

THE

Sydney Institute

QUARTERLY



with Gerard Henderson's

MEDIA WATCH

ISSUE 38

JANUARY 2011

STEPHEN MATCHETT
finds a connection between
the Medicis and the NSW
Right

SHELLEY GARE takes
on food faddists

PETER HAYES on
Ben Hills - gilding
Graham Perkin

SANDALISTA WATCH -
all new expose of the
sandal wearers

ANNE HENDERSON on
the New Deal and Amity
Shlaes

DOCUMENTATION -
Gerard Henderson versus
Brenda Niall

JOHN MCCONNELL
book reviews - Blanche
d'Alpuget and Paul Cleary

MEDIA WATCH AWARDS -
Best of the Worst in
the 2010 Election -
Mark Scott, Laura Tingle,
Fran Kelly, Ross Cameron,
Kerry O'Brien, Peter Van
Onselen, Jenna Price,
Deborah Cameron, et al

*Published by
The Sydney Institute
41 Phillip St.*

Sydney 2000

Ph: (02) 9252 3366

Fax: (02) 9252 3360

CONTENTS

Editorial	2
Sandalista Watch - Gerard Henderson	3
Brain Food - Shelley Gare	7
Amity Shlaes' Great Depression - Anne Henderson	10
How Not to Write a Biography - Ben Hills On Graham Perkin - Peter Hayes	14
Book Reviews - John McConnell	19
Documentation	23
Review of the Reviewers - Stephen Matchett	31
Gerard Henderson's Media Watch	41

Cover Design by D T Graphics

The Sydney Institute Quarterly is edited by Anne Henderson and Gerard Henderson.

Editorial Office: 41 Phillip Street, Sydney 2000

Tel: (02) 9252 3366 Fax: (02) 9252 3360

Email: mail@thesydneyinstitute.com.au

Website: www.thesydneyinstitute.com.au

Layout and typesetting by DT Graphics Pty Ltd, Suite 8/2B Edward Street Kingsgrove NSW 2208.

Tel: (02) 9150 9466 Fax: (02) 9150 6663

Website: www.dtgraphics.com.au

The views expressed in *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* are those of the designated authors. They do not necessarily reflect the views of The Sydney Institute or of its governors.

Registered Print Post No : PP255003/02934

For a complete list of our forthcoming functions, visit our Website: www.thesydneyinstitute.com.au

MR HOWARD'S AUNTY

John Howard, as prime minister, made three serious errors in handling the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. First, he appointed Donald McDonald as ABC chairman. Then he appointed Mr McDonald for a second term. Then he extended Mr McDonald's final term. All up, Donald McDonald served over a decade as ABC chairman, from mid-1996 until the end of 2006.

Mr Howard's initial decision was perhaps understandable. Perhaps he believed that Donald McDonald shared his view that the ABC – despite its many virtues – lacked political balance in the news and current affairs presentations. However, by the end of Mr McDonald's inaugural five year term, it was evident that he did not believe that the ABC was in need of any reform of any kind. This did not prevent Mr Howard from re-appointing Donald McDonald to this key taxpayer funded position. Then, when it was obvious that time was up, Mr Howard again rewarded Donald McDonald – by appointing him in May 2007 (at age 68) to yet another taxpayer funded position, this time as the full-time director of the Australian Classification Board.

It was not as if John Howard did not take the ABC seriously. Always a fan of the ABC in general, he believed that the public broadcaster should present a greater diversity of viewpoints. Put simply, John Howard maintained that the ABC needed to employ some political conservatives to key positions as presenters and producers in order to provide some kind of balance to the public broadcaster's bevy of house-leftists. That was why, early in his prime ministership, Mr Howard called for the ABC to engage one – just one – “right wing Phillip Adams”. The request could have been better expressed – but it did get across the message. In the event, nothing happened. There was no greater pluralism in the ABC when John Howard left office in November 2007 than when he became prime minister in March 1996. If there was such an entity as the culture wars – then this was one battle that the Coalition lost. Mr Howard's decision to place some political conservatives on the ABC Board was well intentioned but futile. Non-executive Board members do not run the ABC. The chairman, however, does have some influence over the ABC managing director, who is also the public broadcaster's editor-in-chief.

This defeat, in a generally successful prime ministership, is evident in John Howard's memoirs *Lazarus Rising: A Personal and Political Autobiography*. Donald McDonald does not rate a mention in the text – despite the fact that the position of ABC chairman is one of the most prestigious appointments which a prime minister can make. The only reference to the long-serving ABC chairman is contained in the author's note – where John Howard writes about his personal friendship with Donald McDonald and merely refers to his contribution “to the community” as ABC chairman. It's as vague as that.

Mr Howard says little about the ABC in *Lazarus Rising* – except for an occasional criticism of the evident anti-Coalition views of the *7.30 Report* presenter Kerry O'Brien. And what did Mr Howard do when the *7.30 Report* ran a self-serving program on Mr O'Brien on the occasion of his retirement from the program? The former prime minister went on the *7.30 Report* and paid due homage to Red Kerry. That's what.

SANDALISTA WATCH

A NEW REGULAR FEATURE BY GERARD HENDERSON

In his 1937 book *The Road to Wigan Pier*, George Orwell defended “the ordinary decent person” against “the intellectual, book-trained socialist”. He wrote that the latter:

“... type is drawn, to begin with, entirely from the middle class, and from a rootless town-bred section of that middle class at that. ...It includes...the foaming denouncers of the bourgeoisie, and the more-water-in-your-beer reformers of whom [George Bernard] Shaw is the prototype, and the astute young social-literary climbers...and all that dreary tribe of high-minded women and sandal-wearers and bearded fruit-juice drinkers who come flocking towards the smell of “progress” like bluebottles to a dead cat.”

The response to Issue 37 of *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* – which ran Gerard Henderson’s “The Inner City Sandal-Wearers versus The People” – has encouraged the editors to initiate the brand new “Sandalista Watch” in *The Sydney Institute Quarterly*. The last issue of the SIQ (Issue 37) featured such leftist sandal-wearers as Margaret Simons, Julianne Schultz, Catherine Deveny, Jon Faine, Jill Singer, Judith Brett and Geoffrey Barker. Issue 38 deals with how the luvvies in our midst handled Jim McNeil (1935-1982) – self-confessed murderer/rapist/ alcoholic/drug addict who also wrote plays – but not many. Here we go with the SIQ’s inaugural “Sandalista Watch”.

SANDAL-WEARERS VERSUS NON-HOPPER CRIMS

David Marr once described Mr McNeil as one of Australia’s three most significant playwrights of the 20th Century. So it is only proper that “Sandalista Watch” examines the interaction between the playwright and the sandal-wearers as a six act play plus an epilogue. The sources for *SW*’s artistic license are primarily contained in Jim Honeywill’s book *Wasted: The true story of Jim McNeil, violent criminal and brilliant playwright* (Viking, 2010) but reference has also been made to *Jim McNeil Collected Plays* (Currency Press, 1987) and the *Currency Press Study Guide* by Paul Tribe and Bruce Hogg.

ACT ONE – IN WHICH A CRIM IS BORN AND QUICKLY GRADUATES INTO A LIFE OF DECEIT, VIOLENCE, CRIME AND ADDICTION

As Ross Honeywill acknowledges in *Wasted*, Jim McNeil was “by nature a storyteller and it is impossible now to verify the truth of everything he said”. David Marr has expressed the view that McNeil was his own best fictional creation. Marr doubts McNeil’s claim that he was a murderer – but no one will ever know.

In short, McNeil was a congenital liar. Honeywill had conversations with McNeil in 1975 and 1976 and obtained access to his private papers for *Wasted*. He also interviewed people who knew McNeil and researched publicly available material. Much of the dialogue in *Wasted* is recreated by Honeywill and some of the events depicted are concocted. Yet the author seems to have reached a broadly accurate depiction of Jim McNeil’s public life and the book has not been criticised for factual errors.

So what do we know about the young McNeil? Quite a bit, actually. Jim McNeil was born on 23 January 1935 in the Melbourne suburb of St Kilda, then an essentially working class area. He was from an Irish Catholic background and attended primary school at Christian Brothers’ College (CBC) St Kilda. McNeil’s father was a violent alcoholic and deserted his family. From a young age, Jim was addicted to violence.

At age 12, Jim McNeil bashed a woman on Carlisle Street, St Kilda and stole her handbag. It was the beginning of a career of aggravated misogyny. Jim’s mother once declared that she was the only woman her son did not hate. In time McNeil became a wife-basher in his own right – particularly when in the alcohol and drug induced psychotic rages to which he was prone. According to Honeywill, he viciously raped and left a woman for dead – standing naked on a box with a rope around her neck, attached to a tree – whom he believed had assisted his wife, and the mother of his children, to take a lover. McNeil was also paranoid. And, by the way, he branded the initial “J” – for Jim – on his wife’s breasts with a hot poker.

In time the law caught up with McNeil – but only on account of his profession as a violent armed robber. By the time he robbed the Olympic Hotel in Preston in 1967, McNeil had already served a number of terms in prison. But this was a big armed robbery job – and McNeil was expected to receive a hefty sentence. Surprisingly he was granted bail, and immediately fled the jurisdiction of Victoria.

There were more armed robberies, including the hold-up of the Royal Hotel in the New South Wales town of Springwood. McNeil was soon apprehended by a single policeman – William Schute. McNeil shot Constable Schute in the leg with a sawnoff rifle. He allowed the policeman to run away and then shot him in the back with the policeman's service revolver, which McNeil had acquired. McNeil was charged with attempted murder, convicted and sentenced to a maximum of 17 years in prison with a minimum non-parole period of seven years – making him eligible for release from the NSW prison system in October 1974.

ACT TWO – IN WHICH JIM MCNEIL JOINS THE PARRAMATTA GAOL DEBATING TEAM, WRITES PLAYS AND MEETS AUSTRALIA COUNCIL LUVVIES

Initially Jim McNeil served time in Parramatta Gaol. He soon joined the Resurgents Debating Society, where he came to debate with outsiders – including such law students as David Marr, Robyn Potter and Michael Eyers.

Jim McNeil was clever with a sharp insight into the human psyche. Asked why educated middle class students had such a fascination with criminal classes, McNeil is said to have replied: "Fascination? Fuck me. We were just a mob of no-hoper crims doing long stretches for being dickheads. Failures at life who didn't know what else to do."

Quite so. But the likes of Robyn Potter and David Marr and Jennie DeLisle (who was briefly married to Marr) decided that McNeil was ripe for rehabilitation. Potter commenced taking books into prison for McNeil to read and soon he commenced writing plays. By 1970 he had completed *The Last Cuppa* – which was re-written as *The Old Familiar Juice*. Then along came *The Chocolate Frog* – which was initially performed at Parramatta Gaol. There followed *How Does Your Garden Grow* and *Jack* completing McNeil's entire output. In prison McNeil finalised his school studies and commenced an external Arts degree at the University of New England. While in prison he was the recipient of a Literature Board grant and in 1975, shortly after his release, won the Australian Writers Guild Award for the most outstanding script for *How Does Your Garden Grow*. Those were the years of Gough Whitlam's Labor government.

McNeil – who invariably blamed others for his own actions – at least always conceded that he was just a "dopey crim". However this is not how the luvvies' set saw him.

The likes of David Marr, Robyn Potter and Jennie DeLisle believed that Jim McNeil was such a talent that he should be released on parole as soon as possible. Why should such a genius be wasted in prison? - was the thinking. As Honeywill put it:

David Marr told Potter after a discussion on the matter, "Why do you want to send him to university? We've been to university and he's got more to teach us."

In a sense this was true. Certainly McNeil knew more about violent intimidation along with robbery under arms than the Marr/ Potter/ DeLisle set.

Honeywill describes Robyn Potter's position, which was similar to that of David Marr:

She thought him one of Australia's most treasured talents and could only imagine what he would achieve if he got out of that dreadful place.

Potter told Honeywill that she once believed that McNeil was "going to be the new Australian Chekhov". She did not say who the old Aussie Chekhov was. Soon Jim McNeil, playwright, became all the rage around the Sydney literati. Malcolm Robertson was despatched by the Australia Council's Jean Battersby to pay court on McNeil in prison. The publisher and theatre critic Katharine Brisbane undertook a similar journey. According to Honeywill, Brisbane came to admire not only McNeil's body of work but also his body – including the prison playwright's "piercing blue eyes and irresistible smile". Katharine Brisbane reflected on prison life after watching the in-house performance of one of McNeil's plays and described how she enjoyed the conversation with Mr McNeil's colleagues in the Parramatta Gaol green room (so to speak):

It was the whole normality of this. They were really nice people, I mean there were a few murderers and other violent people all sitting there with legs crossed and a cup of tea. It was a very domestic and curious scene. Nothing threatening at all in the whole experience, except in my imagination.

That was the voice of the inner-city intelligentsia. It is worth contrasting the Marr/Potter/Brisbane naivety with the judgement of McNeil's sister Nancy. According to Honeywill, Nancy McNeil warned Robyn Potter about the plan to have McNeil released on parole, in the following direct language: "Don't be in too much of a hurry, you've never seen him drunk."

It was sound advice – from an ordinary decent person to an intellectual, book-trained type. And it went unheeded.

ACT THREE - IN WHICH MCNEIL IS RELEASED FROM PRISON, MARRIES ROBYN NEVIN AND LIVES UNHAPPILY EVER AFTER (BUT NOT FOR LONG)

In time McNeil was sent to Bathurst Prison. By now *The Old Familiar Juice* was being performed professionally and Katharine Brisbane gave it a rave review in *The Australian*. Fancy that. Barrister Ken Horler directed the play at the Nimrod in Sydney. In Brisbane, Chief Justice Hanger and Justice Campbell attended the opening night of *The Old Familiar Juice*. It was Australia's very own version of radical chic. In New South Wales the Liberal Party attorney-general John Maddison supported McNeil and wrote an introduction to *The Chocolate Frog*.

There were riots at Bathurst Prison. This motivated Brisbane to work even harder to get McNeil released on parole. He was moved to and from Goulburn Prison. Back in Bathurst, David Marr was given permission to stage a gay party for Jim McNeil and his lover Stephen Nittes (a graduate in armed robbery). By now, McNeil was bisexual.

Then in October 1974 McNeil got parole. However, his problems were not over since he was still wanted in Victoria for the 1967 armed robbery. Once again, the luvvies' set rallied round. McNeil was granted bail on the Victorian charge – after favourable character references from Katharine Brisbane and Kevin Halpin. Soon after Justice Vickery in Victoria, obviously impressed by McNeil's literary stardom, put McNeil on a five year good behaviour bond for the Olympic Hotel robbery. On this occasion character references were supplied by actor Graeme Blundell, theatre critic Geoffrey Hutton and others.

On release from the NSW prison system, McNeil went to live with David Marr and Jennie DeLisle in Balmain. On the first night of his freedom there was a party attended by - among others - Katharine Brisbane and her husband Philip Parsons. McNeil got completely drunk and soon headed upstairs with a young gay actor for a rowdy bonking while the dinner party group remained downstairs. As Marr later reflected:

It was the 70s and we were still surprised. It was not the elegant night of celebration we had hoped for. Jim's deal was that he would bring you real life; he was home-delivered real life; and in addition Jim's stories bewitched us. But this was not a night of glorious story-telling and celebration.

Still, it ended calmly enough. McNeil could not sleep so, after the actor had departed, he crashed in the

Marr/DeLesli marital bed and there followed an early version of the group hug.

As Honeywill put it:

Marr and DeLisle were young and had never experienced anything like the terrifying contradiction of a man with a direct connection to the sublime of being so drunk. All the time. They knew how to recognise the transcendent but knew nothing about the alcoholic.

They should have listened to Jim's non-transcendental sister, Nancy.

Soon after moving in with Marr and DeLisle, McNeil purchased a dog from the Yagoona Pound – and then treated it appallingly. The dog adored him. So did the actor Robyn Nevin. She fell for him. This was an unintended blessing for Marr and DeLisle – since McNeil moved in with Nevin. He left the dog behind. McNeil soon started bashing Nevin. The marriage came later. This upset Katharine Brisbane. She tried to talk Nevin out of the nuptials but was surprised by the thespian's innocence. Within days of the marriage, however, Nevin realised that McNeil was an alcoholic. Fancy that.

ACT FOUR - IN WHICH AUSTRALIA'S CHEKHOV WRITES NO PLAYS BUT PLAYS UP A LOT

Jim McNeil never wrote a play outside of prison. Following his release from incarceration, his life spiralled downhill – not helped by the likes of Ken Horler, Bob Ellis and Graeme Blundell who bought him alcohol and actors Bill Hunter and Max Cullen who drank with him. During his life outside, McNeil kept himself busy – until the inevitable collapse into alcoholic stupor and the resultant, and inevitable, death. Between 1975 and 1982, Jim McNeil:

- Attacked actor John Gaden with a bottle – Gaden declined to press charges.
- Had an affair with Margaret Fink (among others). She asked him to write the screenplay for *My Brilliant Career*, he didn't get round it.
- Met with the Labor luvvie premier of South Australia, Don Dunstan.
- Attended dinner at the home of legal luvvie Justice Lionel Murphy but upset "m'learned friend" by dropping a cigarette on His Honour's exquisite sofa. He was instantly dismissed from the Murphy abode.
- Was approached by novelist Patrick White who wanted an introduction – as did Harry Miller.
- Threw a tantrum at a dinner at the Royal Hotel in Paddington – attended by Robyn Nevin, Malcolm

Robertson, Wendy Robertson – and actor Wendy Hughes and her partner Dennis Miller. Neil verbally attacked a waiter and smashed the silver service cutlery. The dinner ended prematurely. McNeil's rage was sparked by an absence of Worcestershire Sauce to flavour his Steak Diane.

- Accosted actor Graeme Blundell in a car park when the actor declined McNeil's suggestion that he should "loan" him a few dollars.
- Having been separated from Nevin, took up digs with – wait for it – Bob Ellis.
- Moved in with DeLisle who became McNeil's lover. He financed his lifestyle by "donations" induced by (armed) threats. McNeil assaulted DeLisle – she threw him out. Not before time.

ACT FIVE – IN WHICH THE PLAYWRIGHT IS ABANDONED. BY VIRTUALLY ALL – EXCEPT KATHARINE BRISBANE AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

And so it came to pass that the literary sandal-wearers dropped McNeil. Once upon a time, McNeil had laughed at the mugs who kept providing him with money, telling his son Doug: "I only have to ask and whatever I want is mine." Yet, in time, even the sandal-wearers were mugged by reality. McNeil was looked after by Fr Phillip Hoy, a Catholic priest at Ozanam House in Melbourne, who understood how dangerous he was. Ms Brisbane helped bring him back to Sydney, where the nuns attached to St Vincent's Hospital cleaned up the vomit and washed his faeces-stained pants – they understood how alcoholic he was. No more invitations to opening nights or judges' dinner parties were forthcoming – and the likes of Lionel Murphy were not into doing the personal laundry of others.

Yet, even from his death-bed at St Vincent's, McNeil was vile to the nurses. McNeil died on 16 May 1982. Peter Kenna and Katharine Brisbane organised the requiem mass and funeral. Brisbane asked for – and was offered – donations from the literary set. But few paid up – so Brisbane covered the expenses herself. Robyn Potter later reflected:

The funeral was terrible. People fluffed their lines and it was a bit of a shambles. It was held in that Sacred Heart Church in Darlinghurst on the corner of Oxford Street and Darlinghurst Road. I remember a dreadful sense of sadness and disappointment, thinking he died so young and hadn't achieved anything, and how we were worn out by it all; we were all just tired of it, and it was sad, and hopeless.

According to Robyn Nevin, Ms Fink signed the memorial register: "Margaret Hooten McNeil Fink." According to Jennie DeLisle, when driving to Rookwood Cemetery, Nevin complained that she had not been advised of her former husband's in-extremis condition and had to be reminded that she had an AVO (apprehended violence order) out against McNeil for years. According to Honeywill, Ms Nevin declined to leave her limousine at the burial site. There was even a dispute about the wording to go on the recently departed's headstone.

ACT SIX – IN WHICH THE WORK OF JIM MCNEIL IS ASSESSED

As Ross Honeywill acknowledged in an interview on *Late Night Live* (15 September 2010), McNeil's plays do not hold up well today. Readers of his collected works can form their own conclusions. However, if McNeil had not been a violent crim, it is unlikely that Honeywill would have written his biography.

Jim McNeil was not the first scribbler to win a grant from the Australia Council and to fail to produce any work following the receipt of such taxpayer largesse. A close reading of *Wasted* suggests that McNeil only composed one coherent sentence after he left Parramatta Gaol. It was Chekov-like in meaning and well worth waiting for. When staying with Ross Honeywill in South Australia, Jim McNeil did not pen one word of his proposed *My Brilliant Career* script. However, he did write one brilliant sentence – which he affixed to Honeywill's fridge. It read:

We're out of whisky

Worth lotsa literary grants, don't you think?

Jim McNeil RIP – an Aussie Chekov, to be sure – much admired (for a time) by the sandal-wearing class.

EPILOGUE – IN WHICH THE SANDAL-WEARING CLASS REFLECT ON THE LATE JIM MCNEIL

Bob Ellis told Honeywill that McNeil's decision to beat Nevin and "rearrange her face" was – wait for it – "an enormous career error" on the playwright's behalf. That's all, apparently.

And Robyn Nevin told Honeywill:

He was a poet; that's who I got together with; that's who I saw. So much of our time was with him sober. I mean I spent more time with him sober than not, and he was affectionate, gentle, quiet and thoughtful. And very funny. To me he was a poet.

A wife-bashing poet, it seems

BRAIN FOOD

Shelley Gare

The case for chomp-lit: food writing with bite that depends on IQ not dollars

When I was 23, no-one in this country yet said cookie. We ate biscuits. Nevertheless, I knew what America's favourite biscuit - cookie - then was, because that spring in the Seventies, the American magazine *Esquire* had published a lengthy article titled "The Story of Oreo" by Ron Rosenbaum

Rosenbaum is a much celebrated, New York based investigative journalist whose subjects have included business tycoons, Hitler and Shakespeare. This piece though was about a creation that consists of two rounds of chocolate biscuit sandwiching a thin layer of hard white cream icing.

I realised as I read that we had our own versions of the Oreo, whipped up here by opportunistic local manufacturers who had then dubbed them with different names. But the real thing - the Oreo cookie - had glamour.

It's impossible to find the story on-line now but I think it was well over 5000 words long and at the end of that article about a sweet biscuit, you knew why Americans ate the food they did; how they built their factories and what influenced the buyers for grocery chains; you knew about cookie wars and why Americans are so ingenious at inventing these foodstuffs, Coca Cola, chocolate bars and the like, that end up being sold in every 24-hour store around the globe.

You knew the best way to eat an Oreo: twist the biscuit so it comes apart; lick the icing layer; dunk the bits of biscuit into a glass of cold milk ...

It was a brilliant piece of food writing.

Rosenbaum may not have called it that himself. He might have seen it as a piece of social commentary, an investigation into food habits and mores. It could have been described as a business story, the profile of an industry. It also chronicled a country's love affair with a foodstuff.

So, as I was saying, it was brilliant food writing.

For it's context and breadth and spread and aspiration that make food writing work. The art is not in writing about "the deep-fried parsnip, sliced into crisp ribbons and topped with sesame, brings welcome crunch" or "some dishes tease with countrified simplicity, like a half-dozen poached quail eggs set in baby nests of barely steamed broccolini".

That's designed to prod people towards restaurants and there's an enormous amount of it about - more's the pity. It turns food-writing into something that reads as if it has been bought by the yard from Messrs Pretension, Swank and Up Yours Too.

The art is in taking a lamb chop - or a lettuce or an omelette - as your subject and delivering 800 words or more (or less) that tell your audience something they hadn't even realised they wanted or needed to know.

Here is Elizabeth David in gloomy post-war Britain on the Italians:

We are all weary of cheese-paring and to see a Bolognese cook preparing the stuffing for *tortellini* with veal, ham, turkey, chicken, brains, eggs, and cheese is a beneficial experience after years of making do with what I have heard unpleasantly but accurately called the "fragments of the cold joint".

Here is the French philosopher in the kitchen Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin (1755 - 1826) on taste: "It invites us, by means of pleasure, to make good the losses which we suffer through the action of life."

