children and their families and still juggling, as all of us do, work and family responsibilities. I have to say that I find the daughter track much harder than the mummy track. I find now, in middle life, when I thought I'd be able to make up for many of the compromises and the lost opportunities, while I was on the mummy track, that there's a whole new set of anxieties, stresses and being pulled in many directions at once. They can't be attended to and met the way my children's needs could be. That's the challenge on one side of my middle age and life after sex discrimination. But the issue of elder care is another story.



Photo - David Karandis

Milton Osborne

Sihanouk: Prince of Light, Prince of Darkness (Allen & Unwin 1994) by Milton Osborne is the first biography of Prince Norodom Sihanouk published in English. Posted to the Australian Embassy in Phnom Penh in 1959, Milton Osborne developed an interest in Cambodia and kept detailed journals of his many visits there after he left the embassy. In an address to The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 14 June 1994, Milton Osborne discussed his book and the stories of Cambodia's colourful leader.



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SIHANOUK:

PRINCE OF LIGHT, PRINCE OF DARKNESS

Milton Osborne

Thirty-five years ago, still not 23 years of age and more than a little bemused at being there, I stepped off the plane at Phnom Penh's Pochentong airport on 6 April 1959. I was taking up the very junior appointment of Third Secretary in the Australian Legation - the mission had yet to be raised to the status of an embassy. It was a legation that had a total Australian-based staff of three. So, in a completely unplanned fashion, I began an association with Cambodia that has lasted to the present day. And, to use a word for once quite justifiably, my association with Cambodia has inevitably carried with it a fascination with the country's long-time ruler, prince, and once more king, Norodom Sihanouk.

Drama and exoticism

In the first few weeks after my arrival, I rapidly gained a sense of the drama that alternated with the exotic bordering on farce that was so much a part of Cambodia while Sihanouk dominated his country's politics. Phnom Penh was still abuzz with talk of the failed coup that had been mounted less than six weeks earlier by Dap Chhuon, a man who had once been one of Sihanouk's closest associates and who had been "shot while attempting to escape" in late February 1959. The same people, both Cambodians and foreigners, whose gossip dwelt lovingly on the facts and fictions of this affair made up the assembly that came together to wish "Happy New Year" to Sihanouk's father, King Suramarit, in the middle of April, dressed in all manner of national and official outfits. For me this involved donning my ambassador's tails - heavy weight garments tailored for him in Oxford decades before and almost impossibly hot to wear in 40 degree heat.

In 1959, Sihanouk was ubiquitous, possessed of amazing energy and apparently invulnerable politically, both at home and in the international sphere. It was all very striking for a young Australian whose knowledge of Southeast Asia was minimal and whose only overseas experience as an adult had been to spend three months in

Papua New Guinea – Phnom Penh was very different to Port Moresby, Lae and Rabaul. Despite Phnom Penh's isolation from Australia – the "bag" seldom reached us from Canberra in less than three weeks – Sihanouk's Cambodia seemed more closely involved with international affairs than Canberra had ever been during the year I had spent there as a foreign service trainee. America's interest in Indochinese affairs was still limited by comparison with later years, but that country's large embassy and its even larger aid and military missions testified to an involvement in Southeast Asia that I at first found surprising. That there should have been such a large French presence in Phnom Penh was less surprising, even to someone with as limited a knowledge of Cambodian history as my own. France had been the colonial power in Indochina and its official and private presence seemed to flow naturally from that fact.

Given Cambodia's geographical size and its population of around six million, the Asian members of Phnom Penh's diplomatic corps seemed disproportionately large in numbers. Among them the Indians and the Indonesians showed no reluctance to indicate a degree of disdain for Cambodia and what they regarded as its leader's pretensions. Yet this did not prevent – indeed perhaps encouraged – President Sukarno's visiting the kingdom in 1959, so adding to the picture of Sihanouk's Cambodia possessing a special place among the newly independent countries of Southeast Asia. After all, three years before no less a figure than China's Zhou Enlai had come to Cambodia, and even before that India's Nehru had been similarly received with all the grace and charm that were hallmarks of Sihanouk's treatment of his foreign guests.

State visits were occasions for the lavish banquets and the performances by the royal ballet troupe that formed such a central part of the image of his country that Sihanouk sought to project. Although at this time there was no blanket ban on the admission of foreign journalists to the kingdom, it was widely understood that reporting of a negative kind was likely to result in the refusal of a visa. And, in truth, the less attractive features of Sihanouk's rule were far from immediately apparent, even to people such as myself who were living in Cambodia. Certainly, there were obvious social problems. Life expectancy was deplorably low by Western standards and in some areas of the country rural indebtedness was widely present. But these and other less than satisfactory features of life seemed no worse, and in some cases rather better, than what could be found in other developing countries.

Not a gentle land

It took time to discover that there was another side to Sihanouk and to Cambodia. There would be occasional references in conversation to the violence that had accompanied elections in 1955. The death of a left-wing

journalist, who was shot down outside his office in October 1959, was obliquely attributed to the government's security forces. And there were indications that treatment of minority hill people who failed to heed instructions to end their nomadic way of life was harsh and summary.

Slowly, too, I came to realise that Sihanouk's preeminence reflected his unwillingness to permit public dissent. To prosper in Cambodia while Sihanouk was in power required acceptance, in public at least, of his policies. To do otherwise, as a politician, was to endure the withdrawal of princely favour. As David Chandler, perhaps the most distinguished of academic historians of modern Cambodia has argued, Sihanouk's stifling of debate was a pernicious feature of his years in power. In its extreme form his refusal to tolerate dissent could lead to the clandestine killing or the execution of political opponents. Less dramatically, it meant that political life in Cambodia was essentially sterile. With Sihanouk's claiming the right to determine all policies, the dedicated left came to see revolution as their only hope while the right stayed within the system, finally mounting their coup to topple Sihanouk in 1970.

These events were still far distant when, after nearly two and a half years of being based in Phnom Penh, I left Cambodia in July 1961, partly aware of the faults of Sihanouk's rule but still poorly informed on many key points. I knew virtually nothing – and here I was in almost universal company so far as foreign observers were concerned – of the slow growth of the Cambodian communist movement, one of whose members was the future Pol Pot. I knew of isolated instances of violence, but I had no sense that this was a pervasive if episodic feature of Sihanouk's state.

A changed kingdom

I did not return to Cambodia for nearly five years, once again arriving in April at the height of the dry season's heat. In the interim, I had enjoyed the luxury of graduate study at Cornell, where access to the best Southeast Asian library collection in the United States meant that there was little of an academic nature that I had not been able to consult before once again living in Phnom Penh.

Much had changed in my five years of absence from Cambodia. In 1963 Sihanouk had introduced sweeping changes to the country's economic system and renounced Cambodia's previous acceptance of American aid. He both feared foreign domination of Cambodia's economy and was angered by the hostility of his neighbours in Thailand and South Vietnam. He was convinced that the United States conspired with those countries to support Cambodian rebels who were working to bring him down. In a piece of savage political theatre in 1964 he had paraded two of these rebels before a National Congress of his mass political movement, the Sangkum, in a cage. Later he had one

of them executed by firing squad and had the event filmed and screened in cinemas throughout the country.

In the same year he entered into a secret agreement with the Chinese government and the government in Hanoi (the DRVN) that allowed Chinese *matériel* to be shipped to the communist forces fighting in South Vietnam. He had become convinced that the communists would win in Vietnam and this was the first of a series of steps he took, as he saw it, to protect Cambodia's future. None of this was known with any precision by foreign observers, though by the time I reached Cambodia in 1966 the fact that large quantities of rice were being shipped to communist forces in South Vietnam was a matter of common knowledge.

In returning to this very different Cambodia from that I had known five years before, I resolved to repair an omission from my previous sojourn. Then, I had kept a journal on a fitful basis. Now, I determined to keep a detailed political diary in addition to pursuing my research into nineteenth century Cambodian history. I kept my resolution and found, as I suspect many other diarists have found, that writing up my journal each day became a compulsive task. In this undertaking I had two great advantages over the period I had spent in the Australian embassy. The first was the fact that I was much freer to meet and talk to those Cambodians who were ready to talk to me. The second was the fact that tongues had been loosened by a sense of malaise that was already gripping Phnom Penh, in part as a result of the economic decline and in part fuelled by concerns about the dramatically escalating war in Vietnam.

I found Cambodians and foreigners who were ready to talk with a degree of frankness that surprised and delighted me. Four of the most interesting of the Cambodians with whom I talked at length are no longer alive. One, Poc Deuskoma, who joined the Khmer Rouge and fought with them to their victory in 1975, subsequently disappeared, whether in a purge or through natural causes is unknown. Combining important knowledge of the past and valuable insights into the present were Prince Sisowath Entaravong and Father, later Bishop, Tep Im Sotha. Prince Entaravong was driven out of Phnom Penh in April 1975 and his fate is unknown. Bishop Tep Im was executed in the early days of May 1975 close to the northwestern city of Battambang. For the sceptical views of an incorrupt army officer, I was privileged to have access to Major Kim Kosal. He, too, was executed shortly after the Khmer Rouge entered Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975.

The picture I gained from these men, and others, was very different to that which Sihanouk, still with some success, offered to the outside world. How was it, then, that so little of the tensions that were growing within the kingdom was known to foreigners? There were several reasons. From 1963 onwards, Sihanouk had imposed a ban on

virtually all journalists. Equally, for a foreign student of Cambodia admission to the kingdom was difficult. Luck, a sympathetic Cambodian ambassador in Paris and the fact that my dissertation research was concerned with the nineteenth century led to my succeeding in gaining a visa. For journalists, only those who could be guaranteed to write approvingly of Cambodia and its ruler were welcome. The correctness of this approach was demonstrated to Sihanouk when, for reasons that are still not absolutely clear, he allowed a *Newsweek* reporter into the kingdom in 1965.

The reporter in question promptly repaid this favour by writing a story that, amongst other things, highlighted Phnom Penh gossip about Sihanouk's mother receiving income from brothels sited on land she owned. This mistake aside, Sihanouk had no shortage of admirers ready to write uncritically of his policies. French journalists, in particular, delighted in his bitter attacks on the United States for its role in Vietnam. He recruited them to staff his newspapers and magazines and to write the, literally, hundreds of letters that went out each year to an extraordinary range of correspondents who wrote admiringly to him. If French *plumitifs* were the most prominent of his employees and admirers, writers of other nationalities played their part. Han Suyin was in the van, so too was Wilfred Burchett.

To some extent, even the most sceptical of those who were observing Cambodia from the vantage point of Phnom Penh in 1966 found it hard not to feel a measure of sympathy for Sihanouk. While it was apparent that much of the picture he painted of Cambodia was an illusion, and while we knew that his security apparatus could strike with deadly force against his internal enemies, it was hard not to give him some benefit of some doubt. Whatever feelings one had about the Vietnam War, it seemed "unfair" that Cambodia's fate should be so crucially linked to what was happening in that conflict. Moreover, for all his many failings, it was clearly the case that his was the energy that had gained Cambodia's independence in 1953 and which ensured that schools were built and rural clinics opened in subsequent years. Without doubt he wanted the best for his compatriots. The problem was that he was convinced he alone knew what that best was.

What I, and others, only slowly began to recognise was the extent to which his compatriots on the right and the left were steadily moving to the point where they – as Cambodians – were no longer ready to accept his unfettered rule. In a diary entry for 26 May 1966, I recorded a judgment reached in discussion with another foreign observer that:

For a period of two years we concluded that odds of two to one against the survival would be fair – that is the likelihood is that despite dissatisfaction he will survive, but the odds have to be quoted as short. For a five year period, however, there seem to be so many factors running against his continuing in power ... that we felt the odds would have to be in terms of odds on, say five to four on.

of them executed by firing squad and had the event filmed and screened in cinemas throughout the country.

In the same year he entered into a secret agreement with the Chinese government and the government in Hanoi (the DRVN) that allowed Chinese *matériel* to be shipped to the communist forces fighting in South Vietnam. He had become convinced that the communists would win in Vietnam and this was the first of a series of steps he took, as he saw it, to protect Cambodia's future. None of this was known with any precision by foreign observers, though by the time I reached Cambodia in 1966 the fact that large quantities of rice were being shipped to communist forces in South Vietnam was a matter of common knowledge.

In returning to this very different Cambodia from that I had known five years before, I resolved to repair an omission from my previous sojourn. Then, I had kept a journal on a fitful basis. Now, I determined to keep a detailed political diary in addition to pursuing my research into nineteenth century Cambodian history. I kept my resolution and found, as I suspect many other diarists have found, that writing up my journal each day became a compulsive task. In this undertaking I had two great advantages over the period I had spent in the Australian embassy. The first was the fact that I was much freer to meet and talk to those Cambodians who were ready to talk to me. The second was the fact that tongues had been loosened by a sense of malaise that was already gripping Phnom Penh, in part as a result of the economic decline and in part fuelled by concerns about the dramatically escalating war in Vietnam.

I found Cambodians and foreigners who were ready to talk with a degree of frankness that surprised and delighted me. Four of the most interesting of the Cambodians with whom I talked at length are no longer alive. One, Poc Deuskoma, who joined the Khmer Rouge and fought with them to their victory in 1975, subsequently disappeared, whether in a purge or through natural causes is unknown. Combining important knowledge of the past and valuable insights into the present were Prince Sisowath Entaravong and Father, later Bishop, Tep Im Sotha. Prince Entaravong was driven out of Phnom Penh in April 1975 and his fate is unknown. Bishop Tep Im was executed in the early days of May 1975 close to the northwestern city of Battambang. For the sceptical views of an incorrupt army officer, I was privileged to have access to Major Kim Kosal. He, too, was executed shortly after the Khmer Rouge entered Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975.

The picture I gained from these men, and others, was very different to that which Sihanouk, still with some success, offered to the outside world. How was it, then, that so little of the tensions that were growing within the kingdom was known to foreigners? There were several reasons. From 1963 onwards, Sihanouk had imposed a ban on

virtually all journalists. Equally, for a foreign student of Cambodia admission to the kingdom was difficult. Luck, a sympathetic Cambodian ambassador in Paris and the fact that my dissertation research was concerned with the nineteenth century led to my succeeding in gaining a visa. For journalists, only those who could be guaranteed to write approvingly of Cambodia and its ruler were welcome. The correctness of this approach was demonstrated to Sihanouk when, for reasons that are still not absolutely clear, he allowed a *Newsweek* reporter into the kingdom in 1965.

The reporter in question promptly repaid this favour by writing a story that, amongst other things, highlighted Phnom Penh gossip about Sihanouk's mother receiving income from brothels sited on land she owned. This mistake aside, Sihanouk had no shortage of admirers ready to write uncritically of his policies. French journalists, in particular, delighted in his bitter attacks on the United States for its role in Vietnam. He recruited them to staff his newspapers and magazines and to write the, literally, hundreds of letters that went out each year to an extraordinary range of correspondents who wrote admiringly to him. If French *plumitifs* were the most prominent of his employees and admirers, writers of other nationalities played their part. Han Suyin was in the van, so too was Wilfred Burchett.

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That judgment, which I feel some shame in not having made public after I had completed my research in 1966, was made before Cambodia's rapid descent into an ugly mix of disillusionment in the field of open politics, the emergence of an agrarian based revolutionary movement and the country's increasing involvement in the Vietnam War. As Sihanouk came to devote more of his time to the production of amateurish "feature films", the country slipped closer to disaster. By mid-1967 rural unrest, involving clashes between the army and a peasantry that was responding both to genuine grievances and to the urgings of the Marxist-inspired leaders of the clandestine left, was taking place in many areas of the kingdom. The Khmer Rouge was not in control of all this activity, but it was working hard to gain that control. Meanwhile in the capital, political polarisation was more and more apparent as Sihanouk increasingly came to see his salvation as linked to the right and as he called for the most severe punishments to be exacted against those who dared to question his policies.

In 1967 Cambodia was entering a period which, while not as terrible as that which followed during the civil war years of 1970-75 and then the genocidal awfulness of the Pol Pot period, was marked by darkness, much attributable to Sihanouk. It was a period of villages being put to the torch, of summary executions and of bounties paid for truckloads of heads brought to Phnom Penh as trophies and as proof that the army was carrying out its orders. In a curious fashion the excesses of those years were exemplified by an event that did not happen – a Cambodian variant of Conan Doyle's dog's not barking.

In 1967, three leftist parliamentary deputies disappeared. That they had survived in the world of open politics up to that point was remarkable, particularly as Sihanouk had on various occasions threatened to bring them to trial, with the implication that execution could follow. With good reason to fear for their lives, Khieu Samphan, Hou Youn and Hu Nim fled into the maquis. The conviction rapidly grew in Phnom Penh that they had been executed on Sihanouk's orders. Indeed, when I visited Phnom Penh in December 1967, I was given precise details about the manner of their "deaths". After brutal torture, I was told, the three men had been buried in the ground up to their necks and then had their heads crushed under the tracks of a bulldozer. The fact that this procedure approximated a traditional Cambodian punishment in which criminals and enemies were literally ploughed to death lent veracity to this version of events that had almost universal acceptance in Cambodian elite circles. Whatever repugnance my informants felt about these "events", they had no difficulty in believing they had taken place.

The closing years of Sihanouk's rule were marked by his alternating between near-total absorption in film-making and frenetic efforts to maintain a grasp on the conduct of politics. Seeing the leftist-

led insurgency as a personal affront, he did not hesitate to issue savage orders for suppression, readily admitting publicly to this fact as he did, for instance, in May 1968, when he boasted of having ordered the summary execution of two hundred people in the northeast of the kingdom. Yet, as he pursued his domestic communist enemies, he faced the dilemma of being able to do little about the increasing presence on Cambodian territory of large numbers of Vietnamese communist troops who were in these sanctuaries as a result of secret agreements he had concluded with Hanoi in the mid-1960s. Among the many factors that finally spurred Sihanouk's conservative opponents to act against him in 1970, it was the fact of the uncontrolled presence of Vietnamese troops on Cambodian soil that finally tipped the balance towards action. In March 1970, while he was absent in France, they turned him out of office.

Except for a small number of dedicated "Cambodia watchers", the coup that toppled Sihanouk came as a shock and a surprise. Even though his grip on power had been steadily slipping from 1966 onwards, Sihanouk's publicists had continued to project a misleading, but to some extent successfully propagated, image of Cambodia as an "oasis of peace". In promoting this false image, Sihanouk's publicists were aided by the growing international revulsion spawned by the Vietnam War and by the attention being given to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution that was wracking China. The savage civil war that followed Sihanouk's overthrow and then the horrors of the Pol Pot regime played their part in obscuring the reality of Sihanouk's Cambodia, investing his rule with an undeserved roseate hue.

While his admirers will deny the fact, Sihanouk during the more than two decades that have followed the 1970 *coup d'état* has, for much of the time, been little more than a symbol, only occasionally acting in a fashion that has shaped the course of Cambodia's recent history. When he joined his name to the struggle against the Lon Nol regime being waged by his former enemies, the Khmer Rouge, he became a pawn, a fact he slowly and resentfully came to recognise. When the Khmer Rouge triumphed in 1975, he became a frightened prisoner of the Pol Pot regime, living comfortably enough in the royal palace but in daily fear of being put to death. After the Vietnamese invasion ousted Pol Pot in 1979, Sihanouk began his long exile in China, and for periods in North Korea, only intermittently involving himself directly in the politics of his country. Not until the early 1990s did he begin to take a more consistently active role in the efforts being made to broker a peace settlement. His efforts – particularly in mid-1992 – contributed considerably to the eventual breakthrough that led to the UNTAC operation and the elections of May 1993. Yet, even in this case, the fact that the United Nations plan could be implemented owed as much, indeed probably more, to the dramatic changes in the international

strategic situation following the collapse of the Soviet Union than to Sihanouk's efforts.

Banned in Phnom Penh

For presenting a "warts and all" picture of Sihanouk, my book has been banned in Phnom Penh. Whether I can return myself is unclear. My visit to Cambodia in March of this year was made against the possibility that I might not, in the future, be able to gain an entry visa. For the moment, at least, I am not greatly concerned about the possibility of continuing exclusion. Contemporary Cambodia is drastically changed from the Cambodia I first knew and I came away from my recent visit profoundly depressed by what I saw.

Nevertheless, the banning of my book and the possibility of exclusion does raise other, less personal, issues relating to Australian writing on Asia, whether in the media or the academic world. Mine is by no means the first book by an Australian to fall foul of a Southeast Asian government and many will remember the ruckus that was caused by David Jenkin's articles in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The unhappy fact is that telling the truth as one sees it is all too likely to lead to an individual's being excluded from the country that he or she has made the focus of many years of work. Contrary to the impression that is sometimes given currency, Australia has one of the largest numbers of Asian specialists, proportionate to the size of its population, of any country in the world. Yet their work is all too often known only to their professional colleagues and restricted to scholarly publications, for nothing is more calculated to bring their views to the disapproving attention of Asian governments than to write or speak to a wider audience and so to the eyes and ears of the defenders of particular regimes.

Here is a dilemma that deserves consideration when calls for a closer involvement with Asia have assumed a mantra-like character. I do not pretend to have answers to the dilemma, but I do believe that it is an issue worthy of attention. Always provided the need for truth and accuracy is honoured, are Australians to forgo commentary on aspects of other societies that we, rather than the leaders of those societies, judge worthy of comment?



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1. Jodie Brien, Alle Fabro, William Medhurst
2. Rea Francis, Susan Ryan, Elizabeth Henderson, John Howard, Quentin Bryce
3. Marcellus Wong, Helen Wong, Hugh Massle, Claudia Hoffer
4. Robert Van Der Vegt, Fred Lynam
5. Susan Hossack
6. Pamela Beaver
7. Jackie Meagher, Les Meagher
8. Val Rundle, Max Sandow

Photographs: David Karonidis



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SECTS AND CULTS,

DEMOCRACY AND THE LAW

Rachel Kohn



Photo - David Karandis

Rachel Kohn

The issue of cult following and religious sects is of particular importance in democratic societies like Australia. Dr Rachel Kohn discussed the many issues relating to the growth of religious sects and growing concern at their influence in an address to The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 21 June 1994. Dr Kohn is a producer and presenter of religious programs on Radio National.

Voluntarism is the corner stone of democracy. Next to its political expression, voluntary membership in a religious group is one of the most cherished freedoms liberal democracy guarantees the individual. It is enshrined in Chapter V, clause 116, in our Constitution, where religion is neither established nor prohibited by the Commonwealth Government of Australia. The same guarantee is enshrined in the First Amendment of the American Constitution. That provision however is not absolute, as we shall see later. But for the moment, let me continue to pursue the subject of voluntarism.

The definition of a religious sect, starting from the work of pioneer sociologist of religion, Max Weber and his pupil, social historian, Ernest Troeltsch, has always included as one of its key features that it is a voluntary organisation. The voluntary membership of a sect is contrasted to the established church, which confers membership through a baptismal rite at birth and confirmation at puberty. While "established sects", can and often do become church-like over generations, devising ways of all but guaranteeing the membership of its babes in arms, it is the crucial feature of the dynamic sect that it exists due to the voluntary choice and commitment of its members. Sectarians are therefore presumed to be adults who have acted on the basis of information; in other words, they have given their informed consent to be active in the group. That is the "ideal type" of the sect, which Max Weber and sociologists of religion since him have employed in their studies of sectarian religion.

Since the vast majority of the studies of sects has emerged from the American academic establishment, and has been extremely influential in other countries, such as England, Canada, France, New Zealand and Australia, it is crucial to understand its American context, which I shall briefly relate. One cannot underestimate the importance of sectarian religion in America's history. Max Weber, following the French historian, Alexis de' Tocquville, attributed America's individualism, its ever present urge to innovate, its disciplined

puritanism and even its social conscience to the largely sectarian religions which flourished in a country without an established church. Suffice it is to say, the sectarian pluralism of America seemed a paradise of opportunity, by comparison to the European nation states whose established churches were seen as hierarchical, aristocratic, inherently conservative, and too removed from the spiritual needs of a new urban class.

There is a long (American) history, therefore, of viewing religious sects as a positive expression of grass roots social changes. Although some of the literature of the prosperous 1950s and 1960s, such as the work of Elmer T Clark, Charles Glock, and Milton Yinger, portrays sects as the refuge of the deprived classes, who escape their situation through voluntary membership in sectarian religion, this view of sects would soon be regarded as overly critical and condescending. Instead, their positive functions were explored, and in a seminal article by sociologist of religion, Benton Johnson, for example, the Calvinist-inspired Holiness Sects of America's cotton mill towns of the south were seen to socialise their members to be industrious, sober, and thrifty, thereby contributing to their social betterment.

Studies like these, which discerned positive social functions from "backward" religiosity, were at the tail end of what seemed to be an academic discipline, that is, the sociology of religion, headed for extinction. The popular anti-God, Marxist trend was wedded to an overwhelming commitment to the sociology of "social problems" in advanced capitalist societies, where racial tensions and class divisions were at boiling point. The civil rights movement required political and social solutions, not religious ones, or so it seemed in the 1960s. In this climate, the sociology of religion became quaint if not irrelevant. Moreover, the measurable decline of church attendance as well as the palpable weakening of its moral authority, further attenuated the relevance of the sociology of religion as an academic discipline.

But all this changed, it would seem, overnight. In the 1970s, America and soon most western countries, would witness an emergence of numerous religious groups, which provided an opportune laboratory for the sociology of religion. Thanks – in part – to the Beatles! Their association with Maharishi Melesh Yogi (Transcendental Meditation), gave a tremendous boost to a whole new set of religious groups, which would no longer be regarded as merely sectarian. America's immigration laws also assisted the process – allowing the permanent residency of Eastern gurus and the establishment of their movements, such as Hare Krishna, 3HO and Divine Light Mission. These were not sects in the conventional meaning of the term, that is, groups that split-off from Christian churches. They consisted of novel teachers, claiming a unique revelation, but vaguely within the larger Hindu, Buddhist or Sikh traditions.

Not all novel teachers were Eastern. They also emerged from

within the Christian fold, but very much on its edge, like Moses David Berg's Children of God. Yet Berg's "Mo Letters" (daily missives running to the thousands) were so contrary to the morality of Christianity, illustrated as they were with pornographic drawings and promoting a practice called "flirty fishing" (hookers for Christ), that his teaching could hardly be said to be Christian.

The alternative religious consciousness was a fitting substitute for the church establishment. The youth of the 1970s judged the church (along with the rest of the "liberal establishment") guilty of complicity in the death of many of their generation – for the churches had remained silent in the Vietnam war. They had also, let it be remembered, supported a racist social order, which was now revealed in all its shame. "Guilty" was the overwhelming message of the greatest protest singers of that generation, Phil Ochs, Bob Dylan, and Joan Baez. Phil Ochs' brilliant double edged "Canons of Christianity" most poignantly rang the moral death knell of established religion.

The resuscitation of a spiritual consciousness in novel forms, however, would soon arouse a new contingent of sociologists of religion, who age-wise were just on the cusp of the "Baby Boomer" generation. Being young lecturers or doctoral students during those heady days – and often involved in the new religious ferment themselves – the new sociologists of religion were ready to regard the new religious movements as a redemptive wave of voluntary religiosity amongst the young. Redemptive for the lives of the young, and redemptive for society as a whole. Academically speaking, almost overnight, the sociology of religion was also redeemed from obscurity. And even a moribund Catholic sociological association rescued itself from extinction, by changing its name to the Association for the Sociology of Religion, and publishing what is one of two pre-eminent journals in the field, *Sociological Analysis*. (The other is *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*.)

At that point, in the early 1970s, a plethora of academics in the field, some with very intimate relationships to the groups they studied, wrote up the experiences of youthful involvement in these groups as profoundly positive. The "hearts and minds" perspective taken by an increasing number of sociologists argued that, for example, the cult of Meher Baba, functioned positively because it disallowed drug use while it fostered a generalised love ethic, and, it was assumed, turned young people, into useful citizens. The Unification Church, otherwise known as the Moonies, was regarded by the most prolific sociologist, Thomas Robbins, as the last example of a community with a "civil religion" – outdoing America itself, which had lost the quality of being a community with an overarching set of beliefs and values. The momentum of this literature gathered, with each sociologist citing the work of his or her colleagues.

The intimate relationships with the "objects of study," which I mentioned above, took several forms, but they included Herbert Richardson's setting up of Edwin Mellen Press, devoted in the main to publishing studies on new religious movements, with monies he received from consulting to new religious movements. (Herbert Richardson, incidentally, was recently dismissed from the University of Toronto, Canada, for lying to the University about his whereabouts while on leave – instead of receiving medical treatment, he was, in fact, setting up a second of his paper universities; see *Lingua Franca*, Sept/Oct 1993.)

Thomas Robbins and David Bronley were followers of Meher Baba; Eileen Barker pursued long term research on the Unification Church with their full co-operation and support of her material needs; a host of prominent sociologists, including Oxford University's Bryan Wilson wrote for and edited publications under the imprint of the Unification Church's Rose of Sharon Press and attended conferences funded by the Unification Church. Indeed, the attendance by sociologists of religion at the Unification Church's plush conferences, all expenses paid, was a point so contentious that it was the subject of an entire plenary session-debate at the joint conference for the Association for the Sociology of Religion, the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and the Religious Research Association in 1982, which I attended in Baltimore. I recall very clearly how the then President of the SSSR, Benton Johnson, had no cogent response to the ethical criticism of sociologist, Irving Louis Horowitz, and simply pleaded for indulgence, citing the meagre possibilities for academics to attend such lavish affairs.

The fact of these relationships, and they have grown more profound in recent years, is important because it illuminates part of the context in which the studies were undertaken and judgments about them formed. I think I hardly need point out that academic objectivity, in so far as it is a strived-for ideal in the sociological discipline, is severely undermined by such active co-operation with and remuneration by the groups in question. It also provides some insight into the partnership which has long been in the making between part of the academic establishment and various new religious movements or cults, a partnership that is now being marshalled to fight the legal battles that have called into question the positive functions of some of the new religious movements or cults which these academics have claimed in their professional literature.

While a cabal of academics and a new generation of their graduate students have dominated the key organisations and publications in the sociology of religion, with their neatly teleological message that new religious movements, in all their diversity, are essentially a healthy phenomenon because their very existence indicates

the failure of society and established religion, other observers have been less sanguine in drawing these macrosocietal conclusions from their study of individual groups.

One of the characteristics noted by most observers of these groups would seem to undermine their positive functions. It is that membership is often transient, generating a high proportion of ex-members. This fact is usually marshalled by cult apologists as the proof that these groups are benign and do not possess great power over their followers – the spiritual experimenter can dip in a toe and pull it out if the temperature isn't right. But what else may the high turnover rate indicate?

It is from ex-members that some of the most detailed accounts of life within the groups have emerged – and they haven't all been pretty tales. In fact, they provide genuine disconfirming evidence of the rosy pictures painted by many sociologists of religion. Emerging as they do from individual accounts of involvement, their focus is inevitably on the inside "culture" of the group, how it is experienced by them as individuals, and the exercise of power by the leader and leadership cadres as it bears upon their lives as members of the group. It is important to note, however, that these inside accounts are almost uniformly dismissed by the aforementioned sociologists who argue for the positive functions of the groups. They are dismissed on the grounds that, because they are given by ex-members, they are not reliable. We must ask why these sociologists of religion are taking the position which categorically denies the truth-value of eyewitness accounts. We note with interest that it is a position which conforms entirely to the perspective of the groups themselves, which deem ex-members as disloyal and subversive.

Not only ex-members but a few courageous academics have also examined the inner workings of such groups as Scientology and the Children of God – and many less well known groups. But these studies have not been easy, and often at immense personal cost when the findings have not favoured the groups in question. Without a doubt, the most notorious of these experiences was that of the late Roy Wallace, whose study of Scientology is by far the most thorough and sophisticated. Not only did Scientology attempt to destroy his personal reputation, through the exercise of its notorious "fair game" policy, which calls for unbridled harassment of its critics (a tactic recently defended on *The Religion Report* by the Public Relations person for Scientology in Sydney), it also threatened to sue him if his book, *Scientology: The Road to Total Freedom*, was published without an appendix which refutes its claims. (See also the mention of "fair game" in *Wollersheim vs Scientology*, Calif Court of Appeal, Daily Appellate Report, 21 July 1989, p. 9272.)

