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Letters...

Australia's Attraction

I have read with much interest Brian Trainor's contribution on the subject of multiculturalism (IPA Review, Vol 48/2, 1995).

I would like to draw your attention to another aspect of multiculturalism. I feel that great care should be exercised in encouraging customs and attitudes brought in by some ethnic groups. Quite apart from the ones which are clearly unacceptable to Australian society, like female circumcision, blood feuds and forcing young people into arranged marriages, there are more subtle and general attitudes which if allowed free rein might eventually undermine the Australian social fabric.

Customs and mores generally evolve in response to conditions and circumstances prevailing in various countries. It would be foolish indeed to encourage the importation of social conditions prevailing in countries whose citizens have found it advantageous to seek a new life elsewhere.

The economic advantages Australia has offered in the past and still does offer to migrants are not only due to its rich natural resources, but also to a socio-political system which allows migrants to take advantage of available opportunities. The essentially Anglo character of Australian society is largely responsible for that. I myself, being a migrant from a non-English-speaking country, albeit of 57 years' standing, would regard the destruction of the essentially Anglo nature of our society a great pity, as it would, inter alia, reduce the attraction of this country for future migrants.

I also believe that the whole debate about assimilation is only relevant in respect of migrants of the lowest socio-economic background. Educated migrants from wherever have no problems in this regard.

Michael Polya
Dickson, ACT

Bankrupt Position

I am compelled to comment on the crude and simplistic article 'Whose Business Is It?' in the most recent edition of your magazine. The article is a purported examination of the Prices Surveillance Authority's recent inquiry into bank charges, but is ultimately no more than the work of two apologists for the banks.

The article asserts that banks have the right to charge fees which cover the cost of keeping accounts. This is true, but surely this is already covered by the two per cent or three per cent between interest rates offered to depositors and the nine per cent to 12 per cent at which banks set their loans?

To claim, as the article does, that if customers do not like fees they can go elsewhere is equally absurd when all banks impose charges, and do so in such a way as to make it virtually impossible to compare products.

The entire premise of 'account keeping fees' is flawed in an age where everything is kept on computers. Why does it cost the bank more to have a file on its computer for an account with $100 than $10,000?

Troy Anderson
Cremorne Point, NSW

Who Says?

As Derek Parker points out in his article 'Too Hard to Cut?' (IPA Review, Vol 48/2), New Zealand's relative success at reforming its welfare state owed much to the fact that the initiative came not from a conservative, but from Roger Douglas of the Labour Party.

Douglas couched his proposals in traditional Labour terms: giving back to workers resources and control over their lives. This might have been seen as dissembling had it come from the National Party, a cover for doing the bidding of the rich and powerful. (It was not long, of course, before Douglas's own colleagues became suspicious of him.)

The general rule seems to be that what is said and done is less important than who says and does it.

The Hawke Government got away with deregulating the financial markets because it was a Labor government which, at that stage, couldn't be accused of being in the pockets of international capitalists.

There are other recent events which illustrate the rule. Helen Garner's criticisms of hard-line feminism are not especially new. Nor are Naomi Wolf's second thoughts about abortion. But these women (unlike their conservative predecessors) are being listened to in the mainstream media because of who they are. Neither can be dismissed as misogynist, or reactionary, or agents of the Pope (although, as with Douglas, suspicions have been aroused).

Judging by his speech to the National Press Club in Australia (published by the IPA as Rare and Culture) Glenn Loury seems to play a similar role in the American debate over affirmative action and multiculturalism. Would he be listened to as respectfully if he were white? I doubt it.

Australia needs an Aboriginal Glenn Loury, a female Naomi Wolf and an ALP Roger Douglas.

Stuart Ferguson
Spring Hill, Qld

Ailing, But Not Dead

Your observations about the decline of voluntary organizations and its implications are disturbing. Australians' idiosyncratic version of statism described by Vern Hughes and his prescription to reverse its insidious encroachment on community life is persuasive.

Ubiquitous grants to 'community' groups have fuelled the decline in vol-
Voluntary organizations and redirected altruistic endeavour to mastering the complexities of grant applications.

It's an irony that as our experience of community has waned there has been an unprecedented rise in the number of groups and government programs with 'community' in their titles.

Sometimes, it seems, we've lost our sense of community. But not entirely. During the 1983 bushfires and more recently the Victorian drought, stories abounded of great acts by ordinary folk, acts not just of bravery, sacrifice and courage, but of genuine neighbourliness, volunteerism and mutual aid. We were all moved by these episodes and our faith in our communities was strengthened.

The advent of community playgrounds, built entirely by volunteers, families, local businesses and community groups, is also a promising sign.

The Victorian Liberal Government's 'Schools of the Future' policy is an attempt to devolve power to local school communities. Unfortunately its implementation coincided with funding cuts to Education, and opposition to those cuts has influenced public perceptions of the conceptually distinct policy of devolution. It has riot helped that some aspects of the policy's implementation have been ad hoc and abrasive. Even so, many parents, teachers and school councils have embraced their new powers and responsibilities — working out how they'll spend their budgets, establishing priorities, developing codes of conduct and involving the wider community, local businesses, churches and voluntary groups.

These are signs that while community spirit might be ailing, it is not dead. There is no doubt in my mind, however, that weaning ourselves from excessive government is necessary if community spirit is to be revived.

E.S. Bennett
Middle Park, Vic.

Civil Disturbance

The idea of civil society is much in vogue of late, and the IPA Review is to be congratulated both for bringing this idea to the attention of readers long before it became fashionable, and for continuing to add to discussion about it. Vern Hughes' article in your last number raises this issue again, and the survey of the state of various voluntary associations which accompanied it is important for the new information it provides about the Australian situation.

In discussions about civil society Tocqueville seems to be invoked as a matter of course, but I think an important part of his argument has been overlooked. His first concern is with self-government, and voluntary associations are important to him only insofar as they help to realize and maintain this goal. The important point here is that there is no necessary relation between the two. Someone may be very active in a local sporting team but have no interest whatsoever in the affairs of the community as a whole. Moreover, thriving voluntary associations can and do co-exist with political corruption.

None of this detracts from the merits of community and self-help, but we should be clear that self-help does not necessarily mean self-government, especially if civil society is to be mooted as a substitute for the state. As Tocqueville understood, it is not enough that people help organize the school fete or join the local fire brigade. Self-government means running the town.

Another point to be considered in discussions of civil society is whether a better term than 'civil society' can be found to describe what we are dealing with. I have always disliked it, for personal and no doubt highly-idiosyncratic reasons, but now that the genuinely ghastly Eva Cox has commandeered it (in the 1995 Boyer Lecture) to propagate her lurid fantasies of a society made "truly civil" by the state, the matter has assumed some urgency. In Miss Cox's 'civil society', children are to be properly socialized (whatever that means) by professional 'carers', not by incompetent amateurs like mothers and fathers. Whatever else 'civil society' means, I did not think it meant social democracy without end.

Michael Casey
Kew, Vic.
Number of children in August 1995 living in families in which neither parent has a job and at least one parent is looking for work: 223,500

Change in unemployment rate between August 1985 and August 1995 for two-parent families with four or more children:
increase from 5.0 per cent to 9.8 per cent

Change in unemployment rate for couple families without children over the same period:
decrease from 3.5 to 3.3 per cent.

Number of children living in unemployed single parent families in August 1985 (when overall unemployment was 7.9 per cent): 24,200

Number in August 1995 (when overall unemployment was 8.1 per cent): 54,100

Percentage increase between 1985 and 1995: 123

Cost to State Transit (NSW) to respond to a complaint lodged with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) and make its buses accessible to people in wheelchairs: $20 million


Proportion of Australian women who reported being sexually assaulted in the 12 months previous to 1993, according to Felicity Broughton, a lawyer specializing in sexual abuse cases: "In excess of one in three ..." Actual proportion, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics: 0.6 per cent.

The Age, 11 November 1995

Percentage of Australians 35-49 years old who think that Sir John Kerr acted incorrectly in dismissing the Whitlam Government in 1975: 44

Percentage aged 18-34 who think this: 21

Percentage aged 18-34 who have no opinion on the dismissal: 58


Number of reports on Aboriginal affairs produced since 1985 contained in the library of the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority of Western Australia: 800


Proportion of Uniting Church members who support the Liberal-National Party Coalition: 68


Factors with an equivalent effect on the years of schooling completed by a child (each raising the level reached by half a year):
- parents who went to a private or parochial school, rather than a government school;
- parents who vote Liberal-National Party, rather than Labor;
- parents who are both university-educated, rather than only completing secondary school;
- a father who is a top-ranking professional, rather than an administrator or technician;
- an intact family, rather than one split by divorce;
- being an only child, rather than one of four children;
- attending school in the 1980s rather than the 1970s.