And here is British writer and food critic A.A. Gill on the place of his childhood:

You will eat worse in Scotland than in any other country in the world that isn't suffering a visit from one or more of the Riders of the Apocalypse.

That's food writing. It tells us something; it makes us want to read on. It conjures worlds. It gives a point of view that is textured. Too much of what we get now - and goodness, there's a lot of "food writing" about - is nothing more than finger-painting.

A friend of mine who has cooked since he was eight, who can see a chef do something once and then replicate it at home, and who understands food the way Jeremy Clarkson gets cars, is bored to sobs by the wall to wall coverage of restaurants, ovens, recipes and designer vegetables. He never reads any of it which is some feat given I find it almost impossible to escape food porn: *Masterchef* in all its incarnations; leaflets in supermarkets with beaming star chefs; newspaper cookbooks at the newsagent; chef profiles in serious magazines ... News stories on maitre'ds and bread bakers.

The shelves and tables of bookshops gleam with fat, shiny cookbooks, weighed down with photographs and step-by-step lessons. Chefs now produce books that weigh half a kilo and are filled with photos of forks, fish and cookery apprentices executed with the attention to detail of a Durer or Rembrandt. In between are thinner, flirtier volumes with catchy

names. During the global financial crisis, Phaidon, the British publisher which produces coffee-table books with clout, watched sales of its architecture and design books halt, a visiting commissioning editor tells me. The food ones continued to sell.

But why?

For to paraphrase the thirsty shipwrecked sailor, there's food, food everywhere but not a splodge to make us think.

The secret, of course, is that this crop of food writing isn't designed to do that; instead it's meant to make us buy. And so what we too often read about food these days is about as long-lasting and interesting as plastic wrap. It is to Elizabeth David, Brillat-Savarin and A.A. Gill, what plastic Japanese food displays are to David Jones food hall.

Just before Christmas, *The Weekend Australian's* food and wine editors John Lethlean and Necia Wilden blew the whistle on what they termed "cookbook incontinence". They wrote, "The only valid reason for writing a book is having something to say." They criticised the plethora of books from chefs who'd "had their 15 minutes on TV. And did someone utter the words 'cross-promotional opportunity'?"

A few month ago, during the fervour over visiting Danish chef René Redzepi of Noma – Mr Nuts and Berries as he was quickly dubbed because of his taste for foraging native foods - Wilden talked to me about food coverage; how so much of it was just about "what they put in their mouths. There are more interesting issues. Food politics is an important division of food journalism".

She means authors like Americans Michael Pollan who, in *In Defence of Food*, writes about not eating anything that your great-grandmother wouldn't recognise as food. And Jonathan Safran Foer whose book *Eating Animals* is a passionate critique of factory farming and why we now eat the way we do. The latter is a huge bestseller overseas but here in the foodie-land of Australia, it hardly got noticed.

Meanwhile, our foodie magazines ache to be taken seriously as food literature – and sometimes seem to be putting in a good effort at first flick. But then a food-responsible friend nudges me towards the notes at the ends of so many articles: invariably the writers and photographers have been sent by an airline, hotel or tourist bureau.

Ugh.

Real food writing dares to go where others fear to tread. It pays for itself. It doesn't just see a tomato; it sees the tomato as it fits into our mouth, into our recipes, into our life and into our world. It is as lascivious and reckless as Albert Finney was in *Tom Jones*, the movie all foodie film-buffs love to cite for its

oyster-eating scene. Just thinking about that makes me want to lick briney oyster juice from my chin.

It does not prissily and smugly write of an ingredient that no-one has ever heard of, "available from Rajasthani food stores". Hello?

It does not fuss about the shape of the cutlery. Instead, just like Rosenbaum, it sees an Oreo cookie - or a turnip or a strand of spaghetti or the sweat on a sous-chef's brow or a Roman mosaic of a feast – and it tells stories.

WHAT FOOD MEANS

There are food writing stars of course, and by the time you read this, I will have met some of them. I will have been and gone to a literary seminar held over 12 days in Key West in Florida called *The Hungry Muse*. I will have listened to many of my food-writing heroes and heroines. No, not TV stars like Curtis Stone, Matt Preston or Nigella Lawson but people like Madhur Jaffrey, Ruth Reichl, Frank Bruni and writers from *The New Yorker* like Adam Gopnik and Calvin Trillin.

It's a collection of people who enjoy food and like to ruminate about it. One of the guests is Jason Epstein, co-founder of the *The New York Review of Books*, which proves my point that food writing isn't just about either vittles or snobbery. Another is Jonathan Gold who is the first and only food critic to win a Pulitzer. He started writing about food just because he was one of the first journalists to start reporting on ethnic neighbourhoods.

Like sex and death, food is a vital part of the human story. Poet Wallace Stevens used to visit Key West from Hartford, Connecticut, according to *Littoral*, the on-line magazine for the Key West Literary Seminar, the over-arching organisation which has been holding these seminars for almost 30 years. At home, Stevens was a businessman. In Key West, he ate green coconut milk ice-cream, conch chowder and wild doves on toast and, after cocktails, got into quarrels with other writers and poets like Robert Frost. In one poem, Stevens writes, "Slice the mango, Naaman, and dress it/With white wine, sugar and lime juice".

Ernest Hemingway, notes *Littoral*, planted fig, lime and avocado trees around his home in Key West and joked to another author that they were fertilised with the "ton of crap" he cut from his manuscripts each day. He hunted shorebirds and fish, his diet as basic and spare as his writing. He picked his own limes for his gin and tonics.

One of the speakers scheduled for this year's food-focused talks – each year has a different theme - is Patrick Symmes, a correspondent for Latin America. He once wrote a piece for the American journal *Harper's* after trying to live for a month on the same money and food rations as a Cuban. He spent just over \$US15 and says he lost five kilos.

Food is the central theme in all these stories but what extraordinary worlds are being revealed at the same time.

Of course there are food books that take us exploring: Bill Buford's *Heat*; *The Raj At Table* by David Burton. A friend of mine, Keith Austin, has started a food blog called *Scoff* that wades into the eating and drinking melee as happily and deftly as Henry V's archers at Agincourt. This is the adventurous stuff, but too often, in the mainstream, we are being short-changed by publishers who too often assume we have empty brain-pans.

The film *Julie and Julia* provided a clue. Audiences loved Meryl Streep's portrayal of the famous American chef, author and TV star, Julia Child: her delight in eating, her hearty marvelling at tastes, her sheer gutsiness in the way she approached everything, including loving and feeding her husband. As far as I can tell though, few people could stand the Julie Powell character, played by Amy Adams, the young New Yorker who obsessively cooked her way through the first volume of *Mastering The Art of French Cooking* in a year, wrote about it on her blog, even more cannily wrote a book about her cooking attempts - and yet, never had the gorm or grace to actually contact Ms Child until well into all the hoo-hah. At which stage, Ms Child decided she had better things to do with her time.

Powell seems self-obsessed, more concerned with herself and feedback than say, learning how to roast a duck, choose a perfect peach or understand why food can be a civilising force.

Julia Child, according to her editor, Judith Jones (yes, another speaker at *The Hungry Muse*), was serious: "She wanted to teach people to cook well and to care and to take it seriously and to enjoy it." And, Jones said, Child didn't think Powell was a serious cook. Child felt the blog - the whole thing - was a stunt. "Julia didn't like flimsies," Jones said.

Mastering the Art I and II, which Julia Child wrote with colleagues Louise Bertholle and Simone Beck (with Beck only for the second volume) didn't have a single picture although there were a few drawings to demonstrate certain techniques like how to truss a chook or peel a tomato. (I am writing "didn't" because I don't know if somewhere, there are 2011 super-duper editions, masterminded by marketing whiz-kids, that boast: "now with pictures!")

Once upon a time, the joy of reading a cook book was savouring a recipe in your head; imagining the ingredients coming together. One of the first cookbooks I ever used was Rosemary Hemphill's *Spice Collection* for its lamb shanks with cumin seed and marshmallow custard dusted with mint. Another was a little paperback called *Round The World in*

Eighty Dishes and I became obsessed with the idea of making pashka. In the book, it was described as a Russian Easter dessert. As with Hemphill, there were no photos; instead, my imagination provided the sweetness of the crystallised fruits, the cool richness of the cream cheese.

I also loved the idea of baba ghanoush which, at that stage, had hardly been heard of in Perth, WA, where I was living, let alone come in containers on every supermarket's shelf. My head did the rest once I saw it described in Claudia Roden's *A Book of Middle Eastern Food* - no photos again - as a dish of grilled whole aubergines, peeled, mashed and then mixed with tahini to become a thick smoky, creamy puree. (How many people know what goes into baba ghanoush today?)

These were recipe books that made you think. They made you use your brain, your commonsense, your reasoning powers and your imagination.

It's hard to imagine what cookbooks like *Four Ingredients* - which presents endless recipes that only need four ingredients and which has sold over two million copies here - do except play to the human body's survival instinct which is to use up as few calories as possible in activity and thinking every day.

It's not to say these star food writers weren't and aren't sometimes a tad too demanding. Brillat-Savarin presumed his readers had servants, excellent livers and time. In *French Country Cooking*, Elizabeth David reels off a list of kitchen necessities - batterie de cuisine - as frightening as any bride's wedding gifts registry list. A. A. Gill makes clear that every man going out to dinner would be better off with a beautiful blonde on his arm.

But their food writing is executed with the understanding that food is an essential part - but one part - of our lives. And so they also include love, politics, religion, manners, fashion, art, physiognomy, biology, economics, history and philosophy.

And so do all food writers who know and care about what they're doing.

CELLOPHANE FOODIES

There is a new kind of writing, of journalism though, that is creeping in and suffocating expression. It looks like writing; it looks like journalism; but it ain't. The real point of writing is to communicate ideas. Just as the real point of journalism is to tell stories about what has really happened somewhere, somehow, and often these are stories that other people don't want told. Again, it's ideas.

Some years ago, I had lunch with a perky young editor with impeccable credentials. It turned out later that she was an expert in the art of the non-story. Her commissions looked like stories, but too often for my

liking, they weren't. They felt, instead like articles and features that described patina. When we met one day to discuss possible commissions, she told me she had gone back and read several of my stories on-line. She wrinkled her nose as she looked at me. "Your stories always have *ideas* in them, don't they?" she stated. And she didn't say it like it was a good thing.

The foodie stories Ms Perky tended to run told you almost nothing. Perhaps they made you wonder if you should buy new wine glasses or fork out a couple of hundred dollars for a dinner for two at a newly opened hotel. Perhaps they made you feel less because you couldn't afford to do any of that. Perhaps – if you were a bit bolshie - they made you wonder just who the hell were all these fashionable chefs and critics and food groupies anyway who can't wait to be the first to visit whichever restaurant, bar or hotel has taken over the site of a former brothel or brewery or doss-house.

I'm sure these articles, reviews and recipes sold advertising, and a lot of it, but they didn't make me wonder anew about a tomato. They never made me think. Perhaps, any such bits of gristle were plucked out of the copy or put through the bland blender.

When I look at many of the cook books and food books on offer in bookshops, or at the glossy foodie magazines in newsagents, they remind me of the piles of toys that accumulate in children's bedrooms. Toys that look shiny and want-able in the shops – especially to hurried, time-stressed adults who are doing the choosing – but they turn out to be boring and one-dimensional once unpacked and scrutinised.

The children find more joy in the cardboard packaging or ribbon, just as people who really get food keep sneaking back to the classics, to their stained and crumpled black and white editions of Child and David, Jaffrey and Roden.

Food is not this thing that is "other". It's what we eat to grow ourselves. It is absolutely integral to the way the world operates and to what human-beings are. But commercial pressure, fads and the constant media obsession combine to make us think of food as a fashion accessory.

Wilden remembers that the night after the *Masterchef* final, which featured a dessert called the Snow Egg, created at Quay restaurant, she was at an upstairs function at that restaurant. "They had had hundreds of phone calls from punters, wanting to come in and try it. And that night when we were there, EVERY (paying) table ordered it, except one. 'They don't own a television,' quipped the manager."

Perhaps they owned cook books though. Ones with lotsa words.

Shelley Gare is a well known Sydney writer and former editor

AMITY SHLAES' GREAT DEPRESSION

Anne Henderson

Wars and depressions tend to create heroes while leaving a trail of disaster in their paths. They also feed the history industry with ongoing revisions of favourite theories.

The global financial crisis of 2008 has triggered a new round of thinking on the great depression of the 1930s. After a decade of debate over terrorism, war and Islamic fundamentalism, the markets are back in focus and in proportions still not fully appreciated. As in 1930, economists are grappling for answers.

In December 2010, President Barack Obama forced through Congress an extension of the Bush tax cuts for another two years, in spite of heated opposition from many Democrats. The tax cuts repudiate the president's economic policy and signal a shift from government stimulus to tax relief as a means of pushing US economic recovery. Significant sections of the Democratic Party are far from happy, seeing the president's move as a betrayal.

The appearance of Amity Shlaes' *The Forgotten Man*, in 2007, was not especially significant. Written in a racy style for an economic history book, it scored the usual pokes from leftist reviewers who saw in Shlaes' thesis a flawed attempt to denigrate President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his New Deal during the 1930s. Wrote David Warsh, for *Economic Principles*:

What's next, I kept wondering: A "new history" of Abraham Lincoln's presidency and the Civil War?

To which one could say: why not?

Americans value their heroes. FDR is one of them. According to David Warsh, FDR's New Deal is only criticised by nutters and extremists. Then along came Amity Shlaes. No nutter, a Bloomberg columnist and widely read analyst. What to make of this.

The global financial downturn has put Amity Shlaes and her thesis about markets and recovery at the centre of economic debate. Likened by many to the financial crisis of the Great Depression in its impact on the US and Europe, the failure of the US economy to turn around after the global financial crisis of 2008, and the slump in President Barack Obama's record popularity, has many calling for a new New Deal.

Some argue for more experimentation, more daring attempts to place the economy in public hands, more schemes to give back to citizens their share of the national pie. Sherle R Schwenninger argues in "Democratising Capital" for *The Nation*:

... the choices New Deal progressives made are worth revisiting because they provide sound principles for dealing with the economy and government today. ... a large middle class requires an economy that generates a broad base of jobs paying middle class wages. The New Dealers were not opposed to "rigging" the labour and financial markets to achieve this result ... government has a duty to shape the economy to meet middle-class aspirations. A high-wage, middle class society would, in turn be good for the economy: living wages would not only ensure adequate demand for the economy but in so doing would spur new investments and productivity growth.

After 80 years, the arguments are familiar but the solutions are, as ever, elusive. The old questions continue over government outlays, government debt and the role of the market. What's best to put people in jobs, build infrastructures and nurture healthy economies?

EXPERIMENTS AND EMPERORS

Setting the cat among the pigeons, Amity Shlaes argues that Presidents Herbert Hoover and Franklin D Roosevelt would have served their citizens better had they allowed the market to recover rather than spend billions on government schemes. In this, Roosevelt's New Deal was the prime offender. Throughout the 1930s, the US stayed deep in economic depression and by 1937 had developed a depression within a depression. Only Roosevelt's war spending after 1939 got industry rolling again and put an end to the long unemployment queues.

"The forgotten man", Shlaes discovers, was not the teeming masses Roosevelt put into government relief work, but the forgotten middle class who tried to avoid taking relief - the independent small entrepreneur, the salary earner trying to make it through without help.

For Australians, FDR's New Deal is foreign territory Down Under. The experimentation, the largesse of government spending, the indifference to global partners or agreements and the, at times, autocratic stance by the president in decisions about finance is unimaginable in any successful Australian leader. Jack Lang tried something akin to it on a small scale in New South Wales in 1931 and 1932. He was sacked by the NSW governor for unconstitutional behaviour over failure to repay state debt. When Prime Minister Gough Whitlam sought to arrange massive loans for the federal government with a Middle Eastern money

lender named Khemlani, he lost the Lodge and then the 1975 election in a landslide to his conservative opponents.

For Roosevelt, however, there seemed few limits. Such was the power and financial might of the United States, allies like France and England bent before him and tidied up memoranda and documents from conferences to suit US demands. At the World Economic Conference in London in 1933, Roosevelt telegraphed inconsistent positions over days to his representatives, so much so that the British were furious. British PM Ramsay MacDonald told Roosevelt's representative Ray Moley, "I give up now. I can do nothing." Moley would later that year desert FDR for the Republicans.

Roosevelt played with time while he considered what to do. And he played with the financial world. FDR would set the world price of gold, changing it on a whim, while sitting up in bed. In this he sought to push up the price of gold and thus prices, in particular farm goods. New Deal farms would record profits and farmers would thank him. His National Recovery Administration curtailed the supplies of oil to drive up prices. Incomes, the theory went, from sales would rise. It did not happen.

Prices continued to stagnate. Shlaes writes that what FDR was doing was like "pouring glasses of water into the ocean in the hope of raising the sea level". Buyers also determine prices. At the same time as Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau was lending farmers low interest loans at the rate of \$1 million a day, the administration was also paying farmers not to farm. Millions of undergrown pigs were slaughtered in September 1933 under New Deal schemes to push up the price of pork. This momentary price rise had its inevitable effects. One shopper noted: "that has raised pork prices until today we poor people cannot have a piece of bacon". As gold hit a new high, Roosevelt put the US back on the gold standard. The depression remained, with unemployment at 23 per cent, although heading down.

DAMS AND MONSTERS

Around 1934, Roosevelt began massive projects, constructing dams for hydro-electricity. Power resources belong to the people was the catch cry - in a nation where private companies had always owned the utilities. The Hoover Dam, the massive Boulder Canyon Project to dam the Colorado River which President Hoover had brought to conclusion, set the benchmark. FDR's Tennessee Valley Authority, proclaimed in 1933, took up the challenge. FDR would tame wild rivers, light up the south, modernise a backward region and bring prosperity to the whole nation.

Over the next five years, massive projects were undertaken, farmers and locals resettled at great cost and much protest, and private utilities companies

pursued until they could be bought up by the federal government. The dam building was compared to Stalin's "Drieptrostroi" and, indeed, many of the ideas behind both Stalin's Russia and Mussolini's Italy had inspired planners of the TVA. For all this, the Authority did not see a successful return on investment until the extensive industrial revival after 1939 – caused by the Second World War.

The New Deal in the US during the 1930s was America's flirtation with a command economy. It failed in the 1930s and was saved only by the industrial expansion of world war in the early 1940s. Franklin Roosevelt saw himself, however, not as a social engineer but as a moral leader. And he was a charming public figure with an expert machine delivering media friendly photographic material.

FDR's image was one of grappling with monsters - from national financial crisis, added to by drought in the mid 1930s, to living with the effects of a paralysis attack in 1921 which had left him unable to walk. Very few photos exist of FDR wheelchair bound, but his iron frames show at times beneath his trouser legs and he is always pictured sitting down. Here was a man of great personal strength, an example to all of courage and determination. He became father to a nation.

THE AGE OF (FAILED) UTOPIAS

Utopia was very much on the minds of US intellectuals and social planners in the 1920s and 1930s, a belief that government could be run to bring a just and prosperous society. Community schemes under the New Deal included new towns designed on New Deal principles, co-operative agriculture and Civilian Conservation Camps that gave relief work to the unemployed. Shlaes acknowledges many positives – like the many heritage trails and parks left to future generations from the relief works spending of the New Deal. But, at great cost. So great that it was only in late 1937 that the Secretary of the Treasury gave a speech suddenly calling for balanced federal budgets. The spending spree had not worked. From his audience, someone laughed bitterly. Unemployment was then around 14 per cent and about to head back up. Depression seemed the norm.

What became known as Keynesian economics is seen as the theory behind the New Deal – what Shlaes says was FDR discovering an economic theory that fitted his vision. Keynes visited FDR in Washington in May 1934, a meeting that seemed not to have gone all that well according to those who spoke to Keynes and FDR afterwards. The President felt Keynes had been too obsessed with his "rigmarole" of figures and thought him more like a "mathematician rather than a political economist". Keynes, however, told people of the administration that he liked the largesse of the New Deal programs because it gave ordinary people money to spend. He believed that "one dollar paid out

for relief or public works ... created four dollars' worth of national income".

However, as the US unemployment figures remained stuck in the teens by 1937, Keynes was soon writing to Roosevelt that he should abandon his war against private utilities companies: "It is a mistake to think businessmen are more immoral than politicians." By this stage, FDR had an open campaign against business. He had raised income taxes on high earners to 79 per cent, brought in estate taxes or death duties and lowered tax rate thresholds. He had even introduced an undistributed profit tax as capital retreated in the face of unfair competition from government monopolies and over regulated markets. Industries like the railways were being forced to increase salaries under new labour laws but were unable to increase rates. Enterprises that usually bought up a fifth of the wood and steel produced in the US were being starved and the effects went down the line.

As the years of the New Deal continued and jobs remained scarce, often it was the temporary nature of the government relief work that exacerbated the problem. Unless government spending sparked renewed private development and investment, it made little difference in the long term. By 1937, taxing the "middleman" had become an FDR sport while new laws to tighten rules around monetary policy had seen banks forced to keep more cash and cut back on loans. Business had also become expensive. Wages had been forced up – in the first six months of 1936 by 11 per cent. Investment in the USA had become unreliable. August 1937 witnessed the greatest drop in industrial production ever recorded.

ANOTHER WAY - THE UK AND AUSTRALIA

In stark contrast, Australia and the UK took a very different path. In the UK, as Keynes' biographer Robert Skidelsky in *Interests and Obsessions* has pointed out, the depression was mild in comparison to other nations. There Ramsay MacDonald and the National government continued a policy of debt reduction. Writes Skidelsky:

What is striking in retrospect is the shallowness of the British depression and the need for recovery from it in the absence of any deliberate fiscal stimulus. British unemployment, 2.9 million at its peak in 1932, was half Germany's and a sixth of America's at the same date. From 1933 onwards there was a steady recovery (briefly interrupted in the winter of 1937-8) so that John Stevenson and Chris Cook in their recent study, *The Slump*, could conclude that "most people were better off by 1939 than they had been ten years earlier".

In Australia, more damaged by heavy debt by the mid-1920s, the story was also far better than in the US.

Elected in a landslide, in December 1931, as leader of the newly formed conservative United Australia Party, Joe Lyons had become the fatherly saviour of the nation Down Under. The UAP slogan for the 1931 election had been "Tune in with Britain". Lyons had left the Labor Party in March 1931 in dispute over a plan by federal Treasurer Ted Theodore to inflate the economy by printing money for relief works. Lyons believed, as did the Commonwealth Bank and the trading banks, that Australia's record debt had to be tackled first. Inflation and more debt would only multiply the already grave economic problems Australia faced.

Then, at the Premiers Conference in May-June 1931, Lyons had been all but vindicated by the government he had left. Treasurer Theodore had been unable to gain acceptance in the Senate or from the Commonwealth Bank for his fiduciary note issue. And Prime Minister Jim Scullin refused to go to a double dissolution to chance a more favourable Senate. At the Premiers Conference, in the face of increasing problems over payment of loans and raising credit, state premiers and the federal government agreed to the Premiers Plan which promised big cuts in government salaries and the aim of balanced budgets.

But the Scullin Government had prevaricated and lost trust. By the time Scullin lost a vote of confidence in parliament later that year, Lyons had mounted a rallying cry that only he and the UAP could be trusted to deliver "sound money". After winning government, Lyons fought the depression with modest relief works and government economies to bring budgets back into the black.

From 1934, figures showed that Australia had turned the depression around. Unemployment had gone from a high of 29 per cent from the end of the Scullin Government to 16 per cent by 1935. This was the year Joe and Enid Lyons stayed at the White House with the Roosevelts, in July. Both Joe and Enid Lyons enjoyed the Roosevelts' hospitality. The Lyons couple were on their way back from Europe having met Mussolini who had charmed Enid Lyons. In the country inspired by the New Deal, there was praise for the building projects of Mussolini's Italy. Joe Lyons and FDR stayed up late discussing politics and their countries and the world's alliances.

Whether Lyons and Roosevelt discussed their respective unemployment queues is not recorded but it is unlikely they ignored the topic. FDR would have wondered at what practical differences there had been for Australia with such a smaller unemployment rate. His New Deal had invested millions and seen much less. His wonder could only grow when, by the end of 1937, in comparison to the 17 per cent of unemployed in the US, Australia had made single digit figures. Unemployment was back to 9 per cent. And tracking down.