Critical studies of new religious movements have included biographies of the leaders, plotting their rise from social, intellectual,

and financial obscurity to messianic pretenders with multi-million dollar Swiss bank accounts. But by far the most important object of critical study is what stands between these self proclaimed gods and their money – the armies of followers who are exploited for the benefit of the leaders alone. The studies of indoctrination processes used to recruit followers, the structure of power, the methods of harassment employed to maintain members, and the elaborate strategies devised to prevent outside scrutiny have challenged the assertion that such groups represent the cherished democratic ideal of voluntarism. Sociologists, psychiatrists and lawyers have accepted that the freedom to believe anything does not exempt leaders from culpability in the methods they use to both persuade people to believe and to dissuade them from exiting when they wish to, and with impunity. It is also acknowledged that the freedom to associate does not give self-proclaimed leaders the licence to exploit followers and remove from them their basic human rights of personal liberty, privacy, and private property. Indeed the freedom to associate may guarantee the right of groups to exist, but it also applies to individual members of a group who wish to associate with non-members (“unbelievers”) of the group.

Groups which do not permit its members to freely associate with non-members in an unsupervised setting and in fact remove all possibilities of doing so (restricted phone access is one popular way, keeping members completely occupied with group tasks is another) are generally called “totalistic cults” by those who have examined them critically. The definition of the “totalistic cult” as outlined by Louis Jocelyn West is:

A group or movement exhibiting a great or excessive devotion or dedication to some person, idea, or thing, and *employing unethical, manipulative or coercive techniques of persuasion and control ... designed to advance the goals of the group's leaders, to the possible or actual detriment of members, their families or the community.* (*Journal of Cultic Studies* 9/2:164)

Ever since the phenomenon of Mao's Cultural Revolution and the experiences of the Korean prisoners of war, models of recruitment in totalistic environments have been available for deployment in other areas, such as cults. The studies of indoctrination in totalistic environments, such as those carried out by Robert J Lifton, have also provided critical insights to the recruitment processes used by cults. Quite a large literature on the Unification Church (the Moonies), for example, outlined its recruitment method, which employed a system of disorientation (ie removal to a remote setting at night), exhaustion, regressive activities (ie playing children's games and singing juvenile songs), little sleep, ingesting lots of sweet high-carbohydrate children's food, excessive affection, incessant pressure to remain longer than originally agreed to, and setting new recruits against their parents by urging them to ring their parents to ask for money, but at the same time refusing to allow parents to visit. Such tactics, now widely known

and used with idiosyncratic modifications by other groups, have combined social, psychological, financial and physical means of persuasion in heavy doses, with limited information about the identity and true nature of the group. Such unethical methods of indoctrination and soliciting funds have been the basis of prosecutions of the Unification Church in Japan.

To these methods of personal persuasion found in many groups, including some “discipling” churches, are added the other frequently used physical and non physical punishments of humiliation that are intended to erase the self esteem that individuals brought to the group, to be replaced by an identity entirely the product of the group. Intellectual autonomy and family identity is destroyed by controlling the conditions and means of communication by new recruits, both with each other and with their friends and family outside the group. Meanwhile, financial indebtedness and dependence is frequently created in groups offering courses by keeping followers “hooked” on a never-ending series of courses, offered to them for a special discounted rate, but which they are obliged to pay for by “working for the group”. Cults offering courses regularly deploy this tactic, sometimes “employing” followers at rates that are so low (ten per cent of normal wages) that followers have little choice but to live communally in a residence owned by the group. (In a recent unsuccessful case in Sydney brought by Scientology, in which the plaintiff was ordered to pay damages to the defendant, the plaintiff's solicitor advised the magistrate that the plaintiff could not pay the damages because her weekly salary from the Church of Scientology was \$40; Tress Cocks & Maddox court transcript, 22 June 1993).

This is a thumb nail sketch of some of the practices used by a host of cults, many of them not remotely religious, some of them Bible-based “discipling” groups, but all devoted to a leader or leadership cadre claiming to have a uniquely effective teaching requiring total surrender to its dictates. Many of these groups have tax exempt status as charitable institutions or educational and/or counselling facilities because they offer one-off courses and maintain a transient “stream” of clients. And many have made hay with the Department of Education, Employment and Training 1.5 per cent training levy, which is now defunct.

The practices of such groups raise fundamental questions about the protection of freedoms in a democratic society. It is clear, for example, that the success of many plaintiffs in getting damages awarded to them for the harm they suffered at the hands of cults or unscrupulous churches, which they were once members of, rests on the fact that freedom of religious belief does not give absolute protection to religious practices. Practices that are deemed to be harmful to the public interest of the state, which arises out of notions of public health and fraud, are culpable. Thus, the

successful prosecution of Scientology in the Lawrence D Wollersheim versus Scientology case and the successful prosecution of the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, otherwise known as the Moonies, in the Molko versus Holy Spirit Association case do not undermine America's first Amendment. But such cases do send a clear message that coercion and extortion cannot be used to advance the interests of a group which has been granted "church" status or claims to offer counselling or training – or is neither of those things but is an identifiable group.

In Japan, the recent successful prosecution of the Unification Church for undue influence and deception in its fund raising practices, is one of 12 cases against the Moonies, currently covering about 400 plaintiffs in that country, and over the last seven years covers over 2,000 plaintiffs – and over one billion yen. It is interesting to note that the Unification Church in Japan admitted its fraudulent practices, when it tried to use as a defence that it was not responsible for the unethical practices of its followers. That defence was dismissed, however, since the money raised was channelled to the leader, Sun Myung Moon. The Unification Church in Japan is now claiming bankruptcy, as reported by the chief prosecuting lawyer Hiroshi Yamaguchi, on the ABCs *The Religion Report* earlier this year.

The criminal behaviour in question was that of "undue influence". The matter of undue influence is a very old and established aspect of probate or contract law. Cases reaching as far back as the early 17th Century regard undue influence, in the cases of signing contracts and making wills, as tantamount to invalidating them. The case of Mrs Death who took care of the aging Mr Lydiatt, then kept him prisoner, chained to his bed without any care, making a pretence of love of him while torturing him, preventing his nieces from visiting him, lest he tell of his suffering, and then making him sign over his considerable property – is a case in point where all the elements of undue influence are present: weakness, opportunity, means of persuasion, and the unnatural disposition of property and estate (*Journal of Cultic Studies* 10/1:4).

Similar situations were described by the two recent plaintiffs in the first open court hearing in Japan against the Unification Church. A woman was surrounded by Moonies, shouting at her, claiming to be in touch with her deceased husband, telling her that "she would suffer an unfortunate incident" unless she donated money, and so on. Hundreds of other plaintiffs were urged by this and similar means to take mortgages upon mortgages on their property to purchase extremely expensive items sold by the Church. They were then urged to sell on these expensive items to their family and friends. (These are tactics reminiscent of pyramid selling organisations). All this is documented in the proceedings against the Unification Church in Japan.

In current legal history, the case of Molko versus Holy Spirit Association (The Unification Church) used the California Civil Code successfully, and Molko was awarded damages on the basis that he was deceived into submitting to coercive persuasion, whereby the Holy Spirit Association obtained undue influence which it then used to extract a monetary gift. The California Code, section 1575, defines undue influence as:

1. In the use, by one in whom a confidence is reposed by another, or who holds a real or apparent authority over him, of such confidence or authority for the purpose of obtaining an unfair advantage over him; (*Is this why one particularly well known group asks for a confession of a most intimate sort to be kept on file as an insurance against any future threat that a member may pose to the group?*)
2. In taking an unfair advantage of another's weakness of mind; or
3. In taking a grossly oppressive and unfair advantage of another's necessities or distress.

While prosecutions of many cases in America have been successful, and increasingly so, many too have failed. The sociologist, the late Roy Wallace, for example, wrote that some groups have perfected the art of extracting out-of-court settlements by tying up the time of officials extensively in pre-trial depositions at little cost to themselves. In the case of, say a newspaper, the publisher is usually compelled to offer a generous out-of-court settlement than to pursue a lengthy court battle. Individuals as well as wealthy newspapers and television networks have suffered extensively from such action. But there are other advantages to an out-of-court settlement, apart from financially exhausting the other party, it prevents the calling of witnesses to the stand, which can do untold damage to the group's reputation, when reported in the press.

The government actions initiated against the Children of God in France, Spain, Argentina and Australia have failed or only partly succeeded (in Australia). In Australia, out-of-court settlements were made and the numerous witnesses for the prosecution, many of whom were ex-members, were not called. Apart from the problems of proceeding against the communities in the dramatic way that they did, government wearing the responsibility of keeping children from their parents, together with the enormous cost to taxpayers, make such cases very unpopular for them. Nonetheless, the cases were resolved differently in the various countries. In Spain, for example, the case was decided on the premise that The Family, the new name for the Children of God, was different from the latter – a kind of historical sleight of hand, which at the very least, dismisses the effect of the group's practices in the recent past, and at the worst, simply takes the change of name and the 1991 purge of its documents as a change in practice.

The current state of play on these issues in Australia is a reflection of the polarised American situation. The recent appearance of a booklet called *Our Australian Freedoms Under Threat*, is a version of similar booklets circulated in Canada and the US. Although the three names on the cover are from the home grown counselling group called KENJA, which many of its ex-members claim is an oppressive and exploitive cult, and whose founder Ken Dyers is currently facing about 12 charges of indecent and sexual assault, the booklet has all the signs of a collective effort in which many of the well known cults jointly commission a document that makes broad claims about their critics.

The booklet has been circulated in the Commonwealth and State Parliaments, as well various media organisations. Although it's been around since last year, it was recently launched by Tasmanian Liberal MP in charge of schools and training, Chris Miles. Mr Miles' judgment in launching a booklet connected to KENJA, whose practice of so called "energy conversion" in a locked room within a locked room, where the individual is stared at (eye to eye contact) for an hour at a time, while asked impossible questions about their intake of various substances like aspirin and coffee over their whole life span, and then made to serve tea to their counsellor – in a ritual of destabilisation, obedience, and very likely hypnosis, makes me shudder to think what Mr Miles would put past in the schools. I doubt whether he actually knows much detail about the life that KENJA followers live, working extremely long hours, living in spartan accommodation owned by KENJA, and not permitted communication with outsiders except in a recruitment and fundraising setting, all the while under maximum influence of its leaders Ken and Jan.

The booklet, *Our Australian Freedoms Under Threat*, follows a pattern well known to the sociologists of religion who make their reputation by defending cults as a freedom of religion issue, and indeed the booklet cites one of the foremost among them, sociologist cum lawyer, James Richardson. James Richardson, incidentally, came to Australia last year under a Fullbright Scholarship and immediately on his arrival addressed a number of cult representatives at Scientology's new Sydney building for advanced counselling, in Glebe (built largely by the "voluntary" labour of followers, as PR person Henry Bartnik told me – perhaps in repayment for courses taken or signed on for). Richardson's message to the assembled group, which I taped, was that he was there to help and advise them. Perhaps the booklet, which appeared after he arrived and which cites him so liberally, benefited from his input. Indeed, his involvement in the formation of a lobby group for cults in the US, named AWARE (Association of World Academics for Religious Education) and his involvement as expert witness for the groups in several cases there, would suggest that he might have.

The author of the booklet to one side, it claims that "individuals and organisations which espouse new ideas, beliefs philosophies and life styles are being targeted by the Anti-Cult Movement: a reactionary movement of inquisitors who are entrenched in publicly spreading tales of atrocities" through the media and parliament. "As a direct consequence, our freedoms of association and beliefs are being corrupted." (*Our Australian Freedoms Under Threat*: 1993:1).

The document follows a pattern of first labelling the critical analysis of cult behaviour as a religiously and politically motivated reaction of both fundamentalist conservatives and anti-religious people, collectively called "inquisitors". Thus, criticism of cultic behaviour is reduced to a simplistic equation, of one ideology over another. The key features of such labelling have been outlined in Margaret Thaler Singer's "Cults, Coercion and Contumely" (*Cultic Studies Journal* 9/2, 1992), and this list is based on her longer outline:

- Coercive persuasion does not exist
- If it does exist it's suffered voluntary
- Groups hold their converts by nothing more than preaching (the Moonies practice of "heavenly deception" and Hare Krishna's "transcendental trickery" and the confession by a KENJA member of 10 years that she never told recruits what they were in for, plus numerous other examples don't count).
- Cult is a pejorative term and should not be used (despite its academic use in decades of sociological and psychological literature in which it describes the power-structure of a group that need not be religious).
- Critics of cults are anti-religious or they are fundamentalist.
- Charges of cult abuses by ex-members are lies and distortions of the truth, whereas current members are always truthful.
- Psychiatrists, psychologists, social scientists and attorneys who participate in legal action against cults and their leaders make huge sums of money from these activities (in fact, most lawyers undertake such cases on a pro-bono or contingency basis – cases could not proceed otherwise, as ex-members are often bereft of funds).
- Criminal and tort actions against religious cults violate freedom of religious belief and association. (In fact, cases against cults relate only to their practices; in contrast, cults frequently attempt to prevent freedom of speech, either by outside or by inside critics. Scientology, for example, forbids anyone who leaves the group to disclose any of its higher level practices, and targets those who break that vow of silence. Individuals like Robert Vaughan Young, who in his 20 years in Scientology, eventually rose to a senior public relations role, are threatened and pursued if they attempt to speak or publish about their experiences).
- Successful criminal and tort actions against, or legal restrictions on, religious cults will result in witch-hunts against unpopular religions as

well as established ones. (Witness, for example, the pamphlet's citing of myself as calling for an investigation of the Catholic Church – a most incredible distortion of a comment made to Jennifer Byrne of the ABC's 2BL, in which I stated that if violations of human rights occurred in any religious group, be it a cult, a synagogue, a mosque, a Buddhist Temple or the Catholic Church, then they should be investigated and made accountable in the eyes of the law.) "Witch hunts" have simply not occurred despite the prosecution of, for example, Synanon's leader, Charles Diedrich, for implementing Synanon's "new religious posture" which called for beating Synanon's supposed enemies; the imprisonment of Rev Sun Myung Moon (of the Moonies) for tax evasion; the prevention of Mormons practising polygamy; the enforcement of court-ordered blood transfusions to Jehovah's Witnesses transfusions, etc... Other tort actions were successful against Hare Krishna (for, among other things, storing arms) the Church of Scientology, and Church Universal and Triumphant, to name but a few. But the prosecution of groups or individuals for illegal acts, such as violence, immorality, or the prevention of life-saving medical attention, does not amount to a witch hunt.

- Another "Big Lie" along the lines of "witch hunt" that is meant to prey on people's emotions is the following: "anti-cult hysteria has swept the nation". This means that when Waco, or the Cult of the Little Pebble, down in Wollongong, etc, is given detailed coverage in the media it is labelled "anti-cult hysteria". In fact, there are literally hundreds upon hundreds of cults, many of which are small, but not necessarily less harmful for that, which are never reported or investigated by a largely disinterested and uninformed press. Indeed, the area of religious reporting is generally so fraught – because critical comment on religion is taboo and easily construed as prejudice – that most reporters stay well away from the serious issues raised by religious cults.

The issue that underlies our entire discussion is that of power: how much of it is exercised by groups to the detriment of their followers. No one who has studied groups believes there are magical or infallible methods of indoctrination, but they have witnessed powerful and effective methods of intimidation, undue influence, hypnotic suggestion, extortion, invasion of privacy, abrogation of basic human rights, as well as dangerously uncontrolled psychological and physical trials. Currently these take place under the guise of unregulated self help groups, religious and non-religious cults, independent churches under the control of a powerful pastor, and training groups of all kinds, that pose a significant threat to individual health and the democratic ethos.

Some of these practices also violate the basic laws of consumer

protection. Many of them generate a constant flow of harmed individuals, who often have no place to go for understanding and treatment, let alone assistance in retrieving their belongings or, in some cases, their children. Many of those who are ex-members did not even have the dignity of leaving of their own volition – but were humiliated, punished, and expelled for their questioning of cult practices. Some groups have "disciplinary camps" and "rehabilitation" projects, which are abusive and take place out of the sight and the knowledge of its lower-level members. I have never known of anyone who was expelled from a cult with provisions or their property, except the clothes on their back and what they could carry out of their spartan living conditions.

Oddly enough, one of the most frequent defences of cults, repeatedly echoed, for example, by James Richardson, who prefers to call them minority religions, is that their high turnover proves they aren't in possession of powerful techniques of persuasion. But my observation of ex-cult members would lead to the contrary view: that the authoritarian, totalistic environment of many cults, if it does not overpower the individual followers, in fact repels or expels them when they realise the deceptive or misleading circumstances under which they were recruited. That is, when they realise they did not give their informed consent.

It is typical of followers, however, to blame themselves, because the indoctrination message has maximised their feelings of unworthiness. When they find out, however, that the increasing demands are too uncomfortable to bear (for example, one might join up to be a Moonie but find unbearable the business of Sun Myung Moon choosing a spouse for you, a spouse who lives in another country and is of a different culture and race, a spouse whom you will see for the first time an hour before a mass wedding is to be held in three years time, a mass wedding in which 30,000 celebrants were present – to quote from the last one held in Seoul, Korea in 1992). For those, on the other hand, who are more susceptible to the authoritarian dictates of the leadership, for reasons which may be psychological, social or economic, total dependency makes exiting unlikely, even when the personal pressures are severe. There is ample suggestion in studies of groups, that they select for these types of followers and squeeze out or simply don't promote the ones who refuse to surrender their autonomy.

Voluntary association of the individual is central to democracy. Voluntary association rests on the belief that individuals are capable of making informed choices for which they are responsible. But if individual responsibility is a necessary ingredient in democracy, it can sometimes lead to a serious misappropriation of blame when an individual suffers at the hands of an organisation. Undoubtedly, there is a reluctance to tackle the big offenders – ie, those organisations that abuse yet have assumed a recognised place in society – which leads to

simply blaming the victim for being taken in rather than the organisation for the abuse of its privileged status. Whatever the reason, it would seem to be the very essence of a just and democratic society to ensure that the individual is protected from unscrupulous cults and abusive churches, by laws of informed consent, consumer protection, and undue influence.

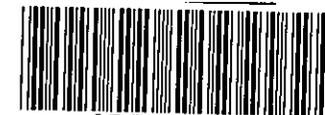
It is a pity that the business of protecting the individual's human rights against their exploitation by self interested cults and abusive churches has remained so polarised in the literature emanating from America. The late Roy Wallace argued that, in a way, it was inevitable, since America is a totally unregulated environment, where all manner of cults, including the Ku Klux Klan, flourish and are permitted public demonstrations of a kind that are now outlawed in many countries. In such a free for all, it is up to private groups of interested citizens of various calibre to fight their effect. He argued that in Britain, by contrast, where the Home Secretary could take decisions to regulate groups (such as preventing the importation of Scientology "students" using an immigration loop hole) in the interests of the State, a far less fertile ground was available to sow the seeds of opportunist cults, and a less extreme situation ensued amongst either the cults or their critics.

It is obvious that Australia has been more interventionist than America – as in the case of Scientology in Victoria and Children of God in Victoria and New South Wales. Yet, rather than the exercise of arbitrary powers, I am inclined to advise more ready resort to existing (or amended) laws of protection – such as consumer protection laws. I would strongly recommend that barristers who are interested in civil liberties consider lending their services on a pro bono basis to take the wind out of the sails of some of these groups, which have thrived on the gullible, the desperate, and the uninformed, cavalierly treading on their most basic human rights, and in some cases causing severe mental illness and suicide.

Lawyers who have traditionally regarded themselves as the defenders of civil liberties, and therefore feel a natural inclination to defend the right of any group to exist, ought to think again about the implications of their position. As the report on the Molko case made clear: "While religious belief is absolutely protected, religiously motivated conduct is not. Such conduct 'remains subject to regulation for the protection of society'. Government action burdening religious conduct is subject to a balancing test, in which the importance of the state's interest is weighed against the severity of the burden imposed on religion" (252 *California Reporter* 122 Cal 1988). It is imperative to realise that the liability for fraud does not prevent or inhibit church or cult members from operating their religious communities, worshipping as they see fit, or freely associating with one another. Nor does it prevent them soliciting funds. It necessarily prevents unlawful ways of

doing these things, and recognises that unethical practices in extremis are unlawful practices. It is worth consulting Richard Delgado's work, "Religious Totalism: Gentle and Ungentle Persuasion Under the First Amendment", *Southern California Law Review* 51 (1977); and "Cults and Conversion: The Case for Informed Consent, *Georgia Law Review*, 553 (1982).

However, may I say, as a closing remark, that if the currently considered legislation for racial vilification eventually includes a clause for religious vilification, then I believe that a very significant blow will be dealt to the critics of unscrupulous groups, who I fear will have a protective shield par excellence from unwelcome critics. Not that the legal means of prosecution through tort law will not exist, but the cultural climate will discourage even considering the issue of abuse in cults or churches. I suspect we shall hear a lot more about it in the upcoming United Nations "Year of Tolerance", when we shall be called upon to become more tolerant of intolerant groups.



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Photo - David Karonidis

John Carmody

Associate Professor John Carmody in the School of Physiology and Pharmacology at the University of NSW is also a well known Sydney music critic. Taking up one of his favourite themes, Professor Carmody revealed some of the pitfalls in the life of a music critic in an address to The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 28 June 1994.

“SMALL AND RODENT-LIKE WITH PADLOCKED EARS” - WAS STRAVINSKY RIGHT ABOUT MUSIC CRITICS?

John Carmody

Who expects consistency? University examiners, perhaps; and readers of criticism, probably.

Literary critics learn to contend with the fact that everyone can read the same poem or novel, even if they all concentrate to variable degrees on different aspects; music passes us by whether we really hear it or not and the experience, once lost, cannot be recaptured – the same performers can be (or sound) different on different nights or from different parts of the auditorium. Like writers, no doubt, musicians say that they want “constructive” criticism – by which they usually mean *favourable* comment; that’s the only consistency *they* want. In any case, consistency is not necessarily a virtue and may, indeed, represent a closed or inflexible mind.

So when Igor Stravinsky (a composer whose music certainly shows no regard for stylistic consistency) was quoted by an English newspaper as saying that he had a dream involving music critics who were “small and rodent-like, with padlocked ears – as if they had stepped out of a painting by Goya”, he was probably forgetting the irony of the fact that he was hardly averse to acting as a music critic himself, as his voluminous *published* conversations with his protégé, Robert Craft, attest. Many other composers have acted as public critics and, in various ways, they all do so in social contexts. When musicians – whether composers or performers – comment on the work and capacities of their peers and rivals they almost invariably do it with a venom and confidence which make most published criticism etiolated and effete (but, at least, mostly within the libel laws). Composers also publicly declare their values and opinions (as good a working definition of criticism as any other, incidentally) by what they do – or, rather, by what they *do not do* – as much as by what they may say: for example, it really is rare for composers to attend concerts when their (or their students’) music is not being played!

There are probably as many answers to the questions, “What is

music criticism and what is a music critic?" as there are authors or readers of criticism. Clive Bell said, "I try to account for the degree of my aesthetic emotion" while Matthew Arnold opined that criticism is "a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world". Leaving aside the rather lofty and *gestalt* tone of Arnold's remark, these statements do epitomise two crucial aspects of the process: I believe that emotional responses almost invariably precede serious intellectual approaches to art (and, for that matter, to science) – life is all too short, so why waste it by grappling with something which has not engaged the emotions – and it is surely natural to want to talk about what excites us?

Criticism, therefore, is the formalised aspect of one of the most basic of human characteristics: we love talking, arguing and disagreeing about what most interests us. In this process we certainly express opinions and take sides – whether the issue is politics, sport or personalities – and the depth of our passions is not always matched by the depth of our information.

I remember an elderly relative who, like his father, had been a professional critic rebutting my expressed scepticism about the value of criticism. "You read it, don't you?" he asked. "Relentlessly," I replied. "Then you *obviously* think that it's important," he retorted. In other words, if we consider something is important, we talk about it – or write about it, which is much the same thing – and if something is of no interest it hardly enters our conversation, let alone our minds. We want to know what's happening to those things we care about – hence the existence and significance of newspapers and the importance of their varieties of criticism.

Whatever distinctions are made between the terms criticism and reviewing (and they're commonly interchanged) the initial task of criticism is reportage for interested readers who did not attend a particular cultural event. As is common with other reportage (sport and politics, for instance), this is usually a blend of "fact" and "opinion" and the report should also interest those who were there. A review may influence its readers to buy (or not to buy) a book or to attend a subsequent performance though, given that concerts are infrequently repeated, this may be a decision to hear a particular performer or ensemble on a future occasion. Certainly it is the critic's professional responsibility to make both fact and opinion as reliable as possible, though "reliable" is a term which is susceptible to flexible definition; at the very least, though, this means writing about only those events which the critic actually attended or books that he really read (there are legendary stories of critics who were "sprung" when these fundamental *desiderata* were lacking). Certainly all such accounts will be selective; it can hardly be otherwise when six hours of cricket or four of opera are being reported in about 1000 words. So what the writer selects in his

attempt to give the "feel" as well as the "fact" of the occasion is as much a declaration of values (or prejudice) as the overt expression of opinion.

These are fundamentals. Above all, the writing must be entertaining: it, too, is a form of public performance and will be assessed and commented upon ("reviewed" in other words).

If the writing is not entertaining – whatever its other characteristics – it will not be read. In fact, it probably will not be published because the first person who needs to be happy with the writing is the editor and if the editor is not regularly pleased by the vitality and appeal of the writing, the critic's career will be short indeed and the fact that he may have an international scholarly reputation will butter no parsnips at all. Even when a critique passes this editorial test, the reviewer cannot be satisfied: no reader of the paper has the slightest obligation to read a single word of what he has struggled over a few nights before. If I set an assignment for my students then I have a clear obligation to read each one carefully; the act of buying newspaper imposes no such obligation. The purchase may be a purely utilitarian one.

There is a famous story of a letter from a composer to a critic which began: "I am sitting in the smallest room of my house and your review is before me; soon it will be behind me." At least he had read the article and it is clear to me that members of the profession read reviews. But they are not written principally for the profession. Naturally it is gratifying when a critic learns that he has the respect of the profession – some do whilst others, emphatically, do not – and it would probably be difficult to survive if the editor regularly received significant reports of professional disrespect, but the profession is not the primary audience. Every good critic writes for the broad mass of music lovers whose ages and musical experience will range as widely as it is possible to do: all of the readers must be informed and delighted (sometimes enraged) but never patronised or taken for granted.

So what critics write should be the entertaining expression of informed opinion.

What sort of education and background are necessary to be able to do that successfully? If we consider only three who have been eminent and important practitioners of music criticism in Sydney – Neville Cardus, Maria Prerauer and Roger Covell – we can see that personality, training and experience can be extremely diverse yet produce outstanding critics. Cardus was a self-taught, illegitimate son of a Manchester prostitute who developed parallel passions for music and cricket and became an illustrious writer about both. Prerauer, the daughter of a Polish immigrant to Australia, had a novel published at seventeen, trained as a singer and married Curt Prerauer (a colleague of Otto Klemperer and an experienced operatic coach). Covell trained

as a journalist in Brisbane, where he did some reviewing for the *Courier Mail*; he was appointed chief music and drama critic for the *Sydney Morning Herald* before he was 30 and soon afterwards joined the staff of the University of NSW as a lecturer in its innovative General Studies program. It is clear, therefore, that the essential knowledge for this *informed* opinion can be acquired in diverse ways. The passion for the art – the willingness to sit in cold or badly-ventilated or cramped halls – is harder to account for but it needs to be coupled with what I call the “critical mind”, the need to ask “Why?” or “How?” or “Why not?”

I well recall the number of times when, as a boy, I was in trouble from my father because I had pulled something or other apart but could not put it together again. The desire to know how things “worked” was almost innate, though perhaps my clinical colleagues might observe that this lesser concern for ensuring that they kept on working made me unsuitable for a career in clinical medicine and directed me to a career in physiology. I like to think that this behaviour was a facet of the “critical mind”. The critic’s integrity – it ought need no saying – should be beyond reproach though doubtless we all fail from time to time (as in other parts of life). We also need to be diligent as we pursue our task of producing what people want to read: virtue is no more its own reward in this than in any other aspect of life. As St James observed, “Faith without good works is dead”, so criticism without readers is irrelevant and a wasted opportunity.

So what do I actually do as I try to be a good and worthwhile critic?

I know that in the *Sun-Herald* I write for the largest (and thus the most diverse) musical readership in Australia. But as I sit down each Thursday night to complete my 1000 words for the following Sunday, that potentially paralysing fact is the last thing which I can afford to think about: my ineluctable task is to provide those 1000 publishable words – without spelling or grammatical mistakes or errors of fact or seriously litigious aspects – in time for the sub-editors and production staff to meet all their deadlines and in time for me to get *some* sleep that night. During the previous week I will have attended two or three musical occasions (sometimes more) or listened to some CDs or read a book in order to have the requisite material for the column; I will have let my editor know what my topics will be and will have done something about securing a suitable picture.

I do my best to think of a good opening sentence which may be paradoxical, argumentative, intriguing, challenging or amusing – an enticement, in other words, for the reader who has been induced to linger over the page by the headline or that photograph. Whatever that sentence is, it will influence what an appropriate second sentence can be and *that* the third. And so on. The conductor, Sir Thomas Beecham once said that how a performance begins and ends are far more

important than what happens in the middle and there’s *some* truth in that about writing, too.

That all-important opening sentence may come quickly – sometimes even a few days earlier as I try out various possible ideas while driving home from concerts or the university. More often, it comes very slowly, but by 10.30 pm I realise that – if I’m to get to bed before 2.00 am – I simply must make a decision. After a lot of crossing out and chewing on my pencil – I write everything by hand first because I can do that faster than I can type and I know fairly well how many words I fit on an A4 page – I eventually have something that I can type up (“polishing” as I go) and then send off to the paper via the telephone line and a modem in my computer. It’s a great satisfaction at 1.30 am or so to be able to do that in about 10 seconds and not have any further worries (until the sub-editors ring up next day because the piece is a little too long or because the lawyers are worried about a few sentences).

When I first began to write for the *Sun-Herald* (after some years with the *National Times* and the *Australian Financial Review*) a colleague, aware of the size of my potential readership, enquired whether I had negotiated some secretarial assistance to deal with readers’ letters. I replied that I’d see how things developed and – surprisingly, perhaps – his concerns have proved decidedly overstated.

Certainly people comment on aspects of what I’ve written (and sometimes amaze me, years later, by being able to quote sentences and paragraphs, *verbatim*) but written responses are very few, indeed. Mostly they’re from friends of those whom I’ve insufficiently appreciated (sometimes the correspondents declare the fact though generally it’s self-evident); occasionally there are letters of praise and thanks for ways in which I have informed the reader. Sometimes, too, there are responses from fellow-critics, the hostility of the tone usually being in direct relationship to the self-importance of the critic concerned.

Far from complaining about this – after all, I did once write a now-famous adverse review of Roger Covell’s operatic “conducting” – I really wish that there were more of it. If there were less of a “delivering tablets of stone” attitude from critics of all classes and more of a willingness to engage in public discussion and argument, the better informed our readers would be and the healthier criticism in Sydney would be.

I must insist, though, that – despite being conscious of the severe limitations on the power of Australian critics (our public have a healthy dose of the scepticism that should characterise every critic) – I believe that Sydney readers are pretty well served by their critics. Those readers (or musicians) who do not like my style, aesthetic philosophy or opinions can read other views in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (which has

three regular reviewers), the *Australian*, the *Australian Financial Review*, the *Sydney Review*, the *Australian Jewish Times*, the *North Shore Times* and so on. That list offers a wide diversity of personalities as well as of cultural attitudes. Few of those writers are boring: I well recall being told by the London-based editor of *Opera*, when he was visiting Australia, that he found in Australian writing on the arts a vitality and wit that the English have lost. Self-interested though it may seem to say it, I believe that he is right.