HIS is a particularly joyous time of year for Christians. Yet there must be many among the declining proportion of Australians who attend church who are squirming in their seats.

Not that a little squirming is necessarily a bad thing. A comfortable congregation, as a clergyman acquaintance of mine says, is a complacent congregation — complacent about the state of its members' own souls, complacent about the well-being of others.

But discomfort in response to one's own failings or the suffering of others is one thing. Trying to make supporters of Victoria's Coalition Government believe that they are aiding and abetting the deification of the jackboot is quite another.

Yet that is the thrust of an extraordinary document, Common Ground: Towards a Biblical and Theological Basis for Political Witness, published in November by a multi-denominational organization, consisting of delegates from 15 churches including Melbourne's Catholic and Anglican cathedrals.

The document links Victoria's Kennett Government with some of this century's most notorious tyrannies:

"It may be argued that the situation in Victoria is not comparable to that in Nazi Germany ... or racist South Africa. Yet in each of those cases the eventual tyranny might have been avoided had action been taken when the tendency towards tyranny first became apparent. Already in Victoria democracy and civil liberties have been seriously eroded. The fact that financial gain is beginning to accompany social and political repression only adds to the danger ... of the Victorian experiment spreading to other states."

Dressing up its politics in theological garb, the document ominously warns, "... the values of Christ's kingdom are being attacked by values which ultimately reflect those of the kingdom of Evil."

The incident is only one among a number of recent interventions by church organizations and leaders into politics.

Uniting Church General Secretary the Reverend Robert Johnson recently launched a church campaign against privatization: "We have fought against the privatization of electricity and we will fight much harder against the privatization of water," he announced in Churchillian style.

The Anglican Primate of Australia, Archbishop Rayner, joined the attack on economic liberalism, criticizing "both sides of the political divide" (but especially one) for placing too much faith in market forces: "They may lead to the best profits for big companies ... But if the cost is excessive working hours and stress for those in employment, and unemployment for many others ... then that cost is too high."

In fact, conditions which enable companies to be profitable also enable them to generate employment. There is no job security in a declining economy. Yes, economic growth means change, and change can be stressful; but economic growth is also an important source of security. And it pays for our education and our social welfare.

As a forthcoming 20-year comparative study of national economies around the world amply demonstrates, economic
growth requires economic freedom. (The study, Economic Freedom of the World: 1975-1995, will be published by Canada's Fraser Institute and distributed in Australia by the IPA.)

Archbishop Rayner is right to warn against pursuing efficiency as an end in itself and to stress the importance of recognizing the human costs of economic policies, such as their impact on family life. But he fails to mention that there will be greater human costs — including the strain on family life caused by poverty and unemployment — if we fail to implement efficient practices in the workplace and to make our economy internationally competitive.

He warns that "if the profit motive is allowed to become the guiding light for the community, our humanity is really threatened", but he might also have warned of the threat to both the dignity of the individual and the spirit of community posed by an overgrown welfare state in which ‘market forces’ are stifled (see Michael Novak’s 'The Crisis of the Welfare State', IPA Review, Vol. 46/4, 1994).

It is true that the wealth which economic freedom generates may not always be put to virtuous use, but that is a universal problem of human weakness. People in socialist economies are certainly no less materialistic, no less selfish and no less corrupt than people in comparatively free economies.

The question of whether electricity and water are best delivered by private or public means is not a matter about which theology offers insights.

The question of whether electricity and water are best delivered by private or public means is not a matter about which theology offers insights. For church leaders and agencies to employ the moral authority of their position to campaign against the privatisation of utilities diminishes their standing and lessens their influence in areas where they could legitimately bring their moral authority to bear.

Discernment is essential. Church officials are unwise to expend their moral authority on dubious causes. The Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose enormous courage in speaking out against Nazism ultimately cost him his life, would not have confused Mr Kennett with an incipient Herr Hitler.

As the then-Anglican now-Catholic priest John Fleming remarked in IPA Review some years ago, the outspokenness of church officials on matters of economic policy is a reflection not of the churches' growing influence on secular society, but of the growing influence of secular society on the churches. He contrasted the certainty displayed by some church officials about matters of complexity and ambiguity, such as economic policy, with their hesitation and equivocality regarding doctrinal matters about which they are expected to have knowledge and conviction.

Conservative laity: By hitting out at policies more associated with one side of politics than the other, church officials, particularly Protestant church officials, also risk alienating the laity. The political leaning of Uniting Church members (see ‘Indicators’ on page 4) is expressed to different degrees across all the main Protestant denominations.

Sixty per cent of Protestants as a whole support the Federal Coalition. A small majority of Catholics (53 per cent) support the ALP. Even so, Paul Keating was drawing a long bow indeed when last October he detected support for Labor in the Pope's refusal to meet with US Republican leaders Newt Gingrich and Bob Dole. Mr Keating claimed that Gingrich and Dole were doing to America what John Howard would do to Australia should he ever become Prime Minister. Ten Coalition MPs wrote a letter to the Pope condemning Prime Minister Keating for dragging him into Australian politics. The Pope’s mind no doubt was on higher things. Not so some of Australia's church officials.

Ken Baker
AN INCREASING NUMBER OF SCHOOL-LEAVERS ARE FAILING TO GAIN A SECURE FOOTING IN THE WORKFORCE.

Richard Sweet is Research Co-ordinator for the Dusseldorp Skills Forum and Adjunct Professor in Vocational Education at the University of Technology, Sydney.

UNEMPLOYMENT rates that are consistently higher than those experienced by adults are but one indication that young people are relatively uncompetitive in the labour market. Another is the difficulty young people experience in gaining the new jobs that economic growth creates. This has been demonstrated over the last two years as the economy has begun to move out of recession, as Figure 1 shows. Such indicators suggest that Australia does not do well in preparing many of its young people for work, even though the doubling of school retention rates over the last decade has resulted in us now having the most educated cohort of school-leavers in our entire history.

Making young people more competent and competitive before they leave school is one way to improve this situation. However, here I want to focus on the next stage of young people's lives, on what happens after they leave school. My concern, in particular, is with those young people who miss out on a full-time place in either education or employment.
YOUTH ON THE MARGINS

Figure 1:
Monthly gain or loss of full-time jobs compared to the same month in the previous year, teenagers and adults, December 1992 to July 1995

Source: ABS The Labour Force, Australia, Cat. No. 6203.0.

Ten years ago the chance of a teenager who was not in full-time education not being in full-time work was around one in four; now it is nearly one in two. The proportion is alarmingly high. This group accounted for some 200,000 15-19 year olds in May 1995, or nearly one in six of all those of this age.

Figure 2:
Per cent of those aged 15-19 and not in full-time education who are not in full-time work, May 1985-95

Source: ABS Transition from Education to Work, Australia, Cat. No. 6227.0 and The Labour Force, Australia, Cat. No. 6203.0.
MISSING OUT: Not all young Australians are poorly prepared for their lives after school, nor even the majority. Annual Australian Bureau of Statistics surveys show that around 70 per cent of school-leavers find a full-time place in education or a full-time job by May of each year. We might want to quibble about the adequacy of the occupational preparation that many of those with a full-time job are getting, as only about a third are at the same time involved in any part-time study or structured training. But at least they have full-time work.

A rising proportion of young people are not so lucky. Nearly half of all those teenagers who have left school and are not in full-time education do not have a full-time job. Ten years ago the chance of a teenager who was not in full-time education not being in full-time work was around one in four; now it is nearly one in two (see Figure 2). This proportion is alarmingly high. As Figure 3 shows, this group accounted for some 200,000 15-19 year olds in May 1995, or nearly one in six of all those of this age. The growth of this group has been one of the most important developments in the teenage labour market during the 1990s.

The pool of those who fall through the cracks after they leave school would by now be even larger had there not been a significant expansion in post-school education places in the 1990s. A minor recent improvement in the full-time labour market for youth and a number of recent labour-market and training initiatives for out-of-school youth have also helped. But these developments have not been enough to stop the expansion of the pool of marginalized post-school youth, let alone reduce it.