BEWARE THE SOCIAL ENGINEERS

It is Amity Shlaes' thesis that by the time the US entered the second depression in 1937 – the depression within a depression – Americans had become inured to financial downturn. The occasional setbacks for FDR had not diminished his determination to rule by command. In 1934, when the small business chicken market Schechter brothers were targeted by Labor inspectors under the NRA Code, for supposedly selling unfit chickens, the case went all the way to the Supreme Court. Along the way the case exposed the absurdities of the NRA Code, its regulations, its nasty and punitive side and its indifference both to consumers and entrepreneurs. It also bankrupted and made criminals of the Schechter family.

Roosevelt and the NRA, however, eventually lost the Schechter case in the judgement handed down by the Supreme Court in 1935. Some 500 cases of people charged under the NRA codes were subsequently dropped. FDR made an angry press conference speech – which he regretted later - with Eleanor Roosevelt sitting next to him knitting a blue sock. FDR was not going to admit defeat. His next mission was an attempt to stack the Supreme Court – he lost there too.

Nothing stopped FDR. When the New Deal failed to deliver economic prosperity, he continued his "Fireside chats" over the radio and people continued to believe in him. By 1938, many were also dependent on the New Deal for their handouts or jobs. As things stayed depressed, any recovery was a win. Shlaes writes:

... the New Dealers' economic failures were working to their own political advantage. The country was now entering its seventh year of depression. The sense of futility was stronger than it had been in the early 1930s. ... Whereas in the old America of the 1920s the sight of so many jobless men had provoked shock and alarm, now people accepted it. ... The 1930s came to be known as the always recovering but never recovered decade.

FDR would be master of the White House for 12 years – eventually the reason subsequent presidents would be limited to two four year terms.

In her daring examination of an American giant, Amity Shlaes has done contemporary history a service, opening up current thinking not only to the flaws in the Roosevelt emperor's New Deal but also confirming for Australians that labour market flexibility and sound money should never be ignored. What's more, Australians' healthy distrust of utopias and social engineering has a lot going for it.

Anne Henderson is Deputy Director of The Sydney Institute

HOW NOT TO WRITE A BIOGRAPHY- BEN HILLS ON GRAHAM PERKIN

By Peter Hayes

Graham Perkin, editor of Melbourne's *The Age* newspaper from 1966 to his death in 1975, is in certain circles a cult figure. That he was the paper's editor during the liveliest ten years in post-war Australian history is obviously part of the reason for his iconic status, as is the fact that he died one night without warning, while still the editor, aged 45. But his reputation rests primarily on the fact that, in partnership with his managing director Randal Macdonald, he transformed *The Age* and made it the newspaper that in essence it remains.

What one thinks of that achievement will largely depend on what one thinks of *The Age*. That Perkin was a good editor is beyond dispute; whether he was a great one is open to question. Ben Hills, an *Age* investigative journalist under Perkin's editorship, has written a biography of his former boss — *Breaking News: The Golden Age of Graham Perkin* (Scribe, Melbourne, 2010) — in which he comes down hard on the side of Perkin's greatness. He is entitled to that side of the question, of course, and it is not my purpose here to debate it with him. My only purpose here is to put on record the faults of his own book — or rather, a selection of them. No one could record them all.

A BADLY ORGANISED BOOK

To start with, Hills does a poor job of organising and presenting his material. There are few dates in *Breaking News*. Perkin was born on 16 December 1929 and died on 16 October 1975, but neither date appears in this biography; one has to work them out oneself from other things that Hills writes in it.

It can be hard to know exactly where one is while reading the book. We hear of Perkin's Matriculation

(Year 12) results several pages *before* he fails a subject the year earlier in Leaving, or Year 11 as it would now be called (46, 50). It's 1965 on page 185, 1962 and 1960 two pages later, then 1963 on pages 190 and 195, *and* 1961 on page 197, then 1962 on page 199, then back to 1961 on page 201, and then 1964 on page 203. And Hills wanders down so many dateless byways that he has occasionally to put himself back on track with a clumsy signpost such as "But back to 1960". (213)

Some details of Perkin's life are presented so far out of sequence that they seem sprung upon us by surprise. We learn on page 338, for example, that Perkin remained a Sunday churchgoer well into middle life, which means that for 300 pages he had been going to church every week and we didn't know it. On page 478, twenty pages from the end of the book, Hills tells us in an aside, while making a different point, that Perkin made "at least one" (whatever that means) visit to Israel. We are given no indication of when that took place, and no account of any such trip appears in the book. Up to that point I had formed the impression that Perkin wasn't much of a traveller.

And Hills' stream-of-consciousness approach to the art of biography leads to a large amount of repetition. A quote from Andrew Peacock to say that Perkin took *The Age* politically to the centre appears on page 162 and again on page 414. We are told on page 346 that, in reaction to his father's premature death, Stephen Perkin at the present day keeps himself fit, and then told it again on page 499. We are told on page 136 that Perkin's widow, Peggy, stills thinks about her late husband every day, and hear this again on page 496.

If you are looking for a coherent chronological account of the events of Graham Perkin's life, this isn't it.

BIAS AND GUSH

Breaking News is also a biased book — a hagiography written from deep inside the Perkin cult. The clearest indication that it's a hagiography is the statement in the preface "this book is not a hagiography" (5). A proper biographer wouldn't have had to say that.

From his schooldays, Perkin is depicted as the man of destiny. "But among this motley crew of teenagers, there were several things that set Perkin apart," (18) Hills writes, even though (according to Hills himself) Perkin was not the school captain (18), was an indifferent footballer and cricketer (47–48), failed his Leaving English exam at the first attempt (50), "was never dux of his class" (46), and achieved only four passes in his Matriculation year (46).

Perkin then enrolls at Melbourne University where over the course of two years (again according to

Hills) he literally fails every subject he attempted and takes no degree, whereupon Hills praises his intelligence: “whatever he achieved in later life owed little to his education and much to his intellect.” (64) It’s that kind of book.

Of Perkin and his wife, Hills gushes: “theirs was one of the grand romances. Into the time they did have together they packed a lot of life and a lot of love.” (135) It’s that kind of book as well.

When Perkin wins a Walkley Award, Hills describes the group photograph of the winners as having “Perkin — as always — posed in the centre to make it a symmetrical people-pyramid.” (167) The picture is reproduced in the book. Perkin is indeed standing in the middle of the five lined-up winners, but Ron Iredale, the fifth of the five, is easily as tall as Perkin, and Jim Bowditch, standing between them, is shorter than either; the photograph is unrecognisable in Hills’s gushing “symmetrical people-pyramid” description of it.

Hills talks Perkin up, literally and figuratively, ad nauseam; other editors of *The Age* he talks down. Michael Davie, editor from 1979 to 1981 and a distinguished author in his own right, is dismissed as “a cultured but ineffective Oxford scholar” (484). (Davie’s widow has pointed out, in her own review of the book, that circulation of *The Age* in fact peaked under her husband’s editorship.¹)

The Age’s editor from 1939 to 1959 “Ham” Campbell’s “embrace of the Establishment”, Hills tells us, “alienated grass-roots readers and cost the paper circulation and revenue.” (108–109) As so often in *Breaking News*, no evidence is cited for this statement and one wonders what basis Hills has for making it. Looking at the graph at the end of the book, one sees that circulation rose significantly over the course of Campbell’s (supposedly) reader-alienating editorship.

In Chapter 14, probably the worst chapter of the book (despite stiff competition), Hills runs through various stories about real and/or imagined links between *The Age* and the intelligence services. One such story has it that Perkin himself was an ASIO contact (405–406); another, that his predecessors Ham Campbell and Keith Sinclair allowed ASIO to vet appointments to the paper’s staff (403, 404, 410). The strongest evidence for either of these stories concerns the first one, in that Perkin once called Ian Carroll into his office and showed him that he had a copy of Carroll’s ASIO file (404–405),² which suggests that ASIO and Perkin may have been at least on friendly terms.

The supposed ASIO vetting of staff appointments by Campbell and Sinclair, on the other hand, is all hearsay, and Sinclair lived long enough to have it put to him and to deny it outright (404; and see *The Age* 30/11/83 p 3). But of the two stories, this is of course

the one that Hills believes. He decides in the end that Perkin was not an ASIO contact, but assumes (after some fleeting doubt on page 404), without question and without evidence, that Campbell and Sinclair did do what *they* were accused of (410).

The Age under Campbell and Sinclair’s successive editorships comes in for a thorough bagging at Hills’s hands, written off as “the paper time forgot” (55). Of its World War II coverage he writes that:

... the paper was often beaten on the big stories from the front-line. In August 1945, for example, the paper completely missed the significance of the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, reporting it briefly on an inside page under the sub-heading “New Type of Bomb Tried in Japan”. (83)

This is neither fair nor accurate. The atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima at 8.15 am local time on 6 August 1945.³ This was obviously too late for that morning’s *The Age* and, by the time President Truman announced the bombing to the world sixteen hours later,^{iv} evidently too late even for the *next* morning’s newspapers in Melbourne, none of which reported Hiroshima in their first editions for 7 August 1945.

The Age’s “final edition” for that day (unavailable on microfilm) reports the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in the middle of an account of a conventional bombing raid, under a headline (“Fourteen cities in ashes”) unchanged from the earlier edition. This is admittedly easy to miss but, contrary to Hills, even the initial *Age* coverage of Hiroshima is on page one and runs to a few hundred informative words. (*The Argus* did much better with its later edition on 7 August, remaking the front page to feature the headline “Atomic bomb on Japan”; this is not available on microfilm either.) On the following day, 8 August 1945, all three morning papers in Melbourne, *The Age* included, led with Hiroshima at their first clear chance to do so. The Hiroshima bombing ran over the first two pages of that day’s *The Age* and spilled on to the third; its significance can hardly be said to have *completely* escaped the paper.

I have looked for Hills’ subheading “New Type of Bomb Tried in Japan” in *The Age* for 6–8 August 1945 in the State Library of Victoria’s holdings, both in hard copy and on microfilm, but haven’t found it. It is now up to him to prove that it ever really appeared.

CORNER-CUTTING AND HOWLERS

Some things in the book Hills does make up more or less openly. For example, he writes:

Menzies wrote to the effect that “While I too am a firm believer in capital punishment, I

think that there is a more important principle and that is the independence of the editor of *The Age*.”⁴ (183)

“To the effect” suggests that Menzies never wrote that sentence, even though Hills puts it in quotation marks.

In an anecdote about a caption to a photograph published in *The Age*, Hills says that the journalist “wrote something on the lines of” (189) — and then makes up a caption himself, rather than finding the actual photograph and quoting what was actually printed.

Chapter 8 of the book has some non-existent editorial priorities incorporated into its title, “Phillip Adams, Les Tanner, and ‘The Wizard of Id’”. Two passages are worth quoting at length

[In 1966 Perkin’s] priorities were the hiring of a cartoonist, a columnist, and a comic strip. This odd trio, says Peggy, were her husband’s “must haves” when he took on the job of revitalising the aged and arthritic newspaper that David Syme’s “Thunderer” had degenerated into: Les Tanner, Phillip Adams, and ‘The Wizard of Id’. (252)....

As for “The Wizard of Id”, you only have to look at *The Age*’s comic strip of the day, “*Curly Wee and Gussie Goose*”, to see why Perkin was desperate for a change. Excruciatingly twee and dated, it had been originally commissioned by the *Liverpool Echo* in the 1930s, and had apparently caught Ham Campbell’s fancy. By the 1960s, it was on its last legs, dull, puerile, and pointless, like much of the rest of the paper... “The Wizard”, on the other hand, although it depicts life in a fictitious feudal kingdom 1000 years ago, had a modern, mordant edge to its humour and was aimed at a more sophisticated, adult audience. (259)

THE FACTS ARE AGAIN OTHERWISE.

“Curly Wee and Gussie Goose” first appeared in *The Age* on 18 October 1937. There was a period of several years beginning in 1949 when it was the only daily strip in *The Age*, but that came to an end on 8 November 1954, when three new comic strips joined it. By October 1966 when Perkin became editor, it was one of six comic strips in *The Age* and by no means the paper’s “comic strip of the day”. One of the three strips that joined it in 1954, moreover, was “Colonel Pewter”, itself a modern and sophisticated strip that distinguished *The Age* a decade before

Perkin’s editorship began.

Hills’ vituperation upon “Curly Wee and Gussie Goose” is misplaced for another reason in that it was a comic strip for very small children. His account of its decline by the 1960s is another patent journalistic invention: to grown-up eyes it was obviously *always* flat and pointless.

“Curly Wee” (the strip’s name was shortened on 25 January 1956, so Hills gets the name wrong for the period he is writing about) last appeared in *The Age* on 24 February 1967. The following day, 25 February 1967, “Tumbleweeds”, “Bristow” and “Senator Gassius” all commenced simultaneously, so they can be said to have replaced it. “The Wizard of Id”, with which, along with Tanner and Phillip Adams, Perkin revitalised *The Age* in the 1960s in Hills’s account, first appeared in the paper only on 2 December 1974 — when Perkin’s editorship (and life) was in its final year.

Phillip Adams’ *The Age* column began on 24 April 1974, again very late in the Perkin day and nowhere near its 1966 start as Hills reports. His account of Perkin’s priorities as a new editor is therefore largely a work of fiction.

Hills cuts a variety of corners. To tell us how bad it was for women in the bad old days before abortion was effectively decriminalised, he quotes half a page from a *Green Guide* review of a television program (320–321). This is a schoolboy’s notion of research, in a book peppered with schoolboy howlers.

22–3: Billy Snedden is described as a “one-time Liberal Party leader” in an anecdote set in 1972, the year in which he *became* Liberal Party leader.⁵ Hills says on page 453 that Snedden was “the first leader in the history of the Liberal Party never to be elected prime minister”. Strictly speaking, that was Snedden’s predecessor William McMahon, who became Prime Minister by a party room vote and lost the only election he contested as PM.

47: Perkin receives “the new polio vaccine” at school, even though he matriculated in 1946 (54) and polio vaccination didn’t begin until 1955.⁶

116–117: “the now-demolished West Melbourne Stadium”. The West Melbourne Stadium burned down in 1955,⁷ and was subsequently rebuilt; its name was changed in 1959 to Festival Hall under which name it still stands.⁸ (Hills himself refers, later in the book, on page 188, to “Festival Hall” as being “the old West Melbourne stadium where Perkin had once reported the wrestling”.)

145: “[*The Times*] as late as the 1970s would still refer to ‘The Australian swimmer, Miss D.A. Fraser’ and ‘Mr F. Sinatra, the well-known singer of popular songs’.” *The Times* has a searchable database covering the entire 200-year run of the paper up to

1985; neither of the above quotes appears in it. “Miss D.A. Fraser” appears just once in reference to Our Dawn — in 1964, not the 1970s. “Mr Frank Sinatra” appears in news items concerning him; “Mr F. Sinatra” never does, not even once, nor “the well-known singer of popular songs” about anyone at all, ever. Mr Hills would appear to have made these things up too.

186: “Finally, Sinclair relented, grudgingly allowing the picture to be run, but only over a single column, and only way back in the paper on page 11, or thereabouts.” The picture here is supposedly one of English fashion model Jean Shrimpton in her classic 1965 Derby Day shift, which *The Age* in fact ran no photograph of at the time. It printed only a file photograph of Shrimpton, a three-quarter profile head shot, in reporting on 1 November 1965 (on page 6) that she had attended the Flemington races on Saturday. On 3 November 1965 *The Age* printed a full-length photograph of Miss Shrimpton at the previous day’s Melbourne Cup (in a different outfit, needless to say) right up the front of the paper on page 3, which casts doubt on Hills’ story that editor Keith Sinclair was violently opposed to printing pictures of her.

203: “Stephen [Perkin] was 11 or 12 when The Beatles toured Australia”. Well, which was it? Neither, as it happens. According to Hills, Stephen Perkin was born in December 1953 (136), which would mean that when The Beatles toured Australia in June/July 1964 he was neither 11 nor 12, but 10.⁹ Later, on page 346, Stephen Perkin is said to be presently approaching 50 when, again going by Hills’ date of birth for him, he ought to be 56.

207: “While Perkin graduated from the state-school system only after sitting his English exam a second time”. This implies Perkin failed Matriculation English, when it was the *Leaving* English exam that he repeated (50–51); Hills doesn’t even seem to know his own book.

232: “the states jealously guarded their control of corporations until the Commonwealth took over these powers in 1974”. One might well ask how the Commonwealth could have done that; in reality, the states voluntarily referred (ie handed over) their corporations control powers to the Commonwealth in 2001.¹⁰

273: “As the blank, red-brick walls began to rise”. The brick walls of *The Age*’s Spencer Street building were a distinct shade of light to medium brown, not red.

281: “The previous decade [up to Henry Bolte’s election as Premier of Victoria in 1955] of unstable and shifting alliances had seen no fewer than 11 premiers”. In the ten years up to Bolte becoming

Premier in June 1955, only *five* men held that office: Albert Dunstan, Ian Macfarlan, John Cain, Thomas Hollway and John McDonald. Even counting terms as premier as distinct, there were only *eight* premiers in that period, and even adding Bolte himself would still only bring the number up to nine.¹¹

324: “... in 2008 abortion was finally legalised in Victoria, by the simple — if fiercely debated — expedient of removing it from the Crimes Act.” There was a lot more to it than that. The *Abortion Law Reform Act 2008* (Vic) also abolished abortion offences at common law, defined who could perform abortions, and created a new offence of abortion performed by unqualified person — among other provisions (which this article is not the place to discuss). Removing abortion from the *Crimes Act* took up only one section out of the *Abortion Law Reform Act*’s twelve.

410: “Whitlam’s attorney-general, Lionel Murphy, staged a midnight raid on the organisation’s [ie ASIO’s] headquarters, demanding that Spry hand over some of his secret files.” Murphy raided ASIO in March 1973;¹² Sir Charles Spry had retired from ASIO in 1969.¹³

422: “In November 1966, a few days before the election ... the US president Lyndon Johnson paid a three-day visit to Australia.” LBJ’s 1966 Australian visit took place in October, not November; over four days, not three; and, not a few days, but five *weeks* before the 26 November 1966 Federal election.¹⁴

434: “when the Whitlam government was defeated at the end of 1975.” The Whitlam Government was not defeated; it was dismissed from office on 11 November 1975 by the Governor-General, whereupon Whitlam’s Labor Party lost the subsequent 1975 election as the Opposition. (Hills must be the only journalist in Australia who doesn’t know this.)

456: In Paris, in 1974, Perkin goes to the Lasserre restaurant, “then a three-star temple to haute cuisine frequented by the likes of Pablo Picasso”. Picasso had died the year before and was no longer frequenting restaurants.

494: [at the Collingwood Football Club, Ranald Macdonald] “rebranded the club ‘New Collingwood,’...” Not exactly. Macdonald led a reform group at Collingwood called The New Magpies which (under his presidency) took over the running of the club, its name and “brand” unchanged, in 1982.¹⁵

499: Perkin’s daughter Corrie is described at the present day as having “quit journalism for good, for a quieter life as an antiquarian book dealer”. Her

THE HON CHRIS BOWEN

MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION &
CITIZENSHIP

TO ADDRESS
THE SYDNEY INSTITUTE

Boat people, refugees, immigration pressures, citizenship testing, population targets, business needs – the Minister for Immigration & Citizenship holds the keys to some of the most crucial issues of our times.

SPEAKER: THE HON CHRIS BOWEN MP
(Minister for Immigration and
Citizenship)

DATE: Wednesday 16 February 2011

TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm

VENUE: Mallesons Conference Room,
Level 61, Governor Phillip
Tower, 1 Farrer Place,
Sydney

ENQUIRIES: PH: (02) 9252 3366

FAX: (02) 9252 3360

OR mail@thesydneyinstitute.com.au

WEBSITE: www.thesydneyinstitute.com.au



bookshop (“My Bookshop” in Hawksburn) sells new books, not antiquarian ones.

Breaking News is incidentally littered with asinine misspellings. Maie Casey (12), Sadler’s Wells theatre (140), the Earl of Derby (140), Sir Laurence Olivier (144), the British Labour Party (150) and Bahrain (350) all have their names misspelt. Automated spellchecking would not have revealed that “pixilated” (104) ought to be “pixellated” or “pixelated” (which would have been the wrong word in any spelling); but what excuse in the computer age is there for such illiteracies as “omnivorous” (41), “heirachy” (365) or even “Mahogony” (70)? (All three are underlined by my own computer as I type this paragraph.)

What makes it all the worse is that *Breaking News*, exhausting what market there was for a biography of Graham Perkin (it was itself partly funded by the taxpayer), is almost certainly the only one he will ever have. If he deserved a biography at all, he deserved better than this.

Peter Hayes is a Melbourne writer

- ¹ Anne Chisholm, ‘Lamentation for a leader lost’, A2, *The Age* (Melbourne), 15 May 2010, p 22.
- ² See also David McKnight, *Australia’s Spies and Their Secrets*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1994, p 185.
- ³ Michael Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2007, p 68.
- ⁴ *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman: 1945*, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1961, p 197.
- ⁵ Allan Barnes, ‘Liberals plan fightback’, *The Age* (Melbourne), 21 December 1972, p 1.
- ⁶ John R Paul, *A History of Poliomyelitis*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1971, pp 432–439.
- ⁷ ‘Stadium goes: blaze at midnight’, *The Sun News-Pictorial* (Melbourne), 24 January 1955, pp 1, 3.
- ⁸ The advertisement for ‘Festival Hall (Stadium) Boxing’ in *The Sun News-Pictorial* (Melbourne), 8 October 1959, p 63 captures the name in the act of being changed.
- ⁹ ‘Drenched Beatles fans praised by their ‘guards’’, *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 12 June 1964, p 6; ‘Screams and tears as Beatles go’, *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 2 July 1964, p 5.
- ¹⁰ *Australian Corporations Legislation*, LexisNexis Butterworths, Australia, 2003, p 26.
- ¹¹ Paul Strangio and Brian Costar (eds), *The Victorian Premiers 1856–2006*, The Federation Press, Sydney, 2006, p x.
- ¹² Allan Barnes, ‘Murphy disciplines ASIO’, *The Age* (Melbourne), 17 March 1973, p 1.
- ¹³ Entry for Sir Charles Spry, *Who’s Who in Australia 1974*, p 934; David Horner, ‘Spy chief led fight against communism’, *The Australian* (Sydney), 7 June 1994, p 15.
- ¹⁴ See ‘The Johnsons go visiting’, *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 21 October 1966, p 1; and ‘President ends visit with nostalgic touch’, *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 24 October 1966, p 1.

BOOK REVIEWS

John McConnell

HAWKE: THE PRIME MINISTER

By **BLANCHE D'ALPUGET**

Melbourne University Press

h/b, 2010, rrp \$54.99

ISBN 9780 522856 705

“Aaarrgh.” Yes, he’s back. Bob Hawke is back. So is Blanche d’Alpuget - Blanche as author, Bob as subject of Blanche’s latest book. Just when you thought they might have retreated with matching white bathrobes to a life of domestic bliss, they reappear publicly courtesy of *Hawke: The Prime Minister*.

Back in 1982, Blanche d’Alpuget’s *Robert J Hawke: a Biography* was released, a year before Hawke became prime minister. Now, Blanche d’Alpuget focuses on Bob Hawke in prime ministerial mode. *Hawke: The Prime Minister* examines the sort of leader he was between 1983 and 1991.

It is a very sympathetic account of Bob Hawke as the nation’s leader. This is not surprising. “Mr Charisma” leads valiantly despite political and personal challenges.

Bob Hawke’s political achievements are indeed substantial. He is Australia’s longest serving Labor prime minister. He led the Australian Labor Party successfully into four federal elections.

Hawke PM sought closer ties with Asia, and was instrumental in the formation of the Asia and Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC). And the Hawke Government introduced a number of important economic reforms. It floated the Australian dollar. It cut tariffs.

These represent important micro-economic reforms. They were reforms that were not easy to implement. The reforms challenged traditional attitudes within the Labor party and the union movement. Many Labor people and trade union officials instinctively adopted postures that made these policies difficult to sell.

It was a complacent Australia, however. The Australian economy lacked international competitiveness. The Hawke Government’s economic reforms succeeded in shifting the nation’s economy onto a path of improved productivity growth. The benefits flowed to the Australian people during the 1990s in the form of higher overall living standards.