Dr Johnson defined the lexicographer's task as "a harmless drudge". There are, of course, aspects of the life of a music critic which could be characterised like that, too. Mostly it is a position of great privilege, invigorating and informative. I believe that I have learned an immense amount about all aspects of classical music since I became a professional critic in 1978 (and before that I had written as long as I can recall and was a student journalist and editor). Furthermore, I now know, personally, virtually every composer in Australia and a very significant proportion of our performing musicians; I have many contacts and colleagues overseas where I have also benefited greatly as a result of my Australian position. Most of all I feel that being able to add this additional facet to my family and academic life has allowed me the rare opportunity of combining the two great loves of my life – music and writing. This brings to mind an age-old dispute between poets and composers who set their lines, a dispute that has spawned a few operas: which has primacy, the words or the music? One of these operas is called *Prima la Musica e poi le Parole*: "First the music and then the Words", which seems a fair summary of the right priorities for a critic.

I accept that – as in life generally – keeping true to those ideals is a faltering story but that must be where the authentic consistency lies. And if I am to be dreamed about by Australian musicians, perhaps I'd like it to be as a nocturnal marsupial in a picture by John Perceval.



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9.

1. Peter Ratcliffe, John Bennett
2. Jodie Baker
3. Kate Coombs, Harry Coombs
4. Fran Morris, Nicole Sheridan
5. H.L. Lee, Robert Van Der Vegt
6. Diana Nicholls, Stephen Fonti
7. Pat Spring
8. Yasna Palaysa
9. Hugh Massle, Claudia Hoffer

Photographs: David Karonidis



Photo - David Karonidis

Jillian Broadbent

The derivatives business has been called the "wild card in international finance". Jillian Broadbent, Executive Vice-President at Bankers Trust Australia, has spent the last ten years developing the derivatives business for BT Australia and New Zealand. She took up many of the difficult issues surrounding derivatives in an address to The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 5 July 1994.



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WHAT'S A NICE

GIRL LIKE ME DOING IN DERIVATIVES?

Jillian Broadbent

When Gerard Henderson asked me to select a topic which I would talk about this evening, it was after some weeks of damning press articles about derivatives. I was asking myself what's a nice girl like me doing in the derivatives market? Thus the topic.

Recent articles have described derivatives in many ways:

1. "The wild card in international finance" *The Economist*, May 1994.
2. Professor Hu at the School of Law of the University of Texas, in a paper examining the legal position of directors on corporate hedging, described derivatives as "a Jurassic Park where new risks and uncertainties arise as financial creatures are invented, introduced and then evolve or mutate". Despite this description, he concluded surprisingly that heavy regulation was not the answer.
3. "Like alligators in the swamp, derivatives lurk in the global economy" says *Fortune Magazine*, March 1994.
4. "Derivatives are what keep bank regulators awake at night." (*Business Review Weekly*, April 1993).
5. "Derivatives spread nitroglycerine over the debt structure of the entire nation" (US Senator Bryon Dorgan).
6. The cover of *Global Finance* is another example.

I've probably got your interest, but I can't guarantee I will keep it.

People always hesitate to ask accountants and bankers what they actually do for fear of being stuck in a very dull conversation. I have the challenge to describe what I work at, expel some myths and leave you with a better understanding of the derivatives business and its positive contribution to business efficiency.

I'm afraid the objective of ensuring this talk is not very dull has been secondary.

My approach is firstly to consider the origin and development of derivatives. Secondly, the concerns their development has raised and finally, I will try to convey the benefits to business efficiency of their application and why I have found in derivatives a creative and constructive career.

Market risk – the risk stemming from price fluctuations – is pervasive. Property companies and interest rates, resource projects and commodity prices, multinational and exchange rates. Managing price changes is a key element in business success. Derivatives were basically developed as a mechanism to control or manage these “market risks”.

The word *derivatives* is used to describe transactions derived from or traced to the underlying physical market.

The futures market was the first form of derivatives. This market provided a mechanism for people to buy and sell contracts which depended on the price of a physical commodity without having to hold that physical commodity. Greasy Wool was the founding futures contract at the Sydney Futures Exchange in 1960, some 34 years ago. In opening the wool trade to a wider group than the growers, it provided an opportunity to eliminate the price risk on wool growing, leaving only the risks of weather, disease, interest rates, etc to contend with. Cattle and gold futures contracts followed, then futures on interest rate instruments some 15 years ago.

Futures contracts are standardised in size and maturity and traded daily on the floor of the Futures Exchange. Banks extended the same concept to cover risks and maturities outside these specific contracts and entered into individual derivative transactions with their client base. These were called over-the-counter derivatives.

This separation of “the price” as an item to be traded, independently of the underlying asset of commodity, is the common element in all derivatives. This separation and intangible nature of derivatives has given these products, to some observers, a sense of mystery. Thus words like “shadow hanging over”, or “lurking around” have stuck to derivatives.

The breakdown of the elements of business risk to its component pieces encouraged these risks to be identified and changed, reduced or increased. This has allowed businesses a widening number of choices and ultimately an improvement in efficiencies. Derivatives have also enabled investors to include specifically tailored risks to their investment choice.

The changes in financial markets over the last 15 years from deregulation, globalisation and the breakdown of bank intermediation have further stimulated this trend to transact in the individual market risk pieces. These developments are interrelated and derivatives have played an important role in the ultimate effectiveness of these fundamental changes in the financing system.

Deregulation allowed a freer movement of capital within and between countries and brought with it a greater volatility in interest rates and exchange rates. There were consequently unwanted risks to be hedged by derivatives.

There was an increase in disintermediation (or borrowing and

lending outside the banking system). Twenty years ago, only the Australian Federal or State governments and the occasional large company raised money through the issue of bonds and debentures. Borrowing and lending of money was primarily through the banks. The banks intermediated between borrowers and lenders collecting deposits and taking a diversified portfolio of credit risk in making loans. This was inefficient and expensive for some borrowers who could raise money more cheaply by issuing securities or transferable notes directly to investors, both domestically and offshore.

This disintermediation and financial deregulation created a growing pool of transferable assets and stimulated the transfer of these debt and equity obligations. Information on the pricing or cost of debt for large borrowers was now visible. It could be called up on a screen. It was less of a private arrangement behind bank doors. Domestic markets became part of a global system of transferring money cost efficiently.

The value or interest rate on a security is now calculated by consideration of all of the contributing risk parts:

- The credit standing of the borrower (Federal government ... Joe Entrepreneur)
- The interest rate paid on the bond, whether it is fixed or variable every 3 months
- The maturity date and the right or option for the investor to redeem his or her investment early
- Currency denomination (A\$, US\$...)

Bankers began to scrutinize all this available information. As derivatives developed, they had a better capacity to manage these separate components.

It could be seen that Australian companies of AA credit category could issue a bond in US dollars, hedge the currency and interest rate through a derivative transaction and save a half a per cent on domestic funding alternatives.

It is the separation and transacting of the different price elements of a security which is the basis for derivatives. Derivatives involve unbundling, transforming and repackaging risks into bundles to fit the particular needs of various clients. Through derivative transactions, each of these component pieces could be swapped and converted into a comparable form and the savings identified and captured.

The Australian Federal government and the larger State governments achieve savings of \$10-20 million each year on their debt servicing costs by the use of derivatives.

Debt and equity issues now routinely tap a global capital pool made available by deregulation, disintermediation and derivative technology. As borrowers sought cheaper funds, investors sought higher returns for the same basket of components. The volume of

transactions in derivatives accelerated. The high credit standing of banks and their traditional role as financial intermediators made banks the natural providers of these risk swapping/derivative transactions.

Banks provide these tailored risk management products to governments, companies, fund managers and other banks. The banks are then required to manage the portfolio of risks they have acquired in providing these services. The risks are the same as those in the underlying markets for interest rates, exchange rates, shares or commodities. The skill of the bank is to manage these portfolios profitably.

The growth in derivatives in the 1980s was primarily from borrowers pursuing the cheapest source of funding around the world. The main area of derivative development over the last five years has been in options, i.e. buying or giving the right to a bank to buy an asset at a predetermined price. As options are dependent on analysis of past data and simulations to determine the probabilities of future outcomes, their pricing and risk management have been very computer intensive.

Computer technology and mathematical research have allowed an explosion in the application of options, and the estimation of the value of bets on quite complex financial outcomes. This option technology is now being applied to create assets with a unique combination of features. I remember Bankers Trust's early success as a fund manager, nearly 20 years ago, was in moving funds between asset categories (rather than just sitting on them as the large insurance companies had tended to do). This flexibility produced a higher rate of return and attracted superannuation funds to their management. Continual portfolio assessment and adjustment is now the normal approach of fund managers. Derivatives provide additional flexibility. They can change the risk components of the portfolio without the sale of the underlying assets.

In extracting the price sensitive pieces of assets or liabilities, derivative transactions can be used to shed unwanted risks or to acquire (tailored) risks. The end result has been generally lower funding costs to borrowers and higher returns to investors as derivatives help eliminate market anomalies. Any risk acquired can, however, have either positive or negative results. As risks transferred between banks and end-users, there have been incidents of losses from both the application and management of derivatives. Public attention over the last 12 months has been drawn to some very large specific losses.

- Showa Shell announced a loss of over \$1 billion on FX contracts used to hedge balance sheets exposure.
- Metallgesellschaft, Germany's 14th largest company, lost \$550 million on mismatches in their oil hedging contracts.
- Procter & Gamble, a large US multinational, lost US \$105 million after tax on geared investments structured with derivatives.

Banks themselves, as creators and facilitators of derivative transactions have not been free from problems.

- A large Dutch bank in New York discovered a \$40 million loss in its foreign exchange option books which had not been properly valued.
- Over the last four years, interest rates moved to historical lows and an era of low and stable interest rates was forecast. In pursuit of higher returns, money managers became attracted to tailored assets geared with derivatives. The recent sharp reversal in global interest rates over the last four months, evidenced by the 3.5 per cent rise in Australia's long bond rate, has shocked investors and caused significant losses. Derivatives are being questioned on the role they have played in exacerbating this sharp turnaround.

Despite these incidents, I do not believe derivatives will bring down the financial system.

The acceleration of turnover in derivative transactions and the incidents of recent large losses, have led appropriately to a closer scrutiny of this market by regulators and market participants. This vigilance is reassuring. Having grown quickly to a significant size and importance in the financial system, the regulatory framework for derivatives lagged behind. Legislation needed to be amended. Taxation, reporting and accounting treatments needed clarification and standardisation. Regulatory and internal guidelines for derivative users had to be established.

This is broadly occurring in most industrialised countries. Central Banks now collect comprehensive data and record the capital which their member banks expose to derivative transactions. These, in aggregate, are probably less than 20 per cent of bank exposures globally.

Last year, a group of 30 international banks cooperated to complete a study to provide 24 "best principles and practices" for financial institutions with regard to their derivative operations.

Legislation in Australia was drafted 20 years ago to cover the futures business but this did not adequately deal with over-the-counter derivatives.

The Australian Securities Commission, at the end of last year, proposed amendments to the legislation to clarify the law covering non-futures derivatives. They also moved to contain the providers of derivatives to well-capitalised, regulated bodies. The desire of the ASC was to ensure investor protection without inhibiting market efficiencies.

Accounting Standards boards are continually amending standards to best reflect the diverse array of products which are emerging. Individual company Boards are improving their understanding and establishing clearer internal guidelines and reporting on derivative transactions. The large losses and consequent response from regulators has created a stronger foundation for all transactions in derivatives.

Finally, for those I haven't put to sleep, I hope I have left you with a sense of the dynamics, the innovation, diversity and genuine cost efficiencies in the development and application of derivatives. There are also some dangers from their unfettered use.

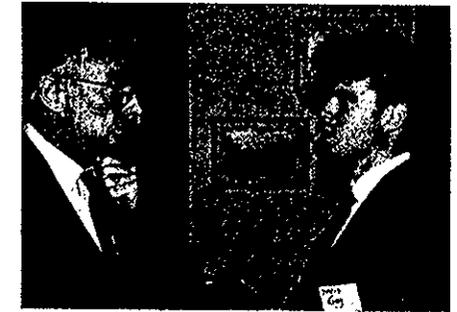
Bankers Trust Company has been a long-standing respected participant in the global derivative markets and is active in identifying and repackaging multiple risks through derivatives.

Charlie Sanford, the Chairman of Bankers Trust, sees finance as a science. He talks about the "Theory of Particle Finance" which will help us better understand an asset's financial attributes. He is a true believer in the added value of derivatives, the expansion in their technology and their application to the theory and practice of business and finance.

The search to identify and tease apart the risk components of a business or financial asset will continue. Derivatives will remain a key element in providing a mechanism to increase or reduce these risks for both fund managers and businesses. I look forward to continuing to play a part in what I see as the cutting edge of financial thinking.



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7.

1. Val Rundle, Carolyn Cameron, Betty Ingamells
2. Don Grimes, David King
3. Bob Wilcox
4. Judy Barraclough, Carnel Prentice
5. Alle Fabro
6. Adriana Lasamento, Julie Barrett, Carolina Puleston, Rebecca Rubin, Connie Salvo, Danielle Treweek
7. Michael Robins, Alastair MacKerras

Photographs: David Karonidis



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THE SCHOOL OF

BABEL – TEMPE HIGH IN MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA

Peter James



Peter James



Robert Cockburn

Photo – David Karanidis

Late in 1993 freelance documentary film producer Robert Cockburn set out to make a film on multicultural Australia. Along the way he discovered an unusual experiment at Tempe High that is attracting international curiosity and inspired by Peter James, the school's principal. To explain the Tempe High phenomenon and the success of the SBS documentary "The School of Babel" which Cockburn subsequently produced, Peter James and Robert Cockburn spoke for The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 12 July 1994.

The media is fascinated with the Tempe-Marrickville area. Reports of police vs drag racers on the Princes Highway, post picnic police-community sport at the Arabic festival, Cooks River pollution, street gangs, the third runway, noise pollution, continuation of the M5 freeway, a major garbage transfer station (Tempe Tip revisited?), and so on paint a dismal picture of the area that certainly suffers an image problem. Most of the local schools are classified as "disadvantaged" (part of the DSP or Disadvantaged Schools' Program) showing that the parents are the poorest 16 per cent of the country on economic indicators. The production of "The School of Babel" is a welcome, albeit unusual, piece of good news.

Tempe High Languages School serves its local community and is often described as the emerging, multicultural face of Sydney or even Australia. It would be easy for us to dwell on our problems, failures, disgraces but while they exist they are nowhere as impressive as the achievements of the bulk of this honest, optimistic and hardworking school community.

The areas that I will concentrate upon are those that the "School of Babel" highlighted regarding the development of English literacy as a long term goal through

- (a) our Languages Other Than English (LOTE) program and
- b) the "Write it Right" writing program.

Keep in mind that these are just two parts in a range of strategies that we have used to develop a new culture within the school. To appreciate this one needs an overview of the school and its temporal and social backgrounds.

Background

Tempe has a long history of accommodating working class people and migrants. The original school, still in use by us, dates 1874 and the second school, now our Industrial Arts block, dates 1923. These buildings formed Tempe Boys Junior Tech., an "intermediate high

school" providing a trades oriented curriculum for students not wishing to or considered incapable of following an academic career. In 1974 Arncliffe Girls Domestic Science School amalgamated with Tempe in our latest buildings to become a comprehensive, coeducational high school.

New buildings do not change a school culture and style overnight. The idea of academic success as a normal achievement rather than a source of amazement requires a sense of confidence from staff and students and an organisation within the institution that demands achievement. This is still emerging for us and the rate of emergence has been influenced by other changes in our environment.

The local district has of course changed in nature. One graduate of the school (1942) who has lived within 500 metres of the school for over 60 years reminisced to me that the Presbyterian church that he attended as a boy is now a Mosque, the old Church of Christ near the school is a Greek Orthodox Church and the Church of England is a private residence. Shopping centres show the influence of European, Middle Eastern, and more recently Asian migration. The arrival of the last few waves of non-European migrants and their choice of this district to settle has put new pressures on communities and their schools. Our consideration of the wishes, needs and aspirations of these mixed cultures as opposed to providing for their perceived deficiencies is another culture shift.

A feature of the present school is that no language group exceeds 19 per cent of the population, including the English background section.

1994 PROFILE

LANGUAGE BACKGROUND	PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION	LANGUAGE BACKGROUND	PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION
MACEDONIAN	18.2	CHINESE	9.3
ENGLISH	17.9	PORTUGUESE	3.1
ARABIC	13.4	HINDI	2.2
GREEK	12.6	PACIFIC ISL.	2.0
VIETNAMESE	11.4	OTHER	9.9

Others include - Croatian, Dutch, Fijian, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Philippino, Serbian, Spanish, Thai, Turkish, Urdu and more.

The six major groups - Anglo, Macedonian, Arabic, Greek, Vietnamese and Chinese make up 82 per cent of the total population. Not having a dominant group and the school's relevant programs help maintain a sense of tolerance within the school community and has allowed racial tensions to be a minor issue.

Challenges

In 1987 I found a traditional, well organised school that was quite popular with the local community through its insistence on discipline and school uniform. However some traditions were showing signs of wear and the movement from junior tech to full high school seemed to have stalled in the curriculum area. This emphasised English, I presume because of student literacy deficiencies, and technical or vocational subjects. Students received a limited choice of electives and effectively were presented with a teacher satisfying curriculum. The powerful curriculum that is highly regarded by society and a key to entering the upper levels of employment and training was available in a restricted form only. In particular the junior school curriculum did not support the more academic efforts in the senior school. Almost certainly this occurred because it was based on the belief that "our students" could not handle real study.

Clearly the curriculum needed revision to ensure -

- greater access to the powerful curriculum
- a more organised 7-12 course structure (now moving into K- 12)
- opportunities to develop social, political, organisational and economic skills to support the existing emphasis on technology.

These moves ought to assist students to avoid a "factory fodder" future. The emerging "clever country" arguments supported the need for new approaches in all schools, but particularly the DSP schools.

Other pressures were the retention rates in the senior school doubling; the community indicating higher expectations from schools; the Greiner/Metherell reforms. Our moves began before government change and I believe were a response to our local needs but swept on by all these issues.

Languages

A staff member cynically commented once that we produced youths illiterate in more than one language. The throw away line was annoying as it seemed to accept and mock this state and unfortunately I believed it was true. The deputy and I talked about languages and agreed that really one strength of our students was their bilingualism and that we ought to seek to capitalise on this.

Following this thinking we pressed for a Language Head Teacher even though not eligible. Fortunately the position was created and the first person offered it was committed to community languages and fluent in Arabic, Italian and French. An idle comment of mine at a function then led to the appointment of an overestablishment Vietnamese teacher. These two lucky breaks pointed us on the LOTE pathway at a time when most schools were winding back in this area.

As these events occurred, I was perturbed at the administrative difficulties and the limited outcomes of our English program. The

school was using much of its discretionary time to deliver extra English classes. This contributed to the narrow curriculum along with unsatisfactory staffing and time-tabling of English. We decided to reduce the 7x40 minute period allocation in English for each of year 7 to 10 to 6x40 minutes. Along with other adjustments we found time and suitable staff to create the language program and also offer an extra elective.

Community languages

In 1987 Greek was the only community language in the school and well supported by the Greek population. French was offered to all students but was dying. All Year 7 students followed a mixed language program which usually involved some French and Greek. Macedonian parents complained to me about the compulsory Greek. Through our new plans we could avoid that problem by offering Greek, Arabic and Vietnamese as community languages and others could choose from them or French and Italian. We also moved into Japanese, and taught Latin and German at different times. We could now see a means of specialising in community languages, particularly if we could introduce Macedonian, and needed to decide whether the outcomes would outweigh the remaining problems. Some of these were staffing, which is still a worry, time-tabling, staff and community attitudes, resources and the development of a school culture that did not allow ghettos to develop but aimed at a future multicultural Australia.

We found these arguments convincing -

- Learning a second language was difficult if you were not literate in your first language. A language teacher mentioned this and as English was the second language for more than four in every five of our students we could see that a community language program might support English. At least it should help develop vocabulary and there ought to be some transfer from grammar studies. The thought also arose that cognitive development across most areas of knowledge was related to literacy as a written form of language based cultural knowledge.
- Representative parents had shown their full support for the introduction of home languages in the school to ensure their children understood aspects of their cultural history.
- The Federal and State government policies on LOTE were unfolding and clearly any move towards languages would be in line with their future directions.
- The scaling factor used in the HSC favoured LOTE for people seeking university entrance though there were rumours to the contrary among many communities. This allegation surfaces frequently, usually quoted incorrectly by a politician.
- The economic arguments concerning overseas trade, the need for interpreters, negotiators and so on were evident.

- Student reaction was positive if only because this would get them out of Saturday Language classes.

Despite problems obtaining a Macedonian teacher we created over two years what is essentially our present system. It undergoes some form of refinement each year as we respond to movements in the community or staff. Our scheme is essentially very simple. As far as possible the children from non-English speaking backgrounds are encouraged to study their home language. We have managed to provide for Greek, Macedonian, Arabic, Vietnamese and Chinese speakers. We also offer Japanese and French for other students and next year we will probably introduce Korean. From Years 9 to 12 students elect to take a LOTE and this year more than 70 per cent of students study one. Through cooperation from local primary schools some students are genuine K-12 in their language. We believe our simple approach is unique in its range and purposes for a comprehensive high school.

Staff acceptance of the concept was slow at first but now seems well settled. Initial concerns were plain antagonism to the idea of featuring languages or cultures other than traditional. One staff member even asked me if I was aware that Australia was a white, English speaking, Protestant society. Other staff were concerned that the only people who would be employed or have a future within the school would be ethnic and bilingual. The desirability of bilingual staff is certain but it is not an exclusive condition or I would need to leave.

Outcomes of the program so far are encouraging -

- For many non-academic students their community language became their strength and gave school a new perspective, increasing their self-esteem.
- Our ethnic groups realised that the school welcomed them and valued their expected contribution to our school/community culture. Closer relationships formed between the communities and school.
- Ethnic groups not in the LOTE program, such as our small Aboriginal community, became active in our cultural activities.
- Peer tutoring of primary students by our students and provision of other support has strengthened relationships with local schools.
- Successes at the HSC in languages include three firsts in the State and a fourth at the highest levels. Often successful matriculants rely on their LOTE marks for a high TER. Improved English results are discussed later.
- Designation as a Languages High School in 1990.
- Provision of resources and advice to other schools in our "lighthouse role".
- Recent publicity and visits from academics, politicians and administrators from across the country and overseas.

I have not dwelt upon problems but there have been and still are plenty of challenges. Qualified staff for community languages are

difficult to find as their overseas training may not be recognised here. A standard of English that allows the teacher to operate as a team member within the school is essential.

Other challenges include - development of suitable, modern resources in many LOTE; providing for minority ethnic groups; providing for non-speakers in some LOTE; maintaining a focus on this country; controlling tendencies towards racism; defending against international tensions.

Writing

Our most recent development has been participation in the Write it Right program of teaching writing. This is the secondary offspring of The Language and Social Literacy project developed in local DSP primary schools. The Metropolitan East DSP group set up the program with a \$1.2 million budget jointly funded from DSP and the Education Training Fund. I represented the State secondary principals on the reference committee of the project. From the outset I encouraged staff members from the English and Science areas to participate in the first trials. We have become more involved and soon all members of the English and Science faculties will have had some formal training in the system and History and Maths will be trained in 1995.

The program relies on accepting literacy as a particular cultural background/context realised in a written language system. The speaker or writer needs to identify the audience and recognise the expected and valued forms and styles of expression e.g. science writing is different from a narrative required in an English assignment. Writings from students, teachers, exams, textbooks and the work place associated with the various subjects were collected by the project and the key elements in each identified.

This approach has particular appeal to me as it seeks to unravel the invisible cultural knowledge in being literate that is not acquired through a standard study of English. I see it as a fast track mechanism for our students who have not grown up in the Australian cultural background.

An example would be the frequently used examination exercise of writing a letter of complaint to a particular authority. For many cultures this is something that you just do not do, particularly to "authority". However a complaint is made that the style used in many cultures is quite different from that expected here and we may not recognise it as complaining.

Many Tempe students are recent arrivals and receive a crash course in English to prepare them for school. They are still extremely dependant on special assistance when they join the normal secondary school able to decipher English rather than understand it or use it effectively.

Other students may have been born in Australia yet at home English is rarely or never spoken. Typically they will have spent lengthy periods back in the home country. Usually they are more proficient in their mother tongue than in English but may not be proficient in either language. Their level of literacy often depends on the parents' education and this may have been severely limited through poverty, war and the other reasons that forced migration. Of course in such a family there is no library of English books, English newspapers are rarely bought, and the cultural blankets that surround the middle-class Anglo youth while growing up just do not exist. The project seems to give them a framework to operate within.

Social and functional literacy is a contentious and complex subject and not all teachers are convinced of this approach. However there are Tempe students who claim that it has helped them, changed their attitude to writing in English and increased their confidence and understanding of what is expected from them. Staff are increasing their commitment and I feel sure that the discussion generated has helped our literacy drive.

Now and next

Has all of this done much that is tangible for the development of our long term goal of improved English literacy?

Educational statistics are as confusing as economic indicators. The base level is continually changing and reference data is inconsistent. We feel we have improved over this time as in the 1986 HSC we sat 61 students for English at the HSC and all at the lowest level. The average results were almost 9 per cent below the State average. Comparable results were obtained in 1987.

In 1992 we entered 133 students at all levels of English including the highest. All groups exceeded the State average except for one of the higher levels but even there they were closer to average than the 1986 cohort. Also more than doubling the number staying on should have diluted rather than have strengthened our candidature, which further suggests an improvement.

The 1993 results were below 1992 but still the second best of the series. I am impressed with this as our 1993 cohort scored poorly as a group throughout their six years at school.

School Certificate English results show a small, inconsistent improvement over this time but in 1993 the achievement at the top end doubled. For the first time we were close to achieving State comparable results on this measure. There are probably a host of other factors affecting this so I regard it as a welcome but anomalous result.

A member of this group was highly commended in last year's Herald Writer of the Year competition. This year we have reached the latter rounds of the statewide, all schools' Mock Trial competition that

requires intelligence, quick wit, a high degree of literacy, and very superior verbal skills. I mention these as pointers to a general improvement in literacy.

I do not pretend that we have found answers to or reached the end of our problems. Each move forward uncovers other areas of interest or concern. We need to identify reasons for specific groups not improving at the rate of the others. I mentioned other emerging problems before and could go on pointing at matters yet to be solved or are currently being considered.

If it was not for the turmoil created by the arrival of Robert Cockburn I would not have bothered to review this area of our work. It has forced me to reflect, research and articulate upon our thoughts and motives that at the time were nowhere near as clear as this report makes them appear. I am grateful to the staff, particularly ESL staff, who have helped me with this. Robert's perspective ought to be interesting as an outsider who was given a unique opportunity to look inside our school.

THE SCHOOL OF

BABEL – TEMPE HIGH IN MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA

Robert Cockburn

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The documentary opens with a 17 year old Moslem Lebanese girl, Rolla Ali. She reads a prayer from the Koran, having first covered herself up with a long sleeved, high-necked jumper. In the next shot a soccer boot is being laced up. It is Rolla – she plays centre forward at school. She strips off to shorts and a sweat shirt, and runs out to kick off the game, and the film.

That's the story. What we accept as irreconcilable conflicts of culture, religion and gender, are not – even for someone who endures the most extreme form of stereotyping.

The film, "The School of Babel", had another title: "Moslem Girls Kick Balls" (after the movie "White Men Can't Jump"). That was found to be a bit rich in these politically correct times, although I don't think anyone around Tempe would have a problem, least of all the girls concerned. Young Australians, all of them, are made up of many parts as well as many places, which are not necessarily contradictory. It is us, an older generation, who tend to label people by a single image. Why?

Our irrational fear of other cultures can be stirred by a Moslem veil or a Sikh turban... and now it seems any teenager wearing a baseball hat in reverse. Difference and change can be threatening from Teheran and New York alike. And that single image, I readily admit, is so often generated by the one-way curse of television. A debate among people face to face, such as the one here tonight, is a kind of luxury now.

Like many of us, I thought I knew what a multicultural society meant. I grew up in one – Britain – where the reality of such is still officially denied. I lived and worked in Lebanon where difference was manipulated to fuel a decade of civil war. You can't imagine how remarkable Australia strikes an outsider with the human possibilities it opens up.

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Fathoming the depths of Peter James' achievements is beyond the scope of a one hour program. But in a school 83 per cent non-Anglo, neglected and divided he found the key to cohesion and educational

success by accepting his students' different cultures and languages rather than trying to eradicate them. Rather than encouraging ghettoism, the opposite has happened.

Teaching students their own languages helped to unlock their cognitive powers and lift their self esteem. The effect was to improve their English and other subjects - and with it their chance to enter the mainstream of higher education and work previously denied them.

By standing logic on its head, Tempe students felt accepted for who they were. They felt a legitimacy in this society, many for the first time in their lives, a way to belong to Australia, as others do without thinking. And when James cut English lessons by 16 per cent, giving more time to their first languages, their English kept improving. Was he defying gravity? The paradox of finding cohesion out of difference made Tempe an irresistible metaphor, or microcosm, for a bigger story.

I'll briefly explain the context "The School of Babel" was made in. Australia is emerging as a learning ground for a troubled world, post Cold War, as it tries to come to terms with the effects of rapidly increasing multicultural contact and conflict. Australia could also be the school of the title. Its multicultural society, while still mocked and scorned, is quietly becoming a serious focus of international study.

The end of the Cold War began an unprecedented acceleration of human movement as old borders fell. Whether they like it or not, more and more countries are becoming multicultural. Add to this the globalisation of business, communications, education, and even crime, and you start to see why the ability to coexist with many cultures is a key to political, social and economic stability, and for some, survival.

Wars in the old Soviet Union and Balkans, and the rise of racism in Europe and the US are all aspects of this global change. Ways to live in this turmoil are being sought in Australia.

A call to Harvard University's Professor of Education, Courtney Cazden, led me to Tempe High. Professor Cazden visited Tempe to see the work of the Federal government's Disadvantaged Schools Program there to develop its Genre English teaching program. This is a teaching innovation developed by Sydney's Dr Joan Rothery to overcome economic and cultural barriers. Cazden was amazed at the school's conscious use of its, the students', own languages in the process, a politically controversial approach in the US and Britain, and one that also sets Tempe High apart in Australia.

Tempe reveals the riches Australia is almost unwittingly discovering in itself, sometimes despite itself. And it poses a choice: what to do with the greatest natural resource found here so far? Ourselves. While not perfect, Australia still has one of the most rare commodities on earth right now - a working multicultural society. Like a vast natural laboratory, Western Sydney's intriguing new patterns of coexistence are becoming an international attraction.

It's not a question of whether or not we should have a multicultural society - it's here, now, and we are all part of it. The question is, do we fully realise the value of this emerging society? Or, as with past booms (to use the mining analogy) will the land suffer commercial exploitation if it is not looked after? Some signs are already appearing.

Poised on a constitutional debate, Australia, almost alone among nations, has a chance to shape its future. It can try to succeed where others have failed. The American Dream to make everyone conform has only polarised and demoralised that society.

Of the many possible film locations, Tempe revealed a future for Australia. Its problem-solving shows the rewards - human and cultural, political and commercial - that are there if we choose. Out of its many languages and problems of education, prejudice and poverty, it realised hidden talents and a sense of identity. Students accept their own cultures and their place in Australia without ambiguity - indeed the first is a prerequisite for the second. Is there a new definition of Australian citizenship emerging here?

Australia has received more people from more nations and more religions in a shorter space of time than any other country. Almost half of Australians now come from a non-Anglo background. Making sense of the process, the school has now been visited by Nelson Mandela's educational policy planner Sheila Jolobe, Judy Hurd wife of British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd and Australia's Federal and various State education departments, to name but a few.

As a metaphor to illustrate the dynamics of Australia's new global relationships, the film cuts Tempe High with the four corners of a troubled world - in this case the US, the UK, Israel and the world's most strict monoculture Japan as they each study Australia.