Young people can find themselves on the margins of employment, education and training in several ways:

- being unemployed — wanting a job but not being able to find one — is the most common;
- having nothing other than a casual part-time job that provides only a few hours of poorly-paid work each week, without at the same time doing any study, and with limited access to employer-provided structured training;
- dropping out of both the labour market and education. There are many teenagers who are working, not looking for work, and not studying. Some can be found in the social security system on a range of pensions and benefits, but many others cannot be accounted for through education, the labour market or the social security system.

As Figure 3 shows, those who are unemployed currently account for somewhat under half of the teenagers who miss out on a full-time job or a full-time place in education. Those who are in only a part-time job account for around a third, and the...
balance are represented by those who have dropped out of both education and the labour market. Both of the latter categories have increased their shares of the overall marginalized group during the 1990s (Figure 4), and unemployment's share has been falling.

**WHY THE GROWTH?:**

There are two main reasons for the increase during the 1990s in the overall number of marginalized youth. In the first place, as Figure 1 shows, teenagers have benefited hardly at all from the rise in full-time employment that has occurred since early 1993, with nearly all of the new jobs going to adults. As a result, the decline of teenage unemployment has been slight. And secondly, as Figure 4 shows, the number of teenagers who have left school and who are in nothing but a casual part-time job, generally not associated with formal education or training, has been climbing steadily since 1990. This is a significant development in the Australian labour market.

There is likely to be an additional reason for the growing difficulty that those who are not full-time students have in finding full-time work. This is the possibility that, as educational participation has risen, qualitative changes have been occurring in the characteristics of those teenagers who are not full-time students. Over the last decade the proportion of 15 to 19-year-olds who are not full-time students has fallen from around one in two to around one in three. One consequence of this could be an increasing concentration of low academic achievers among teenagers who drop out of school early. In a labour market that has experienced an overall rise in the demand for skills and educational qualifications and that frequently relies upon general educational credentials in the absence of appropriate evidence of experience or relevant skills, low academic achievers are likely to have particular difficulty in competing for work.

Ensuring that all young people, regardless of their academic achievement, are effectively connected to the labour market before they leave school is one way to address this issue. But just as importantly, policies and programs for the lowest academic achievers should be a key element of any comprehensive approach to the transition from school.

Whatever the explanation, it is clear that young people who leave school and do not continue on to full-time education are increasingly vulnerable in the labour market, and that their vulnerability has grown rapidly in the 1990s.
Post-school Instability: Our standard education and training models assume that young people's lives are fairly stable for a reasonable period after they leave school. Most TAFE courses are a year or more in length; traineeships assume that young people keep a job with the one employer for 12 months; apprenticeships assume four years of continuous employment.

But anecdotal evidence and common sense both suggest that young people are more likely than adults to move in and out of a range of educational and labour-market activities as they develop their goals, interests and talents. Of course, not all of this movement is a matter to be concerned about. Some of it is an inevitable part of self-development and career-exploration; it helps produce a better match between an individual's skills and the needs of an employer. But there are patterns of instability among the young which should concern us.

There is a significant difference between, on the one hand, a young person who decides to take up a part-time course after a period of full-time employment, or who is promoted from one full-time job to another, or who moves from one job to another that is more highly paid, and, on the other hand, a young person who alternates between a series of casual jobs, or who has intermittent periods of job-search in between periods of inactivity.

The information that would allow us to assess the extent of these different movement patterns is relatively limited in Australia, as most of our information about young people and the labour market is based upon snapshots taken at particular points in time, rather than longitudinal studies. We know little about the extent to which stable or unstable activity patterns interact with marginal or mainstream activities to shape young people's lives in the immediate post-school years. We know little about the extent of young people's flows in and out of education and the labour market, and in and out of full-time work, part-time work and unemployment over time.

However, we can construct a partial picture of the way in which young people participate in the labour market from recent unpublished data from the ABS Labour Force Experience survey. The data describe, by age, the labour-force experience of those who were in the labour market for a full 52 weeks in the year ending February 1995.

Despite limitations and, in particular, the difficulty of knowing how many full-time student workers are included, the data clearly show that young people's experience in the labour market is both significantly more unstable and significantly more marginalized than that of adults. Compared to adults, teenagers have a reduced likelihood of continuous employment, a greater likelihood of experiencing unemployment spells, far greater likelihood of working part-time, and a greater likelihood of working for more than one employer.

When compared with those of 'prime age' (35-44 years) of the same sex, teenagers who are in the labour force for a full year are:

- only three-quarters as likely to have worked all year;
- three times more likely to have combined work and periods of searching for work during the year;
- twice as likely to have spent the whole year looking for work;
- only 60 per cent as likely to have worked full-time for all of the time that they did work;
- in the case of males, over seven times as likely to have worked part-time for all of the time that they did work; and, in the case of females, nearly one-and-a-half times as likely to have worked part-time for all of the time that they did work; and
- three times as likely to have worked for more than one employer during the year.

Even more significant than these comparisons are the absolute levels of teenagers' experience of particular labour-force activities:

- one in three of the teenagers who were in the labour force for the full year to February 1995 did not spend the whole year working;
- roughly one in four combined employment with spells of unemployment during the year, and roughly a third experienced unemployment for all or some of the year;
- of those who worked during the year, only slightly more than half of all young men and only a third of all young women had a full-time job for all of the time that they spent in work;
- one in four of the young men and nearly one in two of the young women who worked during the year experienced nothing but part-time work; and
- one in four of those who worked during the year worked for more than one employer.

Full-time work with the one employer for the full year is the exception rather than the rule for those teenagers who spend the full year in the labour force. For young women in particular, casual part-time work and periods of job-search now seem to be the dominant labour force experience, and together they are far more common activities than 12 months of uninterrupted full-time work. Young men who are in the labour force for a full year are more likely than young women to experience uninterrupted full-time work for the year, but even here it would seem that this is the experience of at most half.

The labour market has changed dramatically for young people. Casual part-time work, combinations of full-time and part-time work, spells of job-seeking and working for multiple employers are, taken together, now far more common as forms of labour-market experience than the uninterrupted periods of full-time work with the one employer that underpin most existing structured training programs.
"How many more sleeps till Santa comes?" little Billy asks. Imagine how heart-breaking and soul-destroying it is for his parents knowing that Santa will probably never arrive.

Many Australian parents see the season of joy and goodwill as a cruel reminder of what they can’t provide — and how much others can.

The sad fact is that half of those living in poverty today are families with children. Families like Billy’s.

Recently, Billy’s dad had an emergency operation. He still needs a kidney transplant and he’s too sick to work. The future looks bleak. And Christmas looks like being just another day for Billy.

This is where you can help. It doesn’t take much to put a little joy into a child’s Christmas, but it does take someone like you.

And The Smith Family.

So please donate to The Smith Family’s Christmas Appeal. Fill in the coupon or phone 1800 024 069.

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CHRISTMAS APPEAL

THE SMITH FAMILY
feeling Good without doing Good

'God helps those who help themselves,' wrote Benjamin Franklin; and with that the self-help movement was born. Today most bookshops have a sizeable section devoted to personal development; but, observes Ken Baker, the advice has changed.

In his popular series Poor Richard's Almanac (1733-1757) Franklin extolled the virtues of thrift, hard work, service to others, self-restraint and modesty. Today's self-help counsellors teach personal fulfilment and psychic comfort. To them, ethical injunctions matter less than psychological health. Society, they complain, demands too much of us.

Where Franklin saw sloth or procrastination, the modern human potential counsellor sees low self-esteem; where Franklin recommended service to the community (as an extension of one's duty to God), the personal growth expert counsels an end to self-denial. The feelings that Franklin admonished us to distrust, suspecting self-deception or self-indulgence, the human potential therapist implores us to embrace: if it feels good, it can't be bad.

It's not that Franklin thought personal fulfilment a bad thing, just that he believed it should not be pursued as a primary goal of life but, rather, accepted as a by-product of a virtuous and productive life.

Franklin's own life as a newspaper proprietor, a writer, a scientist, an inventor and a politician expressed the spirit of a harsh, pioneering, nation-building period of America's development — as did, in many ways, his ethical code. The human potential therapists and their moral vision reflect a time of material comfort and self-absorption.