Yet there have been occasions since then when prominent Labor identities have shown a marked reluctance to recognise the measure of these policy successes. Blanche d’Alpuget interviewed a number of former Hawke staffers and senior public servants for *Hawke: The Prime Minister*. Husband Bob had input too.

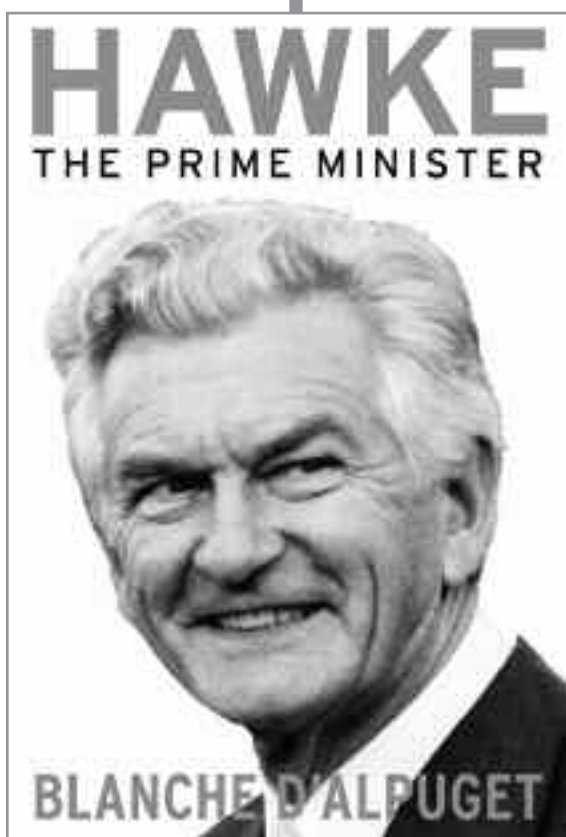
D’Alpuget also interviewed three journalists, Paul Kelly, Brian Toohey and Marian Wilkinson. Paul Keating notably declined to be interviewed. He had concerns with the likely construct of the book, concerns that were confirmed when extracts from the book were published in the middle of 2010.

The book discusses a range of events and issues during the 1983 to 1991 period including the Combe-Ivanov affair, the

MX missile crisis, US bases and the alliance, the tax summit, the Cambodian peace plan, APEC, and Hawke’s leadership role in Cabinet.

Asia so opened Bob Hawke’s eyes, d’Alpuget suggests, that it led him to question the core of his identity. Australia was able to become the “reality tester” between China and the United States, d’Alpuget claims, owing to Hawke’s influence. There is also an informative discussion on Jewish reactions to Hawke’s change of heart on the issue of Israel and Palestinian.

The respective contributions of Bob Hawke and Paul Keating are central to *Hawke: The Prime Minister*.



Paul Keating, of course, was Treasurer during the years of the Hawke Government, until he decided to position himself on the backbench over the leadership struggle.

Blanche d'Alpuget stresses to readers that Paul Keating envied Bob Hawke in the prime ministerial role. The self-declared Placido Domingo of Australian politics saw himself as the Hawke Government's prime mover. Keating believed that he drove a number of key decisions, such as the floating of the exchange rate.

Blanche D'Alpuget relies on Bob Hawke's adviser and "soul-mate", Professor Ross Garnaut, to set the public record straight. Hawke and Garnaut were the authors of this reform, she insists. Meanwhile, Paul Keating struggled initially in the Treasury portfolio.

Assisted by Bob Hawke who acted as his mentor, Keating did find his feet eventually. Then there was the Kirribilli Agreement. At a meeting at Kirribilli House on 25 November 1988, Bob Hawke had agreed to stand down from the leadership before the end of 1991 – assuming victory in the 1990 federal election.

Post-election, Bob Hawke realised that he faced two conflicting commitments. There was his commitment to stand down in favour of Paul Keating, made in the presence of Bill Kelty and Sir Peter Abeles, not to mention Paul Keating. And there was Hawke's developing belief that he and he alone could lead the ALP and the country successfully during the next few years. So Bob Hawke decided, d'Alpuget explains, that his responsibility to the Australian people was of a higher order than his "Kirribilli House" agreement.

Consider the respective leadership rivals. Unlike Bob Hawke, Keating lacked the stamina and temperament needed in the role of prime minister. Paul Keating, d'Alpuget writes, possessed "frightening strengths and equally frightening weaknesses". He lacked a sense of proportion. He had an "unrestrainable blindness".

Blanche d'Alpuget hones in on two alleged deficiencies in particular. Keating lacked a tertiary education; this placed a severe limitation on his ability to examine ideas critically. Certainly, he shone as an intuitive thinker. On occasions, he experienced astonishing leaps in insight. Mark him down, however, on an ability to reflect critically.

Then there was Keating's "Irish Catholicism". This represented another key limitation – so it is alleged. Paul Keating carried an anger associated with being a member of a group pushed to the margins of society

for generations. And so, the ambitious Keating came to be denigrating Prime Minister Hawke.

"There is a touch of madness to all successful politicians," d'Alpuget notes, "especially on the Labor side..." Bob Hawke knew that Australians loved him. But the introverted Keating did not enjoy such a close relationship with the Australian people. He was "shy and even nervous with strangers". So desperate had Keating become for the top job by early 1991, that Bob Hawke began to think that Keating was "slightly mad".

When extracts of *Hawke: The Prime Minister* were released in mid-2010, Paul Keating lashed out at the way he was portrayed. In a letter to Bob Hawke dated 12 July 2010, Paul Keating wrote: "If I get around to writing a book...it will ... record ... how lucky you were to have me drive the government during your down years, leaving you the credit for much of the success."

"I carried you," Paul Keating insisted in the letter to Hawke, "through the whole 1984 – 1987 parliament." The emotional depression that had gripped Bob Hawke as a result of his daughter's drug addiction in 1984 lasted years, not months, according to the Keating version of events.

D'Alpuget reveals in *Hawke: The Prime Minister* that 12 cabinet ministers out of 16 had attempted to persuade Hawke to resign by late 1991. But Bob Hawke is hero. "Throughout history, and in every culture," d'Alpuget writes, "the hero cannot surrender. He will fight and die for his beliefs."

So it was that Bob Hawke was defeated by Paul Keating in a caucus vote on the 19 December 1991. Keating received 56 votes, Hawke 51. "Hawke's brilliant career is over," d'Alpuget remarks, "but the long tail of its comet still shines."

Bob Hawke lost the prime ministership but not his life. However, his life was to change profoundly. The Hawke household tended to be dysfunctional, d'Alpuget notes. Bob Hawke's first wife, Hazel, had shared Bob's ambition to live in the Lodge. When life at the Lodge ended for the Hawke family, the marriage ended and Hazel was "relieved the sham was over". Hazel is no longer able to speak for herself, but was it as simple as that?

Hawke: The Prime Minister includes critical comments on Labor comrades other than Keating. Graham Richardson is tagged "a gifted liar". Once his personal ambitions were thwarted, Richardson embarked on a deceitful and duplicitous role over Hawke's leadership.

John Button was "the most consummate liar" Hawke ever met in politics. Bill Hayden was plagued by self-doubt. He carried a "deep anger" within him. It is not

clear at times precisely whose judgments are being reported in such personal observations.

Blanche d'Alpuget also discusses desirable characteristics of political leaders – courage, political judgment, a theatrical flair to inspire confidence, the ability to work long hours, a steely will and a fighting spirit. Bob Hawke scores highly in regard to these qualities.

But the great man is not without personal limitations, Blanche d'Alpuget admits. In spite of his optimism, will-power and self-confidence, Bob Hawke was highly strung. A negative comment might unnerve him. He was too trusting. Shower him with praise and you could be rewarded with an undeserving level of trust.

Bob Hawke could also take people for granted. Following a successful election campaign, for example, he omitted to thank key individuals for their decisive contributions to the campaign's outcome. And in the economic episode Keating dubbed "the recession we had to have", the Hawke government acted too late and failed to address the problem of high interest rates.

Blanche d'Alpuget believes Hawke's prime ministership was wedded to a vision based on the 3Rs – reconciliation, recovery and reconstruction – both domestically and in overseas forums. Hawke's Christian vision, unlike Paul Keating's apparently, combined admirably with his politics.

Blanche d'Alpuget is an accomplished writer and *Hawke: The Prime Minister* is no exception. The author shines in producing personal portraits and discussing political intrigues, although her grasp in the area of economic reform is less secure.

D'Alpuget's access to some individuals previously not interviewed on the Hawke Government adds considerably to the strength of the book. However, the author's relationship with the book's subject runs the risk that a number of political and family judgments contained therein will be seen as self-serving.

THE MEN WHO CAME OUT OF THE GROUND – A GRIPPING ACCOUNT OF AUSTRALIA'S FIRST COMMANDO CAMPAIGN: TIMOR 1942

By Paul Cleary
Hachette Australia
p/b, 2010, rrp \$35
ISBN 978 0 7336 23189

During 1942, Australian commandos engaged a much larger and better-equipped Japanese military force in Portuguese Timor. The story is not well-known among Australians. Understandably, Australia's military involvement in New Guinea has received far more publicity.

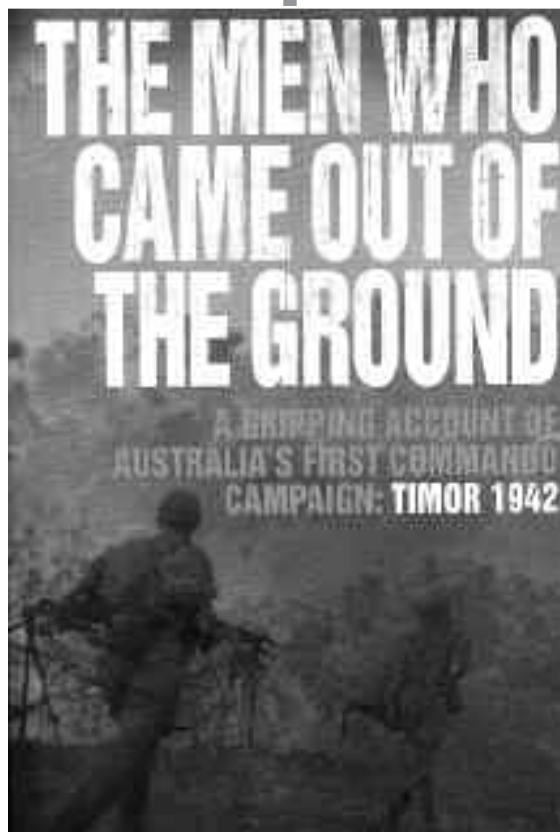
In *The Men Who Came Out Of The Ground*, Paul Cleary, a senior writer with *The Australian* newspaper, makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of Australia's military involvement in Portuguese Timor at a critical time during World War II.

More than 22,000 Australian troops were deployed in late 1941 on islands in the Asian-Pacific region. These troops, in the main, were under-equipped and spread too thinly. It was a poorly-conceived forward defence policy. The Australian soldiers paid for the consequences. Most were captured by the Japanese. Many were killed or died in POW camps in appalling conditions.

The Australian authorities regarded Portuguese Timor as being critically important. Yet, just 270 officers and men were sent to this vital piece of territory. This 2/2 Independent Company was part of Sparrow Force. A

more apt title might have been *Sitting Duck*, Cleary observes. It involved around 1,400 soldiers based mainly in Dutch Timor.

For ten months in 1942, the men of the second company used hit and run tactics against the Japanese. It is an engrossing tale of Australia's first commando campaign, highlighting the plight of soldiers and how much they depend on the wisdom of military strategists and on the plans they formulate.



The commandos had received brief training during 1941, at Wilsons Promontory in Victoria. Recruiting for this special operations unit had targeted men who possessed strong bush survival skills, men who were rugged, adaptable, and self-reliant. Many were wheat farmers and station hands from Western Australia. Among the city-based recruits, a high proportion had grown up in orphanages.

The 2/2 Company landed in Portuguese Timor in 1941. Australian and Dutch forces moved into the neutral territory of Portuguese Timor on the 17 December, 1941, following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on the 7 December. The Japanese then decided to send forces there.

Paul Cleary links the Japanese bombing of Darwin on the 19 February 1942 directly to Portuguese Timor. Fearing that allied planes based in Darwin represented a serious threat to their troop landing in Portuguese Timor, the Japanese decided to bomb Darwin.

This occurred early on the 19 February. Paul Cleary reconstructs a number of ambushes and episodes carried out by the Australians in Portuguese Timor during 1942, identifying roles played by individual Australian soldiers.

The Australians set out to sabotage Japanese military operations. They faced a much larger and stronger force. Operating behind enemy lines, they ambushed troop convoys. They hit and ran. They sought to use minimum manpower in pursuit of maximum results.

The 2/2 Company was the only unit within Australia's 8th Division to fight the Japanese and remain an integrated fighting force. Three reasons account for this exceptional outcome in Cleary's opinion.

First, there was the quality of leadership. Cleary singles out the leadership provided by Captain Bernard Callinan. Callinan was second-in-command. He performed remarkably in extremely difficult circumstances. Bernard Callinan, incidentally, became a close associate of B. A. Santamaria after the war – one of Santamaria's key "acolytes" in "the stridently anti-communist National Civic Council", in the words of Paul Cleary.

Second, there was the bravery shown by many of the men.

Third, the good conduct of the Australians was vital. This latter point meant that the Australians received support from many of the local people – the Timorese and Portuguese. Hundreds of local men and boys provided critical support and intelligence to the Australians. This local support was indispensable.

The Australians were outnumbered. They were poorly-equipped. They were operating in rugged mountainous terrain. At one stage, they were without radio communications. Eventually, the Australians succeeded in rebuilding a radio. They were then able to seek naval and air support as well as direct bombing missions at Japanese forces and naval ships.

The Japanese had sent seven troop battalions to Portuguese Timor, in addition to engineer, tank, mountain gun and search units. Together with a small number of reinforcements from the 2/4 Company, they succeeded in tying up around 10,000 battle-seasoned Japanese troops.

The 2/2 Company lost eight men in combat, not including a tragic incident where a number of Australian prisoners were executed on the whim of a Japanese officer. Losses among Japanese soldiers and West Timorese militia (who supported the Imperial Japanese Army) totalled in the vicinity of 1,500.

The Japanese responded brutally. They terrorised the local population. They killed anyone suspected of assisting the Australians. They destroyed crops and livestock. They sent militias from Dutch Timor to cause mayhem. Around 50,000 Timorese died during the three and a half years of Japanese occupation.

Regrettably, the Australians were forced to leave most of their Timorese helpers behind when they returned to Darwin in late 1942. Australia's military strategists realised too late the folly of spreading small numbers of troops over such a large area.

If the strategy was deficient, so was the level of competence among some of the communications operators located in the Melbourne suburb of South Yarra. Key individuals lacked a proper understanding of guerrilla warfare. They failed to realise that a series of communications from an Australian soldier were sent under Japanese direction. They failed to notice the clues sent by the Australian prisoner. And they revealed very sensitive information to his Japanese captors.

The story of the 2/2 Company in what we now call East Timor deserves to be known more widely. Australia's military involvement to our north during World War II contains a number of important implications for contemporary Australia. We have been very slow to recognise the bravery and resourcefulness of the Australian soldiers that fought there in 1942 and their Timorese helpers.

John McConnell is the author of several senior economic text books



DOCUMENTATION

Brenda Niall's book *The Riddle of Father Hackett* (National Library of Australia, 2009) has been short-listed for the Magarey Medal for Biography 2010. The prize is awarded to the female author who has published the work assessed to be the best biographical writing on an Australian subject in the previous two years. It is judged by a panel set up by the Association for the Study of Australian Literature and the Australian Historical Association.

The Riddle of Father Hackett was well reviewed. It is a significant work of history which involves such personalities as the Irish-born Australians William Hackett S.J. and Archbishop Daniel Mannix – along with the Australian Catholic activist B.A. (Bob) Santamaria and the Irish leader Michael Collins. The book also covers such institutions as the Society of Jesus, the Irish Republican Army and the Catholic Social Studies Movement (commonly referred to as “The Movement”).

Gerard Henderson – who is the author of *Mr Santamaria and the Bishops* (first published in 1982) – queried some of Dr Niall's findings in correspondence which took place in 2010. This was originally published in the “History Corner” section of *Gerard Henderson's Media Watch Dog* blog on 9 July 2010 (Issue 61). In view of the interest which this correspondence ignited, it has been published here in print format as a contribution to the historical record.

The Henderson/Niall emails are printed in full – except for the deletion of some brief comments on a matter unrelated to *The Riddle of Father Hackett*. So far, Dr Niall has not followed up her comment that she would come back with a response to Gerard Henderson's letter of 28 May 2010.

Email from Gerard Henderson to Brenda Niall – 7 January 2010

Dear Brenda

During our recent conversation, I said that I had read a third of *The Riddle of Father Hackett*. I completed the biography over Christmas and found it a most enjoyable read. I was particularly interested in W.P. Hackett's insights into Archbishop Daniel Mannix – along with Fr Hackett's relationships with his fellow Jesuits.

As discussed, I would have liked you to talk about your book at The Sydney Institute in February. Since this was not possible, I will see whether a talk on Fr Hackett will still work around April/May. I will be

back in touch about this. The only possible problem is that the Institute's program is already busy around this time...

SOME CORRECTIONS

In case *The Riddle of Father Hackett* reprints, you may be interested in a couple of corrections.

- At Page 220 you write that “Labor MP Hugh Mahon...was expelled from the Hughes government in 1920 for a ferocious speech denouncing the British for Terence MacSwiney's death in Brixton Prison”. In fact, Hugh Mahon was expelled from the House of Representatives – while a member of the Labor Opposition – following a majority vote initiated by W.M. Hughes who was prime minister of the Nationalist Government. Following his expulsion, Mahon contested the resultant by-election in December 1920, losing narrowly to the Nationalist Party candidate G.J. Foley. Labor's A.E. Green won the seat at the 1922 Federal election.

- At Page 222 you write that “a Catholic peace rally in May 1939 brought Menzies, Evatt and Santamaria together on the same platform”. In the footnote supporting this claim at Page 297, you refer to “Opposition Leader Evatt” being on the platform with Bob Menzies and Bob Santamaria.

In 1939 Bert Evatt was still on the High Court – he did not become a Labor MP until 1940 and he did not become Labor leader until 1951. The ALP representative at the May 1939 Peace Rally in Melbourne was the Victorian Labor MLA Bert Cremean. This is a common myth which stems from an error in James Murtagh's *Australia: The Catholic Chapter*.

- At Page 272 you write that “the label of ‘meddling priest’ was bestowed on Jesuit Frank Brennan by an exasperated Prime Minister Paul Keating, during the 1998 debate on Aboriginal land rights”. This is an obvious error – since John Howard was prime minister in 1998.

I trust the above is useful – and I hope that *The Riddle of Father Hackett* reprints.

DANIEL MANNIX'S PAPERS – A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

I plan to finish my proposed biography of Bob Santamaria in the not too distant future. In my draft I devote some pages – but not too many – to Daniel Mannix. It would be appreciated if you could inform me of your evidence for the following assertions in *The Riddle of Father Hackett* concerning Dr Mannix:

At Page 136, you write that “Mannix had all his papers burned, so as to frustrate biographers”. And at

Page 269 you write that Mannix had “all his private papers burned”.

My question is this – when did this act, or acts, of burning take place? Who burned the papers and where did the incineration occur?

As you may or may not know, I worked for B.A. Santamaria part-time in 1970 and 1971. In this position, on occasions I worked on the Mannix material which you had accumulated when you were Santamaria’s research assistant about a decade earlier. As you are aware, some of Mannix’s papers did survive and were subsequently used by B.A. Santamaria in his biography *Daniel Mannix: The Quality of Leadership* (1984).

It seems to me that if Daniel Mannix had taken a conscious decision to have all his papers burned, then the material which ended up in Santamaria’s files would not have survived.

An alternative scenario is that Mannix did not collect much correspondence in the first place. During his latter years – and perhaps even earlier – Mannix was anything but a hard worker. He handed business matters to his vicar-general for attention and preferred to deal with individual members of the laity. Such dealings would not necessarily have created a paper trail. Also, Mannix had few friends and it is unlikely that he received – or responded to – much personal correspondence. Moreover, apart from his mother who died in the early 1920s, Mannix did not keep in contact with family members. He was very much an aloof loner – as you depict in *The Riddle of Father Hackett*.

In view of this, it is not clear to me that Mannix ever had a discrete body of correspondence which he ordered to be destroyed. As a sloppy administrator, he may well have not collected much correspondence in the first place. This would explain why some correspondence survived – perhaps by accident.

However, I accept that my theory could be wrong. This is why I am interested in the evidence you relied on to support your claim that Mannix had all his papers burned.

THE RIDDLE OF FR. HACKETT, WHAT RIDDLE?

In my 1982 book *Mr Santamaria and the Bishops*, I reported that “it was said that he [Hackett] had been sent out to Australia from Ireland” on account of his support for Sinn Fein and Eamon de Valera’s opposition to the 1921 Treaty. Having read your book, I am less certain about this claim.

The Riddle of Father Hackett mentioned some eleven Jesuits who were sent from Ireland to Australia in the

first half of the 20th Century – including W. P. Hackett. There were some Jesuits who were sent from Ireland to other Jesuit provinces during the same period. The Jesuits you cited in your book, who were posted from Ireland to Australia, are Eustice Boylen, John Fahy, James Farrell, Edmund Frost, Austin Kelly, Thomas Montague, Jeremiah Murphy, Francis O’Brien, James O’Dwyer, Patrick Stephenson and, of course, William Hackett.

In view of this, is Father Hackett’s case so different from that of his colleagues? In other words, why should it have been expected that W.P. Hackett would remain in Ireland when so many of his fellow Jesuits were being sent out of Ireland to the Australian and other Jesuit provinces?

Jesuits of that generation accepted their lot in life. W. P. Hackett accepted his posting to Australia – as did Patrick Stephenson. That was what Jesuits born in the late 19th Century and early 20th Century did. Moreover, as you mention in your footnotes, in his book *To the Greater Glory: A History of the Irish Jesuits*, Louis McRedmond names only two Jesuits who are known to have publicly supported de Valera and opposed the Treaty – namely Timothy Corcoran and John McErlean. If Fr. Hackett had been exiled to Australia, on account of his support for de Valera and his opposition to the Treaty, it is likely that McRedmond would have been aware of this.

Just a thought.

Best wishes
Yours sincerely
Gerard Henderson



Email from Brenda Niall to Gerard Henderson – 8 January 2010

Dear Gerard

Thank you for your letter. I’m pleased you enjoyed *The Riddle*. As to the corrections, mea culpa. The reprint was ordered in Sept, so as to have supplies for Christmas, so unless there is a third printing I won’t have a chance to fix anything (I got 2 days notice of the reprint and made two corrections) But I will keep yours in mind.

I’d be happy to talk to the Sydney Institute, but please don’t worry if a date can’t be found. I have done lots of talks and radio interviews and the book is selling so well that I don’t feel any great need to do more for it...

The Mannix Papers. It is a story widely told, but my immediate source was Frank Little whom I interviewed a few months before his death (you will see the interview quoted in *The Riddle*) He said that the burning was done by May Saunders, housekeeper

to Bishop Fox, and that she told him (Little) that she was unhappy about it but she was following instructions from Mannix which Fox had been told to carry out. 'It was vandalism', Frank Little said.

I would need to look at BAS on Mannix to see exactly what was quoted there. It seems likely that Mannix, having given permission for the biography, would have lent him papers. As you know the work was still incomplete (unwritten?) at the time of Mannix's death. The diocesan archivist, Rachel Naughton, told me that the Santamaria family had returned some papers after Bob's death. Paddy Morgan said in an interview (Phillip Adams?) that many late Mannix letters were written by BAS and that the typed copies are in the SLV [State Library of Victoria] collection. But you should ask Paddy about this.

In speaking of "his papers" I was thinking of the ones written from Raheen, or received there, not the diocesan correspondence. No doubt he signed many letters which were drafted by his staff.

I agree with you that there might not be much late correspondence.