Japan was, perhaps, the most surprising case. The country the world turns to as the model economy to follow, was all the time studying Australian society for solutions to a crucial problem. The reality of Japan's migrant "guest" workers - more than a million mainly Koreans and Chinese who are an essential foundation of the economy, abominably treated and officially denied - had to be faced.

The powerful Ministry of Trade sent a top Tokyo professor, Masime Sekine, to study how Australian society works. Japan chooses the best models when it comes to learning. With Australia's help it is coming to terms with the fact that no race can survive as a political or economic island anymore.

Tempe High, however, went beyond all expectations creating, quite spontaneously, new criteria for coexistence. So, it is not really a fair metaphor for a country where the government is now removing real support for the multicultural society which in 1973 officially replaced the old White Australia Policy. The growing facade of political

correctness, legal structures and bureaucratic frenzy obscures the reality - and indeed, often prevents genuine change taking place.

Tempe High's experiment emerged outside any established legal, political or academic framework. I suspect it only happened, and succeeded, because it was overlooked and neglected by the authorities. The question most asked now is "how on earth did James get away with it?"

I think Peter trusts people by using his own judgment; enough to take the great risk. It is an act of individualism rarely seen these days, and one that is somehow disparaged in this corporate age - until it works.

Overlooking the individual and the particular (put another way, the subjective for the objective) is an attitude of the pragmatic 1980s, and remains in the so-called "caring" 1990s. It is especially true in the media where events are only accepted as legitimate if somehow approved or initiated by officialdom: the ministerial speech; the corporate press release; the PhD thesis; the television documentary; the talk at The Sydney Institute (and bless it for asking us!).

We are losing the gift, no the nerve, to trust what we see with our own eyes to be true; to trust what ordinary people do as legitimate. In failing to see the obvious, we are failing ourselves. Peter James did the opposite of what wisdom and officialdom dictated. He broke the rules.

Now, after reading all the millions of words of research - government reports, the theses and the propaganda - I'm reaching the conclusion that Tempe's and Australia's success lies in something as simple as "a fair go for all". I remember Peter joking that he epitomised the school's problems: he's white, Anglo Celtic, middle class, middle-aged and monolingual! His solution of mutual respect embraces everyone.

Multiculturalism is now central to the crucial issues of citizenship and constitutional change Australia faces. Leaving aside the political opportunism over the monarchy a British Head of State is simply not relevant for the vast majority of Australians of non-Anglo background. Even a supporter of the Queen like Liberal leader Alexander Downer, now calls her "irrelevant".

But if Australia's multicultural nature is so important, why is the government neglecting its stated aim to give non-Anglo people a role in the mainstream of Australian life? Multicultural education was called "a luxury" after the Teachers Federation cut back its work in this field recently.

The Federal government has cut English lessons for new migrants, the key to participation and to realising the skills they bring with them.

Responsibility for promoting cross-cultural acceptance is being shifted into the workplace by a process known as "mainstreaming". It's not working. Without proper support, the public and private sectors are

often incapable of fulfilling anything more than token lip service to ethnic equality, creating politically correct facades that hide the problems making real progress all the more difficult.

If Tempe fulfils Jack Kennedy's challenge "ask what can I do for my country", then we are now coming to the other half of the proposition as multiculturalism moves into that territory of "what can my country do for me". For the penny has dropped that multiculturalism is a profitable concept, a way to make money, to open up untapped domestic and international markets. And with it comes a user-pays clause for those who seek racial equality.

Australia's cultural diversity is being assayed in monetary terms - cents and dollars. (It is echoed in *The Bulletin's* cover story last October on the many ways to make a million dollars out of Sydney's Olympic Games.) Realising the untapped potential of a multicultural workforce is being encouraged with the promise of greater profits under the term "managing cultural diversity".

Our differences are something to be "managed", which is not quite the same as accepted. From a source of racism, multiculturalism is being redeemed by capitalism. But will this mean people who can't contribute or open up a market are valued less? And if the promised profits fail to materialise, will multiculturalism also be judged to have failed?

I looked at a number of industrial and corporate examples to film, which are very impressive. But one company saw acceptance of its workers' cultural differences as a concession to win acceptance of the rationalisation of its workforce. Culture becomes a bargaining chip.

There is a new industry of multiculturalism: at worst its ineffectual tokenism heralds a new orthodoxy to replace old prejudices. It offers no guarantees of equality for ordinary people. Indeed, giving up responsibility to help ethnic communities could be a false economy.

Take the withdrawal of English lessons for new migrants. In 1989 the Federal government estimated loss of productivity from poor communication in the workplace at \$3.2 billion. Today, groups left to give English language training themselves, such as in the car industry, say there are more accidents at work because basic safety signs are not understood. This is not simply about economic loss.

Tempe High demonstrates that by focusing on the educational needs of the individual, the cognitive, psychological and social benefits in a diverse society can follow as a matter of course. Cut corners, ignore the human factor, and the financial rewards will also be put in jeopardy. And yet it is surprising how little these human arguments are understood, even by those whom migrant communities look most to for support.

NSW Labor leader Bob Carr asked recently in the *Sydney Morning Herald* "what use is it" to learn a foreign language unless it is

to a level of fluency to conduct business negotiations abroad. What a criterion for learning! Mr Carr also questioned the role of the "Genre" English program which attracted Harvard to Tempe High. Forget, for a moment, today's fierce educational debate between the genrists' "functional grammar" and supporters of "whole language": Tempe opens up the lives of children who fall outside any functional teaching process.

By giving priority to the commercial imperative are we in danger of throwing the baby out with the bath water? Deny the people who give us such breakthroughs as Tempe and you will lose your dollars too - perhaps even more.

Through education Peter James has also solved a potential explosion. Professor Cazden points out that James was just a chemistry teacher - but he clearly knows a thing or two about working in Sydney's potentially hazardous social laboratory without blowing everyone up.

In 1995 Australia hosts the first United Nations-sponsored conference of Cultural Diversity for world leaders. It is a personal crusade by Prime Minister Paul Keating. Backed by UN Secretary-General Butros Butros Ghali, it is the highest recognition of Australia's multicultural achievements, a sort of human equivalent of the Rio Earth Summit.

The emphasis however will be on the untapped commercial benefits of cultures, largely leaving aside the hard political issues of ethnic cleansing and the rise of racism. We turn a blind eye to these aspects at our peril. Offering unreal expectations could be dangerous and in some ways degrading. Which of us wants to be "culturally managed"?

Could this need to "manage cultural diversity" be a new manifestation of the same old fear of different cultures? While researching the documentary it was put to me that the traditional Anglo establishment is, perhaps subconsciously, still defending itself against the reality of an equitable multicultural country. And by equitable I mean equal access not only to education and jobs, but to power.

One of the most intriguing insights during filming came from Robert Veal a teaching consultant with the Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP). Discussing the general fall in English standards among all students, Veal revealed that some of Sydney's most exclusive schools, (he names Scots College) are now turning to the DSP's English program, developed at schools like Tempe, to help their own students. The traditional guardians of the English language, and the power it confers, are today maintaining standards with the help of Vietnamese refugees.

The DSP's Genre English program is exported to nine countries - a multicultural success if ever there was one. And how has the DSP and its schools been rewarded? This year the NSW Liberal Government cut

back the numbers of DSP consultants in the Tempe area from ten to six, and increased the daily cost of these consultants to disadvantaged schools from A\$225 to A\$400.

Hardly a problem for the likes of Scots College. Has a backlash against multiculturalism set in?

Last night (4 July) the ABC's *Four Corners* program investigated ALP Branch stacking by ethnic minorities - Macedonians and Vietnamese in particular. Rival Labor factions were accused of cynically using migrant frustration to support their candidates - a nice bit of "managing cultural diversity".

To maintain factional power in the ALP, the factory fodder of the 1950s has become the party political fodder of the 1990s. And yet this new non-Anglo membership was still portrayed as a threat, something at odds with what the ALP should be.

Migrants have been promised much by the main political parties, only to be offered token representation at the end of it. Just look at the number of non-Anglo State and Federal MPs and ministers in Australia - for that matter just look at the numbers of women in positions of power if you want to judge real intent and progress.

"Ethnic stacking" of branches is equally a cry to participate, to be able to belong like everyone else. I wonder if one of the factors inflaming relations between Greek and Macedonians here is the frustration of exercising no real political expression and participation. Mainstream Australia could examine its own part in this affair before it condemns the antagonists, or for that matter the "ethnic" branch stackers.

There is, however, one issue of multiculturalism and power that remains taboo for the media. I'm talking about the ownership of Australia's newspapers - Australia's voice - and the foreigners we don't see as such. The News Ltd and John Fairfax groups are controlled by two North Americans, Rupert Murdoch and Conrad Black who greatly influence what we read, and what we don't. Which brings me back to those baseball hats and the powerful single image.

It was without irony this month the *Sydney Morning Herald* attacked Australian youths' love affair with the American basketball culture and what it perceived as collateral damage. Was this attack on youth concealing an adult guilt about the North American control of Australia's newspapers? Blaming youth is popular just now.

I don't intentionally come back to Bob Carr, but he used the image of kids wearing baseball hats reversed, when encouraging tougher police measures for gangs typified by a fashion. Bob once told me of his happy obsession playing arcane quiz games about past US presidents at the US Embassy's Chester A Arthur Club - if you like, the grown-ups way of getting together in a gang and putting your baseball hat on the wrong way around. We embrace different cultures in our different ways.

Used as an image of urban fear, the direction you wear your baseball hat has a logic Jonathon Swift might have dreamed up. Would things be different if this vote catching fad for tougher policing of youth had been applied equally to policing the media owners who influence them?

Of course I chose Tempe High with its kids and staff to film. This is the place that had AMERICA coming to its doorstep to learn about an Australian achievement. It creates self respect out of despair. It turns the cultural cringe (of which America and Britain are two cheeks of, well let's be polite and say, the same face) on its head. It has the stuff politicians can't seem to muster, or perhaps wish to believe in.

Will the 1990s be remembered as the time Australia turned away from a unique opportunity to shape its society for the next century - because we didn't appreciate our own good fortune?

I'd like to thank The Sydney Institute for inviting us to speak, and also to take this opportunity to thank Peter James and the students and staff of Tempe High Languages School for taking another risk in allowing a film to show their remarkable and practical vision of Australia.



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1. Linda Bergin, Brian Bergin

2. Astrid Campbell, Patrick Gallagher,
Monica Joyce

3. Max Walsh, Simon Gentry, Jenny Gentry

4. Jeff Portelli, Anissa Wong

5. Chris Hayes, Susanna Short

6. Barbara Hilliard, John Avigdor,
Elizabeth Fletcher

7. Guy Manson, Needa Milin

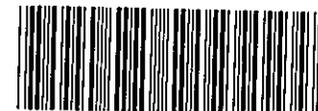
Photographs: David Karonidis



Photo - David Karouidis

Sue Milliken

Chairman of the Australian Film Commission and film producer with Samson Productions, Sue Milliken has a lot to do with violence and the cinema. In an address to The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 19 July 1994 Sue Milliken explored the contentious issues surrounding film classification as well as the continuing debate over cinema and its social responsibilities.



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VIOLENCE IN THE

CINEMA

Sue Milliken

In 1987 I spent what ultimately proved to be a fruitless eight months producing a film for the legendary Italian/American moviemaker Dino De Laurentiis, called *Total Recall*. It was fruitless because during this period the financial house of cards which Dino had built in Los Angeles on the rising tide of the 1980s was collapsing, to mix a metaphor, like a dud souffle.

In the meantime, we had taken over several of the pavilions at the Sydney Showground where 50 model makers, special effects wizards from Hollywood and the Australian director Bruce Beresford had begun the complex planning for this \$30 million film. Bruce had unwisely allowed himself to be sidetracked from a marvellous story which he and I had intended to make about an entombed miner in Coolgardie, into this futuristic confection about a man who decides to take a mind-holiday to Mars.

One after another Dino's slate of American movies opened in the US cinema and flopped with a sinking inevitability exceeded only by the stock market crash which soon followed. Our cash flow dried up as one attempt at resuscitation after another failed to materialise. Finally, we packed the beautiful models of New York in the year 2087 into a rented container and trooped off to other films and other destinies.

There was considerable irony, therefore, when in May 1990 I was required, as a member of the Film Censorship Board of Review, to hear an appeal against an R classification for *Total Recall*.

The rights to the film had been sold to the American company Carolco and production had eventually gone ahead in the USA under the direction of Paul Verhoeven, the director of *Robocop*, with Arnold Schwarzenegger in the lead.

It was a fascinating experience to see someone else's version of a film I knew so well. There it was, unfolding on the screen, the story had changed little, some of Bruce Beresford's rewrite of the script was even still there.

But it was **VIOLENT**.

Bruce's film was to be an elegant spoof of science fiction, with lots of verbal allegories and sendups. Apart from one or two conventional chase scenes and a couple of punch ups, there was no violence at all in our version. Patrick Swayze was to star in the lead role. A sexy, classically trained dancer, he had become a major star after the success of *Dirty Dancing*. He would have had no trouble delivering Bruce's clever dialogue and giving the hero a swashbuckling grace.

Now here was Schwarzenegger, replacing verbal entertainment with visceral. To quote the Censorship Board's description of some of the scenes which caused it to give the film an R:

The railway station gunfight with numerous blood-burst bullet wounds to male's body which is then used as a shield, incurring further wounds;
Males's arms crushed and severed by elevator with subsequent visuals of hero holding the dripping limbs;
Two males implicitly impaled by spiked metal objects, one showing spike protruding from a bloody neck the other from the head, with blood spray and sound effects.

In addition, there were "highly realistic depictions of violence including ongoing fight sequences with heavy blows and kicks, many close-up bullet wounds and post-action visuals of very bloody wounds."

The distributor sought a reclassification to M on the grounds that the violence was tongue in cheek, of the "comic strip" and cartoon type.

While sympathising to some extent with the distributor's position, the Board of Review felt the violence went too far to be available to children in the virtually unrestricted M classification, and rejected the appeal.

In fact if I remember correctly, what ultimately happened was that the film was recut, resubmitted to the Censorship Board proper, and achieved its M rating.

However the point I want to emphasise is not so much the *rating* as the *approach*. We will never know of course whether the Beresford version would have been as successful. On one level, our budget was about half of the Carolco version, and I doubt we could have matched the superb quality of the American special effects. But I was fairly certain that the audience for that kind of film would infinitely prefer Schwarzenegger fracturing the dialogue and kicking heads in, to Patrick Swayze's interpretation of Bruce's spoofy approach.

I felt depressed by this conclusion.

There is a chance to compare the handling of violence in two versions of another film – in this case made 25 years apart – *Cape Fear*. The 1960s version directed by J. Lee Thompson starring Gregory Peck and Robert Mitchum, is a chilling and disturbing film although there are almost no explicitly violent scenes in it. The camera is held back

from the action or placed outside the room when a violent act is occurring. Martin Scorsese's remake starring Nick Nolte and Robert de Niro – interestingly with Robert Mitchum now playing the police chief – gets right in there with the action, and shows you in gruesome closeup what the man with the grudge is capable of.

In my opinion it is not as effective because in the original version one's imagination works overtime, whereas one is prone to tune out in the remake when it gets too much.

Even a director with the light touch of Beresford, however, is not immune from committing violence to the screen. In *Black Robe*, which we subsequently worked on together in Canada in 1990, there is a sequence which begins with a shock cut to a closeup of the wife of a key character being shot through the throat by an arrow and dying horribly, followed soon after by the torture of the heroes. This includes the priest's finger being sawn off by the Iroquois chief and the slitting of the throat of a child. The original version contained a shot of the finger being thrown to a dog who gulped it down with cheerful satisfaction, and a close shot of the throat slitting. The distributor persuaded Bruce to remove these shots from the film before release. I was sorry to see the shot of the dog go, because it was obvious it enjoyed the digit, and those who have seen the film will know there's not a lot of anyone enjoying anything in *Black Robe*.

In *Black Robe*, we were attempting to portray recorded history as truthfully as possible and indeed the violence depicted in the film was kindergarten stuff compared to the real cruelties the Indigenous people of northern Canada – the Indian tribes – perpetrated on each other and, perhaps more justifiably, on the intruding French and British. There would have been no one left in the cinema if we had shown the refinements detailed in a little book called *Tortures of the Iroquois* which was part of the film's research material. However, the film would have been less honest and to some extent have lost focus if the scenes described had been omitted altogether.

In some ways the violence in *Black Robe* was even more shocking than the so-called "cartoon" violence of films like *Total Recall*, because of the skill of the film maker and his desire to create characters and events which reached the audience emotionally and therefore touched more deeply.

The growing proliferation of violence in films designed for mass entertainment such as *Silence of the Lambs*, *Terminator 2*, *Unforgiven*, *The Lethal Weapons*, the Bruce Willis vehicle *The Last Boy Scout*, and *Universal Soldier* not to mention *Basic Instinct*, created a censorship dilemma in regard to appropriate viewing for children which lead to the introduction of the MA rating, which only permits access to people under fifteen years if they are accompanied by an adult. It is ironic to note that although this rating was created because of the desire to

prevent access by young children to violent films, *The Piano*, which had only one violent moment, and my own latest production, *Sirens*, in which there is not a violent frame, were both immediately classified MA. Such are the workings of the bureaucracy.

I had much cause to ponder the subject of appropriate classification during my four and half years on what became the Film and Literature of Board of Review. Sometimes the decisions were comparatively straightforward. Such as rejecting the appeal for registration of a video titled *Inhumanities II – Modern Atrocities*. (*Inhumanities I* was before my time and I don't know what happened to it). *Inhumanities II* was a "documentary video presenting a collage of real life modern atrocities including executions and murders, plus news reel footage showing tragic accidents and crashes at air shows and sporting events". Many of the scenes were replayed many times in slow motion. Much of the material, I have to say, was no worse than scenes which are frequently depicted on the evening news with equally repetitive relish. But the Board of Review agreed with the Censorship Board that it was inappropriate to make such material available for exploitation in video shops.

Not all the appeals we heard were related to violence however. Some addressed the depiction of drugs in films, and a disappointing few were related to explicitly depicted sex. (My very first appeal required me to watch six pornographic videos in the company of three men I had met only fifteen minutes earlier. A somewhat bizarre experience. I think for my colleagues as well as myself. Fortunately the occasional use of the fast forward button provided some lighter moments. The numbing effect of pornography meant that it wasn't long before my principal reaction was admiration for the extraordinary places they put the camera!)

It was fortunate that there was an occasional lighter side to the job, because more often we were presented with films like Peter Greenaway's *The Cook The Thief His Wife and Her Lover*, *Henry, Portrait of a Serial Killer*, and the infamous *Salò*.

My invitation to address this forum came about because I was foolish enough to allow myself to appear on television to debate his use of violence with the English director Peter Greenaway, who was in Australia to promote his new film, *The Baby of Macon*. I say foolish because it is impossible to debate an issue of such complexity in a panel situation in 20 minutes on TV. Even with the floor to myself as I have this evening, I still feel inadequate to encompass all aspects of the issue.

I found *The Cook the Thief* unremittingly violent, sadistic and gross. I therefore had no doubts about voting to reject an appeal for an M certificate, upholding the Censorship Board's rating of R. My points to Peter Greenaway were that I was not advocating the banning of his films, merely appropriate classification, and that I would in future

invoke my right as an individual not to see his exercises in violence such as *The Baby of Macon*.

The case of *Henry, Portrait of a Serial Killer*, was not so straightforward.

This low key, low budget, unsensational and extremely well made depiction of the activities of a bloodless serial killer was refused registration by the Censorship Board. Its very reputable distributor appealed, seeking an R classification. Here, I felt, as I sat down to view the film, was a case of damned if you do and damned if you don't.

In the main, *Henry* is a forensically interesting insight into this most unpredictable category of modern slayers. However in addition to a number of quite explicit scenes there was a sequence where Henry tortures and murders a suburban family – obviously selected at random – while his accomplice videotapes what is happening and which they subsequently replay on the family VCR, and an incestual rape. These scenes gave even the more detached members of the Appeals Board cause for concern. In the end the film was released with an R registration after some cuts had been made.

And then there was *Salò*. I considered leaving this one out of my address this evening, because the issues are so complex and controversial that I can't really deal with them adequately in the time available. However I decided it was ducking the issue to do so. So I'll try.

The film, completed in 1975, had been refused classification in Australia, although it had been screened in a number of other countries. The distributor's appeal for registration was based on screening in a single arthouse cinema in capital cities and there was no question of registration for any other media, such as television or video.

The filmmaker, Pier Paolo Pasolini, was among the leading filmmakers of his time, and *Salò* is considered by many to be one of his most powerful and important works. Generally considered to be a metaphor for Fascism and oppression, its images of violence, torture and sadism are prolonged and shocking. They are, however, integral to the filmmaker's purpose, and neither erotic nor titillating. Nor are they without precedent. One only has to look as far as Peter Greenaway to see that. There was no question of cutting because if you took the nasty bits out of *Salò*, you'd have a film about fifteen minutes long. Perhaps even shorter.

After much agonising, we took the view that after such a long period – nearly 20 years – adult Australians, and I stress the word **adult** – with strong stomachs and an historical interest in the works of Pasolini – should have the right to see the film in properly controlled circumstances. They also, of course, had the right to absent themselves.

The result, which did not come as a huge surprise, was a field day for the minority in our society who would seek to control the individual

freedoms of others. It also provoked a certain amount of serious and thoughtful debate about "how far should we go".

It provided an opportunity for certain politicians to get their names before the public by professing to protect grown adults from something they had not even seen themselves. It gave Senator Harradine from Tasmania a chance to show off his particularly theatrical and inquisitorial style before the Senate Standing Committee on Community Standards for Television. The film had not been classified for television, but the Commission made it its business by claiming that a precedent could have been set for a later appeal for wider registration.

The film I believe screened to generally small audiences and I am not aware of any epidemics of serial killing or unmotivated attacks on innocent people as a result.

So to the sixty-four dollar question: is violence in the cinema justified, and if so, how and when?

Since even before the Coliseum preceded the Rugby League match as popular Saturday afternoon entertainment, violence has been an integral part of society's diversions. That there is a dark side to the human psyche is a statement so obvious as not to require elaborating. The human, after all, is the only animal on earth which kills for any reason other than survival.

There is no sign of this unattractive human trait diminishing, and the immediacy of television has brought the species' propensity to inflict pain and degradation on its fellows closer than ever to our day to day existence.

Is it then better for this dark side to be satisfied by dramatised violence, where no one is actually hurt, or for it to find satisfaction in watching the real thing, such as in the Coliseum or a Nazi concentration camp?

Few would argue for the latter. But the question leads to the real conundrum: does watching fictionalised violence provoke the real thing? Many people think so.

In *Good Weekend*, 21 May, 1994, an article by Catherine Lumby headed "Too Violent?" opened: "Hardly a month goes past without media reports of a crime so terrible that it seems to undermine our social fabric." She goes on to say, "At the back of many people's minds is the notion that blame for the acts depicted in the media lies with the media: that television, films – and now video and computer games – are responsible for an explosion of violence."

There are many conflicting opinions about this, and I can't say for sure that it's not so. My personal view is that bigger concentrations of population with their accompanying poverty and stress just make us more aware of the violence inherent in human society. To a large extent, films are **following**, not **leading**, society's evolving directions.

How then, given the failure of those with an opinion on the subject to agree, is the film maker, the creature of visual fiction, to deal with it?

Speaking personally, I have an incredibly weak stomach and avoid going to see violent films almost entirely. Almost, that is. But even for me, there are exceptions. Such as *The Wild Bunch* – an extraordinary film for its time in the way it handled blood and the bullet hit. Recently, *Goodfellas* and *Unforgiven* evoked a kind of horrified respect. All are unusually well-made films, but what kind of latent atavistic instincts made it possible for me to sit through them? *Romper Stomper* is an important Australian film about a side of our society not often talked about.

I schooled myself to sit through violent films during my time on the Appeals Board, and made my contribution to the decisions as responsibly and fairly as I knew how. Although it is nearly impossible to avoid some depiction of action/violence in most subjects, I have no interest in making films like the ones named here. Even *The Silence of the Lambs*, a clever, slightly tongue in cheek thriller with a totally violent theme, however financially successful, would not attract me as a subject to produce.

Drama is conflict. Thus many stories of sufficient interest to appeal to a wide audience contain elements of violence. Two of the films I have chosen to make, *Weekend of Shadows* and *The Odd Angry Shot*, which were co-produced and directed by my husband, Tom Jeffrey, had violent themes – persecution and murder in a country town, and the Vietnam War. *Black Robe* had the sequence previously described. The subject of what I hope will be my next film is women prisoners of the Japanese in World War II – one of the most inherently violent situations imaginable, nonetheless a story of great courage and imagination.

Even *The Piano* had its finger-chopping scene.

So perhaps it's not whether or not the story contains elements of violence which is the issue, it's how the film maker handles it, and whether it is used justifiably to make a point about the human condition, or whether it is there to appeal to, and profit by, the bloodlust inherent in the human character.

I had learned, through the hundreds of times I saw the gruesome shots in *Black Robe* during post production, to close my eyes until they had passed. But the audience does not have this flexibility. It usually does not know what is coming. Which raises the question of whether film makers always appreciate the traumatic effect of their skills on people to whom violence is neither an art nor a way of life. Probably some don't; some, unquestionably, know exactly what they're doing.

One of the few things we can feel confident about is that it is critical that mechanisms remain in place to minimise the effect of

violence in films on young people. There is no way, with a television set in the living room, that it can be avoided altogether. The mechanisms already in place in our society on the whole work well. But they are at all times very dependent upon the maturity and commonsense of the people who administer them.

At the same time there is a greater freedom of choice for adults than there was even 20 years ago.

There is a genuine concern about access to provocative films by the disturbed minority. But I can't agree that the whole of society should be held down to the lowest common denominator.

If this were so, only a tiny number of the population would be allowed to drive motor vehicles, and deaths on the road would be virtually eliminated. (Of course a positive side benefit of this would be fabulous public transport, so perhaps it's not such a good example).

Just about everything in life is a risk, and the best that can be done is to calculate that risk and put mechanisms in place to offset it. I believe that mature adults should have the right to see films which push at the edge of acceptable convention, which provoke and stimulate. And that film makers should have the freedom to make these films, and to have them seen. If that means that the crazies can get in too, this is a cost we must bear. If it also means that sometimes the regulators acting on behalf of society get the equation wrong, that is something we have to watch and take care about, but be careful to take a long term view. There are as many opinions as there are people thinking about it, about just what constitutes acceptable behaviour and what does not.

It's fine to say, and I and many others believe it, that film makers have a responsibility to the community not to cynically exploit the basest aspects of human nature. But having said it, it is pointless to expect total compliance. There will always be people who put a dollar before principle or responsibility.

A whole new universe of opportunity for exploitation in the visual medium is already opening up: the technology of the interactive video. From a censorship point of view this is a nightmare, especially as the people charged with inventing new regulations are stratospheres behind the principal consumers - young people - in understanding and operating these computer driven entertainments.

And I haven't even touched on pay television.

What is the answer? Is there one? In taking you tonight through some of the aspects of violence in the cinema which have impacted on me, I hope I have given some idea of the vastness of the subject, and its complexity. I haven't given you any answers, but then I would be fooling myself if I thought I could do so.



1. Ewa Werencziak, Clement Tsang
2. Simon Ling, Sally Semmens
3. Jillian Broadbent, Roma Gillam
4. Josephine Delacour, Raewyn Laurenson
5. Elizabeth Henderson, John Johnson
6. Don Grimes, Dick Klugman
7. Chris Butler, Richard Tallboys
8. Helen Saunders
9. Rebecca Golden, Jenny Gentry
10. Rodney Henderson, Philip Smiles
11. Milton Osborne, Janet Grundy
12. John Jacob, Barry Coldrey



Photo - David Karaidis

Deborah Lipstadt

Professor Deborah Lipstadt is the author of *Beyond Belief: The American Press and the Coming of the Holocaust 1933-1945* and occupies the Dorot Chair in Modern Jewish and Holocaust Studies at Emory University, Atlanta. During a visit to Australia in July, Professor Lipstadt addressed The Sydney Institute on Thursday 21 July 1994. Professor Lipstadt reminded her audience of the growing respectability of Holocaust denial theories in spite of their being no more credible than the assertion that the earth is flat.



HOLOCAUST

DENIAL AND THE EXTREME RIGHT

Deborah Lipstadt

This presentation is an attempt to explore who the deniers are and more specifically the right wing threat they represent. I plan also to examine how we might address this issue in terms of governmental policies. I also would like to explore the extent of the threat Holocaust denial presents to history. I am one of those who has long argued that we have to be very careful about behaving like Chicken Little, the figure in the children's book who was always running around yelling, "Dear me, the sky is falling." Well, one day the sky actually began to fall and Chicken Little ran around and said, "Dear me, the sky is falling" but nobody paid any attention because they had tired of Chicken Little's warning. Every time we come across an extremist, every time we come across something racist, anti-Semitic, or other form of political extremism, we have to be very careful of panicking, yelling and screaming. We have to make a special effort to discern what threat is valid and what is not valid. That is part of what I want to address today in terms of Holocaust denial. How real is the threat to history? Are we in danger of becoming historical Chicken Littles?

Allow me to begin by reading to you a letter that I received from a gentleman in northern California shortly after my book appeared in the United States:

Dear Professor Lipstadt,

As I listened to your conversation on the national public radio show *Fresh Air* my mind went back to a bizarre event of some years ago. During the 1958-59 season there appeared on television a drama later made into the movie *Judgment at Nuremberg*. From time to time there was a momentary silence. Not part of the drama, but, many of us supposed, a temporary audio failure. And then a day or so later we had the explanation. Our local utility company - Pacific Gas and Electric - was a co-sponsor of the production. And some official there believed the references to gas chambers would give gas a bad name and possibly cut sales. He therefore ordered all such references bleeped out. So instead of denying the Holocaust we have denying the use of gas. As Winston Churchill wrote regarding a totally different situation: "One cannot today even reconstruct the state of mind which would render such gestures possible."

I begin my presentation to you today with that letter for a number of reasons. First of all, it is so absurd as to be humorous and in my field of study one pounces on every possibility for a little bit of humour. Those possibilities are few and far between. But more important, I think, is the quote by Winston Churchill: "One cannot today even reconstruct the state of mind which would render such gestures possible." That can be said of the Holocaust and it certainly can be said of the attempt to deny the Holocaust. So my effort today is to try and reconstruct the state of mind which would render denial possible.

It may be unnecessary in this kind of audience to give you a profile of who the deniers are but let me do so briefly nonetheless. Clearly, these people are anti-Semites. There is no question but that Holocaust denial is a form of anti-Semitism. One of the questions the deniers have to answer for those they are attempting to attract is: "Why this supposed hoax?" or "What is the rationale of the hoaxers?" They must provide people with a rational explanation for this "massive conspiracy". The deniers ask the rhetorical question, "Who benefited from the Holocaust?" And they answer, "The Jews." According to the deniers, because of the Holocaust, the Jews got the State of Israel. The connection between the State of Israel and the Holocaust is, of course, much more complex than that. The State of Israel was established because the British could not handle the political situation in the Middle East. They showed little sympathy for the Jewish survivors who wished to gain entry into Palestine. Nonetheless the popular notion often is that the State of Israel is a direct result of the Holocaust. But the deniers do not stop there. They proceed and ask, "What else did the Jews get out of the Holocaust?" And they answer their own question with the word, "Reparations." Reparations, of course, is a fancy word for money.

The minute you lay out this scenario you have immediately provided a familiar rationale for the Holocaust "hoax". You have drawn upon long-standing, pre-existing anti-Semitic stereotypes. What are those stereotypes? Jews are connivers. They manipulate, they manipulate political opinion through the mythical, all powerful "Jewish lobby". And, of course, the other part of the stereotype is that the Jews are "money hungry". This idea of Jew as manipulator and the idea of Jew as money hungry have their roots in centuries-old anti-Semitism. As a result the person who is the least bit inclined towards anti-Semitism, has been provided with an explanation for Holocaust denial which "makes sense". It rings familiar.