The seeker of a text — from the hundreds available — which embodies the spirit of the contemporary self-help movement the same way Poor Richard's Almanac embodied the spirit of the movement's beginnings, is confronted by some fairly zany titles: The Amazing Laws of Cosmic Mind Power; Toxic People ("10 ways of dealing with people who make your life miserable") and the endearingly naive All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten, to name but three. In the end I chose a newly-released book by Barbara Sher, with Barbara Smith, with the irresistible title: I Could Do Anything — If Only I Knew What It Was (Hodder and Stoughton, 1995).

Apart from having appeared on the Donahue show and writing regularly for American magazines, Ms Sher is a therapist and a career counsellor. Her previous book, Wishcraft: How to Get What You Really Want, sold over half a million copies. She seems to have struck a contemporary chord.

How does the advice offered by Franklin and Sher compare? To illustrate I chose a selection of maxims from each.

IPA Review Vol. 48/3, 1995
Would you live with ease,
Do what you ought and not what
you please.
The noblest question in the world
is What good may I do in it?
Work as if you were to live 100
years, pray as if you were to die
tomorrow.
Industry, perseverance and
frugality make fortune yield.
Sloth (like rust) consumes faster
than labour wears: the used key is
always bright.
Idleness is the Dead Sea that
swallows all virtues: Be active in
business, that temptation may
miss her aim: The bird that sits is
easily shot.
The things which hurt instruct.
Wink at small faults; remember
thou hast great ones.
No longer virtuous no longer free:
is a maxim as true with regard to a
private person as a commonwealth.
To be humble to superiors is duty,
to equals courtesy, to inferiors
nobleness.
An innocent plowman is more
worthily than a vicious prince.
Don't go to the doctor with every
distemper, nor to the lawyer with
every quarrel, nor to the pot for
every thirst.
Sell not virtue to purchase wealth,
nor liberty to purchase power.
How many observe Christ's
Birthday! How few, his precepts!
O 'tis easier to keep Holidays
than Commandments.
Discontented minds and fevers of
the body are not to be cured by
changing beds or businesses.
Many a man thinks he is buying
pleasure, when he is really selling
himself a slave to it.

He is a governor that governs his
passions, and a servant that serves
them.
Deny self for self's sake.
He that lives upon hope,
dies farting.
To serve the Publick faithfully
and at the same time please it
entirely, is impracticable.
Laws too gentle are seldom
obeyed; too severe, seldom
executed.
The creditors are a superstitious
sect, great observers of set days
and times.
Pay what you owe, and what
you're worth you'll know.

The old way to live was to let
necessity create your goal; the
new way is to use your dream to
create your goal.
Your dreams are obscured by
some kind of inner conflict. It's
not as easy as you might think to
spot inner conflicts. Often they're
disguised as self-reproach. "Maybe
I have no talent," "Maybe I'm just
lazy," "If I were smarter I'd have
done more with my life." If
there's one thing I want you to
get out of reading this book it's to
know that not one of those
statements is true.
Our culture is full of simpleminded
myths of blame ... we're going
to stop all this blaming and swap
it for honest, nonjudgmental
curiosity.
The useful answers, the answers
that help us solve problems, are
always the more forgiving ones.
As children, we can hear messages
[from our parents] even when
they're not spoken. And each
message we get — blatant or
invisible — stays inside us, where
it can sit, unexamined, throughout
our adult lives, undermining
our happiness.
Parents have their own dreams —
and it's those dreams they're
pushing, not yours.
You just have to forget whatever
you were taught about
"meaningful work" and start
noticing whatever has meaning
to you.
You own a great treasure that
you're not using, not sharing.
Inside you is a bona fide genius
who's original, curious, and
loaded with potential.
If you're a winner for the world
and a loser for yourself, you've
struck the worst bargain of your
life.
Why force yourself to reshape all
your natural responses when you
don't have to? Nature has provi-
ded you with superb equipment to
handle anything that happens to
you with strength and precision,
and it's called Your Real Feelings.
If there's any one thing I'd love to
teach you, it's this: Your feelings
won't kill you; repressing them
might do just that.
You can trust your animal
instincts ... You can trust desire.
I know very well that it's not easy
to recover that fierce and loving
core inside you, that private lan-
guage that I call your "genius".
It's been covered up by a
well-meaning cultural program
designed to teach the language
of your society.
Sometimes we're so accustomed
to biting the bullet and doing
what needs to be done that we
forget it's possible to have a life
made up of the things we like
best. Search your tastes and
preferences ... Far from being
self-indulgent, putting your best
efforts behind activities you enjoy
is as smart as planting your crops
in rich rather than stony soil.
There is nothing inherently wrong with sociology as the study of human society, and it can be of use to the researcher, as long as it remains descriptive. When it overreaches its capabilities and becomes prescriptive, sociology breathes life into its chosen field of study, transforming society into Society, which, like Frankenstein's monster, leaves a trail of havoc wherever it goes. Society becomes more than the sum of its parts, and takes on a sinister life of its own; waving tentacles of dominant discourse, it intrudes, persecutes and thwarts. Above all, it makes you sick.

As Roger Sandall pointed out in 'Science and Superstition' (IPA Review 47/4, 1995), the arts have declared war on the sciences, and health education has not been spared. I cannot speak for the clinical content of health-worker education in Australia, but, like Sandall, I know first-hand the realm of idle phrases. My concern is with the sociology texts which sometimes accompany university degrees in medicine, nursing, pharmacy and other health professions. These texts also turn up in social-work and health-administration courses, and are products of the general field of health sociology.

Current wisdom in this field states that health is not primarily an objective and individual condition, but is instead primarily a social construct. The heredity versus environment argument is a long-standing and complex one, but not for the
health sociologist textbook, which cuts the Gordian knot with practised ease. It is environment, or rather, Society. To consider illness or health as states in which the individual has some choice, some control and some liability is to subscribe to the mentality of 'blaming the victim'. What determines our sickness or health is Society and its constructions — age, gendered roles, socioeconomic position, and ethnicity.

So in order to create real health, we need to change Society. This is pejoratively known (by conservatives and other undesirables) as 'social engineering', but in these texts it is called 'empowerment'. Society must be rearranged, made more equal; access to health care must be more 'equitable'. If you do not have access to a hospital or doctor, you are unhealthy. If you do not enjoy a standard of living equal to, say, the average sociology lecturer, you are unhealthy. If you are from a non-English-speaking background, black, or female, you had better be unhealthy, or the authors of these texts will be positively disappointed with you.1

If health is a right, then all the things that produce and sustain health — a good job, high self-esteem, secure emotions, nutritious food, success and peace of soul — are also rights.

THE VANGUARD: The new torch-bearers from academia to the world are health-care workers. Alan Petersen, in his book In a Critical Condition: Health and Power Relations in Australia, dedicates an entire chapter to 'Social change and the politics of health work':

"Health professionals, like other helping professionals, are presumably attracted to their jobs because they wish to work with and help people. Through their work ... they are in a position to view suffering and injustice. They are perhaps more likely than many other professionals to identify with their clients rather than ... with the dominant socioeconomic group ... health professionals, in seeking to promote their individual clients' interests and health in general, need to explore possibilities for social change."2

They have a big task ahead of them. According to Alan Davis and Janet George, the global health scene has been infected with Western biomedical discourses "as a result of the colonial expansion of the European powers and the economic neo-colonialism that has succeeded it.3 The biomedical model of health care — which posits health as primarily physiological, and its cure best effected by Western scientific medicine — is the chief tool of the conspiracy propagated by the patriarchal/capitalist/colonialism (delete according to taste). What causes ill-health is the unholy alliance of all of the above, as these three forces have infiltrated Society and duped it into believing they are right, good and proper.4

example, a white working-class man is more likely to smoke heavily, which may make him sick in later life. But then healthism treacherously collaborates, insisting that "individuals should take responsibility for their own health." This is simply not on, as it "serves to depoliticise other attempts to improve health".5

A N EPIDEMIC OF RIGHTS: Now the wheels start to fall off in earnest. In the face of declining infectious diseases rates and overall improved global nutrition, health has made the ideological shift from privilege to right, and its propagandists continue to up the ante in order to keep themselves in business. Health in its current incarnation is a social justice issue: if health is a right, then all the things that produce and sustain health — a good job, high self-esteem, secure emotions, nutritious food, success and peace of soul — are also rights. Our current mania for handsome legal payouts for damage to self-esteem and psychological suffering fits well into this pattern. The political and economic elements will be provided by redistribution of wealth.