But in 50 years? What about letters from Irish leaders and churchmen in the 1920s? Family members may have been estranged, but someone must have told him of his mother's death. I have seen (e.g.) a Mannix letter replying to Hackett – where is Hackett's to Mannix? I know that Robert Barton sent him a long personal account of the Treaty negotiations- where is that? Father Coyne, whom I interviewed c. 1959, said that Mannix could write 100 letters in a night. (see my *Life Class*, p.88) Allowing for exaggeration that does suggest an accumulation at Raheen of the incoming letters - what one might call his non-official correspondence, which no doubt dwindled over the years. At any rate, that is what Frank Little believed when he spoke of the vandalism of Bishop Fox and the unhappy compliance of May Saunders..

No Riddle? Of course there were dozens of Irish Jesuits sent here in the course of duty. But there is ample evidence that Fr H's case was different. My sources include his letters to the Childers family and their replies. Among the SJ.s, an article by Fr Dennett

in *Jesuit Life* (see my Bibliog) is pretty conclusive. Fr Daniel O'Connell who travelled on the *Ormonde* with Fr H, told Doug Boyd that he believed the Provincial asked Fr H to "volunteer" for the mission because his activities were embarrassing the order.

Father Hackett told my father (c.1951) that he had been in "difficulties" in Ireland because of giving absolution to the rebels. At the time, knowing no Irish history beyond a few Yeats poems, I thought this meant Easter 1916, but it made perfect sense when I read his 1922 Journal of the civil war period, when the bishops had already signalled excommunication for the anti-treaty forces.

I could give you more evidence. But to my mind the riddle was not so much why Fr H was sent away from Ireland, but why he wasn't sent earlier. And the related one: how did his political experience in Ireland influence his Australian activities?

McRedmond may have missed out on Hackett because there was no paper trail in Ireland. If you *volunteered* for the mission, there was automatic acceptance; no discussion would appear in the Irish province records. This was checked, and there is none.

Hope this helps.
Best wishes
Brenda

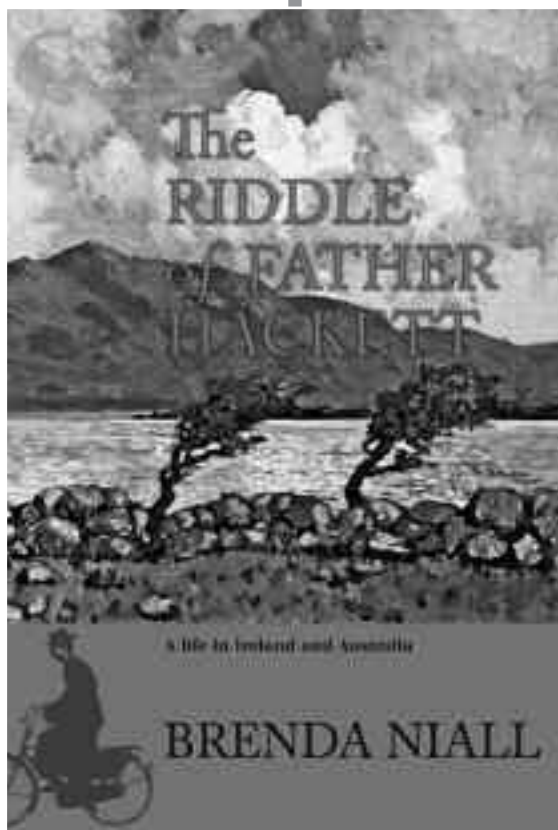
▽ ▽ ▽

Email from Gerard Henderson to Brenda Niall – 28 May 2010

Dear Brenda

Thanks for your email of 8 January 2010. I found the comments in your note very interesting, important and challenging. So I delayed responding to you until I could collect the available material and provide a considered and documented response.

For reasons of clarity, I have focused on Daniel Mannix's papers and the "riddle" of Father Hackett – but have added one extra comment about the relationship between Fr. Hackett and the late B.A. Santamaria. It may be that you might choose to take these comments into account if there is a third print run of *The Riddle of Father Hackett*.



DANIEL MANNIX'S PAPERS (CONTINUED)

I note from your email that it was Archbishop Frank Little who told you that Archbishop Daniel Mannix had all his papers burned so as to frustrate biographers. According to Little's account, he was informed of this by May Saunders – Bishop Arthur Fox's housekeeper – who undertook the burning. It is not clear whether any such destruction of this material took place before or after Dr Mannix's death.

I do not doubt that May Saunders may have burned some of Dr Mannix's papers. This was a common occurrence with respect to many deceased persons in the 1960s and earlier – not only clerics. However, the fact is that not all of Daniel Mannix's papers were burned. I understand that you worked as B.A. Santamaria's research assistant from 1954 until around 1960 – and, in this capacity, you worked on those papers of Dr Mannix which were collected by Santamaria both before and after the Archbishop's death.

This material was quoted by Santamaria in his book *Daniel Mannix: The Quality of Leadership* (MUP, 1984) and it is this material which you refer to as being returned to Rachel Naughton at the Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission after BAS's death. There are many examples of Mannix's papers referred to in Santamaria's book – including Cardinal Van Rossum's 1918 letter to Mannix, Mannix's handwritten notes circa 1919, Archbishop Duhig's letter to Mannix – and more besides. As I recall, Mannix's papers also used to contain a letter written to him by Billy Hughes shortly before the latter's death.

Clearly, then, May Saunders did not burn all of Mannix's papers at Arthur Fox's – or anyone else's – request. Moreover, as you know, Fox was close to Santamaria and it is likely that Santamaria would have opposed any such burning – if only because he would have wanted such papers for the biography which Santamaria was already planning when Mannix died in November 1963.

What is being discussed here are Daniel Mannix's personal papers. In my 1982 book *Mr Santamaria and the Bishops*, I referred to the fact that in the 1940s, 1950s and early 1960s Santamaria wrote much of Mannix's official correspondence. This was confirmed by Patrick Morgan in his edited collections *Your Most Obedient Servant and Running The Show*. A copy of all the material which Santamaria wrote for Mannix remained in Santamaria's files – as did some original documents in Mannix's handwriting.

The question is not so much what happened to the personal correspondence which Mannix received during his time in Australia – but, rather, whether

there was a discrete collection of correspondence which was consciously burned shortly before or immediately after Mannix's death.

In my view the following scenario is more plausible than the “bonfire” explanation.

- Mannix was a sloppy administrator who did not rigorously maintain files and was in the habit of not retaining letters.
- Mannix's letters – which he drafted himself – were invariably very brief and would not necessarily engender detailed correspondence. For example, Mannix's letter to Hackett in March 1923 – which you reproduce in your book – is of this genre.
- Mannix had virtually no contact with his (distant) family and few – if any – personal friends. It is unlikely that Mannix ever engaged in detailed correspondence with family and friends so it should not be expected that he ever held such letters.

I worked part-time for B.A. Santamaria in 1970 and 1971. During this time I did some research on Santamaria's (then proposed) Mannix biography. Santamaria discussed with me the preliminary work which you did with him on the Mannix book. BAS told me that he was disappointed that Mannix left so few papers. But BAS never said to me that Mannix's papers had been consciously destroyed – or that such destruction had been undertaken at the direction of Bishop Fox. Santamaria just regretted that Mannix had not maintained a filing system.

In view of all the above, I remain unconvinced that your comment in *The Riddle of Father Hackett* that “Mannix had all his papers burned so as to frustrate biographers” is accurate. At the very least, such an assertion should be qualified.

THE RIDDLE OF FR. HACKETT, WHAT RIDDLE? (CONTINUED)

In your letter you wrote that to your mind “the riddle was not so much why Fr H was sent away from Ireland, but why he wasn't sent earlier”.

This is a matter of opinion. The fact remains that there is no documented evidence of any kind that William Hackett S.J. was sent to Australia from Ireland on account of his support for Sinn Fein, Irish Republican Army and Eamon de Valera's and Liam Lynch's opposition to the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty (which was signed in London on 6 December 1921). Hackett never said or wrote this. And no one else who was in a position to know ever said or wrote this. It's all a matter of speculation.

In the first edition of his memoirs, published in 1981, B.A. Santamaria claimed that Fr Hackett had been sent to Australia on account of his “close association

with Michael Collins during the Civil War". Collins – as you know – supported the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921. Liam Lynch and Eamon de Valera, as you also know, opposed the Treaty – and in so doing, effectively initiated the Civil War in Ireland. Santamaria withdrew the reference to Collins in the 1997 edition of his memoirs – but he did not claim that Hackett had supported de Valera. Rather, Santamaria was ambivalent about whether Hackett supported Collins or de Valera.

Santamaria knew Hackett well – they first met no later than the mid 1930s and remained in contact until Hackett's death in July 1954. The fact that, circa 1981, Santamaria believed that Hackett was in the Collins camp during the Civil War indicates that Hackett never spoke to Santamaria of his support for de Valera during this period.

The key revelation in *The Riddle of Father Hackett* turns on that section of your book where you document that, on 21 August 1922, Collins wrote to Hackett regretting that a planned meeting between them had not taken place. As you know, Collins was killed on 22 August 1922 while on active duty during the Civil War. Collins' letter reproduced in your book is on paper headed: "Command Headquarters, Cork".

This revelation is consistent with the reference in Tim Pat Coogan's *Michael Collins: A Biography* (Hutchinson, 1990) where the theory is expressed that Collins may have travelled to Cork in August 1922 to meet "some intermediaries" including "a well known priest Fr W.P. Hackett".

In my view, the new material in your book is important evidence *against* your view that Hackett was sent to Australia on account of his involvement with de Valera. It is most unlikely that – in the midst of the Irish Civil War – Michael Collins would have been willing to meet with someone who was regarded as a Sinn Fein and IRA supporter and an agent of de Valera – rather than an intermediary. It is also most unlikely that, if Collins knew Hackett's allegiance to Sinn Fein and the IRA, he would have written such a friendly note to him – even if he had agreed to meet with Hackett as part of some negotiation process.

I have recently read F.J. Dennett S.J.'s article titled: "Tis Sixty Years Since: Fr William Hackett and the Irish Troubles" which was published in the Summer 1984 issue of *Jesuit Life* – and which you cite in support of your thesis. Certainly Fr Dennett believed that Hackett was sent out to Australia due to his support for Sinn Fein, the IRA and de Valera. But Dennett produced no documentary evidence to back his thesis. Rather, Dennett's article is replete with

such words as "might", "probable", "one can only suppose", "one presumes", "must have been", "most likely conjecture" and "this is only my impression". In view of this, I fail to understand how you can describe Fr Bennett's article as "pretty conclusive". It is anything but.

The other pieces of evidence in your email which you cite for your claim are commented on below.

First there is your claim:

Fr Daniel O'Connell who travelled on the *Ormonde* with Fr. H, told Doug Boyd that he believed the Provincial asked Fr. H to "volunteer" for the mission because his activities were embarrassing the [Jesuit] order.

This is hearsay upon hearsay. It's an interesting story – but no more than that. Moreover, as you document in your "Notes" section at page 290 of your book, O'Connell told Douglas Boyd S.J. that he could not speak with authority on the reason why Hackett came to Australia and that he could not recall the name of the priest who told him this story in the first instance. In other words, O'Connell's recall does not amount to much. In view of this, his theory is not at all conclusive.

Second, there is your claim:

Father Hackett told my father (c.1951) that he had been in "difficulties" in Ireland because of giving absolution to the rebels. At the time, knowing no Irish history (beyond a few Yeats poems) I thought this meant Easter 1916, but it made perfect sense when I read his 1922 Journal of the civil war period, when the bishops had already signalled excommunication for the anti-treaty forces.

If, circa 1922, Fr Hackett was a supporter of Sinn Fein, IRA and de Valera it is most unlikely that he would have referred to de Valera and his colleagues as "the rebels". If you are knowledgeable in the history of modern Ireland, you would know that de Valera regarded Sinn Fein and the IRA as the legitimate government of Ireland – or what he termed the government of "the Republic" – and certainly did not regard himself as a "rebel".

In any event, what your father told you about what Hackett said to him is hearsay. Moreover, this hearsay does not necessarily mean what you assert it means. It is accepted that William Hackett would have been willing to minister the sacraments to those Irish Catholics who were imprisoned by the British authorities after the failed Easter Uprising of 1916. At Footnote 24 on Page 289 of *The Riddle of Father*

Hackett, you quote Hackett as referring to visiting a number of condemned men during the Anglo-Irish War (which took place between January 1919 and July 1921). You cite such visits as taking place in 1920 and 1921 – i.e. before the outbreak of the Civil War. Clearly these men were “rebels” – in the view of both the British authorities and those Irish who supported them – since they were involved on the Irish side of the Anglo-Irish War.

The evidence suggests that the time-line of Ireland in the early 1920s is not consistent with your thesis about why Hackett moved to Australia.

- The Irish Civil War commenced on 22 June 1922 and there was a cease-fire on 30 April 1923 – but the war never ended formally.
- It was decided that Fr Hackett would be appointed to Australia around early June 1922 – i.e. before the outbreak of the Irish Civil War.
- The Catholic Hierarchy in Ireland pronounced a general excommunication on those who were involved in insurrection against the Free State Government in October 1922 – this had the effect of instructing Catholic priests not to administer the sacraments (including absolution, confession) to supporters of Sinn Fein and the IRA. Fr Hackett departed Ireland on 2 September 1922 – i.e. before priests were prevented giving the sacraments to members of Sinn Fein/IRA.

As you document in your book, Fr Hackett gave absolution to supporters of Sinn Fein/IRA around mid 1922. This would not have been unusual priestly activity at the time – for Jesuits or anyone else. That is why the Hierarchy chose to forbid such activity some months later.

- The Irish Free State government introduced the death penalty for supporters of Sinn Fein/IRA in September 1922. By then Fr Hackett was already at sea bound for Australia. Consequently, there were no condemned men – as a consequence of their support for the Sinn Fein/IRA and de Valera – to whom Fr Hackett could have given the sacraments. Hackett’s friend Erskine Childers was executed on 24 November 1922. However, as you record on Footnote 24 on Page 289, Hackett did visit a number of condemned men in 1920 and 1921 – who were executed by the British on account of their activities in the Anglo-Irish War.

So it would seem that when Hackett spoke to your father about administering the sacraments to the rebels, he was referring to those Irish Catholics who had rebelled against British rule – initially at the time of the Easter Uprising and later during the Anglo-Irish War. Such an action would not have warranted

Hackett’s effective expulsion from Ireland by the Irish Provincial of the Society of Jesus.

Thanks for drawing my attention to Louis McRedmond’s *To the Greater Glory: A History Of The Irish Jesuits* (Gill and Macmillan, 1991). When I wrote to you on 7 January 2010 I had not read this – I recently purchased a copy. As you will be aware, McRedmond comments that the Irish Jesuit Province did not get involved in politics. Rather the Jesuits administered the sacraments to Irish Catholics who fought with the British Army during the First World War as well as to those who were involved in – or supported – the 1916 Easter Uprising and the Irish side of the Anglo-Irish War. It seems that Fr. Hackett acted in much the same way as his fellow Jesuits during this period.

The evidence indicates that the Jesuit Order in Ireland played no role whatsoever in the Irish Civil War. The event is not even referred to in McRedmond’s history. In your book you refer to McRedmond as naming “two Jesuits known to have supported de Valera, Fathers Timothy Corcoran and John McErlean” (Footnote 34, Page 290). But McRedmond’s actual reference is to these two priests – along with Fr Cahill – as helping “draft a historical case for Mr de Valera to be presented to the Peace Conference at Versailles in 1919”. This is well before the outbreak of the Irish Civil War – and it is likely that the drafting took place before the outbreak of the Anglo-Irish War.

As you know, McRedmond does not even mention Hackett. Yet if Fr. Hackett had been sent to Australia on account of his support for de Valera – it is likely that McRedmond would have been aware of this. For the record, Frs. Cahill, Corcoran and McErlean remained in Ireland during their priestly careers – none were sent to overseas Jesuit provinces.

Theories aside, these are the established facts. A reading of David Strong S.J.’s *The Australian Dictionary of Jesuit Biography: 1848-1998* (Halstead Press, 1999) lists no fewer than 33 Jesuits who are said to have been “sent” from Ireland to Australia. Namely Kevin Bracken, Joseph Brennan, Noel Burke-Gaffney, Kevin Carroll, Daniel Clancy, James Corboy, Michael Dooley, David Gallary, Thomas Gartlan, Joseph Gates, William Gwynn, William Hackett, Dominic Kelly, Tim Kenny, James Kirwan, Francis Lyons, Denis Manning, Edward Masterton, Patrick McCurtain, William Moloney, John Monahan, Valentine Moran, Jeremiah Murphy, Richard Murphy, Dan O’Brien, Morgan O’Brien, Robert O’Dempsey, William O’Keefe, William O’Leary, Joseph O’Malley, Thomas Perrott, Edward Riodoran and Patrick Stephenson.

The Australian Dictionary of Jesuit Biography lists two Irish Jesuits who are said to have volunteered to be posted to Australia. Namely Patrick Duffy and Thomas Fleming. There are also a few Jesuits who came to Australia from Ireland without reference as to whether they were sent to – or volunteered for – the appointment.

As Ursula Bygott points out in *Pen And Tongue: The Jesuits in Australia 1865-1939* (MUP, 1980), the Irish Jesuits exhibited a missionary zeal with respect to Australia. It seems that Fr Hackett went along with this sentiment.

In other words, Hackett was just one out of more than three score of Irish Jesuits sent to Australia in the second half of the 19th Century and the first half of the 20th Century. At this time, there would have been a fine line between volunteering for an overseas posting and being sent to places like Australia. In view of this, the question remains as to why his case was different to that of his colleagues.

There is another possible explanation for Hackett's posting to Australia. According to a rumour within the Jesuit Order, there existed a view that William Hackett (born 1878) was too close to Molly Childers (born 1878). Such an infatuation on Hackett's behalf was capable of causing scandal to both the Jesuits and the Catholic Church. This possibility might explain Hackett's constant visits to Erskine and Molly Childers' homes in Wicklow and Dublin. There is some evidence for this theory on Page 79 of *The Riddle of Father Hackett*, where you write:

Revealingly, Hackett called Molly Childers by her first name: a break of etiquette unless she asked for the formality of "Mrs Childers" to be dropped.

Revealing, indeed. It would be almost unheard of in Ireland, circa 1922, for a Catholic priest in his mid-forties to address a woman in her mid-forties (whether Catholic or Protestant) by her first name. It is just speculation, of course. However, it is a more plausible theory than your own. The posting of Hackett to Australia would have ended any such scandalous relationship.

To you, the riddle of Fr. Hackett turns on not why he was sent away from Ireland but why he was not sent earlier. To me, the relevant question should be – if Fr. Hackett was embarrassing the Jesuit Order on account of his political activity in support of Sinn Fein and the IRA, why did it take the Irish Jesuits so long to dispatch him to Australia? The decision that Hackett would join the Jesuits in Australia was made around early June 1922. But Hackett did not depart Ireland until 2 September 1922.

FR. HACKETT AND B.A. SANTAMARIA – A QUESTION OF EVIDENCE

As previously indicated, I very much enjoyed reading *The Riddle of Father Hackett*. It's just that, on occasions, the evidence does not support the argument. Similar problems emerge with your coverage about the relationship between William Hackett and B.A. Santamaria.

At Page 246 you refer to "evidence of strained relations between Hackett and Santamaria" which (allegedly) "appeared in April 1949". You write that the Jesuit Provincial in Australia – Austin Kelly S.J. – "was asked, presumably by Santamaria, to replace Hackett with someone more suited to the work". The reference is to Hackett's position as chaplain of the Australian National Secretariat of Catholic Action (ANSCA).

So, at Page 246 you state that the request to remove Hackett from this position came "presumably" from Santamaria. However, by the middle of Page 247 any presumption has been discarded and you refer to "Santamaria's request to replace Hackett" – as if this is an established fact. Moreover, at the end of Page 247 you refer to "Santamaria's appeal to the Jesuit Provincial for his [Hackett's] removal" – likewise as if this is an established fact. So what starts off as your presumption quickly becomes a "fact".

There is a reference to Footnote 28 which provides the only evidence with respect to your claim about Santamaria's (alleged) attempt to remove Hackett. This is as follows: "Minutes of meeting, 29 April 1949. Jesuit Provincial Consults' Meetings 1947-1979, ASJASL". I have checked this reference and it reads, in full, as follows:

Ecclesiastical Assistant: It was reported that dissatisfaction was being caused by Fr W.P.H.'s holding the post of Ecclesiastical Assistant to the National Secretariat of Catholic Action, since he was not suited for the task and his retention of the post was preventing the appointment of someone more competent. Fr Provincial said he would suggest to the Archbishop of Melbourne the retirement of W.P.H. from this post.

As you are aware, this report does not contain any reference to B.A. Santamaria. Yet this is your only evidence for the assertion that Santamaria asked Fr Kelly to replace Fr Hackett.

As Patrick Morgan documented in his review of *The Riddle of Father Hackett*, which was published in the December 2009 issue of *Tintean*, Fr. Hackett remained a firm supporter of Santamaria up to the time of his death – contrary to the implication in your book.

UK SHADOW MINISTER VISIT DOWN UNDER

Rt Hon John Spellar MP is Shadow Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister. In the Blair Government, he served as Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Minister for Transport and Minister for Northern Ireland. John Spellar knows Australia well and will address security issues of importance to both the UK and Australia

SPEAKER: RT HON JOHN SPELLAR MP
(Shadow Minister for UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office)

TOPIC: *Security in a Dangerous World*

DATE: Monday 21 February 2011

TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm

VENUE: To be advised

RSVP: (02) 9252 3366

**ENQUIRIES: PH: (02) 9252 3366
FAX: (02) 9252 3360**

**OR mail@thesydneyinstitute.com.au
WEBSITE: www.thesydneyinstitute.com.au**



The only evidence proffered in *The Riddle of Father Hackett* for your assertion that, towards the end of his life, Hackett supported Santamaria’s opponents who gathered around *The Catholic Worker* is the undocumented recollection of Max Charlesworth. Dr Charlesworth, when interviewed by you in November 2008, was recalling events of over half a century previously. There is no documentary evidence to support Dr Charlesworth’s recollections decades after Hackett’s death. It is likely that Fr Hackett was friendly to Max Charlesworth and some other supporters of *The Catholic Worker* as he was, in his priestly way, with virtually everyone whom he came across. But this is not evidence to support the implication that he sided with the *Catholic Worker* against Mr Santamaria.

CONCLUSION

In view of the historical significance of *The Riddle of Father Hackett*, I thought it worth responding to your letter at some length. I know you are busy – and there is no need to reply to this.

If you are planning to be in Sydney with an hour or so to spare, let me know. I would like you to talk about William Hackett if this can work for both you and the Institute.

In view of the importance of *The Riddle of Father Hackett*, I have forwarded a copy of this correspondence to the Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission and the Australian Jesuit Archive.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely
Gerard Henderson



**Email from Brenda Niall to
Gerard Henderson – 6 June 2010**

Gerard

Just a quick reply to your letter. I will look through it again before expressing my scepticism about several of your points, and clarifying one of my own.

As to Sydney, I really can’t plan anything. I may be there in Sept, for a talk at the State Library, but it comes straight after the Melb Writers’ Festival, and even if it happened to suit the Sydney Institute I feel that’s more than enough for one week.

Thank you for the invitation, and I am pleased that you enjoyed *The Riddle* on the whole.

Brenda



REVIEW OF THE REVIEWERS

Stephen Matchett

LABOR AND MEDICI LEGACY

In April 1478, desperate Florentines attempted to assassinate Lorenzo de' Medici, head of his family's political machine and as such the city's real ruler, despite his deliberate deference to the city state's rotating council. They failed and from then on were dead men walking. It took the de Medicis a decade to kill all the participants in the plot but this was more for show than safety because the Medicis had already consolidated their control of the state. They were not above violence but they preferred to use the city's government, "the Medicean system," writes Lauro Martines, "depended upon the compliance and cooperation – whether freely given, bought or coerced – of sizable numbers of the principal citizens and families." Lorenzo's informal power was such that assassination seemed the only way to defeat a ruler who held no tyrant's office but ruled nonetheless.¹

In 2008 Morris Iemma's factional foes were more successful, removing the principal man of New South Wales without using physical violence or facing popular opposition, despite his governing with the mandate of the people.

Two years later, Kevin Rudd's enemies did even better than Iemma's opponents bringing down a prime minister, decisively elected less than three years earlier, in a struggle lasting less than 24 hours.

The differences between these three fights are pronounced. But so are the similarities between them. None of them had anything to do with ethnicity or ideology, ancient allegiance or enmities; they were fights about power and personality, between over-bearing ins and aggrieved outs.