That is an example of how Holocaust denial simultaneously both relies on and buttresses anti-Semitism. Let me provide you with a further example of the deniers' singular preoccupation with Jews. One of the main arguments that the deniers make is that the gas chambers were a physical and technological impossibility. The idea of killing

chambers, they argue, is all something made up by the Jews. It is a "Jewish Fiction". The deniers are attempting to have their listeners ignore something very basic. When they say, "these gas chambers are a story the Jews make up to win sympathy" they are, as per usual, playing fast and furious with history.

In order to understand how they do so we must ask who were the first victims of death by gas chambers? They were those who were, from the Third Reich's perspective, unfit to live. They were people with hereditary diseases and physical deformities as well as those whose physical, mental and genetic profiles did not fit into the National Socialist perception of the perfect Aryan race. Any German "Aryan" who had a physical or mental blemish that the Nazis felt had no place in the *Herrenvolk*, the all perfect race, they were developing was consigned to a gas chamber as part of the Euthanasia Program between 1939 and 1941.

Those were the first people to go into gas chambers. The murder of these people and the gas chambers used to kill them served as prototypes for what would eventually be done in the death camps. Eventually the program was stopped because of an outcry by the German people including the German Christian religious leadership. The deniers, of course, do not address this event. So when today you meet a German who says my uncle, aunt, sibling, or father who had a hereditary disease or who contracted syphilis was killed in a gas chamber, is that person lying? Is that person part of a "Jewish hoax"? Of course they are not. We have all the documentation on the Euthanasia Program, as we have all the documentation about the gas chambers in the death camps. The deniers are not interested in addressing this issue because it does not augment their efforts to spread anti-Semitism.

But it is possible in yet another fashion to unmask the deniers' all consuming pre-occupation with the Jews and not with, as they would claim, getting at the truth. Jews, we know, were not the only ones sent to the gas chambers. There were the Gypsies. We do not know precisely how many died this way but there were a significant number of Gypsies. Are the Gypsies also lying? Then there were the Polish Catholics. Not all Polish Catholics who were arrested were sent to gas chambers. The vast majority were not. But some were. When Poles today talk about their forbearers who were killed this way are they lying? But the deniers never address that. All they address is the Jews because they want people to believe this is a specifically Jewish hoax.

But the deniers are not just anti-Semites. Many of them are also racists. Moreover all the extremist racist groups in my country, the Ku Klux Klan, White Aryan Nation and a range of others have, as have a host of similar groups in other countries, adopted Holocaust denial as a basic tenet of their so called ideology. They use it to buttress the

following argument: Every time we want to talk, "about the natural superiority of white people" we are told "that is Nazi science, that is eugenics. And Nazi science, eugenics, led to the Holocaust." The hoax of the Holocaust is, the racists contend, being used to keep us from making the argument of the natural superiority of white people.

White supremacist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan have been active in countries in the former Soviet bloc in an attempt to establish sub-cells of their own organisations. They espouse both Holocaust denial and racist themes. Both find an extremely receptive audience in those countries where there is not only racial tension but an emerging militant ethnic nationalism. Moreover, there is a desire on the part of certain political, ethnic and religious groups in these countries to rewrite history. So if another group wishes to do the same thing, e.g. the deniers, and if denial supports the objectives of the local group, an immediate affinity is born.

One of the main driving forces behind Holocaust denial in the United States is a man named Willis Carto. He has been intimately associated with the Liberty Lobby which is one of the most extremist right wing, racist lobbies and political entities in the United States. He has been quoted as talking about the dangers to America of the "niggerfication" of America. Carto was also behind much of the effort to establish Holocaust denial in the United States. More recently other Holocaust deniers have made similar kinds of racist statements. Though, I would predict, as they try to use the current tensions between the African-American community and Jewish community to their advantage, they will force the racist element underground.

But they're not just anti-Semites and racists. And here I come to a point which I think is of particular relevance for this audience. They also have a political agenda, a political agenda which is increasingly obvious to anyone who follows developments on the European scene. It is an agenda designed to make National Socialism and fascism respectable once again. The Holocaust gives National Socialism its "really bad name". The deniers deal in immoral equivalencies. Bad things, they say, happen in wars. Everyone does evil in the course of war. There is no good side and bad side. They acknowledge that the Germans bombed London but, they go on, the Allies bombed Dresden and Cologne. (It is not by chance that one of David Irving's books is on Dresden.) Yes, the Germans had concentration camps. But the Americans had detention camps for Japanese Americans. Two parenthetical points must be made here. Even deniers acknowledge that there were German concentration camps. But they say that most of the people in those camps were put there for "protective custody". Citizens of the Reich considered the camp inmates enemies of the State. Consequently the inmates needed protection from the rest of the German population.

The other parenthetical point that should be made here is that as unconstitutional and racistly motivated as the American detention camps for the Japanese Americans were, the American camps cannot be compared to a German concentration camp. The racist nature of the American detention camps is clear from the fact that we never put German Americans or even German non-Americans into detention camps. We never put Italians in detention camps. The fact of the matter is that if you're thinking in terms of a threat, the Japanese presented much less of a threat since they were racially distinguishable. If you saw someone at a sensitive military area who did not belong there you could pick that person out more readily if they were racially distinguishable. My point is that detention of Japanese Americans was a racially motivated action. But the camps can hardly be compared to German concentration camps. Despite the vast difference between the two sets of camps the deniers cite them as if each were the same.

By using immoral equivalencies the deniers try to convince people that the Germans were just those who happened to be on the side that lost. War happens, deniers say, and in wars terrible things happen, e.g. bombings, persecution and physical attacks. The Germans lost the war. That is an unlucky outcome. But, deniers contend, there is no rational reason to vilify Germans and turn them into people who committed a particularly awful deed. They did precisely what the other side did. They just lost.

But for deniers this immoral equivalency tactic is efficacious only to a point. After all the accurate and totally inaccurate comparisons are made, deniers are left with the Holocaust. And there is no immoral equivalency in this procedure for the Holocaust. There is nothing the Allies did which can be compared. So what can the deniers do in order to paint the Nazis as an ordinary enemy? Well, they say it did not happen. This is very appealing to many of the contemporary neo-Nazi and neo-fascist groups. In order to "win friends and influence people," it is necessary to make oneself and one's ideology acceptable to a broader segment of people. Extremist nationalist intellectuals in the former Soviet bloc are particularly attracted to the deniers' contentions. They would find it difficult to justify a Holocaust. It is easier for them to say no, it did not happen than to say it was a good thing. If these extremist nationalists already harbour certain anti-Semitic attitudes the deniers' arguments not only are appealing but make sense and fit into a pre-existing *Weltanschauung*.

That is what we are witnessing today. Fifteen years ago when one interviewed neo-Nazis in Germany, Austria, Central Europe and other parts of Western Europe, or if you read what they wrote, you found they were justifying what was done to the Jews. The only thing wrong, they said then, was that Hitler didn't kill all of the Jews. That was his big mistake. But today, instead of justifying, those same people will say

it never happened, (but maybe it should have). The neo-Nazis have learned the efficaciousness of cleaning up their act from the deniers.

Let us now turn to the question of the deniers' success. Why have they had such success? When I say success, of course, I do not mean to suggest that they have succeeded in convincing many people of the rectitude of their views. As the recently released study conducted by the Australian Institute for Jewish Affairs and the Roper poll in the United States demonstrate, they have succeeded in influencing an infinitesimal number of people. (The Roper poll to which I refer is the one conducted in the Spring of 1994, not the 1993 Roper poll which was shown to be structurally flawed.) There are more people in the United States who believe that Elvis is alive and well and living in Memphis than believe the Holocaust deniers' claims. It is possible that the same could also be said regarding Elvis about Australia.

So why the great concern about the deniers? Why am I here in Australia? Why did I write my book and why has it attracted such attention? Are we making a mountain out of a molehill? Had the deniers' claims been consigned to what I call the "circular file," i.e. the waste basket, had the material been thrown in the garbage as it arrived on people's desks, I would never have written my book. Had the deniers been totally ignored, I never would have bothered to address such a fringe phenomenon. I certainly did not train as an historian of Judaism and the Jewish people to defend the truth. I trained to try and explore and expand upon the truth and to try to further our body of knowledge, not to stand watch in order to protect the body of knowledge.

But the sad truth is that they were not ignored. Even people who give them no credence and afford them no credibility feel that their utter nonsense deserves a hearing. Let me illustrate with an anecdote. Just as I was about to complete the book I received a call from the producer of a nationally televised talk show in the United States. She said to me, "Professor Lipstadt we are preparing a show on Holocaust revisionism [her word not mine] and we would like you to appear." I asked her, "Who else will be on the show?" She replied, "Some survivors of the Holocaust." I said, "Excellent, because their personal witness and experience is exceptionally important." And then she went on to say, "There will also be some teachers who administer a Holocaust resource centre for high school." Then she paused and said, "We will also have some deniers on the show as well." I then said, "No, I will not go on with them. I will not dignify them by sitting in a debate with them." I continued, "You would not ask an historian of the American south to sit and debate with someone whether slavery ever existed or not. You would not ask someone who teaches astronomy to debate whether the earth is round or flat." To do any of these things would be considered a ludicrous kind of enterprise even for a television talk show.

But not only *will* I not debate them, I cannot debate them. These are not people who have any loyalty or fidelity to fact, to objective fact. They make things up, they twist and turn. I have examples in my book about how they do this to the *Diary of Anne Frank*, how they pull things out of context or quote half a sentence to utterly change the true meaning. So then, the television producer, in one last attempt to get me to change my mind, said, "You know, Professor Lipstadt, I know these are nefarious, diabolical people. They are terrible people but don't you think our audience has a right to hear the *other side*?" In her mind, even though she gave deniers no credibility at all, there already was an "other side".

Now I recognise that talk shows are not a bastion of intellectual thought but they reach a large number of people. I obviously could have reached a lot of people if I had agreed to do this. But I refused. This is something I do consistently. Some of you may assume that this is a self-defeating strategy because it leaves the platform for the deniers to occupy alone. There is, you might fear, no one to challenge their views and to illuminate their lies. However, talk shows have one motivating objective, no matter where they are produced. In the United States it is called ratings. If there is no one to engage in debate then there are no fireworks. And if there are no fireworks then all there is on the show is someone spouting ludicrous notions. It would be the equivalent of having a debate among political candidates when only the most fringe candidate appears. Usually when credible historians refuse to appear the show is cancelled. No fireworks; no show. My policy, therefore, is to refuse. I know it is very hard for some Holocaust survivors to refuse to appear because they feel so personally assaulted. They say, "I was there, I'm going to go and tell it." But I think it very important to isolate deniers and not to do that, not to dignify them with this kind of response.

This notion of Holocaust denial being an "other side" leads directly to a great deal of confusion about the issue of free speech. Here in Australia I have repeatedly been challenged with the predictable question, "Don't you believe in free speech? If so, why is someone like David Irving denied entry into Australia?" Of course I believe in free speech. Allow me to address the David Irving issue for a moment. First of all, although I'm not a specialist in Australian law I understand his visa was refused on the grounds of his record of danger or disruption to the public welfare. More importantly, his case is hardly unique. Countries refuse people entry all the time. My country refuses people entry all the time, your country does the same. This is not the first time Australia has refused someone entry. Most important, his voice has not been silenced. He has appeared on numerous television and radio shows. He has been repeatedly interviewed by the media. His presence has simply been shown to be counter-productive to the public welfare.

The issue is not one of free speech. In the United States or here in Australia if a denier wanted to stand in front of this building and say "Deborah Lipstadt is speaking lies" he would have every right to do that. But that does not mean that the place which has invited me to speak has to invite him in and say, "Now we've heard from Deborah let's hear from the 'other side'". A newspaper does not have any obligation, after publishing an article by a columnist on Holocaust denial, to publish the "other side". If a paper publishes an article on the legacy of slavery in America it does not publish an article by someone who says there was no slavery. Newspapers do not publish every article they receive, even the truthful articles. Newspapers don't publish every column that comes their way. Publishing a paper, producing a radio and television show, or running a public lecture series means being in a position of picking and choosing.

Any institution, any television show, radio show, newspaper, academic institution or public policy institution has to pick and choose. The choice must be between different points of view, not between fact and utter falsehood.

As we draw to the end of this presentation, we must ask why have the deniers been able to convince some people, including those who dismiss Holocaust denial as nefarious and ludicrous, that they should be treated as an "other side". The answer is to be found in their tactics not the content – or lack thereof – of their arguments. The deniers figured out about fifteen years ago how to package hatred and extremism. This is really the crux of what I want to say to you today. It is what I call the "gentrification of hatred" or, to use an American figure, the "David Dukification" of hatred. When David Duke was running around, as I like to describe it, in his bed sheets and conehead and was a member of the Ku Klux Klan, nobody paid him any attention. But when he got rid of the bed sheets and the conehead and bought some nice suits and had a new haircut, and then got himself elected to the Louisiana legislature suddenly we saw him on CNN, *Nightline* and all sorts of legitimate political and legitimate news outlets. He looked very respectable. In fact he looked good. His outer appearance had changed. But that which he was saying constituted the same utter extremist right wing hateful nonsense that he had been saying previously when he was a member of the Klan. The difference was that now he was saying it in a format that made it more acceptable. And this, I think, brings us to the heart of the matter.

It is this new tactic that makes Holocaust denial a matter of broader concern than just an attack on the Holocaust. This makes it an issue for anyone who not only values truth but who also understands the fragility of truth. It is an issue of concern to anyone who understands how easy it is to spread hatred and to paint a society as consisting of "them" and "us". It is an issue for anyone who

understands how easy it is for demagogues to find other racial, ethnic and religious minorities or interest groups to blame for society's problems.

To some degree my prediction has already been validated in Germany, Austria, Italy and Hungary. I predicted that some of those who today march with their skinheads, leather jackets, and swastikas on their flags and arm bands, will figure out very soon that a much more efficacious means of winning friends and influencing people is to cast aside the outer accoutrements of extremism. They will come to understand that they should present themselves as reputable or even better as academic. They should wear nice sport jackets and suits. They should present their works in pseudo academic formats, hold pseudo academic conferences, publish journals that look like respectable journals. They pepper their works with footnotes, citations and bibliographies. If they do this – deniers believe, correctly so – people will begin to listen, including people who under other circumstances would have dismissed them out of hand. Some people will listen because they will not immediately discern the extremism. The outer veneer of anti-Semitism or racism will be dulled because it will be presented in a way that sounds logical, that sounds rational, that does not sound infused with hatred. The content remains essentially the same but the packaging is different.

I would argue that when we look at Holocaust denial we are really seeing a prototype for the spread of extremism and right wing hatred in many other contexts. Given the success the deniers have had, not in convincing people of their views but at least in having their voice heard and being thought of as an "other side", we will see their *modus operandi* replicated.

Finally why do I refuse to call them revisionists? Simply put, these are not people who are revising anything. These are simply people who are denying. It is important to understand these are not revisers. Historians *revise*. Revisionism is the historian's craft. We look at a body of material and ask what fact has been ignored? Whose voice has not been heard? When we fold that fact or that voice into our pre-existing body of knowledge how does it revise our understanding of the event. But these people do not revise, they deny. Words are exceptionally important. The deniers understand this and, therefore, have chosen this appellation, revisionist

The danger the deniers present is not a clear and present danger. It is a clear and future danger. As those who provide us eye witness accounts of this event – whether their accounts be from the perspective of the victim or of the perpetrator – die off, the deniers will find a more fertile field to sow. The seed they wish to plant is one of hatred, prejudice and extremism. It is a seed that will ultimately bear fruit. All those who have ever faced the task of confronting hatred and

extremism know that haters are extremely tenacious, they never die or disappear for good. Truth and memory, on the other hand, are exceedingly fragile. The primary tool which can be used to confront the seed of hatred is education and knowledge. I am, therefore, particularly thankful for the opportunity to share my views with you today.

THE LARRY ADLER LECTURE – 24 AUGUST 1994



1. Donna Staunton,
David Chapman,
Mary Riordan
2. Andrew Horsley,
Karina Campbell,
Michael Landale
3. Phil Scanlan, Julie
O'Neill, Robert Whyte

4. Neale Joseph, Roxy Adler
5. Paul McCarthy,
John Ballard
6. Michael Scobie,
Rod Halstead
7. Anne Simson,
Greg Hywood

8. John Landrigan,
Max Walsh
9. Bob Elmslie,
Pauline Elmslie,
Tony Bowra, Helen Bowra
10. Robert Richards,
Peter Thomas
11. Paul Lederer, Eva Lederer

Photographs: David Karonidis and James Hunt



Photo - David Karonidis

John Brogden

The Young Liberal Movement's Federal Treasurer, John Brogden, is a supporter of an Australian Republic and thinks the Liberal Party should pursue the votes of young Australians who, he believes, are looking for a political force that identifies with their vision, needs and concerns. John Brogden addressed The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 26 July 1994.



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THE YOUNG

LIBERAL AGENDA

John Brogden

To discuss the young Liberal agenda it is essential to offer a view of young Australia in 1994 through the eyes of a young Australian.

I am 25. My generation is the first generation in Australia that will inherit a lesser standard of living than our parents. The "Australian dream" has always been for parents to give their children a better life than they themselves enjoyed. Sadly, the "Australian dream" of home ownership, education, career choice and comfortable retirement may only remain a dream for the younger generation.

We are the generation of "economic reality": this generation is feeling the force of the cancellation of wages and workplace luxuries slowly built up over the last 100 years; this generation is feeling the full force of an Australia unable to compete with Asian nations that were "third world" when we were born; this generation will never be eligible for old age pensions; this generation will deal with the results of greatly depleted natural resources; this generation has suffered an unemployment level three times the national average; this generation is being told by their government that some of them will never work because full employment is a casualty of modern times.

We are the generation of "social reality"; for heterosexuals considering sexual relations, they don't consider pregnancy first, they think about AIDS; young people laugh when politicians scurry for cover over the issue of smoking marijuana when harder and more dangerous drugs are readily available at a relatively young age; we are the generation who can no longer easily trust teachers, priests, baby sitters, scout leaders and, tragically, family friends, relatives and parents because we are now more aware, and rightly so, of sexual and physical assault; we are the generation that has given Australia the unenviable honour of having one of the highest levels of youth suicide on the planet.

We are the generation not touched by war. Our parents had Vietnam. Our grandparents had World War Two and Korea. Our great grandparents had the Great War; their parents had the Boer War. We

have grown up in a warless Australian society – no victory marches – protest marches; no rations or restrictions.

We are the generation of a culturally diverse Australia. In my year at school we had Neilson and Turnaturi; McKenna and Brajbisz; Khoury and Tse; Aspropotimitas and Vulic. Many were the sons of political and economic migrants who spoke a language other than English at home and lived a different cultural experience. Yet for as much as we were different, we were the same.

We are the generation without heroes. The national and international leaders of today are so much more human – the tests against which they are measured still remain superhuman. Where are the Menzies?, the Curtins?, the FDRs?, the Churchills?, the Ghandis? Mass media has brought greater focus on our leaders and destroyed the concept of heroes and role models in political life.

We no longer get told that Australia is the “lucky country”.

This is the reality of young Australia. It is a dark, arguably pessimistic outlook. This view is reflected in the generally negative image in which the media portrays young people. The “idealism of youth” has been replaced by pessimism and cynicism.

Yet young Australians are not without the will to support a political party that understands them and will address their concerns. They will support a party that has a vision for Australia’s future that includes them.

The young Liberal agenda is to represent the views of young Australians to the Liberal Party and to demonstrate to the party the importance of attracting the vote of young Australians. The young Liberal agenda seeks a commitment from the Liberal Party that it will remain open and responsive to the needs and concerns of young people.

The young Liberal agenda demands that the Liberal Party always be the party of today and tomorrow – never the party of yesterday. The commitment I seek is not to out worn views, but to the timeless values of the Australian Liberal tradition. Policies may become obsolete, but the ideals of Liberalism always endure.

The young Liberal agenda is to promote awareness that each generation of Australians will arrive at a different reality, and that to be a successful political force into the future, the Liberal Party must be relevant to the young.

I strongly contend that the themes a young person establishes as they start out in life, the driving forces and the choices they make, shape them for the rest of their lives. Equally, their first vote can dictate the way they will always vote.

The 18-35 year age group is just over five million people, representing 29 per cent (June 1993) of the population. They must be regarded as a significant voting sector. How do young Australians vote?

The majority of 18-30 year olds have voted for the ALP at the last five Federal elections. At the next Federal election, due in 1996, no-one under 31 will have voted in a Federal election that produced a Liberal government. Young people are traditionally viewed as ALP voters because to date the Liberal Party has lost the image battle in this generation.

The 1993 Federal election is an excellent case in point. Paul Keating presented an image as smooth, cynical and in touch with young voters. He appeared on the cover of the popular music magazine *Rolling Stone* wearing a pair of fashionable sun glasses. He was a guest DJ on a youth radio network. He described the Liberal Party as a party of the 1950s because of its policy in support of the constitutional monarchy – a ploy to portray the Liberal Party as party of yesterday, not tomorrow. To a generation who see themselves as underdogs, he acted like an underdog. Paul Keating’s image to young Australians said he understood them and was on their side.

All this from a man whose government created 33 per cent youth unemployment and an epidemic of youth homelessness. All this from the leader of a party that offered no youth policy after ten years in office.

In comparison, John Hewson failed to capitalise on his attractive image of rags to riches. For young people, the Liberal Party in 1993 meant one thing, one thing only – a youth wage of \$3.00 an hour. The image was uncaring and out of touch.

The result – over 50 per cent of young people voted for the party that gave them unprecedented levels of youth unemployment – the ALP.

Despite this, I contend that the vote of my generation is still up for grabs. Alexander Downer can meet Paul Keating on the image battlefield if he ensures the youth policies of his party are inclusive of the needs of young people. The youth wage has been scrapped, but there can be no similar policy pronouncements in this vein.

This generation has not yet displayed sufficient loyalty to the ALP to regard it as lost forever to the Liberal Party. They are angry with the state of the nation they will inherit from the ALP and will support a political force that identifies with their vision, needs and concerns. The Liberal Party can be that force – for its own political future the Liberal Party must be that force.

The significance of a first vote cannot be underestimated. I regard the Australian electorate as divided into three broad political groupings; the Menzies generation, the Whitlam generation and this, as yet, unclaimed generation. The Menzies and Whitlam generations supported then, and continue to support today, the party that strongly identified with their needs when they were young Australians. Those who benefited from the economic boom and social stability of the

1950s and 1960s voted for the then Menzies led Liberal Party and the majority remain loyal to it today. The social revolution of the early 1970s and the new image ALP under Whitlam captured a new generation of voters who also remain loyal today. No party in the late 1980s and early 1990s has offered policies in government or opposition that have met the needs of this generation.

The youth vote is a prize not yet claimed by any party. Securing the youth vote is an investment in the political future of Australia. To do this, the Liberal Party must address the needs and concerns of young Australians in order to win the 1996 Federal election and elections in the future.

What are the issues that concern young Australians? What are their needs?

In 1993 the US corporation Amdahl commissioned research into the attitudes of Australian youth to leadership. It identified the following as the top ten issues of concern:

- child abuse
- youth unemployment
- the environment
- Australia's economic future
- drug abuse
- youth homelessness
- personal finances
- the risk of catching AIDS
- high divorce rate and the lack of family stability
- personal stress and pressure

In a survey of youth attitudes, 30 per cent of young people were optimistic about Australia's future, 15 per cent pessimistic, with the majority – 54 per cent – expressing mixed feelings about Australia's future.

More than half of young Australians are uncertain about the future of their nation. I believe they are prepared to accept a new style of national leadership that is honest enough to explain the problems of Australia and offer the commitment of work towards solving them. Australians, particularly young Australians, have given up listening to politicians who offer unrealistic promises and fail to deliver. The policies of the Liberal Party must offer a clear direction for Australia's future. If we as a nation can look with some certainty to a better future, then I believe we are willing to make some sacrifices along the way.

This generation is suffering from government and business inability to provide basic needs in areas such as employment and education. Unlike our parents and grandparents, we did not live through the glory days. For us it is not a case of returning to the good old days – we never knew them. We are more realistic about governments' and society's inability to solve every problem without

making hard decisions. I believe this generation therefore is more realistic about solutions that involve sacrifice, provided the vision and direction lead to a prosperous future.

Australian politics in the 1990s and beyond is a game of image, politics and policy. Image, as discussed earlier, is particularly important to young voters. Therefore the way in which the Liberal image is communicated to young people is important.

What is the language of Liberalism? One great failure of the Liberal Party in attracting people to the cause has been that Liberals often talk in values, not issues, in abstract, not personal language. For example, too often Liberals say that they believe in the free market and economic freedoms. That is the value. That language does not motivate me or stir my emotions. However, if I say the Liberal Party is about creating new jobs for Australia, that means something to me personally. Further, Liberals say they believe in small and efficient government – a value. If I say I think the tax you pay every week is too high and the way to reduce it is to cut waste from government, that provides a personal connection.

How is the message sold? Political parties do not recognise young people as a group worthy of targeting. The electoral support of other groupings is regarded as essential to political leaders; the arts, ethnics, women, small business and families all receive detailed attention. These sections of the community are targeted with election promises and targeted campaign material and advertising. Who could ever forget Paul Keating's remarkably arrogant pronouncement when claiming victory in 1993 that the women of Australia were responsible.

However no party has adapted its advertising to cater for young Australians. The message political parties currently send to young people is the same as to all other Australians. It is also in the same medium. No party advertises its message in the media that young people watch, listen and read. It's a bit like advertising a car to a young person because it is safe and reliable, when they want to know it is fast and fashionable.

Business, however, recognises the potential of directing their message to young people. Entertainment and sports market themselves and advertise with images that are attractive to young people. They use fast, modern music and young, enthusiastic faces. In the banking and insurance sector, often seen as stuffy, specific packages are tailored to young people. They recognise young people as a commercial entity and adapt their product and strategies in order to capture the market. Just as it is their business to get young people to deal with them, the Liberal Party must make it its business to get young people to vote for it.

What sort of a Liberal Party would young Australians vote for?

Above all, young people want to see a Liberal Party that has a vision for the future of Australia – their future. The task of leadership in

the 1990s is to embrace economic and social progress within the Australian Liberal tradition.

I wish to touch on a few policy issues I believe are relevant to young Australians.

Employment must be the key to any economic policy. To a generation who face unemployment levels in excess of 30 per cent, the ability to pursue a career of choice seems like a dream. The Liberal Party must turn the dream into a reality. Yet the opportunities for employment must be provided through the private sector.

Deficit and debt reduction is an essential factor in securing Australia's financial future. Whilst many would not consider reducing government debt high on the list of priorities for young people, it must be recognised that the full dilemma of out of control debt will be experienced in years to come when we find that our governments will be unable to provide basic services in areas such as education, law and order and defence. By that stage it will simply be too late. Reducing debt now will buy back the future of Australia.

As debt gets out of control, the pressures on government to maintain welfare services grow. If we seek to reduce debt now, we can avoid the increasingly popular view of government in the US today, that argues that the welfare system is all bad and must be totally dismantled. Action on this problem now will avoid divisive debates that question the very ideal of government helping those in genuine need.

To this end the work of comparison must continue. Australia is suffering an epidemic of youth homelessness. I have been out on the streets of this city in the early hours of the morning with charity workers and I have spoken with children and teenagers without a home, or fleeing a home that is the place of physical, sexual or mental torment. I can walk 500 metres from this very building to the streets in the shadows of our courts, banks and parliament where homeless people spend the night.

The poor may be out of political fashion, but they are not without genuine human need. One of the shocking side effects of recession is that as a greater number of people suffer in economic terms, the plight of the long term destitute is pushed out of the spotlight. I cannot recall the last time the media focused on this issue. Yet the results of the recession have been an increase in people sleeping on the streets of Sydney and other cities, suburbs and towns. An enduring Australian value is compassion. It has always been a Liberal value too.

Australia must remain a world leader in science and technology. Of the ten Nobel Prizes won by Australians, nine were won in the area of science and medicine. Government and business must ensure research and development is supported.

The employment provided by the industrial revolution to generations of young people no longer exists. We must now look at the

information and technology revolution as a means of employment for future generations of young people.

My generation has grown up in a culturally diverse Australia. We respect and appreciate the diversity of our nation. The Liberal Party must reflect this in its policies and image.

This generation of Australians is more appreciative of the needs of the Aboriginal community than our predecessors. A major problem in the Aboriginal debate has been ignorance. Most non-Aboriginal Australians have little knowledge of the Aboriginal culture. Education must have a greater emphasis on understanding, promoting and celebrating our indigenous culture.

We have enjoyed an unprecedented level of peace, safety and stability in this nation over the past 25 years. Yet we must always guard our rights and freedoms under the law. I support a bill of rights to act as a safeguard for all Australians.

The Liberal Party must look to Australia's place in the world and this region. As we move to the end of this century the power structure in the world will continue to find a new balance. I believe Australia can play a significant role as a moderator for peace. We must continue to focus on the importance of trade within our region and recognise that our economic future and growth lies in Asia.

The Liberal message must be that Australia's achievements in the past will be eclipsed only by our ability to achieve in the future. The Liberal vision must be to create a new generation of prosperity in Australia.

Young people want to see an open and tolerant party that does more than mouth the mantra of diversity. We are the party of diversity. We have always sought to represent the coalition of liberals and conservatives; social and economic. So let us do this in both our words and our actions. I nominate the republic as a debate that should be encouraged within the Liberal Party. If the party shuts the door on this issue, we are guilty of the same close minded debate on the republic in which the Labor Party is engaging. In a party that seeks to represent all Australians, alarm bells should be ringing when an issue is closed to debate.

Liberals should never allow themselves to believe that discussion of an issue is division. The time has come to ignore the doomsday criers inside and outside the party who promote this view. Open debate is the sign of an active and responsive political force. Engaging the community in the debate takes issues to the source. In the end, people will only join a party where their vote and their voice are welcome.

This is why hard line views have always failed in Australian politics. Many Liberals argued strongly in the 1980s that we should adopt the Reagan and Thatcher agendas. The fundamental difference between Australia and other political democracies across the world is compulsory voting. In the US and the UK leaders are able to focus

their policies on a limited section of the community with success. In Australia, the rules are different and therefore the dynamics are altered. Whilst few young people vote in many countries where voting is voluntary, young Australians have little choice and they must be considered an essential part of the community coalition that delivers victory at the next election.

Liberals should not fear a diversity of views within the party – they must reject the call to reaction. This has always been the agenda of the Young Liberal Movement. We have always sought to engender debate on issues that are relevant to young people. In recent times this has been witnessed through the Young Liberal Movement's position on the republic. In 1993, the NSW Division of the Young Liberal Movement, under my presidency became the first section of the Liberal Party across Australia to support the republic. This position was endorsed again this year.

In the mid-1980s the Young Liberal Movement strongly supported homosexual law reform in New South Wales, provoking much controversy within the Liberal Party. Ten years later the right of homosexuals to live within the law is no longer questioned by the majority of Australians.

In the 1960s, the then Young Liberal President in New South Wales, John Howard, led the cause in the Liberal Party for government funding for private schools. Thirty years on this remains an accepted policy. In 1951, the Young Liberal Movement opposed then Prime Minister Robert Menzies in his campaign to ban communism in Australia.

The Young Liberal Movement has always played an activist role in the Liberal Party and the community. Unlike our counterparts in Young Labor, we actively challenge the policies and directions of the general party to ensure that the views of young people are considered in the decision making process. At times, this causes heart-ache amongst older members in the Party. However, if the ideas of tomorrow are carried by the young of today the Young Liberal Movement has an essential role in stimulating thought and discussion.

The key for the Liberal Party is to listen to us. If the views of the youth wing of the Liberal Party are rejected without consideration, why would a young person outside the party consider the Liberal Party would ever be interested in their needs. I am happy to say that the majority within the party, at the parliamentary and organisational level, respect the role of the Young Liberal Movement.