Talk of rights implies obligations, and Australians know where to turn — government. A basic concept underpinning practically any proactive health sociology text is that there should be extensive government involvement in the provision of health care, not just as safety net but as starting-point. Government must now guarantee us a certain state of health, much in the way that it must also guarantee that we will not be discriminated against in any way, that we will have some form of income upon which to live, and that we know upon which side of the road to drive. Government publications support and are supported by health sociology, which is only to be expected given that the sociological models propagated would vastly increase the state's role in health care.6

There are a number of straw dummies set up by these texts, chief among
There are a number of straw dummies set up, chief among which is that, as far as health care is concerned, we live in a capitalist society. This is, of course, patently untrue, because the chief provider of health care in Australia is the state, organized along the socialist principle of redistributing wealth, so that the middle- to high-income earners pay a Medicare levy to support public health care. The state enjoys a privileged position: it is quite hard to sue it for malpractice, so instead individual doctors, hospitals and pharmaceutical companies bear the brunt.

MENTAL CONFUSION: The surest means of keeping the maximum number of people really happy, in these depressing postmodern times, is pharmaceutical. Health sociology becomes confused over this: an excellent example is Michael Gossop’s *Living with Drugs*, which produces paeans to heroin, cocaine and LSD, juxtaposed with one of the most virulent attacks on smoking ever seen in scholarly print. Does the hep young health worker advocate illegal drug use, or oppose it? The huge global sales of Prozac and other anti-depressants are similarly confusing — a profound opposition to the big business of pharmacology suddenly strikes the sociologist, despite promises of a happy, smiling, healthy world. Compulsory tranquillizers would be one means of achieving such a world, of course, but somehow this does not make it on to the agenda.

Faced with similarly confused values, feminism goes completely to pieces. Statistically, women tend to use health services more than men — the sociological justification is that the Western patriarchal biomedical discourse constructs women as unhealthy. But this is not enough — feminism would have women as actually unhealthier than men: more susceptible to the horrors of poorly paid work,
drudgery in the home, chaos brought about by the actual use of reproductive organs for the bearing of children, and starvation dictated by the alleged masculine desire for the skeletal. It is perplexing for the feminist health sociologist, who wants to ‘empower’ women, to come to terms with this, because victimhood is addictive, and its moral gist, who wants to ‘empower’ women, to come to terms with this, because victimhood is addictive, and its moral advantage almost too good to let go.

At the same time, some feminist health sociologists are starting to question the radical orthodoxy by asking, for example, whether oral contraceptives have been the liberators they appeared to be for so many women. Which ideology will prevail, when these clashes occur?

These are only two examples of the myriad inconsistencies of the ‘philosophy’ of current health sociology. Others include advocating free rein to ‘alternative’ health-care practitioners simply because they will undermine Western orthodox medicine. This will allegedly assist consumer choice, but in fact aims to admit alternative therapies to the safe and snuggly Medicare roost. Health sociology hijacks the valid issue of consumerism, and neutralizes it by arguing that the literal cure for all ills is greater government involvement. Any suggestion of dismantling government-sustained health care is met not so much with laughter as with the frowning of brain circuits — Australia without extensive state-funded health care is inconceivable in the health sociology Weltanschauung.

Professionalism is another minefield for the health sociologist. For Marxists (or at least democratic socialists), professionalism is a Bad Thing. Professions are elitist, hierarchical, patriarchal and — worst of all — impede the proper function of the state. Professionalism also impedes the radicalization of health-care workers, as they instead seek to protect their own interests. My own problem with professionalism in this context is that it has created state-protected monopolies of health-care provision, but given the above arguments, I am almost prepared to throw in my lot with the professionals — anything capable of jamming the socialist works should have one’s full support.

QUEST FOR POWER: Radicalizing health-care workers is actually an exercise in the transfer of power. Shrewder health sociologists have already realized that “a change in the locus of control from health practitioners to the subject ‘patient’, is not likely to happen. The radicals will be very keen on securing their slice of the pie as their old-fashioned professional counterparts, and will be doing it for the same reason — The Public Good. As our consciousness is raised by our radicalized health professionals, they will have to be aware that patients may see them as role models, for good or ill. New members join the team for the ‘new public health’, such as behavioural scientists, who have been so helpful in “developing approaches to encourage better health through b e h a v i o u r change”. Proto-health workers are actually being taught that we, the public, are every bit as dumb as the evil medical profession is supposed to have taught us.

And what of the consumers of this ideology? University students, after years of government-funded education, are largely ignorant of history, politics and economics, and do not possess the critical skills to examine health sociology in a balanced light. The tinkering at the social engine already botched by social workers and quasi-health-care personnel will only be aggravated further, with exponential puzzlement. These grim prospects are lit up by one marvellous ray of hope: many of those studying in the biomedical and clinical fields do not take health sociology units terribly seriously in comparison with the pressing claims of memorizing formulae and writing up lab reports. Hopefully only a minority in these fields — where mistakes really are fatal — will take the new dictums to heart.

Radicalizing health-care workers is actually an exercise in the transfer of power.

7 Davis & George, op cit, p. 99.
13 Petersen, op cit, p. 148.
16 ibid, p. 38.
IN THE DEBATE OVER HOW BEST TO EDUCATE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES, TOO OFTEN IDEOLOGICAL ZEAL SUBSTITUTES FOR SOUND RESEARCH.

SIMON HASKELL

CONTRARY to the assumption of some Australian educators, the philosophy and practice of accommodating disabled pupils in ordinary classes and regular schools (called 'integration', 'mainstreaming' or, more recently, 'inclusive schooling') actually date back over 100 years. There has never been any dispute as to whether disabled pupils should receive their education side by side with their non-handicapped peers. The real concern has always been how best to achieve this desirable goal, whilst respecting the child's needs and parents' aspirations.

In the late 1960s, two Scandinavians, Bank-Mikkelsen and Bengt Nirje, gave the integration movement a fresh impetus. They advocated the principle of 'normalization'. The cudgels were taken up by Wolfensberger in the USA. His views are regarded by some workers as extreme and his shrill polemics have damaged the cause.

Wolfensberger coined the unattractive and cumbersome phrase 'social role valorization' which broadened the normalization notion to embrace all minority groups (aged, sick, poor, disadvantaged and black). He claimed that these groups were relegated to an inferior position in society. With Calvinistic zeal he has advocated the total dismantling of the social system and campaigned strenuously for the comprehensive deinstitutionalization of all intellectually disabled people. In Australia, Wolfensberger's views are enthusiastically embraced by some.

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political activists in the special education and disability arena.

The movement for total integration of all disabled children into regular schools, regardless of the severity or multiplicity of their disabilities, reached a hapless stage when neo-Marxist sociologists entered the fray. Their social system reconstruction theories calcified the integration movement into fundamentalism. The neo-Marxists’ incapacity to engage in rational dialogue or be exposed to a diversity of perspectives has led to a new form of dogmatism and orthodoxy in special education. Sections of UNESCO’s Special Education Division appear to have joined in this crusade for political correctness, and it is disconcerting to record the chorus of hippe approval from Western academics for this new creed.

Left-wing special educators in Australia have been strongly influenced by neo-Marxist British sociologists. During the heyday of the Kirner Government in Victoria the tipsy conjectures of the Socialist Left faction were fostered by the Government, which set about dismantling the best elements of the special education system.

The outrageous assertion that parents of disabled children have joined forces with doctors and teachers and the economically powerful to oppress their children in committing them to special schools gained currency in a number of Education faculties in Australian universities.

The movement against special education was fuelled by remarks such as that by a British sociologist, Tomlinson, who stated:

“... A crucial factor in special education is that, unlike other parts of the education system, the children concerned cannot speak for themselves and, despite the growth of parental pressure groups, parents still have little influence on special education processes. The clients of special education, children and their parents, have the least say and influence over what happens to them, and are more subject to pressures, persuasions, and coercion than any group in the education system”.

This is surely a simplistic analysis of the UK scene and certainly is not true of the Scandinavian, the North American or the Australian systems. A further claim by the same sociologist that, “special education did not develop because individuals or groups were inspired by benevolent humanitarianism”, suggests a limited reading of the history of special education.

In Britain, the Egerton (1889) and Sharp reports (1898) and the Charity Organisation Society’s annals during the 1880s and 1890s clearly demonstrated that doctors and educationists worked together to retain the bulk of disabled children in ordinary schools. Only a small number of highly problematic and challenging pupils were admitted to special schools. Despite the hardship of large classes (over 60 pupils), and the pressure to gain good results, teachers were always encouraged to retain troublesome children and those with severe physical and sensory disorders in ordinary classes.