In Florence, the losers loathed the way the Medicis refused to share power with other oligarchs who ran competing machines. In NSW, the party apparatus and its union allies were appalled at the way Iemma was putting what he saw as his obligation to the interests of the people of NSW above what they believed was the obedience he owed to the party. And, in Canberra, the rank and file of the parliamentary Labor Party simply rebelled against a leader they loathed.

SIMON BENSON, BARRIE CASSIDY, RODNEY CAVALIER AND PAUL HOWES ON CONTEMPORARY LABOR

Four books on the state of Labor in 2008-2010 demonstrate that while the forms of politics change the core of the competition remains the same - Simon Benson, *Betrayal: The underbelly of Australian Labor* (Pantera Press, 2010), Barrie Cassidy, *The Party Thieves: the real story of the 2010 election* (Melbourne University Press, 2010), Rodney Cavalier, *Power crisis: the self-destruction of a state Labor party* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), Paul Howes *Confessions of a Faceless Man* (Melbourne University Press, 2010)

Democracy may have civilised politics but power, patronage and personality are drivers, just as they were in fifteenth century Florence. And, in the absence of ideas, they can do great damage to a political party.

The attempt to murder de Medici and the political assassinations of Kevin Rudd and Morris Iemma would be easily understood by members of the generation of Americans that fought the War of Independence, beginning the long march to representative democracy as we know it now. The eighteenth century British and American political playbook warned against MPs grabbing power and patronage. According to seventeenth and eighteenth century Anglo-American opposition ideology, when this happened politics became less about members serving their constituents and more about keeping their side's snouts at the tax trough to the exclusion of all others. And once faction fighting became the norm freedom was doomed.

PARTIES V FACTIONS - EDMUND BURKE AND FRANCOISE BOUCEK

Those who feared factions believed there was ample evidence for their idea; from ancient Athens and the end of the Roman republic through power-mad Stuarts in the seventeenth century to the patronage politics of Walpole and Lord North in the eighteenth. But the idea that political organisations were anathema to the rights of the taxpayer assumed that the electorate agreed on everything and that there was no need for debate, let alone new ideas in politics, that political organisations were always and only factions, focused on grabbing power.

It was Edmund Burke who recognised the potential of MPs assembling around ideas, which they presented to the electorate and promised to implement if they had a parliamentary majority. Academics argue whether he had any idea of a permanent party system.² But, thanks to Burke, "parties came to be accepted subconsciously, and

even so with formidable reluctance – with the realisation that diversity and dissent are not necessarily incompatible with, or disruptive of political order.” They prosper when “the belief that a monochromatic world is not the only possible foundation of the polity”, is replaced by a system where rent-seeking faction is replaced by ideas driven party.³

James Madison argued that parties were not the problem for electoral republics; rather they were the solution to stopping single-issue and sectional activists taking over.⁴

But in distinguishing between faction and party the eighteenth century optimists ignored the obvious – that the latter is always a collection of the former and that trouble for the polity as a whole starts when internal brawls shape party, or worse, government policy.

Francoise Boucek suggests there are three forms of faction, two of which, cooperative and competitive, are not trouble and one of which is degenerative. He cites federal Labor in the 1980s as an example of a party strengthened by the existence of formal factions which by cooperating allowed it to expand the range of its supporters, without losing overall cohesion:

In large groups and organisations, people with common traits, strong family ties, powerful community loyalties, or simply common interests and convergent preferences are driven, sometimes spontaneously, to partition themselves into separate groups. Political parties are no exception, especially big-tent parties under two-party dynamics where there is a premium on party unity.⁵

Competitive party factions are also positive, internalising intellectual competition and keeping leaders on their toes: “Competitive factionalism can improve party performance, policymaking and intra-party democracy. By articulating different policy positions, factions can indicate to party leaders which policies are acceptable or which are not.”⁶

But degenerative factionalism is disastrous for the way it places factional interest above that of the party as a whole and privatises incentives.

NSW LABOR AFTER IEMMA

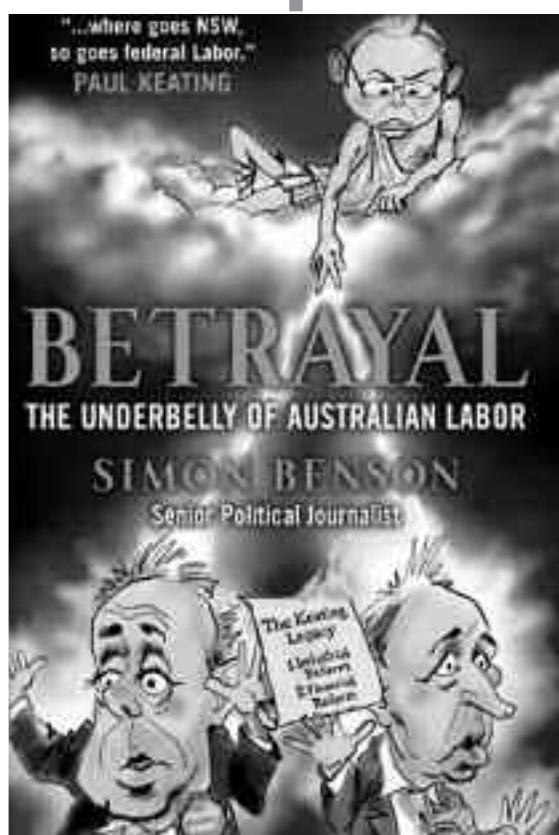
On the arguments set out by Cavalier and Benson, (and on the evidence Paul Howes presents it is hard not to see him agreeing) this is where Labor in NSW is now, and has been since the unions and party machine removed Morris Iemma as premier in 2008. According to Barrie Cassidy, what saved Labor from defeat at last year’s election was the factions abandoning inertia, with the boys and girls emerging from the backroom to kick-start the rolling of Rudd.⁷

None of this is unique to Labor. The conservatives in NSW have also divided over internal power and personality in faction fights that did them electoral damage. Despite winning the 1988 election, party historian Ian Hancock writes, “the longer term legacy of this period was the spread of factionalism, the erection of ramparts around the factions and, in the case of preselection for state seats, the opportunity and the excuse to promote mediocrity ahead of merit.”⁸

The danger of degenerative factionalism is always with us. James Madison could have been taking notes on the state of the Liberal Party in the past and the NSW Labor Party, now, when he wrote:

Complaints are everywhere heard from our most considerate and virtuous citizens, equally the friends of public and private faith, and of public and personal liberty, that our governments are too unstable, that the public good is disregarded in the conflicts of rival parties.⁹

But the fact that in Australia we associate faction fighting with Labor is largely due to the way it has always been a confederacy of union leaders, machine minders and parliamentarians rather than state and federal parties with subordinate units. The three great Labor splits – during the First World War over conscription, in the 1930s over economic policy and in the 1950s over communist influence in the party were not the result of degenerative factionalism. But



the institutional structure that made them possible also allows the party to degenerate into brawls over the spoils.

As Rod Cavalier explains, for the first 90 years of the NSW party's history the right was regularly ruled by a union strongman who, Medici-like, placed his people in key party positions. It all went wrong in the 1980s when, despite the decline in union memberships, their ongoing industrial power led to institutional change that created the conditions for division in the dominant NSW right:

The governance of the industrial side of the ALP evolved from a prince in the Labor Council ruling the principality to a coalition of barons enjoying irresistible powers within their own private baronies. ... The monolithic Right has developed minor cracks as warring tribes have fought for dominance, expressed in the ability to advance their officials and liegemen into the Senate, Legislative Council and safe seats.¹⁰

DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM SANS IDEAS

These four books set out what has happened to Labor as the party factions ceased to include ideas in their reasons to exist and became personality power bases and patronage machines which sometimes hate each other more than they hate other parties. As Simon Benson reports, in 2008 when the NSW Labor Party machine and the state's union leadership were at war with the parliamentary party over electricity privatisation, officials wanted to explore a deal with the Liberal opposition.¹¹ This was less treason to the party than a fight for control of it so desperate that one side was willing to a treat with the external enemy.

In November 2010, the Labor Party plumbed even deeper depths when Bernie Riordan, long time Labor official and union leader, authorised a union publication which stated the comrades could support candidates from all parties when NSW goes to the polls next March.¹²

According to former NSW treasurer Michael Costa, who was on the losing side in the fight over power privatisation, this was a struggle between those who believe politics is about the power to implement policy and those who think politics is about the power to hold power, a fight between, "politicians who believe ideas and policy are the core of politics and those who believe winning elections at any cost is the measure of success."¹³

In this sense it was also a blue as old as the Labor Party, a battle between the parliamentarians who believe their obligation is to the electorate and the union officials and their allies in the party machine who believe MPs are obliged by Labor rules to do what they are told and that ultimately power in the party is what matters most.

But it was something else as well, a degenerative faction fight between two groups divided by nothing more than being in opposite camps. The Medicis and their enemies would be astonished by electricity, but put them in a meeting between Morris Iemma and Michael Costa and their party foes and the Florentines would have understood exactly what was going on as personal animosities overwhelmed policy problems. Labor premier Kristina Keneally has admitted, the split over power privatisation did not need to happen. That it did demonstrates the way factions did not fight over ideas, they just fought.¹⁴

And this is the elephant in the legislature that Cavalier best understands - factions that do

not want power in their party to implement new ideas inevitably degenerate into vehicles for personality based conflict or struggles over spoils. Like the Buffs and Blues fighting for the seat of Eatonswill in *The Pickwick Papers*, the Labor factions in NSW exist to argue and, lacking much to argue about, picked on power, an issue that mattered mainly to electricity workers who feared losing public sector perks and people who believe the state should control the means of production.

The problem with attempting to put the 2008 privatisation dispute into the old factional moulds is that the Labor machine did not split on ancient



ideological lines, with the dogmatic left calling for continuing control of the generators and the reforming right wanting the state out of the electricity industry. Rather, the divide was between supporters of the public sector in the unions, party machine and what was left of the branches on the one hand and the leaders of the parliamentary party on the other who believed that the economic interest of NSW required privatisation. It was a divide that split the other side of the legislature as well. While the Liberals were keen to keep out of it, letting the government eviscerate itself, there were Nationals who opposed privatisation.¹⁵

A NEW DIVIDE? ENTERPRISE COMMUNITY OR THE WELFARE STATE

Although the issue is beyond the scope of all four books, this fight could be the precursor of a new partisan divide in Australian politics, the successor to free trade versus protectionism and government regulation of the economy versus free markets, a division between advocates of the enterprise community and welfare state. This is a distinction that transcends existing party lines. For all Kevin Rudd's claims that John Howard was keen to create a brutopia, where workers are at the mercy of a rampant ruling class, the last Liberal government ran a welfare state, increasing pensions and payments to every interest group inclined to vote for it.¹⁶

As George Megalogenis reported in 2008, Prime Minister John Howard used the proceeds of the last mining boom to push the number of families who pay no income tax from 38 per cent under Paul Keating to 42.2 per cent.¹⁷

As the Parliamentary Library puts it, debates on welfare spending, "rarely fit neatly into a simple left/right dichotomy: supporters and opponents of non-poor access to welfare exist across the political spectrum ... many who argue in favour of universal access to public services such as health and education, are also strong advocates of means testing of welfare benefits such as the age pension."¹⁸

The cross factional consensus against economic reform that destroyed Morris Iemma, as presented in these four books, demonstrates the way issues are increasingly irrelevant in politics.

PAUL HOWES' INSIGHT INTO LABOR'S ELITE

Paul Howes has produced what is easy to dismiss as an ephemeral effort. Written as a diary of the federal campaign, it presents the Australian Workers Union national secretary as he wishes the world to see him. Readers who remember the old Australian ideal of the

man of few words, none of which were about his own achievements, will wonder what has happened. On the basis of this book, Paul Howes is not over-burdened by modesty, keeping confident, even when wrong.

Thus he dismisses Tony Abbott: "The man is completely unelectable. His beliefs – on climate change, women's rights, workplace relations – are anathema to the majority of Australians. When they're not carefully shrouded in campaign speak, that is."¹⁹

Howes also thinks the way to win elections is for Labor to fight the Greens for the 10 per cent or so of electors to the left of his party:

I strongly believe that the outcome of the 2010 election said more about the way in which Labor has governed since 2007 than the actual campaign itself. The big swing to the Greens and the disaffection felt by much of our base undoubtedly were caused by our unwillingness to provide real leadership, and our abandonment of socially progressive policies.²⁰

And if he believes that he needs to get out more, especially in Queensland which abandoned Labor, not for the Greens but the conservatives. It demonstrates how Howes spends too much time in the inner-city or closeted with the comrades and not enough with workers who are less interested in social engineering than economic growth.

It certainly seems that Howes is focused on his place in the labour movement. His sucking-up is spectacular, in one notable case to Innovation Minister Kim Carr, writing:

During the global financial crisis he [Carr] demonstrated a strong determination to ensure that Australia kept and expanded its manufacturing industry. ... There are literally tens of thousands of AWU members who have their jobs today only because of his innovation in the sector, which has strengthened it considerably.²¹

His score settling is cringe-making, such as his go at enemies in a Western Australia fight that none but the AWU elite will understand: "It's great to see the AWU going from strength to strength in a state where we went backwards for far too long under the leadership of some pretty ordinary individuals."²²

Yet, this is a very useful book in the way it illuminates the state of the Labor elite. Howes is an obviously energetic political operator, with the intellect and influence to advocate a return to the policy reforming tradition of the Hawke-Keating era. But he is so caught up in the internecine strife of a party in trouble that he devotes too much time to attacking internal enemies.

Howes provides an insight into the way politics is played among the professionals, where personal loathing overwhelms even alliances of convenience. While calling Mark Latham names did no harm, it does not seem to have occurred to Howes that Kevin Rudd, whose “narcissistic tendencies” and “bitter and twisted” presence he describes, might emerge from the election with an important party role.

In this case, the focus is on Labor Party individuals and institutions, but what Howes writes about – personalities and the pursuit of power – are likely much the same on the opposite side of the partisan fence. As they were in fifteenth century Florence for that matter.

BARRIE CASSIDY ON KEVIN RUDD'S FALL

Barrie Cassidy's campaign study does not focus on the state of NSW Labor, although he does argue the federal party's biggest campaign blunder was the promise to build an Epping to Parramatta rail link – “if any single measure could remind the electorate of broken promises and blatant, cynical vote-buying, it was that.”²³

But he does explore what happens to political parties when personality replaces policy as the cause of conflict within them. His core idea is that Malcolm Turnbull and Kevin Rudd stole their parties. Turnbull “because of a manic desire to get his own way” on climate change, Rudd “through his authoritarian approach: the more his popularity soared, the more he ruled alone, taking only sycophantic advice and being answerable to no one.”²⁴

But, despite a brief attempt to include the end of Malcolm Turnbull as Liberal leader in his model, this is a book about the way Rudd led Labor and the election his removal brought on.

Cassidy knows his stuff and the book benefits from his close observation of the extraordinary events of 2010. But its credibility is reduced by elementary errors that Cassidy should not have made or his editor should have corrected. Bill Shorten, Member for Maribyrnong, becomes a senator. The NSW seat of Gilmore falls to the coalition in the 2010 election, despite it being held by Liberal Joanna Gash since 1996, the Greens won four, not six, new Senate spots (two sitting senators were returned).²⁵

And there are too many space-filling war stories from his time working for Bob Hawke, which are entertaining enough but have little to do with the “party thieves” thesis.

What makes the book useful is the way Cassidy shows what happened to federal Labor under Rudd, when the discipline provided by factions united by

ideas disappeared. Rudd stole Labor by taking detailed economic policy debate out of the party. Cassidy blames this on Rudd's obsession with the media:

Once a government judges that it must 'win the news battle' every day of every week of every year then it is in permanent election campaign mode. The business of government takes a back seat to daily spin. Policies, rhetoric, appointments – everything is determined by what works best in the media. Everyday is a separate political contest that has to be won in the media while the actual running of the country and the showing of leadership are secondary considerations.²⁶

But this assumes effect is in fact cause. The reality is that government as media management only occurs when the party in power has no policy agenda to implement. And the best way of building an agenda is when groups within a party share a common commitment, but want to achieve it by different ways.

Rudd had ample ideas but they were never presented as part of a coherent plan. And, because he stood aloof from the factions, his ambitions were never held in common with other MPs. The result was a government that was only as good as its last spending promise and subsequent opinion poll – and after Rudd backed away from his emissions trading scheme an enormous number of voters decided he stood for nothing other than his own ambition. Cassidy claims it cost Labor a million votes in a fortnight.²⁷

Cassidy demonstrates what happens when factions less degenerate than disappear, an event until now less uncommon than unique in any parliamentary party, Labor or Liberal.

RODNEY CAVALIER AND THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY

As such Cassidy is not much use in explaining what happens when factions decline. But Rodney Cavalier's book is. This is the most substantive of the four books, one which puts the collapse of the Iemma Government from within, in the context of decaying Labor institutions in NSW over time.

Cavalier has the political historian's ability to understand the factors that changed Labor and the party player's capacity to recognise the way damage was done. The result is a fine book, which explains the factional rot as the result of much more than personalities. It sets out the party's problems in the way it connects, or doesn't, with an electorate which has left union allegiances and rusted-on Labor loyalties behind.

The core of Cavalier's argument is that Labor suffers from a tension which has always existed – the determination of the unions to see the parliamentary party as their creature, and MPs' commitment to govern for all the electorate rather than the industrial organisations. He argues that Morris Iemma's attempt to privatise electricity was the culmination of a conflict on the cards since 1916, when the representatives of affiliated unions replaced members of the party as the people in charge. And, with the end of the Cold War and the triumph of market economics, the left had no ideology to defend, and factions came to exclusively exist to squabble over the spoils:

What really separates the factions is competition for jobs. The immediacy of a job is the principal means of recruiting operatives, as a practical step backed up by tantalising portrayal (sic) of a future with glitter and power. ... The party has become professional as the factions have hardened into employment mechanisms.²⁸

It is hard to argue with either Cavalier's history or analysis, especially the way Iemma's experience fitted into the tradition of fights between the industrial wing and parliamentary party, which Boucek's model easily accommodates.

Cavalier sets out how the parliamentary Labor Party, the machine that drives it and the union movement cooperated for most of the party's history. It was always a tense relationship and sometimes it exploded, notably when Jack Lang took over the NSW state machine. But leaders who understood that good policy, soundly administered, kept the party in power delivered enough to keep the factions cooperating. Thus Cavalier describes the system set up by William McKell, which helped Labor stay in power for 24 years:

The McKell model demands the parliamentary leadership make every imaginable effort to cosset party opinion, communicate widely, stoke the machine, pay homage to the supremacy of

conference at conference itself and at every set-piece occasion, where homage might be made. Labor governments would always be doing plenty in many areas as to convince the party the government was worth the goods.²⁹

However, it takes more than power to keep a party perky, to stop it falling into factions divided by nothing more than the fight for spoils; it takes competition over substantive policy ideas.

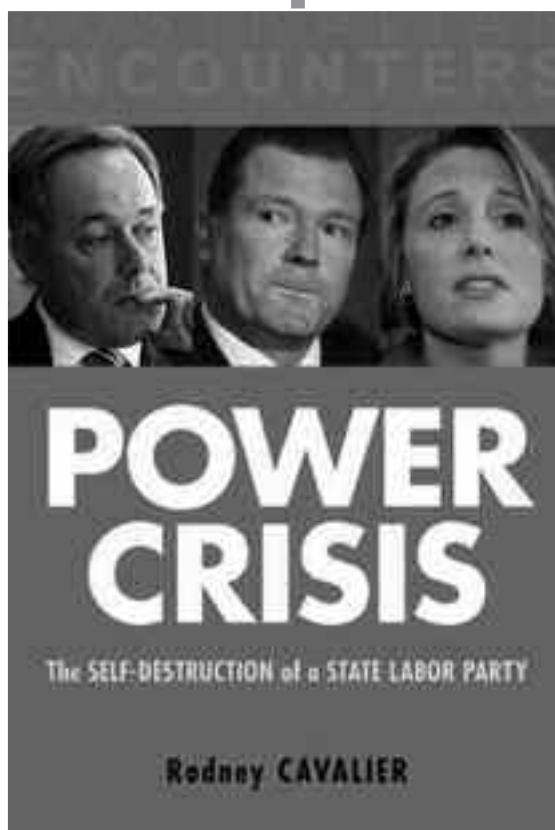
For its first 90 years there were plenty of issues to divide NSW Labor, from conscription in World War I, the split over economics in the Depression and communism in the 1950s. But the end of any thought the state should occupy the commanding heights of the economy and the decline in union authority in the

wider community in the 1980s meant meaningful ideological divisions between left and right disappeared. The result, as Cavalier explains, was the collapse of factions into groups competing for party positions and public office which are based around union and personal loyalties rather than ideas:

The factional system since the end of the Cold War turns on the regulation of conflict. ... The modern factional system is built on a culture of mutual dislike leavened by calculated cooperation. This is most obviously the case inside the parliamentary parties. Now that the separate factions have a quota of positions, either by formalised

rules on proportional representation or by binding deals, competition arises *within* the factions for the spoils available. Competitors are notional allies. The frustrations of ambition thwarted are directed inwards to fellow members of the faction.³⁰

This degeneration of the factions led to the Shakespearean stoushes that saw NSW Labor rip itself apart over power privatisation in a civil war as brutal as it was self-defeating. The virtual dismissal of Morris Iemma by unelected party and union officials did more harm to the Labor cause in NSW than any Liberal could.



SIMON BENSON – A MASTERFUL ANALYSIS

While Cavalier's is the better explanation of why the NSW Labor Party ripped into itself over power, Simon Benson delivers the best chronicle of the struggle. Certainly the book has blemishes no copy editor should allow. There is a reference to "Curtain" University and one to "Davenport" in Tasmania. There is bad writing such as, "a savage front page attack on the Liberals graced the front pages". The little boy whose body was stuffed in a suitcase was found in a pond at Ambarvale not Brewarrina. Chris Ronalds SC may have started as a solicitor but she is far better known now as a barrister.³¹ Still, *Betrayal* is one of the best ever narratives of an Australian political drama and the best book on Labor in crisis since Robert Murray's celebrated study of the party's collapse in the 1950s, *The Split*.

Benson's ability to assemble a narrative from interviews and the ephemera of press reports is masterful; his discipline in keeping control of a complex narrative impressive, and his skill in telling a story while communicating its significance shows that good journalism is indeed the first draft of history. Certainly there is a great deal in his book to take on trust, with most of his evidence unattributed and coming from people with scores to settle. But there is a sense of substance about the book. And the way Benson and Cavalier come to the same conclusions confirms the credibility of both texts. If there is another side to the very similar story they tell, the party and union officials who could tell it are remarkably reticent about getting their own version on the record.