The coalition of views that will deliver the Liberal Party government at the next election will never agree on all issues. But if you and I agree on 80 per cent and disagree on 20 per cent, we've still agreed on 80 per cent. However, if we take the view that we will wait until the people agree with us on 100 per cent, we will be in opposition forever.

The young Liberal agenda is to provide the opportunities of the past with the policies of the future. Equally, the challenge for the Australian Liberal tradition in its next 50 years is to use the philosophy of 1944, that is still relevant today, to build the policies that secure Australia's prosperity into the future.

Essential to this is the recognition that young people are an integral part of any coalition that elects governments in Australia. The Liberal Party must embrace young people into its policies and image.

That is the commitment of the Young Liberal agenda.



Photo - David Karonidis

Bob Gregory

Unemployment is one of the most talked about issues of the 1990s. Bob Gregory, Professor of Economics at the Australian National University, was a member of the Committee on Employment Opportunities which prepared the discussion paper for the government's 1994 Full Employment White Paper. Professor Gregory addressed The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 2 August 1994 to discuss some of the factors underlying unemployment in the 1990s. In Bob Gregory's view the application of simple economic models is not enough.



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UNEMPLOYMENT:

WHAT TO DO?

Bob Gregory

Tonight I am speaking in an informal manner and will not bring any messages that have not been heard before. I will run over some of the well known facts about unemployment and some of the discussion in the Employment Green Paper.

The need for higher rates of economic growth

The most important point in the Green Paper, and the subsequent White Paper, was that to reduce unemployment to acceptable levels Australia must pursue policies that generate high economic growth. High economic growth means growth rates faster than those experienced during the 1970s and the 1980s. People often ask what policies do we need to generate high growth rates? This is a complex question which I cannot answer tonight but one of the most important preconditions is to have major players in the economy believe that high growth rates are both desirable and achievable. To establish this belief policy needs to create the fundamentals but it is also important to talk about and continually re-emphasise the need for high growth rates.

It will take some time for investors and the rest of the community to re-adjust their economic growth expectations. The past always acts as a powerful anchor. When I first began talking about unemployment in the 1970s I remember going to ICI when they were in the process of lowering their expectations of the Australian long term GDP growth rate. They had more or less decided to lower their expectations for four and a half per cent and were worried whether this long term GDP growth rate was too low. Over the next decade the growth rate averaged less than three per cent. Their forecasts, like most, were dominated by past experiences. Current forecasts of sustainable growth rates around three and three and half per cent are probably too dominated by past experiences and may well be shown to be too low.

In any event if three and a half per cent is the long run sustainable growth rate the long term unemployment problem will not be solved unless one or both of the following changes occur. First, there would

need to be very low labour productivity growth for some time so that all the output growth translates into employment. Second, the attitude of many of those currently not working would need to change. As long as so many members of our society want to work the potential labour force will continue to grow quickly along with employment opportunities. With the levels of productivity growth required to give us higher standards of living, and with the growth of employment required to provide us with adequate job opportunities it soon becomes clear that a long run average growth in GDP of three and half per cent is not enough.

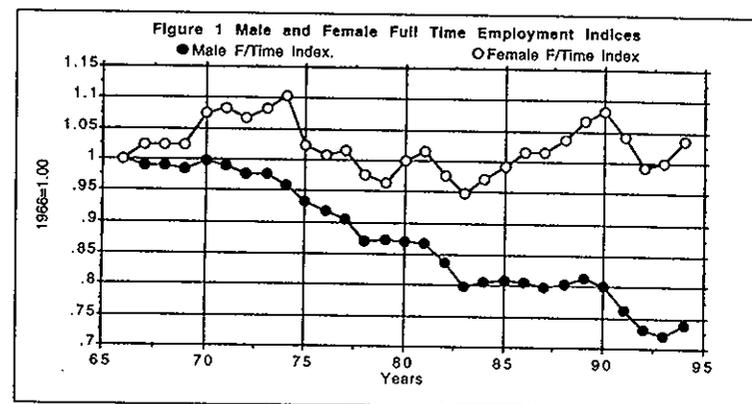
Many pundits are talking about the possibility of substantially higher labour productivity growth in Australia and continuing increases in labour force participation. If their forecasts are right we need much faster long run sustainable GDP growth rates, perhaps a little more than five per cent for a few years and then settling around five. I do not think this level of growth is widely accepted as yet. In the country's boardrooms I doubt whether the average GDP forecast for the next decade would be five per cent per annum. My guess is that boardroom members are saying perhaps five in exceptionally good years, then some bad years, and an average of about three and half.

It is necessary to shift expectations upwards. One part of that process is to shift our eyes off the USA, Canada and Europe where growth rates have been low and move our sights towards Asia where growth rates of between seven and ten per cent occur all the time. We cannot expect to grow at these rates, because to a large extent the Asian economies need to catch up and to move large numbers of people from fairly unproductive sectors to more productive ones. But, if we keep our eyes on their growth rates of sevens and eights, the five per cent growth rate here appears more achievable.

Special factors in the pattern of labour demand and supply that reinforce the need for higher growth rates if unemployment is to be reduced.

Of course the average growth rate needed to reduce unemployment will depend on labour productivity growth and the desire of Australians to seek paid employment (the participation rate). I would like to focus on the latter for a moment or two. The need for high GDP growth rates is all the greater if the pattern of employment growth over the last fifteen years continues. The outstanding fact of employment growth over the last fifteen years is the demand for part-time workers, essentially women and students, and the weak demand for those who work full-time, especially men. If that employment pattern continues then GDP growth will need to be faster than otherwise just to generate sufficient full-time jobs. There appears to be such a pent-up demand for and supply of part-time work that it is possible for job growth to be very

large without making any impact on unemployment among full-time workers.



These points are illustrated by Figure 1 which plots index numbers for full-time employment. The dark circles refer to men with full-time employment divided by the number of men aged 15 years and over. The ratio is set at unity in 1966. In 1994, 25 per cent of men who would have been at work in 1966 are no longer employed. As unemployment has increased throughout this period a significant fraction of this change can be interpreted as a demand effect. Job growth has been biased against this group which is very heavily represented in unemployment and especially among the long-term unemployed.

The other interesting point is how small has been the growth in full-time employment for women (the white circles). In 1994 there are fewer women employed full-time, as a fraction of the population of women aged 15 years and over, than in the early years of the 1970s. I regard this as a remarkable statistic. It illustrates again how much the market has been biased against full-time workers. All female employment growth, as a fraction of the number of women aged 15 years and over, has been in part-time employment.

Other interesting points emerge if we examine the 1983-1990 period. Employment growth in this period rivalled that of the USA, which along with Australia, posted the highest employment growth rate in the OECD. Despite these high growth rates they were only just enough to keep the fraction of men employed full-time at a constant. There was no clawing back of full-time jobs lost in the 1982-83 recession. For women who worked full time the performance was better - they took the bulk of new full-time jobs over and above population growth rates but they also could not fully claw back to the heights of the early 1970s. If the labour market continues to follow these patterns of bias against full-time jobs, Australia will need very much higher growth than otherwise if it is to produce new full-time jobs.

It could be that the employment demand pattern in the future will be different and move away from women and back towards men, and away from part-time workers and back towards full-time workers. This change would reduce unemployment more quickly, since upon losing a job, or not finding one, women and those who work part-time are less likely than men to go into measured unemployment. But I see no reason why the demand pattern should change. If anything the labour market is demanding more and more flexibility of hours worked and is seeking more and more women workers who tend to be better qualified for the new jobs on offer than the unemployed men.

Constraints and the labour market

I would now like to speculate on future growth constraints. Over most of our recent history real or imagined constraints have originated in the labour market. Over the 1973-1975 period real and nominal wages increased quickly, fuelled in part by political changes. The constraints of 1980-1981 again seemed to originate in the labour market as the wage break-out emanated in the metal industries and then spread throughout the system.

The constraints leading to the 1985-86 recession, and those of the 1989-90 period do not seem to have occurred in the labour market. Can it be said therefore that labour market constraints have become less of a problem? It could be argued that the labour market has been less of a constraint because the Accord has moderated wage increases, and I believe that the Accord should get a significant share of the credit. But does it follow that if the Accord is a less powerful instrument over the next decade that labour market constraints will again re-emerge? Perhaps not.

I have two reasons for suggesting this. First, the labour market has been shocked by the current recession and I think attitudes have changed significantly over the last decade and a half so that a wages blow-out will be less likely. Furthermore, where wage increases occur in one part of the labour market they will not flow as quickly to other parts as they did in the past. The American experience also suggests that labour market constraints are disappearing. The United States economy is seen by most economists to be operating at over full-employment but there are no significant wage increases.

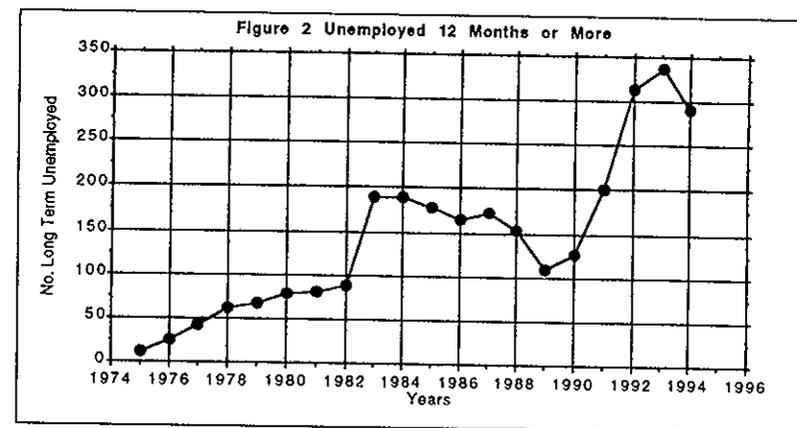
Where then might constraints occur? One possibility, which has not been subject to a great deal of analysis, is capacity utilisation. Investment rates in productive equipment have been low for a long time now and perhaps considerable investment is needed if the Australian economy is to meet a long run growth rate of five per cent. Of course, with so much growth in the service sector, it is difficult to know exactly what we mean by a capacity utilisation constraint. Furthermore, one continually hears that more flexible labour practices

and hours of work can remove the need for many new machines and factories. I do not know a great deal about relationships between capacity utilisation and economic cycles but it looks like a fun thing to research over the next few years.

The long term unemployed

The second emphasis in both the White and Green Papers was on the long-term unemployed. It is certainly true that the long-term unemployed have been increasingly left out of the growth process. It is something that governments must address.

Figure 2 plots the number of persons who are long-term unemployed, defined here as twelve months or more, and has a number of distinctive features. The first is that there appears to be a large trend upwards. At the depths of the 1975-76 recession the number of long term unemployed was around 26,000. At the depth of the current recession the number was around 340,000. Each recession has seen a larger and larger increase in long-term unemployed.



The second obvious point, which had a big impact on the thinking underlying the Green Paper, is that the increase in long-term unemployed people was not matched by a symmetrical fall during the rapid rate of recovery during 1983-1990. Between 1983 and 1989 when 1.4 million jobs were created there was hardly any change in the number of long term unemployed. Up until 1988 we had managed to claw back only a third of the increase in the long term unemployed that occurred in 1983.

It is frightening to contemplate the outcome if a rule of thumb measure indicates that it takes five years of high economic growth to undo one third of the increase in long term unemployment that accumulated in just one year.

It is also evident that the situation for the long term unemployed

was significantly worse in the last recession. Not only is the increase in long-term unemployment greater but the increase continues for more than one year. Within a few months of the start of the second year of the recession the gains of the previous six years were offset. Figure 2 is the most depressing picture I know of the Australian economy.

Suppose, for example, that over the next decade we could duplicate the high growth rates of the 1980s. If we add the 1980s path of long term unemployment fall to the top of the unemployment graph at 1994 then it is easy to see how one can become very pessimistic. It appears that high economic growth with the pattern of job creation in the 1980s will not be enough to reverse the trend. Hence the concern in the Green Paper to direct resources towards getting the long term unemployed back into the labour market.

Criticisms of the Green and White Papers

The most important criticisms of the White and Green Papers come principally from two groups. First, there were those who knew that the recommendations of the Green Paper would take a long time to be effective and who wanted a greater Keynesian expansion and a larger deficit devoted to public works. Whatever its merits in the early years of the recession the time for this policy mix to be a serious option seems to have passed. Currently we should be thinking about reducing the deficit during the good times of economic growth so government will feel less constrained about using deficits for employment purposes during the next recession.

The position of the second group is that if government and the committee had the courage to fully deregulate the labour market so that there was full wage flexibility, the long term unemployment problem would go away. The logic of this position, and the underlying model is so simple, that it is hard for economists to resist.

The argument has three steps. One, if wages for the long term unemployed were to fall the jobs would be created for them (the demand curve for labour). Two, as the wage fell many of the long term unemployed would not regard employment as an attractive option and they would "go away" so that they would not be a policy concern (the supply curve of labour). Three, because unemployment benefits would be more attractive than a low wage job, access to unemployment benefits and the level of payment would need to be reduced. This model is taught in every micro labour course in every university and is the essence of all micro analysis of unemployment.

I fully accept the economics of this framework but do not believe that the policy conclusions should be adopted. Let me try and explain why I am worried about two things. First, how much of the adjustment will fall on demand and how much on supply? The more the adjustment falls on demand – that is, the more jobs that wage flexibility

creates – the more comfortable I feel about the analysis. The more adjustment that falls on supply the less comfortable I feel. Second, I am not indifferent to the change in aggregate income that would occur in this disadvantaged group as a result of the policy changes.

Let us begin by focusing on demand. The argument is that in a deregulated labour market the wage of the long term unemployed will fall and as a result jobs will be created for them. The issue is what is the empirical magnitude of the elasticity of demand for labour? The greater the elasticity the less the wage need fall and the greater the number of jobs created.

There is an older econometric literature which suggests that the elasticity might be 0.3. That is, to increase employment by ten per cent wages need to fall by 33 per cent. To estimate the proportionate increase in the number of jobs needed is not easy but suppose the 300,000 long term unemployed effectively compete with a group of workers that number about one million. If this was a reasonable estimate then to create 300,000 jobs would require a 30 per cent increase in employment and therefore a 90 per cent wage reduction (if the elasticity were 0.3). This is a very large wage reduction indeed. Perhaps the long term unemployed compete with two million workers, if so the wage would need to fall by 45 per cent. These are very large wage falls.

But recent evidence suggests that an elasticity of 0.3 might be too high. Consider three examples. The first example is the move to equal pay for women in Australia during the early 1970s when the real wages of women, relative to men, increased 30 per cent. If the elasticity of demand for female labour were 0.3 their employment should have fallen by 10 per cent. In fact female employment increased, relative to male employment, which suggests that either elasticity is very low or that other things, not related to wage changes, matter more. If other things do matter more it suggests that relative wage changes alone cannot be relied upon to solve the problem of unemployment.

The second set of examples are taken from the current debate in the USA between two extremely respectable groups of economists. The Princeton groups: A Card and Krueger; B Card, Katz (Harvard) and Krueger; and their opponents, C Neumark and Wascher. The first debate is between B and C. The Princeton group B claim that after analysing the data used by C they can find no adverse employment effects of minimum wage increases. The other side, C, claim that they can find an elasticity of between 0.1 and 0.2.

The important point is that both sides are arguing over a range of elasticities that remove a relative wage change as a solution to unskilled long term unemployment. An elasticity of 0.1, for example – assuming that the long term unemployed effectively compete with two million workers – would suggest that a ten per cent wage cut would increase

the employment level by only 20,000. The other 280,000 long term unemployed would be unaffected.

In a second study the Princeton Group A examined the effects of a change in minimum wages from \$US4.35 to \$US5.05 in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. They claim that the increase in the minimum wage had no effect on employment. In fact employment grew. The elasticity must be about zero or the wrong sign.

We do not have to buy into the debate as to whether the elasticity is 0.0 or 0.3, or somewhere within this range, because an elasticity in this range cannot be combined with a relative wage cut to solve unemployment. There is no feasible wage cut that would create a sufficient number of jobs.

The above examples ignore supply. It may be that a large wage cut would have its major impact on labour supply. That is, the unemployed would find a better use for their time than seeking work and as a result measured unemployment would fall. What might that use of time be?

The obvious response is that more of the low paid would move into unemployment benefits which those of us in work would have to pay for. Indeed the wage would not need to be cut very far before unemployment benefits were more attractive than wages. Any policy to introduce relative wage flexibility must involve cutting benefits.

A combination of wage reductions and unemployment benefit reductions must result in a large fall in the income of unskilled workers. Their income will be cut by a large margin when they are employed and by a large margin when they are unemployed. Australia would become a very unequal society – and this is my major concern with the fully deregulated labour market policy.

I can illustrate this concern as follows. I have just spent three months at the University of Chicago. You cannot live in Chicago, or any other large American city, without being told the first day you arrive that there are places that you should not go. There are “no-go areas” for all except the very poor. I drove to some of these areas out of curiosity and they are remarkable. I am sure that you have seen them too. They look like a war zone. Buildings are destroyed, other buildings are boarded up and there is evidence of fires everywhere. The streets are full of people hanging around without work.

In a flexible labour market, such as the USA how can all this unemployment exist? How can the richest society in the world have within its borders such impoverished areas filled with unemployed persons? The usual answer from economists who believe that the US has a flexible labour market is that these people are not unemployed. They have decided not to work because the wage they could receive is too low and we are observing the proper functioning of the supply curve in a free labour market. But if this is the supply curve operating

in a deregulated labour market then the outcome seems an unsatisfactory one. Someone growing up in the ghetto hardly ever sees a local with a legal job. The income distribution consequences of the free US labour market would seem unsatisfactory to most Australians. Now I do not believe that a fully deregulated labour market in Australia would lead to a US situation but I do believe that the income distribution effects would be undesirable.

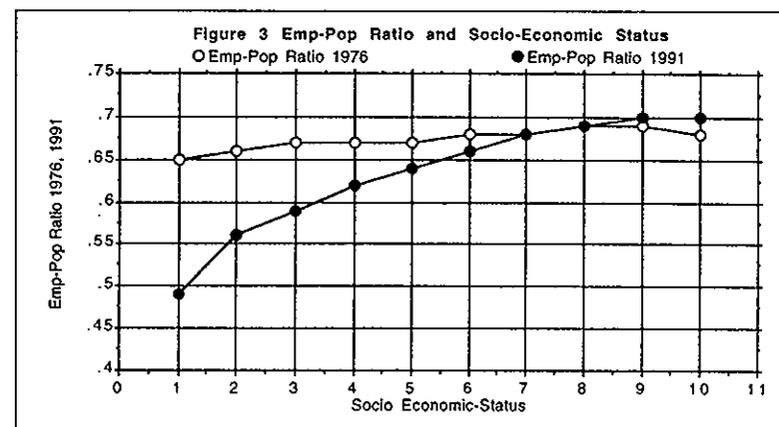
Poverty and ghettos in Australia

Boyd Hunter, one of my graduate students, is studying the impact the growth of unemployment is having in particular local areas. I will briefly outline some of the findings.

We all know that Sydney is divided into the North Shore (rich) and the Western suburbs (poor) and that jobs and wealth are not evenly distributed. How has this income distribution been changing?

Boyd Hunter and I have tried to measure the geographical aspect of unemployment by dividing Australia into small areas of 300 contiguous households. These groups are then ranked from the lowest socio-economic status to the highest. Figure 3 shows for each area the proportion of the male population in employment. In 1976, if you walked across Australia crossing from high socio-economic status areas to low socio-economic status areas you would notice that access to employment did not change very much. The income differences produced across areas were derived from different wages not from different levels of employment. If you walked across Australia along the same path in 1991 you would notice that the income differences among some areas have become exaggerated. The principal reason is the change in employment opportunities. The income of the poor areas is falling because of lack of jobs.

Now to return to the earlier discussion about relative wages. If the wages of those in poor areas are to be reduced, without much of an



increase in employment and if the welfare payments which poor areas increasingly rely on are also to be reduced, then the regional and geographical dispersion of incomes must get worse. I do not think that circumstances will deteriorate to US levels but they will certainly deteriorate.

We are all made poorer if the income dispersion between areas worsens significantly. We all lose when our children are born into poor areas where it is not usual to work, where schools are poor, where a significant fraction of income is derived from crime. These children have not had a start in life that we would want for Australians.

To conclude, the debate on the role of relative wage flexibility in our economy needs to be widened away from the dogmatic application of simple economic models. Not because the models are wrong, or that economics does not apply to labour markets, but because the empirical realities that are needed for the simple model to provide a satisfactory policy solution are just not there. The slopes and positions of demand and supply curves lead to unsatisfactory outcomes. Relative wage reductions cannot generate a sufficient number of jobs to make accompanying adverse income shifts worthwhile.

THE LARRY ADLER LECTURE – 24 AUGUST 1994



1. Ian Brown,
Meredith Wagstaff
2. Anna Kasper, Tony Adair
3. Maureen Rayner,
Roger Casey, Pru Casey
4. Sam Ballas, Peter Drysdale
5. Theo Onisforou,
Michelle Onisforou

6. Robert Milliken,
Rea Francis,
Cathy Robinson
7. Ian Fraser,
Robert Cockburn,
Anna Cater
8. Glenn Bates,
Bill Clark

9. Paul Murnane,
Annie Murnane
10. Sue Hooke,
Judith Wheeldon,
Frank Hooke
11. Vivian Smith,
Anne Henderson
12. Edmund Capon,
Helena Carr



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Photo - David Karonidis

Brian Castro

Award winning Australian writer, Brian Castro, says "writing has no boundaries". Addressing The Sydney Institute following the release of his new novel *Drift* (Heinemann), Brian Castro explored his approach to writing and some of the perspectives and experiences of its art. Brian Castro spoke for The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 9 August 1994.

CONTINENTAL

DRIFT: WRITING, EXPERIENCE AND GEOGRAPHY

Brian Castro

As a fiction writer I have a rather privileged role, in that when I'm required to give a paper or deliver a speech it is really as a writer that I do it, and as we all know, writers are schizoid, full of multiple personalities, so I'm able to call upon a number of characters to fulfil this function; to take on simultaneously a number of different positions. At least, I'm not required to present a static self, but a self that is always in transition. One could say it's typical that writers get away with anything. There's no pressure to be a professional commentator. But in fact, it is sometimes a lot harder to be an amateur, for the burden that the amateur bears is that of the responsibility for one's inventions. And I suppose it is ultimately how we invent ourselves that will determine our personal and collective futures.

Since I had been brought up to respect scholarship, no matter how tedious or enlightening it can be, I couldn't square it with my conscience not to speak in some sense about transition and tradition. Australia, of course, has always been in transition, as far back as Aboriginal memory. European history, mankind in transit between one state of mind and the next, moving between totalising and differentiating. Countries are always in transition, societies are always changing; continents drift, policies realign. The mistake, I think, has been to believe too much in the static notion of culture. As though, from a single base can be erected a permanent monument to utopia. So I am quick to identify what drags like seaweed on the moving keel of culture. What stops transition? It isn't fanciful to assume that it is sometimes culture itself that is its own worst enemy. Cultural defensiveness, unemployable myths drawn from the past and projected into the future, cultural discourse which draws up boundaries about what a national literature is or should be... all these things ensure tradition without acknowledging a blind spot: that it took a form of transition to bring them into being.

I want to be someone else, somewhere else, in order to see myself.

We seldom have this sentence in our literatures. Its shifting

nuances, its dynamism, its projections, threaten the establishment of a simple connection between place and identity. This polarisation which makes one either an insider or an outsider is what I have called in the past, the unfortunate bifurcation of the cultural mind. Challenging that, it seems to me, is the very crux of writing as a vocation. I am keen to see that Australia in its self-involvement in seeking a definable and immutable identity, will also discover the temporariness and transitoriness of all cherished theories. It is quite futile searching for a fixed human nature identifiable with a nation, behind all the varieties of human behaviour.

To write therefore is to be unsettling. In it, the idea of a cosy and clannish home is backward-looking and defensive. In it, totalising myths are discarded. Contemporary writing seems to be creating a defamiliarisation with the world, and with one's place in it. As a writer alongside many other Australian writers, the place wherein one lives becomes a very strange one indeed. It is a paradoxical procedure, this attempt to name what is constantly slipping away. Words and things have drifted apart. It is nevertheless a procedure as old as the novel itself, wherein languages, ideas and styles have always formed an unsettled mixture. The old novel, however, to use what may sound suspiciously like an oxymoron, had defined boundaries within which information was traded for the reader's loyalty to a common and national agenda. The new novel places the boundaries themselves under question.

So the writer's task is to nail down the paradox. *Para-doxa*. Contrary to received opinion. This does not mean being self-contradictory, but it does mean seeking out a new conception of reality. In a book on the Belgian painter Rene Magritte, Michel Foucault speaks of the *heteroclite*, which he defines as things "laid, placed or arranged in sites so very different from one another that it is impossible to find a common place beneath them all". The common place, of course, is chimerical. Religious, ideological and tragic wars have been fought in the name of such utopias, when the role of politics was to cast the illusion that life could be easy and the future untroubled. In heterotopias, on the other hand, things are cast adrift. Old hierarchical models are discarded for lateral provocations in which the imagination is allowed to roam. It is the valuation of this disparity that is common. *This* has become the common value: a kind of lateral thinking which is not a prescription for anarchy but is a catalyst for regional and international connectiveness.

In 1893, after a series of disastrous shearers' strikes in Australia, William Lane led a group of 400 men, women and children to found a new society in Paraguay. Their utopia in that South American jungle was a dismal failure, but their descendants remain to this day, bearing the original names, appearing blonde and blue-eyed before the

television cameras sent to track them down, but sounding completely Paraguayan, that is, they spoke only Spanish, and were curious about Australia, but had resolved to always live in South America. They were, nevertheless, in a peculiar way, exiled. Exiled because the majority of nation-states find such aberrations, such differences to homogeneity, difficult to absorb. This kind of defamiliarisation questions and overturns the comfortable historical image of nation-building.

The hybridity of which Lane's descendants are representative stands in stark contrast to his original idea of purity, the paradox of which was that Lane had moved there in the first place motivated in part by his paranoia of the Asian hordes threatening Australia. That Chinese diaspora of course, was unprecedented, and *their* hybridity, *their* exile has rarely been recorded.

This was the starting point of my writing career. I was not interested in utopias, which is what any new nation wants to create. I was interested in *heterotopias*, which are disturbing, and which, as Foucault said, "dissolve our myths and sterilize the comforting lyricism of our sentences".

Hybridity was the sort of crossing or chiasmas I had to make even before I began to write. And my ancestors had made these before me. People were transported across and arranged in sites totally alien from the surface familiarity of the world. I wanted to evoke that diversity.

I was born literally during a crossing, in a lumbering steamer between Macau and Hong Kong 44 years ago. One could say that I've been at sea ever since. My father had come from a long line of Portuguese-English merchants who settled in Shanghai at the turn of the century intent upon exporting rice to Europe. I still like to think that he was following in the footsteps of Marco Polo, whose only claim to fame as far as I was concerned, was to introduce the noodle to Italy, the noodle which gradually metamorphosed into spaghetti. My great-grandfather, therefore, may have been responsible for that Italian dish now known as *risotto*. They were a family that had good taste, but were blithely ignorant of the internal turmoils of China, blind to its history and remarkably optimistic that business would go on as usual. It was only when it was too late, when the Nationalists and the Communists had fought pitched battles, when the Japanese had marched into Shanghai, that they realised their fate was intrinsically linked to China's, and that they really had nowhere else to go. The adventurers had become the exiled.

This was the first paradox.

On my mother's side there were even stranger crossings.

My grandmother was from Liverpool in England. She took a sailing ship and landed in Kwangtung in the early part of this century in order to convert the Chinese to Christianity. She too, dreamt of utopia, but her mission was a miserable failure. Instead, she married a

Chinese farmer in a little village outside of what was known as "Canton", a union from which my mother was born. My grandmother, despite her blond hair and blue eyes, spoke fluent Cantonese, and my mother was brought up hardly knowing a word of English. Thus for the first five or so years of my life, I only spoke Cantonese. It was my grandmother who taught me English, reading from an old set of history books entitled *Britain And Her Neighbours*, which despite its benign title, saw most of its neighbours as conquerable and colonisable. My grandmother, however, read it with pride, pausing often to praise God and Britain, an attitude which nevertheless failed to save her during the Second World War, a harsh period in which she was interned and starved and given up for dead, and during which she lost her faith.

This was the second paradox: the believer had become the sceptic. From her, I inherited a healthy amount of scepticism. I doubt if I would have become a writer without it. For it fostered within me a terrible anxiety when it came to any form of ethnographic nationalism or the exclusivity of religion. The mania for authentication, whether it be through culture, ethnicity, lineage or gender, made me shiver with dread. For any scientific analysis based on ethnography always concludes that it is impossible to separate out, usually beyond more than 500 years or so, the confusions and complexities that render political generalisations about people such an illusion. It is more the kind of simplistic, mythic perpetuation which makes what is happening in Bosnia, for example, so frightening.

It is, for me at least, one of the enduring fallacies of any cultural community, that the contingency of the present and the complexities of the past are unrecognised, integral, authentic and unthreatened by any dissidence or damage or notions of anxiety. The Frankfurt philosopher Theodor Adorno reminded us time and again, that we need to seek liberation from the mythic, the cultic, the ritualised contexts in which traditional aesthetics had totalised what is seen to be authentic. For me, writing is not celebratory, nor is it a nationally or politically correct activity. It is basically a discovery of complexity. My subjects are sex and death, the same old things really, which Freud had pointed to almost a century ago, as the great primal drives. To write is to be unsettling, to maintain the itch of questioning existence. I am troubled by the most important, and probably the only issue facing every single human being: the inevitability of the moment of death and silence, but at the same time I feel immensely soothed by the consistency of self-invention. Janet Frame captured this moment particularly well. Asked recently if she would appear on a radio program, she characteristically declined, saying that while she was a deep thinker, she was not a deep speaker. She gave reverence to the notion that something else lay beneath the fiefdom of instrumental reason and literary explanation. Something else that might be called the ludic seriousness of being... an

ethical gesture, self-contradictory perhaps. David Malouf said more or less the same thing when he said writers were actually dumber than most people. Not less intelligent, but more silent. Or as Samuel Beckett put it: the three things in a writer's life are "the inability to speak, the inability to keep silent, and solitude".

To have to articulate the meaning beneath experience is always self-contradictory. It cannot be accomplished without absurdity. It isn't a particularly scientific procedure. But then science is not an accumulation of particular pieces of knowledge, but rather the experience of changing conceptions of reality. *Experience*. This is the key word. As that great Enlightenment philosopher Diderot said:

The act of generalisation tends to strip concepts of everything sensuous. As this process advances, corporeal processes recede; notions gradually pull away from the imagination toward the understanding, and ideas become purely intellectual.

I sometimes feel that ideas have very little to do with writing. They may form like crystals at the end of it, or perhaps like iron filings, are drawn to a magnet strategically placed, but ideas, like parasites using and devouring their host, are always secondary to inspiration. Not the other way round. Our wounds of experience, imaginary or otherwise, are far deeper, are far more productive of inspiration, and they provide more knowledge than any idea conceived through abstraction. I used to think that ideas were the motors that drove novels, but as each novel appeared I discovered that words whirred out in a rather unconscious and fortuitous arrangement of a kind of divination of the world, driven by a cognitive hunger. It was what the Czech writer Bohumil Hrabal called "the dictation of being". Ideas were consigned to erasure at an early stage. One writes essentially to make a discovery. And that discovery is usually of a kind of architecture. A complex structure discovered in the subconscious which articulates a life.

So whenever there was the scent of a life... yes, lives smelt fishy, full of that breathless chaos of oceans rather than of the rarefied air of mountain-tops... whenever there was a scent of that, there would usually be great excitement. And then the double-entry, the balancing of the books would begin; a juggling act between the imagination, the physical production of words and the cancelling out of social discourse; a poetics, in other words, which presents chaos for the very purpose of ordering it.