Understandably, some teachers were keen to transfer “emotionally disturbed and severely handicapped children” to special schools. Others were anxious to spare handicapped children being teased and ostracized by their non-handicapped peers. Many teachers too were acutely sensitive to parents’ and children’s concern over the stigma attached to the new special centres referred to as ‘silly schools’.

There appears to be in the Marxist approach an uncritical application (with some violence to the facts) of modish sociological notions of deviance and simplistic translations of class structure and social division of labour to special education. That such views are being peddled is not surprising, but that they are enjoying some popularity in academe and special education is.

LABELLING: Currently, there is a movement to ban labelling in special education which has arisen out of the belief that the use of a label, such as ‘mentally retarded’, is a destructive self-fulfilling prophecy.

However, the claim that labelling alone causes adjustment problems for handicapped children has been refuted by a group of researchers who concluded that “regardless of the dependent measure employed (self concept, acceptance, lowered achievement, post-school achievement), the evidence does not support the conclusion that there is a detrimental labelling effect”.

Another researcher has argued that labels could open doors to opportunity and help direct appropriate resources to needy groups. Others have suggested that labels tend to make non-handicapped persons more tolerant towards their handicapped peers. Another researcher maintains that when one abandons one label another quickly replaces it.
The primary task facing educators is to ensure that disabled children are equipped with the highest possible educational and work skills to enable them to pursue as independent a livelihood in the community as possible.

The possibility of a label influencing the attitude of non-disabled pupils is dependent on a variety of factors. For example, the significance of a label may be greatly reduced when other crucial information about the disability is provided. The behaviour of an uncontrollable, hyperactive child is more likely to cause rejection than the label itself. There is evidence that children are more influenced by the behaviour of their peers than by labels.\(^1\)

The current UK obsession to abandon labels and adopt the bland term 'special education needs' has not overcome the problem when disabled pupils are attending special units in ordinary schools. One observer concluded that the tardy acceptance of integration in the UK is due to the limited resources for disabled children in regular schools and the superior academic achievements of disabled pupils attending special schools.\(^5\) The problems American educators face in attempting to integrate disabled pupils in regular schools include coping with the limited social skills of disabled pupils who are forcibly integrated with poorly prepared non-handicapped peers. Many teachers themselves lack adequate professional skills in meeting the needs of their disabled pupils.\(^6\)

Since the evidence that labelling is either harmful or harmless is inconclusive, care-givers might redirect their energies profitably to the more pressing medical and educational needs of children with disabilities.

SUPERFICIAL RESEARCH: Integration has been and is a highly contentious issue. The literature surrounding it has grown at an
exponential rate. Protagonists of both camps have resorted to dramatic language in support of their claims. Education is a mixed field of study. It is, however, when one is in the realm of fact rather than values, that the term ‘research’ is appropriate. Yet, when one surveys the vast industry of research into Special Education, one is reminded that Carl Murchison’s observation on the social sciences, in 1935, is still as applicable to the research into integration today.

“It is with something akin to despair that one contemplates the piffling, trivial, superficial, damnably unimportant topics that social scientists investigate with agony and sweat.”

Much of the research into the efficacy of special education lacks what might be called ‘cognitive perspective’. Many of the investigators appear to have a very limited conception of what they are doing. They tend to work away at their investigations without seeing its connection with much else, and are cognitively adrift.

The research studies investigating the efficacy or weakness of integration fall into two distinct categories. The first of such studies attempts to offer empirical evidence that integration or special education confers real benefits. The second group of studies consists of surveys and descriptions of existing facilities and an identification of the needs of special populations in regular and special settings. More recently, there have been some experiments which have examined the effects of classroom practice and other variables on the efficacy of integration.

Attempts to establish the superiority of either form of school organization — special or integrated — have been totally inconclusive and have a will-o’-the-wisp quality. Often enough, the justification for integrating disabled children has been based upon social justice considerations rather than on specific psychological or educational grounds.

The American mainstream movement has relied on psychological jargon (‘self-esteem’, ‘social adjustment’, ‘role modelling’, etc.) to promote its position. One British observer claims that,

“Much of what has previously passed as psychological theorising has been no more than a loose and wishful synthesis of psychological models which has led to the assumption that merely placing handicapped children in ordinary classrooms will result in:

(a) increased social interaction between handicapped and non-handicapped children;
(b) increased social acceptance of handicapped children by their non-handicapped peers;
(c) mainstreamed handicapped children modelling the behaviour of their non-handicapped peers, because of exposure to them.”

The belief that social contact and proximity between disabled and non-disabled pupils will be sufficient to reduce stigma and rejection has not been borne out in American studies.

WORTHWHILE EDUCATION: What then are the most critical tasks facing educators of disabled children?

Our concern must be to help free disabled children from the undesirable stresses of daily living and to foster their personal relationships that would enable them to live with zest and a feeling of worth.

Teacher educators must be persuaded to exchange the comic range of so-called educational studies for discipline-based courses. The overriding aim of special teachers is to ensure that they do not cut off handicapped children from gaining the basic scholastic and vocational skills. Teachers need to have sure knowledge of the medical, psychological and educational consequences of handicapping conditions in children. There is no reason why the skills component cannot be preserved without sacrificing the knowledge basis of studies pursued.

The primary task facing educators is to ensure that disabled children are equipped with the highest possible educational and work skills to enable them to pursue as independent a livelihood in the community as possible.

All disabled children are capable of benefiting from education and training when in the hands of skilled teachers. Comenius’ exhortation has a prophetic ring as far as disabled children are concerned:

“For we must take strong and vigorous measures that no man, in his journey through life, may encounter anything so unknown to him that he cannot pass sound judgement upon it and turn it to its proper use without serious error.

If it be urged that some men have such weak intellects that it is not possible for them to acquire knowledge, I answer that it is scarcely possible to find a mirror so dulled that it will not reflect images of some kind, or for a tablet to have such a rough surface that nothing can be inscribed on it.”

Radical political action will not bring disabled people perfect health or major improvements in their educational provision. The imperative is to avoid the false hope that we may move on to perfection. Perhaps, instead, we should demand answers to the questions that Socrates asked in earlier times: “To what end?” and “At what cost?” For our only true purpose lies in the pursuit of health, happiness and quality education for all disabled children in our country.
THE LONG MARCH TO INTEGRATION


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"Climate change disaster is imminent ..."
These are familiar cries in the environmental debate of the 90s. But are they fact or fiction?
Tall Green Tales is a collection of essays written by leading Australian social and physical scientists and is published by the Institute of Public Affairs.
Each Tale deals with a myth or distortion that has achieved prominence in the environmental debate.
The escalation of the Weipa dispute to a national dispute involving stoppages on the waterfront and the coal fields captured the headlines in mid-November. Was the central issue equal pay for equal work or the ACTU's need to assert its power and relevance? Union coverage at the Weipa site had been reduced to 10 per cent of the workforce as a result of the incentives offered by Comalco, a subsidiary of CRA Ltd, for workers to move to individual contracts.