Like Cavalier, Benson makes the point that MPs were caught between the need for loyalty to their leader and their obligation to obey the party, although neither the Labor machine nor the unions represented the electorate.³² And he understands that the intellectual collapse of the factions took away the competing ideas that, rather than pulling the party apart, held it together:

A new Realpolitik (sic) built around personality-driven cliques and pursued

through the political and industrial wings of NSW Labor slowly began to replace the traditional factional model ... Without the ballast of the right-wing faction stabilising it, the industrial wing of the NSW Labor Party began to see itself as not just separate from the political wing but actively opposed to it over certain issues.³³

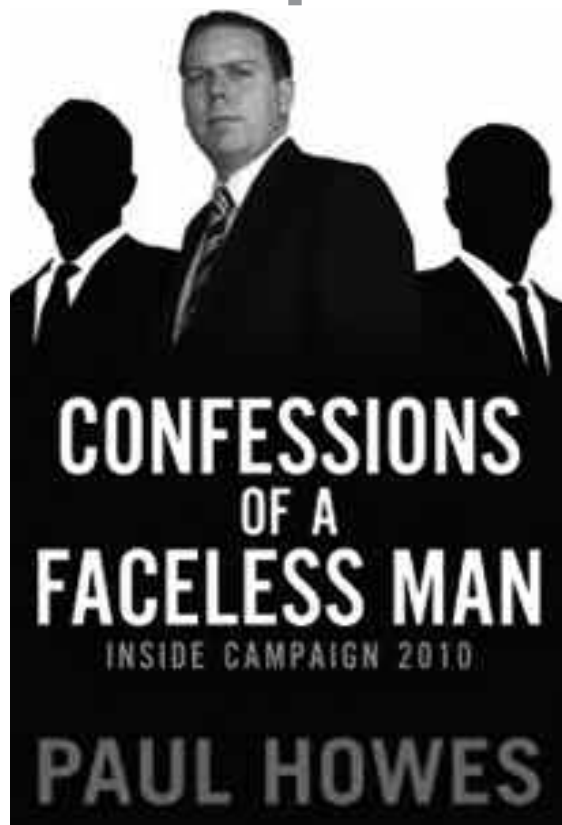
While there was, and is, much talk of the virtues of public sector ownership of electricity generators, what Benson believes the fight was really about were perks and patronage, "avarice masquerading as public interest."³⁴

As a demonstration of what happens when factions degenerate it is hard to beat. Perhaps the most important insight in the book is the way Benson grasped the way Kevin Rudd's administration was stripping policy out of federal Labor. Written before Kevin Rudd was removed, Benson makes the case that in 2007 the then federal opposition leader prevailed on Iemma to delay privatising the NSW generators, lest it hurt Labor in the national poll. Then, despite promises of assistance, Rudd declined to get involved once he was in the Lodge:

In 2008, a newly-elected federal Labor prime minister couldn't bring

himself to come to the aid of a provincial government seeking to sell a few clapped-out, coal-fired power stations. The privatisation of the NSW electricity industry, unpopular as it may have been electorally, was a policy gift to Rudd Labor, a key plank in a real agenda for broader micro-economic reform. That it was scuttled on the basis of internal political agendas, and not on the judgement of whether or not it was sound policy, reflects on the political will of the Rudd Government and a lack of rigorous belief in reformist policy.³⁵

And Benson all but explained the reasons for Rudd's demise before it occurred, "Rudd appears in his first term to have taken Labor back in time, allowing archaic Labor conventions to re-emerge."³⁶ Benson



quotes Paul Keating: “when the motivation of the machinery of the party is unfurnished as to policy purpose, it has nothing more to offer than to focus on marketing and polls.”³⁷

BIG BOOKS BUT RESTRAINED REVIEWS

Perhaps last year’s politics left little to say, and perhaps everybody is over politics. Whatever the reason, the big ideas these books dealt with did not generate the reviews they deserved and most of those that were written were restrained.

Margot Saville approved of Paul Howes’ book and “very progressive” opinions, basically it seems, because she agreed with him:

For us political tragics, this is a great book. Like all melodramas, it has its villains (Rudd and Mark Latham) a hero (our author) and a rolling cast of pygmies and capering dwarves (politicians). In this era of sanitised pollyspeak, it’s wonderful to read true class hatred on the page, punctuated by the odd bout of head-kicking.³⁸

Stephen Loosley was also sympathetic, but suggested that having got the book out of his system Howes should shut up:

It’s a good book in terms of its candour and astute observations of the players. It’s true, though, that the author needs to discover the value of the U-boat theory of politics, where from time to time it is necessary, when under sustained assault, to crash dive and stay at the bottom for a while until the convoy moves on. Howes has a bright future and this lesson should not be lost on him.³⁹

Barrie Cassidy deserved more coverage than he got. While Loosley was generous he was brief and did not ignore the obvious 1980s emphasis in the book:

Cassidy’s book is well researched and well written. At times, though, it seems that the book he really wants to write is: *Bob Hawke: Humorous Anecdotes and My Part in His Triumphs*. Perhaps he should. But he’s done our political culture a service in sketching the end of Rudd and Turnbull and the election campaign that followed.⁴⁰

Bruce Elder’s judgement was even briefer, “this is an astute journalist’s view.”⁴¹

Rod Cavalier received more extensive analysis, all of which was unfailingly polite if not always supportive. Imre Salusinszky thought more of the book than he did of its underpinning argument:

... the first 50 pages of this book are as good as anything that has been written on how Labor governs since *How Labour Governs*, the landmark 1923 study by anthropologist V. Gordon Childe (the first book Cavalier encouraged me to read when I started reporting from Macquarie Street five years ago). ... Cavalier, a member of the Left (or, as he ironically refers to it in its present incarnation, the “Left”) never says plainly whether, as a delegate to the 2008 annual conference, he supported or opposed the privatisation. It is pretty easy to gauge his view, however, by his repeated suggestions that journalists and editorial writers, in particular those employed by News Limited, were boosters of privatisation. Well, maybe, but here is the start of a list of others who were public, unequivocal supporters of lemma’s reforms: Kevin Rudd, Wayne Swan, Martin Ferguson, John Brumby, Anna Bligh, Mike Rann.⁴²

Ross Fitzgerald made much the same point:

Cavalier’s fine analysis is a worthy 21st-century successor to V.G. Childe’s magisterial analysis, *How Labour Governs*, which was first published in 1923. In his equally important critique, Cavalier raises some crucial questions. Perhaps the most significant is this: how can a small cadre of union officials, some of whom have never toiled in any industry, continue to wield such power in the ALP.⁴³

Perhaps because it was released before the removal of Kevin Rudd, when Australians were more easily shocked by political plots, Benson got more review space than the other three titles.

Salusinszky less reviewed Benson’s book than used it as the basis for a considered essay on the state of Labor in NSW, although suggesting it “is more than a compelling political potboiler” damned with faint praise. Overall he drew the same lesson from Benson as Cavalier:

[Benson’s book] should stimulate the beginnings of the conversation about what Labor government in NSW between 1995

and (if the polls are correct) 2011 has meant. ... This says something about NSW as the last vestige of "industrial" Labor. It suggests, surely, that, in the 21st century, a social-democratic political party and a historic trade union movement should be two things, rather than one.⁴⁴

Stephen Loosley made a similar point:

The end of the Cold War and of ideological contest has seen parts of the ALP "Balkanised", with the great Right and Left factions splintering into fiefdoms, run sometimes by petty, myopic warlords. For the NSW Right, this has proved ruinous, as much of the legacy of former premier Bill McKell has been eroded, if not lost.⁴⁵

Michael Samaras, who by-lined himself as a delegate to the 2008 Labor conference, went further: 'Like Somalia, it is a failed state run by warlords and pirates.' Overall he less reviewed the book than extended its argument, holding the right responsible for all that is wrong with the party:

Benson records the consequences of Labor's failure as being a clash of personalities, with Costa's crazed tactics and incendiary language always at the centre of any exchange. Keating and Unsworth are left nodding gravely that things were different in their day. Which is not altogether true. Keating and Unsworth may now wish it were otherwise but when they were running the show, problems were running riot. From the bashing of Peter Baldwin, to the murderer Phuong Ngo, to the sordid scandals in Wollongong, the culture and history of the NSW Right speak for themselves.

Samaras added that the culture of the NSW ALP is an anachronism: "the ALP's tribal culture of mates and nepotism is increasingly out of place in the modern Australian meritocracy. Educated, skilled and resourceful Australians, who build their careers on the basis of their talents, efforts and performance, look on aghast because they have nothing in common with Labor's anachronistic culture of patronage."⁴⁶

It was left to Michael Easson, a former secretary of the NSW Labour Council, to sum it all up in a masterful review essay which put Benson's book in the context of party history. While detailing limitations in its argument, he concluded that

Benson had done a pretty good job: "As a snapshot of what happened, the book deserves comparison with Alan Reid's *The Gorton Experiment* (1971). The events, scheming, the atmosphere and personalities, drama and ultimate tragedy are deftly sketched."

But it was where degenerative factional fighting might lead Labor which most concerned Easson who picked what was afoot in national politics two weeks before Kevin Rudd went:

Who would have thought that the guile, acumen and skill of the NSW Right, built over 70 years, would in 2008 prove so destructive of brand Labor. The same crew who destroyed premier lemma and energy reform have more recently provoked Rudd's spiralling downwards trajectory in the opinion polls when, in early 2010, they told him to coldly drop the Emissions Trading Scheme. That's not how you change policy. Only if you have no interest in good policy would decisions be made like that. The electorate is now uneasy about how much government cares about anything. Surely NSW Labor has never slouched so low.⁴⁷

We shall see whether he picked the bottom when NSW votes in March.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Lauro Martines, *April Blood: Florence and the plot against the Medici* (Oxford University Press, 2003) 261
- ² Frank O'Gorman, *Edmund Burke: His political philosophy* (Allen and Unwin, 1973) 32
- ³ Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and party systems: a framework for analysis*, (Cambridge University Press, 1976) 12
- ⁴ James Madison, "The Federalist, Number 51", (in) Jacob E Cooke (ed) *The Federalist Papers* (Wesleyan University Press, 1961) 56-65
- ⁵ Francoise Boucek, "Rethinking factionalism: typologies, intra-party dynamics and three faces of factionalism," *Party Politics*, 15, 4 (2009) 1-31, 19
- ⁶ Boucek, op cit 22
- ⁷ Cassidy, op cit 121, 247
- ⁸ Ian Hancock, *The Liberals: The NSW division 1945-2000* (Federation Press, 2007) 249
- ⁹ Madison. "The Federalist Number 10" (in) Cooke, ibid
- ¹⁰ Cavalier, op cit, 73
- ¹¹ Benson, op cit 178
- ¹² Alexandra Smith, Brian Robbins and Ben Cubby, "Damn the traitor not the Hunter", *Sydney Morning Herald*, November 29, 2010
- ¹³ Michael Costa, "Reform the cure for Labor's ills" *The Australian Literary Review*, 5, 11 (December 2010) 3-4

AUSTRALIA'S COLONIAL LIFE

MANNERS AMONG THE SAVAGES

Exploding the myth of the uncouth, mannerless Australian, Penny Russell has produced evidence of a lively Australian colonial “history of snobs and slights, huffs and handshakes, curses and courtesies”. It is clear that in colonial times Australians did in fact care deeply about what we call “manners”. Reputation was critical and there were complex rules about everything from shaking hands to serving poultry, strolling down Pitt Street or travelling on a tramcar.

SPEAKER: ASSOC PROFESSOR PENNY RUSSELL
(Author of *Savagery and Civility: A History of Manners in Colonial Australia*)

TOPIC: *White Savages?: Sketches of Colonial Life and Manners*

DATE: Tuesday 15 February 2011

TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm

**VENUE: 41 Phillip Street, Sydney 2000
LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**

**ENQUIRIES: PH: (02) 9252 3366
FAX: (02) 9252 3360**

**OR mail@thesydneyinstitute.com.au
WEBSITE: www.thesydneyinstitute.com.au**



- ¹⁴ Sean Nicholls, “Keneally begs for a second chance,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 4, 2010
- ¹⁵ ABC News, “NSW Nationals set to oppose power plan,” ABC News, August 26 2008 @ abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/26/2346892.htm
- ¹⁶ Kevin Rudd, “Howard’s Brutopia: The battle of ideas in Australian politics,” *The Monthly*, November 2006, @themonthly.com.au/monthly-essays-kevin-rudd-howard-s-brutopia-battle-ideas-australian-politics-312 recovered on December 27
- ¹⁷ George Megalogenis, “The tax free middle class,” *The Australian*, September 20 2008
- ¹⁹ Luke Buckmaster, “Money for nothing: Australia in the global middle class welfare debate,” Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Library, Research Paper 31, 2008-2009, May 12 2009, @ www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/rp/2008-09/09rp31.htm recovered on December 28
- ¹⁹ Howes, op cit, 114-115
- ²⁰ Howes, op cit 234
- ²¹ Howes, op cit 121
- ²² Howes op cit 165
- ²³ Cassidy, op cit 239
- ²⁴ Cassidy, op cit X
- ²⁵ Cassidy, op cit 81, 223
- ²⁶ Cassidy, op cit 130
- ²⁷ Cassidy, op cit 40-42
- ²⁸ Cavalier, op cit 49
- ²⁹ Cavalier, op cit 20-21
- ³⁰ Cavalier, op cit 38
- ³¹ Benson, op cit 35,45, 263
- ³² Benson, op cit 71, 167-168
- ³³ Benson op cit, 17, 19
- ³⁴ Benson, op cit 168
- ³⁵ Benson, op cit 280
- ³⁶ Benson, op cit 283
- ³⁷ cited in Benson, op cit 21
- ³⁸ Margot Saville, “Lunch with Richo and the faceless men: launching Labor’s progressive manifesto” *Crikey* November 9, 2010, @ www.crikey.com.au/2010/11/09/lunch-with-richo-and-the-faceless-man-launching-labors-progressive-manifesto/ recovered on December 30
- ³⁹ Stephen Loosley, *The Australian*, December 18, 2010
- ⁴⁰ Loosley, ibid
- ⁴¹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 4, 2010
- ⁴² *The Australian*, November 20, 2010
- ⁴³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, October 23, 2010
- ⁴⁴ *Australian Literary Review*, August 2010
- ⁴⁵ *The Australian*, June 26, 2010
- ⁴⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 19, 2010
- ⁴⁷ *Australian Financial Review*, June 11, 2010

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



GERARD HENDERSON'S **MEDIA WATCH**

The inaugural issue of Gerard Henderson's Media Watch was published in April 1988 – over a year before the first edition of the ABC TV Media Watch program went to air. Since November 1997 “Gerard Henderson's Media Watch” has been published as part of The Sydney Institute Quarterly. In 2009 Gerard Henderson's Media Watch Dog commenced publication as a weekly e-newsletter – it appears on The Sydney Institute's website each Friday.

BEST OF THE (MEDIA) WORST IN THE 2010 ELECTION

Most journalists are irreverent types who exude a sense of cynicism towards both people and institutions. This irreverence is all pervading – except when it comes to their own profession. Most journalists take themselves and their craft very seriously indeed – which helps to explain why those who live their lives criticising others tend to be so sensitive and defensive when criticism is directed at them.

Journalistic narcissism is most evident when media types get all dressed up to shower one another with gongs for excellence in this or that – on such occasions as the Walkley Awards. Knowing just how attached journalists are to award functions, *Media Watch* has decided to acknowledge the top media performances in the lead-up to, and the period after, the 2010 Federal elections. Stand by for *Media Watch's* Best of the (Media) Worst in the 2010 Election.

Mark Scott – Most Revealing Comment Award

Here's what the ABC managing director and editor-in-chief had to say during his speech to the Melbourne Writer's Festival on 3 September 2010:

Laura Tingle is probably the country's finest writer when it comes to sophisticated political analysis. But I would argue that far from dominating the conversation, too often Laura's fine words disappear from view, locked up behind the *Fin's* expensive and impenetrable pay walls.

And here are some examples of La Tingle's “sophisticated political analysis”. Let's start with the *AFR* political editor's take on the Labor leadership issue on 15 June 2010:

Most [Labor] MPs believe some sort of circuit breaker is needed very soon. But it

is not clear that that means the dumping of the Prime Minister. This might be the standard modus operandi of the NSW Right but the rest of the party should consider the faction's credentials – its disastrous record in NSW and its role in recent federal strategy – before mindlessly adopting it. Many MPs might dearly like to think a switch to Julia Gillard would provide an easy answer to their woes. Most know that life isn't that simple.

So, on 15 June 2010, Ms Tingle's sophisticated political analysis led her to opine that most Labor MPs knew that replacing Kevin Rudd with Julia Gillard would not provide an easy answer to Labor's political woes. On 24 June 2010 Ms Gillard was elected leader unopposed in a Caucus ballot. Kevin Rudd did not contest the leadership ballot when it became evident that he had scant support within the Caucus.

Now let's look at how Laura Tingle responded to the Rudd Government's announcement that it would enter into negotiations with the leading mining companies concerning the proposed Resources Super Profits Tax (which was subsequently dumped by Prime Minister Gillard). Ms Tingle's sophisticated political analysis led her to predict – on 16 June 2010 – that Kevin Rudd's backdown might be a plus for Rudd Labor:

When does a backflip start to look like political savvy? Given the amount of flak the government has worn over this issue, it could just be that if negotiations carry on long enough, it could still prove a positive for the Prime Minister.

Then on Friday 13 August, just over a week before the election, Laura Tingle appeared with George Megalogenis on a *Lateline* panel – presided over by Ticky Fullerton. It was one of those familiar ABC discussions where Laura agreed with George who agreed with Ticky who agreed with Laura. For example, Ms Fullerton raised no objection when both members of the panel declared that Tony Abbott and the Coalition were not fit to govern, viz:

George Megalogenis: Well I think the sense that the Liberal Party is not ready to govern is what you got this week.

Laura Tingle: They've [the voters] got this choice between a Government that really can't sell itself very effectively and an Opposition which I do not think is ready for government.

During the discussion Ms Tingle said that Julia Gillard's commitment to building the education revolution “sounds all very Soviet” – as if the Prime

Minister was sounding a bit like Vladimir Lenin or Josef Stalin. However, the highlight of the discussion occurred when the *AFR's* political editor declared: "I suppose I still remain a bit nervous" about the result. In other words, Laura Tingle confessed to being nervous that Tony Abbott might become prime minister. Quite a sophisticated political analysis, don't you think?

Then after the election, while negotiations were proceeding about whether Labor or the Coalition would win over enough Independent MPs to form a minority government, Laura Tingle delivered her sophisticated political analysis on Tony Abbott and the Coalition in the *AFR* on 3 September 2010:

There are two possible explanations for how an opposition presenting itself as an alternative government could end up with an \$11 billion hole in the cost of its election commitments. One is that they are liars, the other is that they are clunkheads. Actually, there is a third explanation: they are liars and clunkheads. But whatever the combination, they are not fit to govern.

The allegation that the Coalition had an \$11 billion hole in the cost of its election commitments was an assumption based on a number of estimates. That's all. On the basis of this, Laura Tingle argued that Tony Abbott and his colleagues were both liars and clunkheads. How sophisticated can you get?

Finally, just after Julia Gillard formed a minority government, Laura Tingle supported Labor's commitment to a National Broadband Network – which is backed by Greens MP Adam Bandt, pro-Greens Independent Andrew Wilkie and at least three rural based Independents. The *AFR's* political editor wrote on 17 September 2010:

How to value the national broadband network? Everyone seems to have an answer to that question, and whether spending \$43 billion is a good idea. Tony Windsor, the independent MP whose crucial vote locked Labor into minority government, has one way of looking at it. "One of the arguments against the NBN is its \$43 billion price tag," he noted last week. "Well, apparently the actual government investment is closer to \$27 billion. But I'd just note that over \$40 billion has been spent on tax cuts since the last election." He's right, of course.

How about this? The *Australian Financial Review's* political editor can see no difference between expenditure increases and tax cuts – rather, she sees tax reductions as a form of spending. As the managing director of the tax payer funded ABC, Mark Scott may regard such analyses as sophisticated. But to "Media Watch", this is junk economics.

Mark Latham's "Don't Do As I Did" Gong

In his piss-poor special for *60 Minutes* – titled "Latham at Large" – which aired on Sunday 15 August 2010, Mark Latham decried the quality of the 2010 election campaign. As he told Channel 9 viewers:

There's one important thing missing from this election campaign, and that's

substance.... From the moment Julia Gillard rolled Kevin Rudd to become our first female prime minister, she knew what her election plan would be. She didn't want to campaign on policy, just empty slogans.

Mark Latham led Labor to its disastrous 2004 election campaign. And what might his campaign slogan have been? Can you believe it? EASE THE SQUEEZE. For example, there is a section of Mr Latham's 2004 official campaign launch speech which is sub-titled "Ease the Squeeze" in which the former Labor leader promised that "Our Tax and Family Plan will ease the squeeze on middle Australia".

Needless to say, Mr Latham did not tell his *60 Minutes* audience about how, when he was Labor leader, he ran with the emptiest of empty slogans.

Bravest Prophecy In The Lead Up To An Election Campaign – Peter Van Onselen Defeats Peter Van Onselen

Julia Gillard replaced Kevin Rudd as Labor leader – and prime minister – on 24 June 2010. That evening Peter Van Onselen (as in PVO) appeared on Sky News' *The Nation with David Speers* and declared:

I think she [Julia Gillard] can pick up seats not just hold the line.

A brave prediction to be sure. But PVO exceeded himself with the following declaration in *The Australian* on 25 June 2010:

Here is my prediction and I am well aware I will be held to account for it. Julia Gillard won't just win the next election, she will increase Labor's majority.

Julia Gillard did not win the 2010 election in her own right. She did not increase Labor's majority. And PVO was not held to account for his false prophecy. Here's a bit of (continuing) advice to young PVO. There is one thing we know about the future. And that is we don't know anything about the future.

Most Leading Question – Hugh Riminton And Fran Kelly

In a highly competitive field, it's difficult to choose between Hugh Riminton's speech-disguised-as-a-question when comparing Network 10's *Meet the Press* on 5 September 2010 and *Radio National Breakfast's* presenter Fran Kelly on 8 September 2010 who attempted to disguise a statement as a query. The interviewee on each occasion was Christopher Pyne, the Coalition's Shadow Minister for Education. Let's go to the transcripts:

Hugh Riminton: What about the costings scandals? The Independents have made it quite clear that they were concerned, they've expressed it in different ways individually, but they were concerned when the Treasury costings at last came back on your election campaign promises and found billions of dollars adrift. Was that an error by the Coalition?

Christopher Pyne: Treasury often have different opinions than other people about costings. Let's face it, when the Treasury first announced the figures for the mining

tax, they said it was going to raise \$12 billion. A few weeks later it was apparently going to raise \$22 billion so there are –

Hugh Riminton: But these are the matters and assumptions and errors. I mean, there are things in your costings that are plainly, on any measure, false. The fact that you had the Medibank Private being sold off but you were still claiming in your costings the dividend benefit as if you still owned it. I mean, there were errors in that. The conservative buyers' allowance which is simply a saving that you claimed of \$2.5 billion is simply not allowed under budget accounting rules. This was at best surely sloppy and at worst mendacious or worse. These are plain out errors that you tried to cover up before the election and even after the election. Is that not true?

So there you have it. Mr Riminton makes a political statement and then demands an answer in the is-this-not-true? mode.

On 7 September 2010 the Independent MPs Tony Windsor and Rob Oakeshott decided to support a minority Labor government. On *RN Breakfast* the following morning Fran Kelly interviewed senior Coalition frontbencher Christopher Pyne about the outcome of the deliberations which had seen Julia Gillard commissioned to form a minority government. Let's go to the audio tape:

Fran Kelly: So you think you got a raw deal from this?

Christopher Pyne: Those three members are former Nationals. The Coalition received more votes than Labor, more preferences than Labor and more seats than Labor. This deal doesn't seem right to people because, of course, it does offend common sense. But they've made their decision and we will all have to live with it. And I think it's amazing that Tony Windsor indicated yesterday that he was backing the weaker party because they would be less likely to want to go to an election – essentially confirming that they have been a bad government for three years. And yet Tony Windsor and Robert Oakeshott are going to keep them in power because they are a bad government and would fear an election.

Fran Kelly: And because some on your side of politics indicated to them early on in this process that they'd like to get back to the polls as quickly as possible because they thought they would win. In other words, they didn't really have their hearts in going full term.

Christopher Pyne denied Fran Kelly's undocumented assertion that Coalition MPs had indicated to Tony Windsor and Rob Oakeshott – the Independent MPs who supported Labor – that the Coalition wanted to get back to the polls as early as possible. There was no evidence of this. Even Tony Windsor, when interviewed on the *7.30 Report* on 7 September 2010 acknowledged that the only evidence for the claim was what he termed "background noise" which he

conceded did not come from Tony Abbott.

On 8 September 2010 Gerard Henderson sent an email to Ms Kelly – with a copy to *RN Breakfast* executive producer Tim Latham – as follows:

This was a significant statement by you. My query is this. Who, on the Coalition side of politics, "indicated" to the rural Independents that the Coalition "would like to get back to the polls as quickly as possible because they thought they would win"? I am not aware of anyone in the Liberal Party or the Nationals who was ever quoted as indicating this. I would be grateful if you would advise who you had in mind – and I will go looking for the relevant sources.

Neither Fran Kelly nor Tim Latham replied to this request for information – despite the ABC's public support for the Right to Know Coalition. It can only be assumed that Fran Kelly had no evidence to support her piece of gossip which she presented as fact in a leading question (read assertion) to Christopher Pyne.

Most Wacky Analysis For Both Before And After The Election – Well Done Guardian-on-the-Yarra

The Age, these days, is very much the newspaper for inner city leftie types – despite the fact that *The Age* survives due to the support of its advertisers and the potential markets they aim at in suburban Melbourne and regional Victoria. The election provided a snapshot of the thinking of the powers-that-be at The Guardian-on-the-Yarra.