Writing, like ordinary life, is actually a muddle and a feeling of one's way through darkness... a making of incisions against the determinism of God or Nature, or whatever limits that have been imposed upon us. Before the 18th Century, before the Age of Enlightenment, all that was known about the human body was written in abstraction. Right thinking and logic gave the body a geometrical totality which was impossible to breach. Disease came in the form of

devils or as the repercussions of sin. Indeed, maladies were seen, and of course still are seen, as a derivation from evil, as though the transience of Nature had no place in human life. One fought disease through the illusion of a unitary nature, a yearning for a recombination with God. But then anatomy changed all that. Anatomy was a revolutionary procedure which muddled through the body, delving into darkness and disrupting the *Ancien Regime*. Indeed, it established a collection of chaos from which it stitched together conjectures and oppositions, based entirely on one's own experience.

Experience, empiricism, experiment. All three have a common thread, derived from Classical Greek. All form the basis of writing, which doesn't try to establish a meaning, but pushes against the totality of a mythical but powerful orthodoxy. Writing is counterpunching by imagination. It is anarchic as anatomy. But it is anarchic only within the realms of one's own experiences. It is therefore entirely mutable and ungeometric. As in the 18th Century, there is no notion of *progress* within the word "experiment".

In the cultural sphere, this word has, in relatively recent times, been devastatingly corrupted. "Experiment" originally meant to have experience of, to experience, to feel, to suffer. But to be an "experimental" writer in the late quarter of this century is to have had one's humanistic force as a dissident stolen, to have had one's passion for vulnerability removed, so that even the charm of the individual quest for distraction and exploration, as old as the novel form itself, is remade into the populist distrust of it as a kind of writing in which "anything goes". And indeed any number of bad works have been shunted into this category. A real novel, so runs the counter-argument, must be simple to understand, have a beginning, a middle and an end, and it must satisfy the greatest number of readers. We are now in the era of mass communication.

I was particularly interested in Bryan Stanley Johnson because he was condemned as "experimental" by critics who were totally insensitive to the darker purpose beneath his more frivolous provocations. With its freight of black humour and white laughter, a kind of cosmic joking from which one knew there was no recovery, with its eccentric typographical layout, its cut-outs and black holes which mocked the censors, his texts left a particularly vivid representation of the erratic articulation of daily life, being at the same time, a scourge of his critics as well as of his copy-editors. What drew me to him, besides the extraordinary precision of his writing, was his suicide.

From the outset, I was not interested in Johnson's private life or in the psychological ramifications of suicide. Besides being in bad taste, these gossipy considerations and popular psychotherapeutics seemed to me shabby recreations of the morbid classifications minted in the 18th Century. And although any imaginative effort does not arise from a

vacuum, I was more concerned with the literary processes of erasure. For a writer, I think the purpose of literature is to be made redundant through it. Like a monk, one phases oneself out, renounces the world, because literature is a place withheld, it is not a festival for the casting of votes, yet at the same time it is also a public place, and this paradox induces the connection with lost worlds. Johnson came to his own divinity by erasing what he recognised most of all: the dictatorship of instrumental reason, explanation and meaning within these lost worlds. The black holes in his novels, the blank pages... all these were proleptic, suturing together the riven experience, binding art and life with an existential doubling: ... *what I am really doing is challenging the reader to prove his own existence as palpably as I am proving mine by the act of writing*, wrote Johnson six months before his death.

I first came across B S Johnson's work about fifteen years ago. Even back then, his books were hard to obtain. One day, in a municipal library in the west of Sydney, I found a stack of books which had been withdrawn to make way for newer acquisitions. I found a book of Johnson's and bought it for 50 cents. On my way out of the library I discovered that someone has scattered what seemed like printed notepaper, all the way down the street. I gathered these up because they looked interesting. It was only much later that I realised these were pages from one of Johnson's so-called "novels". It was entitled *The Unfortunates*. It was a loose-leaf book issued in a box and held together with wrappers. The chapters could be re-arranged by the reader to form a kind of random narrative. But no matter which way they were arranged, the subject matter remained like silt caught in a delta: a grim account of his friend's death by cancer. The critics of course, overlooked the latter in order to condemn the whimsicality of the form. In the same way, the erstwhile purchaser of that withdrawn novel was after the box and not the text. That incident seemed to confirm what Johnson had said many times; that life was chaos and that in order to represent it the writer had to be liberated from contrivance. But above that was always a respect for form. It also seemed to me that the trail of text scattered along that street exerted a duty to reconstruct, to preserve through a kind of mad challenge, the vulnerability and paradox of Johnson's belief in heterotopias.

Many years later, I was invited to Hobart. I brought along a book to read in my hotel room. I tended never to leave my room on trips abroad. I think that I'd unconsciously inherited the eccentricities of a French surrealist, Raymond Roussel, who once travelled around the world without leaving his cabin. The book I brought along was B S Johnson's *Trawl*, an account of a trip he spent on a fishing trawler in the North Sea. He trawled up memories, monsters from the past, while documenting with great percipience, the daily life of fisherman. At the end of the book I felt quite ill with seasickness and claustrophobia, so I

took a walk along the waterfront at midnight and inspected the crayfish yawls berthed so harmoniously along the wharf. I understood that there was a fish war going on, that foreigners and migrants had invaded the sacred grounds. Invasion and counter-invasion. Tasmania intrigued me because of its tremors and apprehensions. Tasmania, indeed, became a fiction, one's experience being less a matter of trawling up the past than a matter of re-reading the present as a parallel text, as B S Johnson had done on that fishing boat in the North Sea. For a strange, incandescent moment, he spoke to me on the waterfront in Hobart.

Before his suicide, B S Johnson had resolved to write a trilogy of experimental novels, entitled: 1) *See the Old Lady Decently*, 2) *Buried Although* and 3) *Amongst Those Left Are You*; these titles to be read as one sentence across the spines of the books. He had only completed the first volume.

In this book, the first of what was going to be called the "Matrix" trilogy, he invited his readers to complete the other two volumes, as if he had already planned his own suicide. His obsession with the ambiguities of the idea of the Mother, Motherland and Motherhood, combining his personal history with that of Great Britain, brought to his work a peculiar ambivalence and piquancy about Britain's Imperial past. The Motherland or "home", which was always to be protected, inevitably deferred to the patriotism of the Fatherland. But the Mother possessed the language, from which the man-child took his civic oath, a mother, who, in Johnson's case, had scant regard for his writing, for his ambivalence, for his complexity. This disappointment mirrored his own disappointment in Great Britain, an island nation which sought to possess territory and then fell into decline, unable to meet the promise of a decent living for its ordinary people. I read Johnson's first volume and came across a passage which could only have been a description of Tasmania. Johnson's text, complete with strange punctuation and gaps, left holes into which the imagination could fall. He wanted to see the language decently buried as well, casting his lot with the sovereignty of literary style. Written shortly after the death of his mother, this was his threnody of unresolved grief. He never completed the other two volumes, challenging instead the reader to do so. This was the inspiration for my novel *Drift*.

The wounds of experience sometimes engaged those with anxious sensibilities. To them fell the sacrifice to, and the remorse for history. I wanted to redeem for B S Johnson that darker, more serious purpose he had always upheld. I wanted to link his disappointment with Britain's colonial adventures to the tragic demise of the Aboriginal peoples of Tasmania. But I wanted to do this without the simplistic platitudes so often trotted out as the discourse of aggression or victimisation. I wanted to portray the complexities of history which matched my own experiences. So for Byron Shelley Johnson, my

invented character, storytelling in an epic, national sense, was also lying, and like Bryan Stanley Johnson, he prefigured apocalypse in order not to have to lie. He comes to the realisation belatedly, that lamentation can be taken too far, and that history isn't everything. In fact, history itself is always partly invented.

The whole business of lying in fiction troubled him greatly:

Now anyone who wants simply to be told a story, he wrote, has the need satisfied by television... Life does not tell stories. Life is chaotic, fluid, random; it leaves myriads of ends untied, untidily... Telling stories really is telling lies... I am not interested in telling lies in my own novels... The novel is a form in the same sense that the sonnet is a form; within that form one may write truth or fiction.

The thing is that if Johnson declared that everything he wrote pertained to the truth, and if writing and truth in our time have both been put under erasure and interrogation, then writing the truth in its most primary sense would in some way or other, entail fulfilling and carrying out one's fictions. This could only make for madness, but it also called into question the whole idea of commitment and responsibility.

Now of course this is an exaggeration. For my hyperbolic character, the humanist ideal of responsibility is fraught with all the ambiguities of the misplacement of reason. The haunted history of Tasmania's European settlement, which sailed in on the same principles of Reason and Enlightenment as the Renaissance had done, but which dissolved into a medievalism prescribed by a cruel and unreasonable necessity, seemed to me a fitting conjunction to Johnson's remorse. No longer able to proclaim from mountaintops about eternal laws as the great Classicists had done, we can only describe disjunction for ours is a fractured universe which strives not for that recombination with God but, in its fragmentation beyond historical life, seeks the redemption of human connectiveness. Indeed, this kind of affiliation is modern humanity's last claim to the nobility of the spirit. And if humanism has lost its way and contributed to the wreck of Western culture as has been recently suggested, then it has also brought a tiny moment in which art became autonomous, and individuation redemptive. This by-product of humanism has always provided the essential counterpoint to authoritarianism. Once art is politicised, we are doomed.

Last year, the President of the Czech Republic Vaclav Havel gave an address to the General Assembly of the Council on Europe. In it, he warned that the idea of Europe could fail if it argued endlessly over technical matters, without changing the stereotypes of behaviour. He argued that Europe lacked an ethos, imagination, generosity and the ability to see beyond its own particular interests. He stressed that Europe could succeed only if it took on the framework of a broad civic society and to smother the demons of nationalism which is threatening

to engulf Central Europe. I think Australia can benefit from this idea. It is not fanciful to suggest that Australia can instigate and seek out the principle of a broad civic society in the Asia-Pacific region, a continental re-attachment without the millennia of isolation. It is not beyond it to absorb and share common values, to advance a common purpose, to shed petty self-interest and the primitive drive to dominate.

President Havel, I think, echoed his inner voice, the voice of the writer, in saying that scholarship, intellectual and spiritual advancement, the establishment of the broad civic society, have all existed in ancient civilisations, but they were not achieved without the great sacrifice of standing behind ideas and broadening the nature of the imagination. Tradition must make way for transition. But within all this compulsive activity to generate the future, there is always a larger question. Can culture ever be more than itself besides serving those economic and instrumental ends within the routines of our daily lives?

My hunch is that it can, that the novel form, for example, through its disparity and diversion, through its gaps and multiple perspectives, through its inter-relatedness and breakdowns and impurities, is the manifestation of that lesion in our selfhood formed by the wound of existence, which asks the most profound question: What is that emptiness we have inherited in simply being? A vast spiritual, rather than despairing value is the fruit of such meditation. Contemporary writing asks our imaginations to be bold and not defensive. For a moment time is stopped. For one moment we see ourselves unmasked and human, our identity unsustainable by passports, credit cards and driver's licences. For one moment we see ourselves naked, accepting the fact that we have to die, understanding that blind-spot which we have always contrived not to investigate but to hide, even though we do so with all the playfulness, diversion, invention, energy and whimsy at our disposal.

THE LARRY ADLER LECTURE – 24 AUGUST 1994



1. 2. 3.



4. 5. 6.



7. 8. 9.



10. 11. 12.

1. *Martin Riordan,
Malcolm Colless*

2. *Susan Ryan,
Quentin Bryce*

3. *Michael Skinner, Kate
Legge, Sandra Yates*

4. *Michelle Onisforou,
Lyndi Adler*

5. *Jenny Burn,
Mark Tredinnick*

6. *Christine Colless, Jackie
Mockridge, Malcolm
Colless, Barbara Ward,
Tom Mockridge*

7. *Anne Simson,
Stephen Mulholland*

8. *Ross Tellis, Linda Tellis*

9. *Ken Cowley, Jo Charlton*

10. *Astrid Campbell, Peter
Campbell*

11. *Liz Story, Nicola Palmer*

12. *Tess Donellan,
Ian Macfarlane,
Lindsay MacAlister*



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A YOUNG LABOR

AGENDA

Reba Meagher



Photo - David Karonidis

Reba Meagher

At the time of her address Reba Meagher was President of NSW Young Labor and also Industrial Officer for the Transport Workers Union (NSW Branch). In her address to The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 16 August 1994, Reba Meagher pointed out that New South Wales Young Labor is considered the toughest political training ground in Australia as well as being a microcosm of the Australian community. She also noted that the voting preferences of young Australians increasingly influence election outcomes. In October 1994 Reba Meagher became the new member for Cabramatta in the NSW Parliament.

I gladly accepted The Sydney Institute's invitation for two reasons. First, it is an opportunity to present the ideas and thoughts of our organisation to leading members of the community. The second reason I accepted is because I knew it would infuriate the members of Young Labor's left wing who feel it is inappropriate for the President of Young Labor to address The Sydney Institute. And I haven't been disappointed. The left have been barking and whining for weeks.

Anybody who has attended a Young Labor Conference would know that attacks from the left are common. They are something which we in the right faction both thrive on and enjoy. And it is that combative nature that allows members of Young Labor to hone their skills, or more accurately, sharpen their teeth, for future political careers.

New South Wales Young Labor is the toughest political training ground in the country. Just look at its graduates - Paul Keating, Bob Carr, Graeme Richardson, Michael Lee, Mary Easson, Laurie Brereton, Deidre Grusovin - each one rising to Cabinet level in State or Federal Parliament.

Twenty years ago, as young students and activists, each of these leading political names battled their opposition, stacked branches, doorknocked their members and argued their way through the ranks of the Labor youth movement.

Each one benefited from their apprenticeship in youth politics. However 20 years ago, the Labor Youth Council as it was then called, was nowhere near as large, powerful or influential as the present youth organisation that I represent.

Under the present leadership, Young Labor in NSW has over 3,000 members. We are the largest democratic political youth movement in the Southern Hemisphere. With 800 delegates we have the second largest annual conference of any Labor Party unit in the country, second only to the NSW Branch's Annual conference. We have eight delegates to the NSW State Conference and Australian Young Labor has a vote at the National Conference.

At the age of 25, I was fortunate enough to become the youngest member ever elected to the influential Administrative Committee - the executive arm of the NSW Branch. The Secretary of Young Labor, Joe Tripodi, is the endorsed Labor candidate for the seat of Fairfield, a safe western Sydney seat. Other senior members of our organisation work as advisers to Bob Carr, NSW parliamentarians, senators or as officials with leading unions.

A recent graduate, Gabrielle Harrison, is contesting the crucial Parramatta by-election. I have no doubt that Ms Harrison will win the seat of Parramatta. Her Young Labor training ensures that she is the superior candidate. Young Labor has prepared her for the challenges of a long and difficult by-election campaign.

The Young Labor movement in the 1990s is stronger, more dynamic and more exciting than during the Keating/Carr/Richardson era. This strength comes directly from the membership of our organisation.

The important element that distinguishes the modern movement from its predecessors is the cultural and demographic make up of its members. The old Youth Council was largely formed from the ranks of the Catholic Youth Leagues. In Young Labor today, every major ethnic and cultural group is represented.

While governments and the community debate the effectiveness of affirmative action principles, we have already applied them to our organisation, ensuring the power-share among the sexes is fairer and more equitable.

We are very much a microcosm of the Australian community. Young Labor members come from a broad range of backgrounds. They are the sons and daughters of factory workers, business people, migrants and academics. They come from urban and regional or rural Australia. They're Christian, Jewish, Islamic or atheist. They may be married and single - straight or gay.

The dynamic tension that creates means debate in our organisation reflects the diverse interests and priorities of the Australian people. The one thing we all have in common, is that we are at the forefront of a generation which continues to support the ALP at both State and Federal level.

Young Australians are an increasingly powerful voting block. Recent elections have shown that the voting preference of young Australians can and does influence election outcomes. An analysis of the last Federal election confirms my argument. *The Australian's* Newspoll reported that:

Young people moved heavily towards Labor as the campaign progressed.

The AGB McNair Poll, reported in *The Bulletin* said: "Younger males and females tended to support the ALP while older males and females went for the coalition."

The Morgan Gallop poll analysis of the last Federal election claimed that Keating and the ALP won the election on the support of voters under the age of 35.

In other words, young Australians have the voting power to determine the outcome of elections, and that power has been used to elect a Labor Government.

Polling at the State level shows a similar trend. According to the AGB McNair Poll published in *The Bulletin* of 2 August, Bob Carr's Opposition has a seven point lead over the Liberal Party among 25 to 39 year olds and a commanding 22 point lead over the Liberal Party among 18 to 24 year olds. The Fahey Government's strongest support was among age groups over 40.

There is only one conclusion from this. In recent elections the youth vote has been captured by the ALP. It is worth exploring, how the ALP has achieved this in a period when traditional ties to the major parties are in decline.

I believe young Australians, more than any other generation, are less likely to have strong party allegiances. They are less inclined to vote for the one party throughout their lives. This is not surprising as the society we have grown up in is fundamentally different from the environment which shaped the political opinions of our parents. Many of the features which polarised the Australian people and defined its political parties have disappeared.

Prior to the 1980s the factors upon which political allegiances were formed were clear and unambiguous. There was the working class and the middle class. There were the Protestants and the Catholics. There were the capitalists and the workers. These divisions not only helped individual Australians define themselves, they also helped define the political parties that represented them. All this has changed.

With the rise of humanism and ethnic diversity, religion has been displaced as focal point around which Australians and Australian families group themselves. Among young Australians over one third nominate that they do not believe in a god. Denominational divisions such as the Protestant support for Menzies and the historical support for the ALP by Catholics have become blurred and increasingly irrelevant.

The issue of class is no longer a defining feature of Australian society. Whitlam's reform of the tertiary education system allowed young people from working families to equip themselves to cross the traditional class barriers. Prior to the Whitlam Government less than a quarter of university students were from working class families. The current government's introduction of the Austudy scheme has meant more and more people from lower socio-economic backgrounds gain tertiary education and enter the professions.

Young Australians, on the whole, are better educated than their

parents and have a commensurately higher expectation of their standard of living. They have little respect for class barriers or prejudices. The class conflicts which shaped the political preferences of previous generations barely impact on the consciousness of our generation.

The great ideological debates of the Cold War era are now history. The fear of Eastern bloc communism has disappeared with the break up of the Soviet Union and fall of the Berlin wall. Young Australians read about the anti-communist and anti-socialist paranoia of the 1950s and 1960s. They have not, and will not experience it. The political debate in this country has moved beyond ideology and paranoia. Young Australians are not interested in ideology. They're interested in answers and outcomes.

The decline of class distinctions, religious rivalry and the merging of ideological positions in Australia has inevitably led to party allegiances becoming weak and fluid. No generation has been less influenced by issues such as class, religion and ideology as has our generation. And because we are not influenced by these factors, young Australians are unlikely to form their political opinions based on these divisions.

The question I would like to address, is why, in an age of political pragmatism, when party allegiances have declined, do young Australians continue to support the Australian Labor Party?

I believe the answer is that the Australian Labor Party has successfully communicated a vision for Australia, and it's the kind of Australia young people want.

There are numerous issues which young Australians feel strongly about. They include the republic, Mabo, the environment, multiculturalism, homosexual law reform and feminism. They are issues which capture the imagination of young people and about which they hold definite views. Most importantly, they are issues on which the views of young Australians differ greatly from those of our parents and grandparents.

If you examine how both parties have responded to these issues, it is easy to see why the Liberal Party has failed to inspire confidence among young people. Because the Liberal Party has failed to address these issues, young Australians have failed to support them.

The reverse is also true. The position taken by the ALP government on issues such as Mabo, the republic and multiculturalism, reflects the expectations and opinions of young people.

Every Liberal leader since Malcolm Fraser has tried to appeal to the older Anglo-Australian by questioning the appropriateness of Australia's multicultural policies. Howard did it with anti-Asian bogey, Peacock did it with the Multi-Function Polis. John Hewson went so far as to call multiculturalism the politics of division.

The tactics of the Liberal leaders are understandable. There is not a lot of support among older Australians for cultural diversity. They are more comfortable with the concept of Australia as a far flung bastion of European culture, particularly British culture.

So where do young Australians stand on multiculturalism? The *Herald's* Saulwick poll reported in June that young people are more favourably disposed towards the concept of ethnic diversity. According to Saulwick, 58 per cent of young people support multiculturalism. Among people aged over 40, it is supported by a mere 34 per cent and among those over 55 support is an alarming 26 per cent. On the issue of multiculturalism, the Australian people are divided - along generational lines.

Young people find Keating's vision for Australia's role in the Asia Pacific region exciting. They are encouraged by the opportunities it will bring. There was a time when the first trip overseas by an Australian was invariably to Britain and the Continent. Today, young Australians are just as likely to go to Thailand, Hong Kong or Indonesia.

The Liberal Party has been slow to respond to the changing face of the Australian nation. By questioning the appropriateness of the immigration mix, Liberal leaders may appeal to a certain conservative constituency, but it doesn't make many friends among young people and the ethnic communities themselves.

The relationship between the ALP and the various ethnic communities is a strong and constructive one. It is based on mutual respect and trust. It has been the ALP's ability to recast itself that has allowed us to respond to the needs of a diversified Australian populace.

The ALP was long committed to its original platform of White Australia. The Labor Party used to believe that White Australia meant protecting jobs. It was less than 25 years ago that former Labor leader Arthur Calwell said Asians bred like flies and lived on the smell of an oily rag. Calwell's comments did attract criticism, but the fact that he could make such a statement reflects the deeply entrenched belief the ALP held in a policy which today would provoke outrage and calls for expulsion.

The White Australia Policy was one of the binding and unifying characteristics of the Labor Party. It wasn't until Whitlam, that the policy was finally buried. The process of regeneration and renewal undertaken by the ALP has seen the party admit it was wrong and re-write its policies to remain relevant to an evolving society.

Contrast this to the comments of previous Liberal leaders. Even at State level, the Liberal Party's approach to ethnic diversity has been crude and inappropriate. Throwing wads of money at ethnic communities in the heat of an election campaign is a tactic which is both clumsy and ineffective. The Liberal Party has yet to learn what the ALP has long known - that support from ethnic communities has to be

earned, not bought. The Liberal Party's failure to gain ground on multiculturalism is all the more damning when you consider that the Liberals created the policy of ethnic diversity. It was Malcolm Fraser who originally popularised the term multiculturalism. It is hard to argue that the Liberal Party has progressed very far on ethnic affairs since the Fraser years, if you compare them to the ALP which has completely re-cast its position on the issue.

A more dramatic picture of generational division emerges on the issue of the republic. The largest pro-republican group is the 25 to 39 year olds where 73 per cent of people want to break ties with the monarchy. The least attracted to a republic were those aged over 55. In this age group the majority are opposed to constitutional change. Older Australians prefer a constitutional monarchy. Young Australians want a republic.

It is an issue which the Liberal Party appears to have a lot of problems with. Rather than discussing the issue of the republic itself, the Liberals are still debating if there should be a debate. Well, there is a debate, and by failing to constructively enter it, the Liberal Party has alienated a lot of the younger members of the community including members of the Young Liberal movement.

In Young Labor there is no question on the need for a republic. We have moved beyond that, adopting the position that a republic is inevitable. This allows us to focus on the kind of republic we want Australia to be. Last year, NSW Young Labor approached the question from the point of view that a republic is both inevitable and desirable. It is our belief that politicians and opinion makers should start addressing the wider issues confronting the Australian people and not just the constitutional arrangements of our Head of State.

To achieve this we had a community summit, bringing together politicians, community leaders and opinion makers to share ideas and discuss issues affecting young Australians. Gerard Henderson may remember the summit as he generously agreed to participate. From the summit we developed a comprehensive blueprint for Australia as a republic which was presented to the Federal and State Parliamentary Labor Parties for their consideration and comment. The final policy paper will be presented to the ALP's Annual Conference next year and incorporated into the party's policy platform.

Republicanism is just one of the many items on the Young Labor agenda. We see Australia becoming a republic as an occasion for us to confront the broader questions of social justice.

I am encouraged that the Young Liberal movement has broken ranks with their senior party and adopted a pro-republican position. Again this is an example of the generational divisions that are emerging on key issues, and highlights the failure of the senior Liberal Party to respond to them.

There are other issues which show the split between generations. For example, Aboriginal land rights. I consider Aboriginal affairs to be the great failing of the Hawke years. The promised treaty never eventuated and the national land rights legislation was inadequate – the rhetoric was never matched by action. We promised much but we delivered little.

There is no reason why the Liberal Party could not have out manoeuvred the ALP on the issue of Aboriginal affairs. Highlighting Labor's failure on Aboriginal health, housing and education would have hurt the Labor Party among its own constituency.

It took Paul Keating to again grasp the issue and restore the party's faith in its ability to confront the social agenda. Keating's land mark speech at Redfern, where he apologised to Aboriginal Australia for their treatment after settlement was a pivotal statement for an Australian Prime Minister and signalled that the ALP would begin delivering the long awaited reforms.

Once again, the Liberal Party leadership failed to respond to changing attitudes and ignored the rising public awareness of Aboriginal issues. John Hewson's tactics during the Mabo debate were designed to frustrate reform.

Young Australians viewed the Mabo debate as more than just an economic problem. It was a chance to correct an injustice and start the process of genuine reconciliation. It was a process which was supported by the majority of young Australians.

Recent comments by the current Liberal leader, Mr Downer on Aboriginal affairs may reflect the views of the Western Australian business community, but they will be rejected by young voters.

There are other issues which have priority on the youth agenda. The debate over Tasmania's anti-homosexual legislation presents an interesting challenge for the Liberal Party, and one which young people are watching closely.

The Liberal Party claims it supports homosexual law reform. However, they are unable to support overriding legislation because to do so would be to question the sovereignty of the Tasmanian State government. So the Liberal Party is left in a position where it is defending State's rights over gay rights. You won't find a million people watching a march for State rights, but you get nearly a million people watching the Mardi Gras. Young voters just see this as another attempt by the Liberal Party to frustrate a desirable and necessary social reform.

The commitment to the old conservative chestnut of State's rights affects the Liberal Party's ability to address the pressing environmental needs of the Australian continent. When confronted with the Franklin Dam and the mining of Kakadu National Park, the Liberals responded

by talking about State's rights. It was also the excuse used by many Liberals for opposing the Mabo legislation.

Many young voters support the ALP because of its superior environmental credentials. Regardless of their good intentions, the Liberal Party is unable to match the ALP on environmentalism and will be unable to do so while in coalition with the National Party.

The influence of the National Party can best be seen in New South Wales where the Greiner and Fahey Governments have failed to declare a single new national park after nearly seven years in office. The Fahey Government's attempts to improve their environmental credentials by announcing new wilderness areas was abandoned after National Party members threatened to sit on the cross benches.

By contrast, the ALP has balanced its commitment to environmentalism with the need to protect jobs. In so doing we have established our environmental credentials, and stemmed the flow of young voters towards the Greens and the Democrats.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are the issues that young Australians care about. I believe there are two common characteristics that bind these issues. First, on each of these issues, the Liberal Party has failed to communicate an effective position. Second, they are emerging as the key issues upon which the next election will be fought.

Paul Keating has already signalled his intention to fight the next election on the issue of republicanism. Australians will be asked to decide whether we continue the push for an Australian Head of State or we maintain our ties to the Royal family.

Alexander Downer has placed the issue of Aboriginal affairs and land rights on the election agenda. The Liberal Party's record on the environment and women's issues cannot match the ALP's. It remains to be seen if Alexander Downer will follow Liberal tradition and play the race card.

Republicanism, multiculturalism, Aboriginal affairs – issues about the Australian identity and character. And on each of these issues, the ALP advocates a position which has majority support among young Australians. They are issues that concern young people enough to determine their vote and by doing so, determine the election outcome.

I believe this places Australia in a unique situation. For the first time in our history, Australia will have a Federal election where the population will be divided along generational lines. Age will be the polarising factor at the next Federal election. I will go so far as to say the next Federal election is emerging as a battle between the young and the old. It will be the advocates of change versus the proponents of the status quo. It is a battle between the forces of modernism and traditionalism.

On one side is a party which has a record of renewal and rejuvenation which has allowed it to remain relevant and progressive.

On the other side is a party that is failing to respond to changing social priorities and appears determined to ignore the new agenda for fear of alienating its declining constituency.

While the ALP has consistently encouraged internal debate as a means of policy evolution, the Liberal Party is attempting to stifle discussion on issues like the republic. The recent pattern in the Liberal Party has been to exclude the advocates of change, the moderates such as Macphee, Puplick, Chaney and Baume. Instead they have promoted the dries, the Hewsons, the Costellos, the Abbotts and the Bishops.

The current battle for Upper House preselections shows that the Liberal Party is again dumping the moderates in favour of the dries. By forcing the moderates out of the Liberal Party, they have lost their one chance at reforming themselves through internal forces. These were the people who could have led the debate from within, by developing the intellectual arguments and by organising and communicating the ideas to the membership.

Current developments in the Liberal movement paints a picture of a party whose leadership and platform is increasingly irrelevant to the needs and concerns of young Australians. It is becoming a party of tired old men.

To remain relevant, the Liberals must change. But rather than having the courage to make the necessary changes, the Liberal Party is still trying to work out if it is a liberal party or a conservative party. At this stage, the conservatives appear to be winning.

I have no doubt that the change will happen, but without internal critics, change will be forced on the Liberal Party by external forces, such as the shock of election defeats. After five failed campaigns, I would have thought the external pressures for reform would be irresistible. The process of change will always be more painful to a political party if forced upon them by external realities rather than by internal criticism and evolution.

The need to respond to a changing agenda is not lost on our Prime Minister. Keating won a lot of support from young people by appearing on the front page of *Rolling Stone* magazine. It made him seem relevant and contemporary. Keating's rhetoric towards Alexander Downer brands him as "a young fogey" who is part of an old guard conservative establishment. It is a good tactic. If Keating successfully brands Downer as a fogey, young people will ignore him. If Downer devalues, rather than builds on, the achievements of the Mabo deal then young people will resent him. If Downer's policies fail to address issues like the republic, young people will deny the coalition government for the sixth consecutive time. It is up to Downer, as Liberal leader, to start bridging the generational gap. If he does not, he risks again losing the election.

One of the questions the Liberal Party must examine is exactly

where is its constituency and where it can be broadened. In a traditional framework, the Liberal Party is the party of capital and Labor the party of workers. The Liberal constituency are those with a greater affinity with ownership, initiative, enterprise, effort and reward. You have a problem when your friends embody the values of self preservation and the survival of the fittest. This self interest is apparent every time a businessman writes a \$ 10,000 cheque for the Liberal Party. He will write another for the ALP, because it's in his interest to hedge his bets. But I promise you one thing – the Australian Workers Union or the Electrical Trades Union will never write a cheque for the Liberal Party.

It is hard for the Liberal Party to find a constituency that will be there through thick and thin. Labor not only has a constituency, it has a family. Right or wrong, success or failure, the family and the movement will always stand by you. It is a movement built on faith and belief. And as the Liberal Party grapples with internal change, young people are increasingly becoming part of the Labor family. They are finding they too share the same faith and the same belief. Be it for an Australian republic, a multicultural society or for the rights of indigenous peoples.

There is a clear message to both parties in all of this. Ignore the concerns of young people at your peril.

THE LARRY ADLER LECTURE – 24 AUGUST 1994



1. Valmay Hill,
Jillian Broadbent
2. Ian Blackburne,
Sandra Blackburne
3. Stuart Simson,
Gerard Henderson,
Aletha Hoy,
Lawrence Street

4. Carla Zampatti,
Lynn Anderson,
Meredith Hellicar
5. Carol Berg, Rodney Pearse,
Libby Wills
6. Ann Jenkins,
David Jenkins
7. Bernadette Fulton,
Alison Tarditi
8. Penny Street,

Roger Adams,
Anne Summers
9. Stan Darling,
Sylvia Darling
10. Lalita Mathias,
Glenn Mathias
11. Henry Tsang,
Anne Vipond

Photographs: David Karonidis and James Hunt



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THE CHANGING

PATTERN OF HONG KONG'S MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES

Anissa Wong



Photo - David Karonidis

Anissa Wong

During a visit to Australia in August, Anissa Wong, Assistant Director-General of Industry of the Hong Kong Government, addressed The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 23 August 1994. She outlined one of the advantages of investing in Hong Kong where government assistance offers concessionary terms for high-tech industries.