The decision by the ACTU to use Bob Hawke as its advocate before the Industrial Relations Commission, and the insult this implied to Prime Minister Keating, added a further dimension to the issue. An agreement before the Industrial Relations Commission was reached on 21 November, which the ACTU hailed as a victory, but which Comalco said would not impede its policy of encouraging individual contracts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Canberra Times</th>
<th>“The Comalco battle is fundamental because the power of the old centralised union officialdom is at stake. If workers can negotiate for themselves, either as individuals or as genuine workplace units, the place for the centralised union bureaucracy will become almost superfluous.”</th>
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<td>The Sydney Morning Herald</td>
<td>“CRA acted legally in signing up the workers at Weipa to individual contracts. The blockade at Weipa port by the 75 workers who refused to sign contracts, however, has been deemed to be illegal.”</td>
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<td>The Australian</td>
<td>“The traditional role of unions has had to give way to the rise of individual choice, as exercised by the movement towards individual contracts. These changes provoke two key questions: are they good for workers? and are they good for the nation? The answer in both cases is ‘yes’.”</td>
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<td>The West Australian</td>
<td>“It is simply a shameless exercise in muscle-flexing by a union movement that is becoming increasingly irrelevant in contemporary industrial relations practices and is struggling to combat plummeting membership.”</td>
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<td>Editorial</td>
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<td>The Age</td>
<td>“Not to put too fine a point on it CRA is using industrial muscle to ensure unions are ‘locked out’: by bribing workers to leave unions, offering new workers no choice but to accept individual contracts, and exploiting legal fine print to avoid arbitration in the absence of meaningful collective bargaining.”</td>
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<td>18 November</td>
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<td>Kenneth Davidson</td>
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<td>The Sydney Morning Herald</td>
<td>“The habits of the bovver boys of the NSW Labor Right are not conducive to effective conflict resolution; they are really about winner takes all. This, too, is the essence of the ACTU position in its conflict with CRA - it is not inclined to compromise but is determined to reassert its control of all work places, whether the workers want it or not ...”</td>
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<td>P.P. McGuinness</td>
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<td>The Australian</td>
<td>“In the case of the CRA dispute, much more objectionable than any so-called discrimination against those who haven’t signed individual contracts is the way in which the ACTU appears to believe that each individual employee shouldn’t have the right to make up his or her own mind about whether or not to sign up.”</td>
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<td>Financial Review</td>
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<td>The Age</td>
<td>“The PM is in a cleft stick: he has sided with the unions but there is nothing to suggest that CRA is doing anything unlawful. Indeed, it appears that it is simply taking advantage of legislation passed by the ALP to promote enterprise bargaining ... The union movement’s actions have been excessive and unnecessary.”</td>
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<td>Courier Mail</td>
<td>“Many of the workers they [the unions] were seeking to represent apparently found their needs and wishes for the future could be better met by their employer rather than their union. ... This is not to say CRA wears the white hat in this fight. ... Differences in pay rates between contract workers and unionists at Weipa make it difficult for CRA to argue it is not aiming to rid its workplace of unions.”</td>
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<td>Editorial</td>
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<td>Herald Sun</td>
<td>“So far this resounding victory has cost the nation much more than $100 million, not to mention the international damage to our reputation. The only real winners are the leaders of the centralised union fighting for relevance. But they have only postponed the inevitable.”</td>
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The great thing about a mature democracy is that people have the right to decide how they wish to live their lives. In at least one crucial respect Australia is not yet a mature democracy because we are denied the right to exercise individual choices on employment issues.

In October, Tom Burton in the *Australian Financial Review*, commenting on the inclusion of sick pay in wages, asked incredulously: “Does anyone seriously believe workers on $390 a week are going to put away $10 a week in case they get sick?” Comments like this illustrate an attitude embedded in the national psyche: individual workers as too immature to make choices for themselves. This attitude is an affront to human dignity.

Fortunately things are changing: maturity is growing and individual choice will eventually prevail over the tyranny of employment collectivism.

When Australia had national wages cases, the industrial relations system operated on a national collectivist approach to employment conditions, underpinned by industry awards. The introduction of enterprise bargaining has devolved the collectivist approach to a company level. Enterprise bargaining allows employers and employees at each company to negotiate directly...
Under enterprise bargaining, industrial relations continue to operate on the collectivist assumption that workers are incapable of independent thought.

Being used by CRA and are being attempted by the education and health departments in Victoria, as well as by others. They require approval from the Industrial Relations Commission which has been forthcoming. That the Federal Industrial Relations Commission has allowed workers individually to enter over-award contracts caused the ACTU to mount its recent industrial and political campaign against CRA. That campaign highlighted the union movement's fear of contracts but has not stopped the over-award contract model from progressing.

POOR PERFORMANCE: The major reason for the slow death of employment collectivism is that the enterprise bargaining route is not providing the degree of reform companies need to compete, given global competition. Enterprise bargaining is entrenching under-performance, resulting in lower profits, lower wages and fewer jobs. All Australians lose.

One large Australian company which has been promoted as an example of successful enterprise bargaining privately expresses disappointment with the results. Work tasks continue to be rigidly time-defined, and if work is finished under the allocated time, employees will not undertake another job; instead they do nothing. Drug, alcohol and crime problems are endemic. The public profile of the company and the reality of its workplace are wide apart.

Another company has as its largest single customer a business operating from premises next door. They have adjoining paved backyards, separated by a low wire fence. The completed products are stored in the company's backyard. When the company sought to put a gate in the fence so that it could fork-lift products through to the customer, an industrial relations problem erupted and strikes were threatened. The company retreated and today continues to load semi-trailers for the 'long haul' to the yard next door where the products are unloaded. Collective enterprise bargaining has not fixed this problem.

The managers of a vehicle-parts manufacturing company complain that they need flexibility to engage more people at particular times of the month to satisfy a known pattern in customer ordering. Their excuse for not doing this is that if they engage and disengage people on a regular basis over six months, it will result in declaring casuals as regular employees and lead to unfair dismissal claims. The company retreats and today continues to load semi-trailers for the 'long haul' to the yard next door where the products are unloaded. Collective enterprise bargaining has not fixed this problem.

Who is to blame for these situations? Most commentators would chastize the workers, the union bosses, the industrial relations system and enterprise bargaining inadequacies. The truth is that the managers are to blame. They allow other bodies and people to dictate internal operational matters and ignore the available reform systems. The managers have failed to exercise their responsibilities.
They have failed to confront the problems and to focus their workforces on the competitive and productive needs of the company. Their failure is to the detriment of shareholders and workers.

The ineptness of managers like these is obvious when viewed against the benefits of reform being achieved by other Australian managers. Even with apparently rigid industrial relations regulations and barriers, there are Australian managers with the vision and the resolve to implement speedy and substantial reform. This is demonstrated in a landmark case-study of workplace reform.

Prepared by Pam Swain of Curtin University, *Strategic Choices* compares management choices exercised at three iron-ore mines in the Western Australian Pilbara: Robe River, Hamersley and Mount Newman. It is a study contrasting management success with management failure.

When, in 1986, new owners took control of Robe River, it was a mine facing financial loss, loss of contracts and, as a consequence, loss of jobs. The new owners assessed the degenerating situation and concluded that the major cause was inefficient workplace practices. They compiled a list of 300 work practices which were not authorized by the appropriate award and needed changing. Chief amongst these was rigid work demarcation, accepted and enforced by the old management.

In one typical example a powerhouse superintendent was reprimanded and suspended for two days without pay following a union complaint. The superintendent’s ‘misbehaviour’ had been to reset a circuit-breaker, thereby renewing the township’s electricity supply after a blackout caused by a fault at the powerhouse. According to the union, this task should have been performed by someone else.

By 1990, Hamersley was producing 15,000 tonnes per employee per year and Robe River more than 24,000 tonnes, but Mt Newman was still at 8,000 tonnes.
the operation profitable. While the incumbent executives were being sacked in Perth, the new management team was landing at the airport in Robe River. Sweeping reforms were announced, throwing the union movement into a frenzy, and a massive industrial relations battle followed.

The company was publicly pilloried for daring to make changes outside the parameters of the industrial relations system. Yet Strategic Choices reveals that all the company actually did was to require the Industrial Relations Commission and the unions to comply with the letter of the prevailing industrial relations law. The company's real transgression was to flout the unwritten, cosy rules evolved over time among the members of the 'industrial relations club'.

In the nine years since the changes, Robe River has been essentially strike-free, moving from a situation approaching financial loss to producing in excess of a billion dollars' profit. Critics argue that these results were achieved by a heavy-handed bullying of workers. The reverse is the case. Robe River is a story of managers exercising their responsibilities to their shareholders and to their workers by implementing workplace reform. The vision driving the Robe River managers was and is that company performance rather than industrial-relations conservatism should prevail, and that a direct company-employee relationship should exist free of outside (union) interference.

CRA at Hamersley has undertaken reform at a slower pace than occurred at Robe River but is motivated by a similar philosophy. CRA is progressively and successfully implementing workplace reforms throughout its Australia-wide multi-mine organization. The union movement has accused it of waging an anti-union campaign by introducing individual contracts. But CRA's management rejects the old class notion of workers versus bosses which underlies the union claim, arguing instead that everyone involved in the enterprise is reliant on its performance for their well-being.

As described in Strategic Choices, Hamersley's policy consists of a long-term strategy of empowering local workplace managers to deal directly with production and workforce issues as they arise. Their role is to create quality working relationships between production people, their local supervisors and the total organization. In the past, local managers were like eunuchs, subservient to deals done between senior managers and the unions, either in the Commission or privately.

On one occasion Hamersley suffered rolling strikes when several unions fought over whose members should operate two front-end loaders introduced into a pit site. After many months and frustrated by antics in the Commission or privately.