On the Friday before the election, *The Age* did its final survey of the six voters it had chosen for qualitative research in the Federal seat of Melbourne. Adam Carey chose to focus on the views of six voters in Melbourne – David Cassar (age 37), Wei-Shen Mak (age 30), Leonie Starnawski, (age 31), Emma Van Leest (age 31), Ashley Wakefield (age 36) and Penelope Scanlan (age 36).

Their professions, respectively, are (i) projection estimator, (ii) DJ and lawyer, (iii) online content manager, (iv) artist, (v) facility manager and (vi) youth worker. Adam Casey managed to find four Greens voters (Cassar, Starnawski, Van Leest and Scanlan) and two Liberal voters (Mak and Wakefield). *The Age* could not find one reader living in Melbourne who intended to vote Labor. Not one.

Also, Adam Carey was not able to locate for his survey (i) anyone aged between 18 and 29, (ii) anyone aged over 37, (iii) anyone employed in any field of manual work, (iv) anyone unemployed, or (v) anyone on welfare benefits, including the aged pension.

Yet *The Age* reported Adam Carey's feature titled "The Voters: Melbourne" without realising just how unrepresentative his survey was. According to *The Age's* projections, the vote in Melbourne would be as follows:

Greens: 67 per cent
 Liberal Party: 33 per cent
 Labor Party: Zip

That was on Friday 20 August. On Saturday 21 August, the electors of Melbourne recorded the following votes:

Labor Party: 38 per cent
 Greens: 36 per cent
 Liberal Party: 21 per cent

Adam Bandt, the Greens candidate, won Melbourne on Liberal Party preferences after trailing Labor on the primary vote. Yet, according to *The Age's* qualitative polling, Labor was not going to receive a primary vote. Fancy that.

On the morning after the 2010 election night before, *The Sunday Age* – sometimes termed “The Observer-on-the-Yarra” – published what it titled “Election 2010 – The Verdict 12-Page Special Edition”.

Understandably, most of *The Sunday Age's* coverage was on the House of Representatives. However, about half of Page 6 of the special election edition was devoted to the Senate campaign. The Sunday Age ran a feature – replete with a large colour photo – of the successful Greens' candidate Richard Di Natale. From Canberra, Tim Colebatch reported the Senate count with a focus on the Greens.

Believe it or not, there was not one mention in *The Sunday Age* of the fact that the Democratic Labor Party candidate had a chance of winning the sixth Senate vacancy in Victoria. This in spite of the fact that Antony Green – the ABC's election analyst – had raised the possibility of John Madigan winning a Senate seat for the DLP in the tally room on Saturday evening. Presumably Mr Colebatch was not listening – nor doing his own research.

It is as if *The Age* is so fixated on the inner-city left in Melbourne that it has little interest in life outside the Greens' voting base.

Most Over-Written Analysis In the Lead-up To The Elections – Ross Cameron

In the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 21 June 2010 – just before Gillard overthrew Rudd – the former Liberal MP Ross Cameron let fly with some over-written attempts at historical comparisons. Try these for size:

This is the most bruising, tantalising piece of political theatre since the sacking of Gough Whitlam. This is George Foreman and Muhammad Ali in the Congo in 1974. Two heavyweight champions slugging it out: Australia's biggest, toughest, richest, most productive industry against the elected government... Here's a form guide.

That was a reference to the argument between the Rudd Labor Government and the large mining companies over the proposed Resource Super Profits Tax. But to Mr Cameron – it was just another rumble in the jungle. There was more:

Last on the form guide is Rudd. How did Mr 70-per-cent tie himself in this Gordian knot? Pink batts, school halls, tobacco tax, emissions trading, boat arrivals ... bang, bang, bang. He argued in opposition that surplus budgets were not based on John Howard's skill but on the greatness of the mining industry. Now he's got to persuade the same electorate taxing miners to buggery won't hurt the economy.

That was quite an achievement, when you think about it. Mr Cameron managed to get a Gordian Knot and

buggery into the same paragraph. But there was even more:

The Prime Minister has never experienced political hardship. He's never felt pressure. Now he is being squeezed. Like a dissident in a Soviet concentration camp, he's learning about pain.

How about that? Ross Cameron regards the pressure which Kevin Rudd experienced in mid-June 2010 before the Labor leadership change as equivalent to the suffering of those who were incarcerated in the Soviet Union's gulag. But there was more still:

Ruthless ALP strategists wonder if KR is damaging the brand. The people of Penrith have not helped. A fun redhead [Julia Gillard] is breathing down his neck, coyly denying but smiling. He's looking down the barrel of blowing his party's mandate in one easy lesson but he thinks he's Alexander the Great and he'll find a way to cut the knot.

It's that Gordian Knot again – with Kevin Rudd as Alexander the Great. And so Ross Cameron continued on about the Resource Super Profits Tax:

Rudd has been told to fix it and he's taken over talks. He will make concessions to break the miners' treaty, like Caesar did with the Celts: divide and conquer.

Now it's Rudd as Julius Caesar. Whatever happened to Rudd as Alexander the Great? And is the Gordian Knot still uncut? Stand by for more of The Thought of Ross Cameron.

...[Rudd] has to regather the fragments of a Labor agenda and his authority as an electable party leader. If he hears the footsteps of Brutus approaching this week, he could easily jump in ComCar C-1 and bolt for Yarralumla.

So Rudd is still Julius Caesar and now Julia Gillard is Brutus. Mr Cameron ploughed on, apparently in search of yet more comparisons.

If Rudd wins, it will not the next day change the chemistry of one ounce of one deposit in one mine. It will forever weaken the commercial appetite to dig it out, muzzling the ox that pulls the Australian plough. We will take a strip of bark off our country's reputation as a solid place to do business. Our competitors in Russia and Canada and Brazil will be glad for the help.

Now mining is the ox that pulls the Australian plough. And mining is but bark on a tree of reputation. And then, for a finale, Ross Cameron linked Neil Lawrence – who was handling the mining industry's PR campaign, having once worked for Rudd – to an alleged mercenary:

This is the resources super profits tax election. The miners are prepared to bet on a change of government and they are betting big on Tony Time [Who the heck is Tony Time? – Ed]. They have nothing else to lose. They meet daily in a council of war, chaired by a mercenary [Neil Lawrence] who drove Rudd to the Lodge and is now driving a stake through his guts. They will

**not blink. They will go to the mat saying:
"Let the people decide."**

And so it came to pass that "the people" went to the polls – and could not quite make up their minds. In fact, you might even argue that on election night Australians remained in a, wait for it, Gordian Knot.

Most Disingenuous Question Directed To A Political leader – Kerry O'Brien

There is little doubt that Tony Abbott's poor performance during his interview with Kerry O'Brien on the *7.30 Report* on 10 August 2010 played a part in the Coalition's failure to win the 2010 election. O'Brien initially unnerved Abbott by early on quoting the criticism of the Coalition's broadband policy by Professor Rod Tucker. Let's go to the transcript:

Kerry O'Brien: Professor Rod Tucker from Melbourne University with a string of qualifications in this field as long as your arm - very impressive I might say - including the Australia Prize for his contributions to telecommunications had this to say today: "The idea that we could use very fast broadband based on mobile technologies and existing fibre," - which is what you would do - "... defies the laws of physics."

Tony Abbott: Well I accept, Kerry, that not everyone is going to like our system, but I just don't believe that you can trust this government to roll out a \$43 billion bit of infrastructure.

Kerry O'Brien: But does that preclude you if the plan itself is good?

Tony Abbott: Well, as I said, I think we can do something that will be good for a lot less price. Our system will give Australians national broadband, but it won't be nationalised broadband and it won't depend on just one fibre technology.

Kerry O'Brien: And it won't be anywhere near as fast or as efficient. Professor Tucker also says this: "Building a broadband network will," - as the Government has pointed out, this is the broadband network that they've presented - "... have the same kind of transformational impact as the railways in the 19th and 20th centuries, but doubters and naysayers seem intent on living in the past." He also says: "Broadband technologies are poised to transform society in ways we don't yet fully understand." So when you attack Labor for investing so much in this transformative technology that countries like Japan already have, how did you calculate what Australia would lose if you scrapped the network?

How frightfully interesting. Kerry O'Brien neglected to say that Rod Tucker is director of the Institute for a Broadband Enabled Society – which was part funded by the Victorian Labor government and which was officially opened by Communications Minister Stephen Conroy. As Liberal MP Paul Fletcher pointed out on Sky News on 10 August 2010, Professor Tucker was also a member of the Panel of Experts

which was set up by Senator Conroy and which broadly supported Labor's NBN proposal.

Just imagine what might have been Tony Abbott's response if Kerry O'Brien had been fair and balanced in his presentation of Professor Tucker's position – i.e. if he had phrased the question this way: "Professor Rod Tucker from Melbourne University with a string of qualifications in this field as long as your arm – and who is a consultant to the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments on broadband policy – had this to say today...". Enough said.

Most Intrusive Comment – Jenna Price and Simon Kearney Share a Gong

You can't accuse *Canberra Times* columnist Jenna Price of dwelling on the private lives of others – if only because she fills so many of her own columns with information about her own private life. During the 2010 election campaign, Ms Price moved from being an agony aunt to a dutiful guardian when she offered this advice to the Prime Minister and her partner on 29 June 2010:

I'm trying to imagine what Tim Mathieson will be like in his role as Julia Gillard's consort; and pray that if he really is involved in any kind of business now, he gets out of it pronto. Also, if they could just get married before the election, I'd be really grateful. There needs to be absolutely nothing about him that will embarrass her in any way, no little difficulties that will come back to bite her.

Well, thanks for that. On 6 July 2010, Ms Price returned to writing on herself. She commenced her *Canberra Times* column as follows:

In the days when I was single, I remember picking up this bloke at a party and having brilliant sex. Which we continued to do so for 12 days. Then either I woke up and it was over; or he did. And that's a bit how I feel about the new Prime Minister. It took me 12 days to wake up. What brought me to this sudden crisis?

Ms Price went on to refer to Julia Gillard's (alleged) "revolting anti-social behaviour", declared that "this is not the government I want" and advised that Ms Gillard "is already breaking my heart". [That's enough, surely. Ed]

Then there was the *Sunday Telegraph's* national political editor Simon Kearney, who had this to say about Julia Gillard's new ministry:

Julia Gillard has rewarded the plotters by promoting each of Labor's notorious "faceless men" who were instrumental in killing Kevin Rudd... In looking after the men who paved the way for her to snatch the job from Mr Rudd, Ms Gillard promoted former union boss Bill Shorten into her ministry and handed NSW Right faction powerbroker Mark Arbib "greatly increased responsibilities" including the sport portfolio. Ms Gillard also appointed two other lesser-known plotters – faction bosses David Feeney and Don Farrell – parliamentary secretaries. Australia's first female PM promoted former lover Craig

Emerson to cabinet as Trade Minister, but did not elevate any more than three women already in the inner circle.

What a load of tosh. Bill Shorten and Mark Arbib – far from being “faceless men” – are two of the best known Australian politicians. And Craig Emerson was one of the best performers in the Rudd Government – and well deserved his promotion from the outer ministry to a place in the Gillard Government’s cabinet.

Most Predictable (Inner-city) Leftie In An Election Campaign – Several Deborah Cameron Moments

Deborah Cameron’s “Mornings with Deborah Cameron” on ABC Metropolitan Radio 702 each weekday has become the ABC’s *Green Left Daily* – channelling, as it does, the *Green Left Weekly* real thing.

There were many – oh, so many – Deborah Cameron Moments in the lead-up to 21 August – they were monitored by Nancy and documented in *Gerard Henderson’s Media Watch Dog* blog each Friday. However, Ms Cameron excelled herself in the immediate aftermath of the election. Here’s how.

It’s Monday 23 August – the morning after the election. And who does Ms Cameron invite on to “Mornings with Deborah Cameron” to analyse the campaign? Not the highly professional ABC election analyst Antony Green. And not the ABC Canberra-based journalist Alison Carabine who appears regularly on “Mornings with Deborah Cameron” and gives balanced reports on Australian national politics.

Not at all. Rather, Deborah Cameron’s guest is none other than *Get Up!* Director Simon Sheikh. This led to one inner-city leftie (Cameron) talking to another inner-city leftie (Sheikh). Both rejoiced in the fact that it appeared likely that neither Labor nor the Coalition would be able to form a majority in their own right. This was good news indeed for supporters of the Greens and the Independents – and for inner-city lefties like Ms Cameron and Mr Sheikh. For most of the time Deborah Cameron is a passionate advocate for full disclosure. Nevertheless, on this occasion she neglected to advise listeners to “Mornings with Deborah Cameron” that:

- *Get Up!* was a player in the 2010 election campaign and ran TV advertisements urging Australians not to vote for Tony Abbott.
- *Get Up!*’s advertising campaign was primarily funded by left-wing trade unions and that this had been reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on the morning of the election. (It was later revealed that the left wing Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union provided \$1.2 million to *Get Up!* for its anti-Abbott advertising.)
- *The Sydney Morning Herald* had also reported that, up to the election, *Get Up!* had refused to name the trade unions that funded its anti-Abbott campaign.

When queried by Gerard Henderson as to why “Mornings with Deborah Cameron” had not delivered a full disclosure on Simon Sheikh and *Get Up!*, Ms Cameron ignored the question. But she did offer an excuse for not being aware that *Get Up!*’s advertisements had been funded by left-wing trade unions. It was a beauty – here it is:

I am sure that you can appreciate that I was glad to be at the end of the election campaign. I had a sleep-in, went for a walk in my neighbourhood and around a couple of garage sales and then went to the polling station to support my local school which had set up a stall. I did not thoroughly read Saturday’s *Herald* which meant that I did not see the story about union donations.

Soon after the Deborah Cameron-Simon Sheikh leftie love-in, Ms Cameron decided to discuss the impact of the environment debate on the 2010 election campaign by interviewing Rupert Posner (director of the Climate Group) and Ian Lowe (president of the Australian Conservation Foundation). Needless to say, Rupert Proser essentially agreed with Ian Lowe who essentially agreed with Deborah Cameron who essentially agreed with Rupert Posner. It is a widely held view that Tony Abbott revived the Coalition’s standing when he focused the Liberal Party on opposing Labor’s proposed emissions trading scheme. But anyone who agreed with the Coaliton’s environment policy was not heard after the election on “Mornings with Deborah Cameron”. Clearly, Tony Abbott and his supporters do not fit Ms Cameron’s “Green Left Daily” format.

Let’s not be too harsh. This may have been a genuine oversight. It’s possible that Ms Cameron was not aware of Abbott’s position on account of the fact that she missed this news having (i) slept in, (ii) gone for a walk around the neighbourhood, (iii) attended garage sales or (iv) sold vegan cakes at the local school.

Then on 15 September 2010 Deborah Cameron gave a soft interview to John Menadue who, in a rant-to-air, managed to bag all his political opponents – including Labor, the Coalition and, in particular, his former employer Rupert Murdoch.

But *Media Watch*’s favourite “Deborah Cameron Moment” in the 2010 election campaign occurred when Ms Cameron took on the Liberal Party’s advertising campaign which depicted Kevin Rudd as a lemon – meaning a product full of promise which failed in execution – by asking her listeners what they thought.

Deborah Cameron: If Kevin Rudd is a lemon, then what fruit or vegetable is Tony Abbott? Mary, what do you think?

Mary: I think of Tony Abbott as a prawn, great body but an ugly head.

Deborah Cameron: Another Mary says Tony Abbott is like a coconut, particularly with his hair. I’d never thought of that. Tony Abbott is a Halloween pumpkin, says Andrew in Frenchs Forest. All smiles, very scary but nothing inside.

Which raises the question, what fruits or vegetables does the ABC’s “Green Left Daily” remind you of?

Most Pronounced Finger-Pointing in the Wash-up to an Election – Jill Singer and Niki Savva as Joint Winners

Herald-Sun columnist Jill Singer has never disguised her dislike of the Coalition in general and Tony

Abbott in particular. So it came as no surprise when Ms Singer went into school-marm mode and declared on 7 October 2010:

He [Tony Abbott] needs to take a good hard look at himself.

Ms Singer believes that Tony Abbott compares unfavourably with David Cameron – the leader of the Conservative Party in Britain who became prime minister after doing a deal with Nick Clegg and the Liberal Democrats. According to Singer:

Abbott blew his chance to win over conservative independents and form government, but Cameron on the other hand still managed to deal with the Liberal Democrats, despite their obvious ideological differences.

This is nonsense. There are three Independents from what were once National Party seats – Bob Katter, Rob Oakeshott and Tony Windsor. Katter supported Abbott to form a government. Windsor is a visceral opponent of the National Party and was never likely to support a Coalition government in which senior Nationals would have been in the cabinet. Oakeshott, also, is a disaffected National. More seriously, Oakeshott made it clear when Abbott was elected Liberal Party leader on 1 December 2009 that he was deeply suspicious of Abbott's Catholicism. It was all very sectarian. It was never likely that Oakeshott would support a Coalition government led by Abbott.

Even if Tony Abbott had accepted Ms Singer's advice and taken-a-good-look-at-himself he was never going to get Oakeshott and Windsor on side.

Then there was Niki Savva, who offered this piece of advice to Tony Abbott in her column in *The Australian* on 14 September 2010:

Good morning, Tony, this is your reminder call. Just in case you had forgotten, you did not win the first election, which finished on August 21. You did not win the second election, which finished on September 7. And unless you now get it right, you will not win the next one either. Assuming you are still there to fight it, that is.

And now for some facts. Tony Abbott knows he did not win the August 2010 election and does not need to be reminded of this by Ms Savva. And the Opposition leader knows that he did not prevail in the discussions with Independent MPs Rob Oakeshott and Tony Windsor that took place after the election.

It's possible that Mr Abbott might be interested in Niki Savva's view that, unless he takes her advice, he will not win the 2013 election either and that he might not even lead the Liberal Party by 2013. Just possible. But it's also possible that Tony Abbott may recall Ms Savva's past false predictions of recent memory and decline to take much notice of her predictions. Let's turn to Page 280 of *So Greek: Confessions of a Conservative Leftie* (2010) where Niki Savva offered this assessment of Tony Abbott:

Once upon a time, not all that long ago, I would have recoiled in horror at the

prospect of Tony Abbott as leader. I would probably not agree with 90 per cent of what Abbott stands for, and some of his earthier expressions make me wince. I doubt he would ever be elected prime minister, unless he moves even further to the centre than he already has, seeks and takes advice from a much wider circle, and promises not to allow his religion infiltrate his politics.

Ms Savva went on to advocate that Andrew Robb should become Liberal Party leader. She believed that Robb would be "a sound alternative to Rudd, perhaps after an Abbott reign of terror".

Now here's some gratuitous advice from *Media Watch* – written in the Niki Savva style:

Good morning Niki. This is your wake up call. Just in case you had forgotten, you underestimated Tony Abbott's political ability. Also, you did not correctly predict the election outcome. And unless you desist from poor analysis and false prophecy, you will get it wrong next time around. Assuming that you are still scribbling by then. So there.

In conclusion, congratulation to the winners of the most prestigious Best of the (Media) Worst in the 2010 Election awards. Commiserations to the losers – take heart. Your time will come.

CLARIFICATION TO THE SYDNEY INSTITUTE QUARTERLY – ISSUE 38, ON-LINE EDITION – RE TIM COLEBATCH

The Age's Tim Colebatch contacted *The Sydney Institute Quarterly* claiming that there was an error in *Gerard Henderson's Media Watch* (Issue 38 – see page 44). The full correspondence between Tim Colebatch and Gerard Henderson concerning this matter was published in Issue 83 of *Gerard Henderson's Media Watch Dog* blog on 18 February 2011.

The second edition of *The Sunday Age*, published on 22 August 2010, did refer to the possibility that the Democratic Labor Party's John Madigan would win the sixth Senate vacancy in Victoria. There was no reference to the DLP in the first edition of *The Sunday Age* on the morning after the election – which formed the basis of the comment in Issue 38 of the *Sydney Institute Quarterly*.

Gerard Henderson believes that the possibility of the DLP winning a Senate seat should have been covered in both issues of *The Sydney Age* – but is happy to acknowledge that this was covered in *The Sunday Age's* second edition.

THE SYDNEY INSTITUTE FORTHCOMING FUNCTIONS

PLEASE NOTE IT IS ESSENTIAL TO RSVP FOR FUNCTIONS no earlier than 2 weeks prior - NB DATES AND VENUES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. PLEASE ASK WHEN BOOKING, OR GO TO www.thesydneyinstitute.com.au

- SPEAKERS:** RICHARD ACKLAND (Editor/Publisher of *Justinian* and columnist *The Sydney Morning Herald*); JANET ALBRECHTSEN (columnist, *The Australian*); WENDY BACON (Director, Australian Centre for Independent Journalism; Professor of Journalism, UTS); GERARD HENDERSON (Executive Director, The Sydney Institute & *SMH* columnist)
- TOPIC:** *WikiLeaks – a Discussion*
DATE: Thursday 27 January 2011 **Bookings from 13 Jan only**
TIME: 5.00 for 5.30 pm
VENUE: Mallesons Conference Room, Level 61, Governor Phillip Tower, 1 Farrer Place, Sydney
- SPEAKER:** DR DELIA FALCONER (Senior lecturer UTS, & author, most recently, of *Sydney* [New South Press])
TOPIC: *In Search of Sydney*
DATE: Tuesday 8 February 2011 **Bookings from 25 Jan only**
TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm
VENUE: 41 Phillip Street, Sydney 2000 **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**
- SPEAKERS:** WU'ER KAIXI (Prominent Chinese dissident leader) & CHIN JIN (Australian writer and China watcher)
TOPIC: *The World Needs a Different China*
DATE: Wednesday 9 February 2011 **Bookings from 26 Jan only**
TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm
VENUE: 41 Phillip Street, Sydney 2000 **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**
- SPEAKER:** ASSOC PROFESSOR PENNY RUSSELL (Author of *Savagery and Civility: A History of Manners in Colonial Australia*)
TOPIC: *White Savages?: Sketches of Colonial Life and Manners*
DATE: Tuesday 15 February 2011 ****Bookings from 1 Feb only****
TIME: 5.30 for 6 pm
VENUE: 41 Phillip Street, Sydney 2000 **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**
- SPEAKER:** THE HON CHRIS BOWEN MP (Minister for Immigration and Citizenship)
DATE: Wednesday 16 February 2011 **Bookings from 2 February only**
TIME: 5.30 for 6pm
VENUE: Mallesons Conference Room, Level 61, Governor Phillip Tower, 1 Farrer Place, Sydney
- SPEAKER:** RT HON JOHN SPELLAR MP (Shadow Minister for UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office)
TOPIC: *Security in a Dangerous World*
DATE: Monday 21 February 2011 **Bookings from 7 February only**
TIME: 5.30 for 6pm
VENUE: Corrs Chambers Westgarth, Level 32, Governor Phillip Tower, 1 Farrer Place, Sydney
- SPEAKER:** HUGH MACKAY (Writer, commentator, social researcher & author most recently of *What Makes Us Tick?*)
TOPIC: *The Ten Desires that Drive Us*
DATE: Wednesday 23 February 2011 **Bookings from 9 February only**
TIME: 5.30 for 6pm
VENUE: Clayton Utz Seminar Room, Level 30, 1 O'Connell Street, Sydney
- SPEAKER:** ALASTAIR WILSON (CEO, School for Social Entrepreneurs, London)
DATE: Wednesday 2 March 2011 **Bookings from 16 February only**
TIME: 5.30 for 6pm
VENUE: 41 Phillip Street, Sydney 2000 **LIGHT REFRESHMENTS**
- SPEAKER:** THE HON JOE HOCKEY MP (Shadow Treasurer)
DATE: Wednesday 9 March 2011 **Bookings from 23 February only**
TIME: 5.30 for 6pm
VENUE: Gilbert & Tobin, Citigroup Tower, Level 37, 2 Park Street (between George & Pitt Street), Sydney

FREE TO ASSOCIATES & ASSOCIATES' ONE GUEST / \$5 STUDENTS / \$10 OTHERS

RSVP - PH: (02) 9252 3366 OR FAX: (02) 9252 3360 OR EMAIL: mail@thesydneyinstitute.com.au

WEBSITE: www.thesydneyinstitute.com.au