It gives me great pleasure to have this valuable opportunity to meet this distinguished audience. I would like to take this occasion to bring you up-to-date on the changing pattern of Hong Kong's manufacturing industries, with particular emphasis on new technology areas where we think vast investment opportunities lie.

Hong Kong's manufacturing industries today

Hong Kong's economy has grown considerably in the past two decades. The average annual growth rates of Hong Kong's Gross Domestic Product and GDP per capita between 1970 and 1993 were, in real terms, 7.6 per cent and 5.8 per cent respectively. During this period, Hong Kong's industries have undergone major changes.

Manufacturing developed on a large scale in Hong Kong in the 1950s. The territory's small size limited the amount of land which could be made available for industry and precluded the development of heavy or land intensive industries. Its manufacturing industries were therefore characterised by small-scale firms; most operating from premises in multi-storey buildings, and manufacturing light consumer goods for export.

For many years, manufacturing was the territory's largest employer and its dominant economic sector, employing 904,709 employees in 1984, or 41.7 per cent of the total employment and contributing 24.1 per cent to GDP.

A change of scene, however, occurred as China adopted an open door policy in the early 1980s. Manufacturers took advantage of the policy to shift labour-intensive jobs into China to reap the benefits of the lower land and labour costs there. Local manufacturing employment fell therefore to around 508,133 (20.5 per cent) in 1993, and its contribution to GDP was 13.8 per cent in 1992.

Looking at these two sets of statistics I have just quoted, many may draw an easy conclusion about the disappearance of manufacturing industries in Hong Kong. This, however, is a very

superficial conclusion, which is far from the truth. The fact is that there are many industries remaining in Hong Kong and they are becoming more productive and are producing higher-quality, more valuable goods.

During the period between 1986 to 1992, the productivity of Hong Kong's industries, in terms of value-added, increased by an average of 7.6 per cent per annum; during the same period, value-added per person engaged increased by the even higher average of 16.3 per cent per annum. Hong Kong is now the world's leading exporter for garments, imitation jewellery, travel goods and handbags, toys and clocks.

This greater efficiency has much to do with Hong Kong's economic relationship with China. The remarkable industrialisation of Southern China over the past decade has given Hong Kong's industries enormous opportunities for outward processing, investment and diversification. In providing a base for land-extensive and labour-intensive processes important to Hong Kong's economic development but which are difficult to accommodate in Hong Kong, Southern China's industrialisation has also allowed Hong Kong's industries to concentrate on higher-value activities, such as improving production processes, increasing productivity and designing better products: this trend is reflected in the increased value of domestic exports in high-quality clothing, electronics, printing and industrial machinery. Movement of some industries to China represents, then, not a stripping away of Hong Kong's manufacturing sector, but an expansion of Hong Kong's industrial base across the border and a strengthening of Hong Kong's higher value-added, higher quality industries and a stimulus to its services for industry.

The opening up of Southern China may have helped to facilitate these processes, but other, wider considerations make it essential that Hong Kong's manufacturers restructure their operation in this way. Sharper competition from our newly-industrialising neighbours – most of whom have cheaper, more plentiful and more readily available land, labour and raw materials – requires more economical and flexible production methods, and greater attention to the design and reliability of our products. Periodic recession and growing protectionism in many world markets require adaptability to new markets and higher value-added to our products. Greater demands for quality and novelty from consumers require improved quality management, innovation and imagination.

In short, the challenge is not merely to ensure that our manufacturing industries in Hong Kong survive, but also to maintain and develop the position of influence they have achieved in the region. The answer lies in a vigorous process of improvement, innovation and automation. There is, of course, nothing new in this solution, and

industrialists have been adopting it for many years. What is increasingly apparent, however, is the role that very sophisticated, fast-changing technology must now play in this process if our industry is to maintain its competitiveness. And applying this technology as widely and as fully as possible, especially in a community of predominantly small or medium-sized factories, requires a collective, co-operative effort between industry, higher education and the government.

Measures to assist technology upgrading

Such cooperation has existed for some time. In addition to supporting industry through providing effective infrastructure, manpower training, and other basic services, the government has encouraged the greater application of technology to industry in a number of ways.

The Hong Kong government's first initiative in this area began with the establishment of the Hong Kong Productivity Council in 1967. The Productivity Council provides technical support to manufactures in various industries. It also functions as a technology transfer agency, a product-development laboratory and a research centre.

The other initiative to encourage high-technology manufacturing in Hong Kong was the establishment of the Hong Kong Industrial Estates Corporation in 1977. The Corporation supplies land for industries introducing new technologies that might not otherwise be able to take root in Hong Kong's traditional, crowded industrial environment. Two industrial estates are now accommodating over 120 technology-based industrial undertakings and a third estate will soon be allocating its first phase of 10 hectares of land later in the year.

Besides, there is also the Hong Kong Industry and Technology Centre Corporation, which was established by the Hong Kong government in 1990 to facilitate the promotion of technological innovation and development and the application of new technologies in industry in Hong Kong. The Centre acts as an incubator for start-up technology-based companies and also as a design and development centre for new technological products and a conduit for technology. The Hong Kong Industry and Technology Centre Corporation is constructing an intelligent building which will soon be completed later this year, providing technology-related companies with another choice of accommodation.

A recent initiative by the government is the A\$35 million (A\$1 = HK\$5.75) Applied R & D Fund Scheme, established in early 1993 to encourage more R & D activities, through the provision of matching funds to Hong Kong registered companies who wish to conduct applied research but lack the full necessary financial resources. Funding under this scheme can take the form of a loan, equity participation or a combination of both, and any returns from such investments will be

ploughed back to the Fund to assist other research projects. Another scheme to provide funds for industrial support projects, initially at A\$30 (HK\$180) million each year, has also been introduced this year.

Mention of the technological infrastructure in Hong Kong will definitely be incomplete without a reference to the tertiary education institutions. The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and the City Polytechnic, together with the longer established University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University and the Hong Kong Polytechnic and the two other degree-awarding institutes are an integral and vital part of the technological development in Hong Kong. Altogether they supply around 18 per cent of the relevant age group (17-20) with a place in tertiary education.

Employers are also encouraged to acquire new technologies for commercial application, under a new A\$20 mn. (HK\$105 mn) Technology Training Scheme. This scheme provides a matching grant to employers sending their technologists and managers to undertake training either overseas or in Hong Kong in new technologies of benefit to Hong Kong's manufacturing industries.

Opportunities in technology-based industries in Hong Kong

The initiatives that I have just mentioned help to strengthen the movements towards greater use of technology among Hong Kong's manufacturing industries. Evidence shows that this trend is already well established. In the clothing and linkage industries, computer-assisted design and production equipment and other forms of automation are commonly used. So too is the increasing use of high technology in the manufacture of high-quality clothing, electronics, printing and industrial machinery.

In keeping with the focused way that Hong Kong zeroes into opportunities, joint efforts have been made between the government and tertiary institutes to identify promising business opportunities in the technology sector, having regard to the advantages of Hong Kong, which include a hardworking population, efficient infrastructure, access to basic research and low cost labour in China, availability of technical manpower as well as familiarity with and access to advanced technology from overseas. Four technology-based sectors have been identified: Information technology, biotechnology, material technology and environmental technology.

Information technology

Hong Kong is well placed for investment in information technology. The territory is very well served by communication networks, in particular the telephone and cable television networks which can provide high capacity optical fibre links to virtually all premises at low costs.

The financial sector is at present the largest information technology user in Hong Kong. Manufacturing, trading and distribution, and publishing, being well-established computer users, are the major sectors of growth of the local market. Many small retail shops are installing bar-coding and point-of-sale (POS) systems for inventory control and sales analysis, while several major retail chains have started linking up POS systems with vendors, exchanging purchase orders and invoices. Manufacturers are automating their ordering, production management, sale and distribution, and use computer-aided design/manufacturing (CAD/CAM). Hong Kong's Community Electronic Trading Service system, using electronic data interchange (EDI) to transmit information and documents over telecommunications networks between trading partners, government and relevant service industries, is due to be introduced shortly, and will further stimulate demands for electronic trading information management softwares.

With the network in place, customer demand already keen and equipment available, there are vast investment opportunities in this field.

Biotechnology

Biotechnology is one of the most rapidly growing technology areas of the 20th Century with wide applications in various industries such as medicine, agriculture, medical electronics, food processing and the production of organic chemicals. Hong Kong has already been actively progressing in this field. Hong Kong is a good location for international, biotechnology companies to access the Southeast Asian markets. Its proximity to China also provides convenience to tap the vast resources of Chinese medicinal and herbal drugs for further refinery and commercialisation. Some of the major fields for growth are medical electronics, pharmaceuticals, bioactive compounds from traditional Chinese drugs and food biotechnology.

Materials technology

There are many opportunities for employing better technology, through the utilisation of expert knowledge or through testing and characterisation, to make more effective use of materials in many sectors of Hong Kong industry. Many venture opportunities exist in the metals sector: integrated computer simulation of metal working processes, new energy-efficient processes for metal working and the development of novel instruments.

With the thriving construction activities in Hong Kong, there are substantial opportunities for technological improvements or services to building materials. There is a need to transfer technology to ensure that imported materials are used correctly under local conditions of

temperature, humidity and specific pollution environment. One example is a fire rating period testing for building materials, and another is the investigation of fouling and corrosion problems in sea water cooling systems.

A number of world leading plastic material producers have set up production plants in Hong Kong in recent years, to satisfy the increasing demands from manufacturing industries in Asia. For example, the US Cabot Corp has established a plant to produce plastic master batches and compounds, while Himont, the world's biggest producer of polypropylene resins, has production and technical research facilities in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Petrochemical Co Ltd, which is a joint-venture of Italy (Enichem), China (ICITIC Beijing) and the Republic of Korea (Yukong), increased its polystyrene output capacity from 80,000 to 140,000 tonnes a year to service both local and regional markets.

Environmental technology

Environmental protection industry is in the development stage in Hong Kong. Environmental issues are rightly of increasing concern in Hong Kong. Large scale environmental projects are connected with capital construction with government, the utilities being the largest customers. On the other hand, there remains a vast market for environmental technology in Hong Kong to develop locally-developed pollution abatement equipment to fit in with the needs of the many small to medium size factories in Hong Kong, which are housed in multi-storey factory buildings.

Conclusion

Having said a little about what the government is doing to help technology development in Hong Kong, I should perhaps reassure you by telling you what the government is *not* doing. Committed to a policy of minimum intervention with the market economy, our stand will continue to be to support industry but not to subsidise it; to encourage but not to intervene; to promote but not to protect; to build on the strengths that already exist and not to take decisions that are best left to businessmen. This policy has worked well and we have no intention of changing it.

Australia has a very visible business presence in Hong Kong. I hope there will be further economic co-operation between the two places. I also hope that you will exploit the opportunities which are available as Hong Kong moves into technology-based manufacturing.

My colleagues and I are from the one-stop-unit of the Industry Department which has been set up to serve overseas investors, by providing information relating to investment climates and business decisions; assisting them in making contacts with the right government

departments, industrial support organisations and local joint-venture partners, and also in their development and assessment of investment plans. You will, I hope, find us all helpful and responsive.



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IDENTITY AS

*LIVED EXPERIENCE:
UNIQUELY AUSTRALIAN*

David Malouf



Photo - David Karandis

David Malouf

The Larry Adler Lecture for 1994 was given by the acclaimed Australian writer David Malouf AO. In 1993, David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* was runner-up in the Booker Prize and his other novels, in particular *The Great World* (1990), have won numerous national and international awards. David Malouf was introduced by Australian actor Kate Fitzpatrick. The vote of thanks was given by former NSW Premier, Nick Greiner. The dinner was opened by Meredith Hellicar, member of the Board of Governors of The Sydney Institute, and the MC for the evening was Tony Berg, Deputy Chairman of the Sydney Institute.

What I want to suggest is very simple. It is that we should for a time suspend the attempt to define our Australianess in terms of qualities or national characteristics, which are notoriously difficult to identify – besides, we never agree on them – and try describing it instead in terms of experience: that part of our experience that as Australians we hold in common.

Experience has its source in actual phenomena that can be pointed to; and the experience we share, even if we come to it with different responses, can be established, anecdotally and in many other ways. Community of experience – isn't that what holds us together? Our common response to place, to land and landscape in all its diverse forms over the continent, to the events we call history, to the institutions that determine our relations with one another and through which we try to make a good and just society, to all we have added, over the 200 years of our being here, to the local scene: towns and cities, forms of domestic architecture, which also vary across the country, the trees and plants and animals we have introduced, along with the problems they have created, and all we have made, artefacts, tools, playthings, including works of art, to embellish mere living with the amenities of life.

The things too, some of them intangible, that we found here when we came; which come out of the lives of the indigenous people of the place and enrich us with views of the world that we would not have access to if we lived elsewhere. Most of all, which is why I have left it till last, the language we speak – English, our local variety of it – in which what we experience is given shape and communicated and whose peculiar habits not only give form to that experience but determine what it will be. Quite apart from the way our history and institutions would be different if Australia had been colonised by the French or Dutch or Spanish is how different our thinking would be, what a different shape Australia would have in our consciousness. If we can define what is unique in these elements of our experience, and to the

volatile unity they make, we may begin to discern an identity (and that is the one and only time I intend to use that word), or enough of one to be getting along with.

You will have noticed that I set my remarks under the sign of community rather than nation or people.

A community may consist of more than one people and is both less formal and more closely integrated than nation, since there is something of neighbourliness and chosen kinship in it. We assume full rights and responsibilities in a community as soon as we have decided to join it, whether we arrived 200 or 40,000 years ago or last week. As members of a community we come with separate histories, different tastes, beliefs, temperaments, and a good deal of what is most important to us will go on being separate in that part of our experience that belongs to the individual life; but in choosing to come together we agree to share with one another the other part that is public. We find ourselves living together in one place and time, in the enjoyment of the same rights as citizens, the same restrictions too. We inherit through these the same history. But here we need to be careful. That the events we call history are such a muddle should make us wary of pressing too far the notion of singleness in any of these areas.

We experience what happened in history, events and their consequences, in different ways according to where we stand in the line of them and how we have benefited. What happened in history exists by report, and the reports differ according to which side or faction is doing the reporting. We have been made sharply aware of this by arguments about what happened when Europeans came to this country, in such contradictory terms as "settlement" on the one hand and "invasion" on the other – terms I'll want to return to later. We should be grateful for this awareness of contradiction. It enlarges our thinking, makes us sceptical of received truths. What I mean to suggest is that the kind of multiple and contradictory views that come in here under the term "history" themselves constitute the sort of experience I want to point to, and I wonder, when we look closer, if this sort of complexity of view and multiplicity of experience does not apply as well to the other areas I have mentioned; to where we stand on the use of land, for example, and the meaning of land, and to the law. Recent arguments about the incorporation into our law, for Aboriginal people, of tribal law, raise questions that may remain no more than that, but in being raised at all modify simple assumptions that our experience of the law is the same for all.

In all of these areas the presence of Aboriginal people amongst us, as members of the community of experience I want to evoke, not as outsiders to it, has made us sensitive, as people elsewhere may not be, to the riskiness of seeing things from a single point of view. Multiplicity, even contradiction, may be an inherent and inescapable

quality of our shared experience. But one of our gifts as humans is that we have minds that are flexible, the more so as we exercise them. We are capable of holding more than one idea in our heads at the same time, of living with multiple and contradictory views – which does not limit our capacity to speak of our experience as communal and shared.

What I want to do now is examine some of the elements of our Australian experience and try to discover to what extent they are distinctive and, as we take the full weight of them, might allow us to see what it is that makes us ourselves. Then I shall want to ask how we can sharpen our perception of these things, that is, educate ourselves in an awareness of where we are and what we have made that makes up the rich fabric of our living in this place.

When I look back 40 years to the time when I was growing up and being educated, not just at school but into that interesting confusion of visual phenomena and popsongs and hearsay and story, and information and misinformation, that is perhaps the largest part of our induction into a local world, I am astonished how ignorant we were of the place we were in and of things Australian, though I should add that as a Queenslander I was luckier than most; there was a real attempt in Queensland to introduce us to local writing and to some local history.

To live fully in a place we need to feel that it is crowded with the evidence of lived life. With landmarks we recognise and know the names of, which speak to us and are touched with significance. With trees, plants, animals, birds that give us the sense of being in a rich and sustaining nature, and which fill our consciousness, as well as simply the space around us, with names and the enlarging sense of other beings. Without all that we are neither fully at home in the world nor fully ourselves.

In the same way, to be fully at home I mean, we need to feel that the line of time we stand in is similarly crowded. With events, documents, memorials; with faces and figures out of the past that fill out for us the lives of our grandparents and other forebears and make those lives as real to us as our own – and perhaps we come into the reality of our own lives only through that. We need to feel that we are in a space/time that is crowded too with the *products* of living, objects – tools, farm-implements, pieces of furniture – with sticky fingerprints on them that tell us we come out of a world that has been richly inhabited and whose life is still available to us in things we can touch. There is a sense, as I discovered when I wrote my first book *Johnno*, in which places only become fully real to us when they have appeared in a book, when their landmarks have been enriched with the sort of associations they acquire when they move out of the realm of geography into the realm of the imagination, and so into the heads of readers. There is a vast iconography of images, a geography of real but re-imagined places,

that any people, the English, for example, or the French or Americans, carry about in their consciousness and which gives them their strong sense of who they are and where they come from and belong, and which identifies them in the eyes of others as English or American or French.

Forty years ago you could have looked into the heads of most Australians and found nothing of that sort, no gallery of images that would suggest a place richly inhabited and illustrated. The ideal landscapes you would have found there were European, they came from books imported from England. It was English and European places that had the touch of magic on them that comes from the imagination and appeals to imagination. Whatever iconography of objects existed there, of precious artefacts, was also English. It was as if we had made nothing of our own that showed a local taste and spirit, bore the print as it were of a local thumb.

One of the triumphs of Australian publishing over these last years, and of the scholarship that has fed it – an achievement too little recognised for the change it has wrought in our national consciousness – is that this iconography now exists and has entered our heads.

If we want to know about crude bark huts or colonial houses, or styles of federation woodwork or tiles or ceiling roses, or colonial furniture over a range of periods, or contemporary furniture-makers, or Australian silverware or glass; if we want to look at images out of our past going back to the beginnings of photography, or consult the documents of our history, or distinguish the many varieties of eucalyptus, or study Aboriginal cave paintings or a hundred other aspects of life on this continent, they are there, fully recorded and illustrated, and the real objects are there too, great houses or farm-implements or carved and mounted emu-eggs, all there to be seen. Most of all, they have become familiar to us. They have got into our heads as live images filling what used to be called, both in real geographical terms and by extension as a demeaning metaphor, the great Australian emptiness.

Of course, they were always there, and so were the varied landscapes, with all their geological wonders, that make up, as we see now, this interesting place we live in. They were there but we had no eyes for them, no imaginative access to them. What brought them to our consciousness at last was a growing need for them, a hunger for what was local and unique, for what we had made here that might define us. Think how conscious we are now of local styles of domestic architecture, how expert we have become, in our national hobby of house restoration, at deciding which form of ceiling rose belongs to a particular style of house. Think of the ways painters like Nolan and Drysdale and Boyd and Fred Williams have filled our heads with imaginative versions of the Australian landscape, or of ramshackle

country towns, that not only familiarise these things, and touch them with a particular light and significance, but provide us with eyes for seeing them at last, for feeling them too as our own. The iconography is there and we reach for it to ground ourselves in what surrounds us. We have begun to see the world we are in as richly crowded. Some of us have even ceased to refer to these 206 years as a short history and have begun to say, not often enough, that it is long. To call it short, to see it as short, is to miss its crowdedness and deny the many crowded lives that filled it.

As for the emptiness of Australian space, we have learned, mostly from the contrary experience of Aboriginal people, to be wary of assuming that a landscape is empty only because it does not contain what our European eyes have been trained to find there. A place may be crowded with meanings we do not apprehend because they are in a language we have not learned. If there is any one aspect of our experience as Australians that is unique it is surely this confrontation with and response to the landscape, or more precisely, landscapes of the continent.

I was amused, just recently, to see Jim McClelland in his weekly column in the *Sydney Morning Herald* referring to the opinion of Cyril Pearl – not long ago, as you'll recall, one of our most acute commentators on things Australian – that what made the Australian landscape so depressing was its uniformity. Thirty years ago this was the accepted view. Would anyone maintain it today? What *we* are overwhelmed by is its variety. The change is our way of looking, in our discovery in ourselves of a new eye for recognising diversity, and beyond that, which is perhaps what created it, of an interest in diversity, even a preference for it, which belongs to a new consciousness.

Early arrivals here came with an image in their heads of what a real landscape should be. It should be a made landscape like the ones they had left. One, that is, that had been redeemed from wildness (in the Protestant belief that nature too was fallen) by the efforts of man. It should be cleared, fenced, ploughed, made fruitful, or recreated in the artful wilderness of a park. This was the grand work of man – divinely entrusted. A wildness thus transformed gave men and women, when they looked at it, a measure, by reflection, of their effectiveness in the world. It gave them back an image of their own humanity.

What they saw when they confronted the landscape of Australia was how much work would have to be done. It was a landscape that was in their terms meaningless and would remain so till they had changed and shaped and humanised it.

As for the people they found in it, how could they be human when they had lived here for centuries, thousands of years, and felt no need to make it productive or shape it to a human ideal?

Attitudes to the land and attitudes to its original inhabitants have always been linked. The Aborigines are right in this: they and the land are one. In the new and changed landscape the arrivals meant to create they must either change or they could have no place.

So long as the land was seen in this way, as deformed, it could not be loved for itself, but more importantly, it could not, in any real sense, be *seen*. Neither could the Aborigines. Only as we have come to see and care for it – care for it in both senses of the phrase – have we seen how the Aborigines “cared for it”, and how their sense of custodianship, their recognition of value and significance in it, might constitute another and equally human way of considering nature and dealing with it, a way that questions our own more active and aggressive one. What that has done is to bring both the Aborigines and the land into a new focus.

The land has begun to reveal itself to us in all its variety and subtle difference – even those parts of it, deserts or wetlands for instance, that do not offer themselves to what we think of as use. To reach that point we have had to develop new, non-European responses, and they in turn have created in us a new sensibility. The land we had thought to change has changed us. The process has only just begun and it is too early to point to the qualities that might result from it, but one consequence of seeing the land is that we can now see and respect the people who have, for so long, lived with it. We have even come to believe that they might have something to teach us. And one of the results of developing an eye for diversity in one area is that we have begun to exercise it elsewhere. We have become open to an appreciation of difference, of contradiction in ourselves and of diversity in general.

But nature – the land and its many landscapes – is only the most obvious of the things we share. Beyond nature are the institutions that order our lives.

It is difficult sometimes to see what is distinctive and rare in systems you have known all your life. All the more if you live, as we do, in a place where the order of things has never been seriously interrupted, by revolution or dictatorship or anarchy. Too easy to assume that everyone must enjoy that sort of stability, or could if they really wanted to; or to ascribe our undisturbed tranquillity to a lack of political interest or intensity rather than to rights hard-won and the working out, over many centuries, of a system whose good sense and tolerance, and openness to pragmatic change, belongs not only to a particular history but, like that history itself, to a particular habit of mind. Sometimes you have to leave home to see these things.

I was struck during the last Presidential election by an editorial in the Italian paper, *La Repubblica*.

Europeans are used to taking a superior attitude to Johnny-come-

lately, New World places like Australia and the United States. The editorialist was pointing out, rather wickedly, that for all their lack of Old World refinements, the Americans were celebrating something no European power could boast, the democratic election, in an unbroken line, of their forty-second head of state.

Can I just quickly suggest some aspects of our form of government that we take for granted but which are very rare indeed.

The first is that we actually believe in government; believe I mean that a government can be fairly elected and, once there, will act in our interest, whether or not we actually voted for the party in power. Most people in the world do not trust their rulers, whether elected or not. Their distrust is blood deep and based on bloody experience. What runs parallel with government in most places is a system of patronage that bypasses government, reaches deep into the judiciary and public service, and follows older loyalties to family, or clan, or to ancient and mostly secret societies.

Our second piece of good-fortune is our limitation on the role of the military. Once a government is elected there are no generals or colonels in the wings, making trouble and preparing to restore order in a coup.

The third thing I want to point to also comes out of our history but even more than the other two suggests what I called earlier a particular habit of mind. It is the quite peculiar way, under our Westminster system, that power is held, the very British institution of a shadow government in Her Majesty's loyal opposition: that formal recognition of the defeated party as a government in waiting, and the again peculiar acceptance that the two parties (that there should be two is itself peculiar) will oppose one another and alternate.

What sort of mind is reflected in this system? One, I'd suggest, that in making a claim or statement is simultaneously aware of the opposing point of view, and to such an extent that truth is not fully served unless it is somehow stated. Our education trains and encourages us in this form of thinking. Our institutions embody it. It is, I'd guess – but here I am making a large claim of my own – inherent in the very language we speak, so that in using the language we are already being educated into an acceptance of what our institutions apply.

English as you know is peculiar among the languages in being a multicultural affair, a glorious bastard of a language that in mixing two root-languages of different ethnic origin has multiplied its vocabulary, refined its capacity for making fine distinctions, and abandoned the formal structure, the inflectional and gender systems, of both. Parts of speech in English live a life wonderfully free of determination by anything but context and the playful extension of precedent. They are an inspiration to us all. The result is almost continuous change.

Change of course is the fate of any language that is in daily use,

but change in English, by the appropriation of words from other languages and the witty coining of new ones, is almost dizzyingly rapid; what is more it is embraced rather than resisted. We have no body, like the French, to guard the language against impurity. Impurity, a talent for appropriation and promiscuity, is what keeps English growing and fearlessly enriching itself.

Is it too much to see in this – I am, I know, pushing a point – a model for the way culture develops under the influence of this tongue? By appropriation and assimilation; by letting usage, daily practice, the redefinition and extension of old forms, determine, within the limits of precedent, but also by bending it a little, what can be done; by a mixing of elements in daring and witty ways to “make it new”.

Is, for example – to choose something close to home – the emergence of what we call Modern Australian cuisine, the crossing of Old Australian with Mediterranean and Asian elements to make an entirely new form of cooking, the expression in another form of the language we speak? Boldly appropriating and adapting, pushing the rules, to arrive, by an eclectic and improvisory process, at a mixture that *works*? Is the ability to work this way taken on with the language, as part of an unconscious education? If so, then assimilation – in the special sense in which I am using the word here – will remain a key aspect of multiculturalism in Australia, and the palm will go to those who are most flexible, most ready to abandon older and purer forms, most willing to appropriate and, by mixing, transform. And the way to that may be through English itself.

Everything I have said should suggest that the more aware we are of the elements that make up our local experience, the more aware we will be of what, as Australians, we are. What I want to ask now is how we might nourish that awareness and encourage those who are growing up here in the fullest appreciation of what it is to *be here*.

Of course they will suck it up out of the air, but mightn't we help them a little, and get things moving more quickly, if we were to introduce into our schools what we might think of as Australian studies? And I mean all our schools, even those that have exercised their right here to be separate; those perhaps most of all.

I have in mind something that would begin, among smaller children, with an introduction to the land and its many landscapes, how they came into being, their flora and fauna, with questions, to be taken up more critically in later years, about land use and how the way we understand what land means might influence the way we see it and would want it used. This would naturally lead on, in the later years, to a study of the difference, say, between Aboriginal and European attitudes and open up moral and religious questions about how different cultures and religious groups regard nature and the place of humans in the totality of it.

We would also introduce our young people to their own history. Not as an indoctrination in national myths, though those too are relevant, but as a series of events that need to be looked at as being, at the same time, both acts of occupation and violent displacement, cultural disruption, leaving wounds that are still unhealed, and, from the contrary viewpoint, as acts of settlement, involving achievements and forms of stoicism that we continue to be proud of since they created so much that we value and still enjoy. Being a settler society is not unique to us; it is the common condition of most of the world's nations. The English, Italians, Hungarians, Turks – the list is virtually endless – are not the indigenous inhabitants of the place they now live in. What might make us unique is how we *think of* that condition, and how we treat those we have displaced, the accommodation we might make with them in a common cause.

But any total view of our history must exist in two versions and any truthful one admit that they contradict one another. Our history is multiple, and not only in this way. Multiple too because it is not single and continuous but begins over and over again in different parts of the continent and at different times, and in each place has created its own style of life. Not everything begins with 1788. I am not one of those, for example, who would want to derive “Australian” characteristics from our convict past simply because the earliest places in Australia had one.

And there are other histories of arrival, as well as those of the English, Irish and Scots – some of them quite long: Chinese, Islanders, Lebanese, (my own family came here more than 100 years ago), as well as the many migrant groups who came before and after the war. Theirs are histories that also belong to us, and it is good that more recent arrivals should be aware of them. Nor should we be unwilling to recognise the racism, sometimes of the most repulsive kind, that is so embarrassingly juxtaposed, in *The Bulletin* for example, with some of our noblest democratic sentiments and the beginnings, not only of our local literature but of some of our most enduring sources of feeling. We need to face these things squarely, even as we outgrow them. They are part of the scene.

We might also ask our young people to study our system of government and the law, comparing them with the way things are managed elsewhere; looking at the civil codes of Europe, for example, and asking ourselves why it is that we derive our laws not from principles laid down by professors and legal experts but from precedents established in the daily business of the courts, how such procedures affect us, what they tell us about the kind of people we are and our way of thinking, and how the results compare, in terms of justice for all, with, say, Islamic law or Japanese law or the tribal law of our own Aborigines.

A study of the development of our system of government, of

course, will involve our students with the study of a good deal of *English* history: we ought not to be afraid of that. It will not hurt young Australians to discover that much of what is best in our system we did not make ourselves. It was made for us, by brave men more than 100 years before Australia was even thought of, who made on our behalf, and so that we would not need to make one, first a bloody rebellion and then a bloodless revolution. (The fact that they also, for a time, made a republic need not inhibit us from making one of our own.) Our history goes back well before the founding of the place, as our real lives go back before our birth.

We would also introduce young people to the heritage of artefacts they have come into: all those objects I spoke of earlier that are the product of two centuries of intense living and making, of art and mind, and the even older heritage of what was made by Aborigines – some of it by leaving things just as they are.

Most of all, we should do more than we are now doing to make sure that our language, English, is available to the whole community, by convincing migrant groups who do not at the moment participate in language programs that by doing so they are seriously desempowering themselves, and by making their children, and ours, free of the language, since without that freedom they will be deprived of the fullest understanding of themselves and others and of real power in the world they have come into. Full understanding, real empowerment, depends on our being at home with all the tones and shades of meaning of English, its jokes, all the nooks and crannies of it where feeling and true meaning hide, of having an ear for its music, including its silences.

I know about crowded curricula and about educating young people for life, but that is exactly what this sort of education would be. It would set them down where they are, make them at home in a place dense with living and fully comprehended. No kind of education, no sort of awareness – and not just for our young people – is so urgent if we are all to hang together here, or will prove in the end so healing, so health-giving.

THE LARRY ADLER LECTURE – 24 AUGUST 1944



1. 2. 3.



4. 5. 6.



7. 8. 9.



10. 11. 12.

1. Ric Charlton
Jane Munro
2. Cecily Williams,
Rory Robertson,
Jenny Wilkenson
3. John King,
Genevieve King

4. Mike Feehan, Peter
Skellern, Jane Kelly
5. Owen Eather,
Julian Eather
6. Luke Slattery, John Cody
7. Alison Broinowski,
Philip Flood

8. Bronwyn Standen, Brett
Johnson, Dale Johnson
9. Elizabeth Henderson,
Christian Killen
10. Sylvia Lo, Tony Lynch
11. Mark Day, Lisa Chapman
12. Geraldine Cox,
Donna Jacobson