Despite warnings and recommendations for action by local managers, the senior people in the company are frozen by indecision. They deny that a problem exists and, when pressed, wobble like a blancmange.

HAmstrung: The third Pilbara mine, Mount Newman, presents a quite different picture, with a management group satisfied with attempting reform within the confines of the industrial status quo. Mount Newman exemplifies the approach of most companies and government bodies in Australia.

In contrast to the Robe River and Hamersley management philosophies, the Mount Newman approach was to work with and through the unions and to win the unions over to the need to reform work practices and improve the mining operation’s performance. In effect, however, Mount Newman allowed outside industrial-relations players to dictate internal operational matters: the views of individual workers were of secondary importance to union dealings, and communication with the workforce was by mass means rather than individual face-to-face interaction.

According to Strategic Choices, the need for workplace reform was evident. Mount Newman admitted that its technical capacity allowed for the production of 45 million tonnes a year but only averaged 30 million tonnes. Negotiations began with the unions in early 1986, but by mid-1988 no substantial work practices had changed. As a result the company was facing a crisis, with an impending six-million tonne shortfall in con-tracts delivery. Further, production actually dropped 25 per cent in 1989. The viability of Mount Newman was at risk as a direct result of poor management approaches.

A comparison of production figures with Hamersley and Robe River indicates in stark terms the results of the companies’ differing industrial relations strategies. In 1986, Hamersley and Robe River produced 10,000 tonnes of ore per employee per year and Mt Newman produced 8,000 tonnes. By 1990, Hamersley was pro-
MANAGEMENT INERTIA

... producing 15,000 tonnes and Robe River more than 24,000 tonnes; Mount Newman was still at 8,000 tonnes. In 1994, Hamersley was generating 20,000 tonnes and Robe River nearly 30,000 tonnes; Mount Newman was no longer providing figures to the researchers.

Strategic Choices demonstrates the striking and perhaps frightening correlation between workplace issues and company performance. The message is that companies which ensure that the central focus of all people in the organization is company performance and who strategically work to achieve needed reform, will realize the rewards. The report seriously calls into question the 'comfort-zone mentality' of the bulk of managers who operate within the unwritten 'club' rules of industrial relations. Investors should take note.

INDECISION: The lessons which Strategic Choices offers have been learnt by few companies in Australia, and mostly the blame lies with management inertia.

One major Australian mine (not in the Pilbara) is currently confronted with a serious industrial-relations problem in which a radical left-wing union is to be granted monopoly coverage. The existing local management has direct and close working relationships with the contracted workforce. When the radical union gains sanctioned coverage of the workplace, the result will be the dismantling of flexible, productive work arrangements with which the existing workforce is happy.

Despite warnings and recommendations for action by local managers, the senior people in the company are frozen by indecision. They deny that a problem exists and, when pressed, wobble like a blancmange. The local managers do not have the authority to act. This large company demonstrates little strategic thinking in relation to its own workplace, yet it often complains about the inadequacy of existing industrial-relations legislation.

Similar challenges confront the managers of small and medium, private and public organizations. The essential focus must be organizational performance. The tools for reform are available.

Small companies without the financial resources to seek Commission approval for over-award individual contracts have the agency-contracting system readily available. Medium and large organizations can use both agency-contracting and over-award staff contracts. Over-award, individual contracts are best suited for companies which need to foster strong and loyal bonds between employees and employers. Agency-contracting delivers a mature business relationship with workers through the mechanism of an administrative agency.

Perhaps the most sensible approach is that proposed by the Western Australian health department in a memo circulated earlier this year to hospitals. It put the view that just as there is a variety of people, so there should be a variety of work arrangements: traditional employment, agency-contracting, contracts for services and outsourcing. The memo says, "... there is no one right answer or template we can use ... The pursuit of quality, efficient and effective services is an ongoing pursuit that requires managers and staff to explore these options and make changes that will drive improvements."

The primary responsibility rests with managers to create and carry with their workforce a vision focused on mutually-beneficial performance. This responsibility cannot be handed over to outsiders. The collectivist approach to work relations is diminishing as performance-focused individualist approaches deliver results in Australia's maturing democracy.

CAN YOU HELP?

The IPA is looking for volunteers to help part-time in its Melbourne office. The work varies, but could include proof-reading, helping to organize mail-outs, small research assignments, cutting out and circulating relevant newspaper articles and library work.

We can't afford to pay you, but we can offer you regular contact with policy analysts, the opportunity to attend IPA seminars, and a look at how IPA Review and other publications are put together.

If you can assist, please contact Louise Cato on (03) 9654 7499.
The Tower of Babel is upon us. Our children are going to become multi-lingual, the Federal Government has decided. This decision is driven by the need, we are told, to integrate Australia more fully into the world economy. The Government has designated 14 'priority' languages other than English (LOTE): French, German, Italian, Modern Greek, Russian, Spanish, Arabic, Mandarin, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Vietnamese and Aboriginal languages (!). Last year the Council of Australian Governments accepted a report which recommends that 60 per cent of Year 10 students be studying a priority Asian language by 2006.

Before applauding the Government's aim, however, we should consider the substantial obstacles to achieving it, obstacles which the Government seems to have overlooked. Many people underestimate the difficulty in becoming proficient in a foreign language. Experts tell us that it will take 800 hours of rigorous lessons to achieve tolerable fluency in French. But it will take more than three times as much effort to achieve a similar fluency in Mandarin, Arabic or Japanese. The particularly difficult nature of most Asian languages appears not to have been understood by our bureaucrats in Canberra, or by many of our schools.

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The reader who has glanced at the bottom of this page may now be asking how I, as a scientist, should have the temerity to write about language learning. My only excuse is that I have tried my hand at a dozen modern and archaic languages, becoming truly fluent in three or four of these and learning enough to get on reasonably well in another two or three.

Although I have lived in Australia for more than 37 years, I have yet to meet an Australian, excluding immigrants, who could speak a foreign language well. Obviously, such linguists do exist. But the number who can speak a foreign language fluently in a reasonably high-level discussion — business negotiations, for example — is certainly minuscule. Students are unable to communicate in a foreign language after four to five years of study at high school. Even graduates, after a further three years of tertiary study, are almost mute. Why is this so?

For a variety of reasons, native English-speaking people have difficulties with foreign languages and progress beyond a few simple phrases soon comes to a halt. This is not the case with Northern and Central Europeans, many of whom are fluent in two and sometimes three foreign languages.

Emeritus Professor Asbjorn Baklien is a former Professor of Industrial Chemistry at Monash University.
The federal government wants to see more young Australians becoming multi-lingual and, in particular, literate in Asian languages. It won’t happen unless we reverse some of the educational trends of the last quarter century.

Asbjorn Baklien

It is worth considering briefly some of these reasons because they indicate the areas where we differ from the Continental Europeans in our approach to language teaching and therefore the areas that need meticulous attention if there is to be any hope that at least some of our children will become fluent in a LOTE.

- The first reason is lack of incentive. Everybody else speaks English, so why bother?

- The Anglo-Saxon philosophy of ‘progressive’ education and ‘process learning’ has taught our children to avoid ‘hard’ subjects unless they can be watered down, as we have long ago done with maths and science. Newspapers recently reported that students didn’t want to study a LOTE because it was “too hard”. As ‘progressive’ education rose through the 1970s, participation in foreign language studies declined. The proportion of final-year high-school students studying a LOTE fell from around 40 percent in the late 1960s to 12 percent by the early 1990s.

Where language teaching has survived in Australian high schools it often lacks rigour: there is a lack of serious intent to teach the language.

- Arts faculties no longer require high-school knowledge in a LOTE. You can study French without having learnt any French in high school.

- There are too few well-qualified language teachers. Many university graduates have proficiency levels too low for teaching a LOTE at Year 12 level and certainly too low for business and interpreting.

- The almost total absence of knowledge about English grammar and syntax as well as lack of spelling practice is a major handicap. Many teachers themselves have a shaky grasp of English grammar, not to mention the grammar of a LOTE such as German or Russian.

- There is a reluctance (again in the name of ‘progressive’ education) to insist on rote learning where this is the fastest way to learn. Rote learning is essential in the study of languages, particularly in building up vocabularies and mastering aspects of grammar. I remember learning by heart several groups of German prepositions and their corresponding grammatical cases. Not only did this save me an enormous amount of time later on, but it also enabled me to speak and write correct German.

- Our philosophy of equality is another obstacle to language learning. Teaching to the lowest common denominator is an absolute guarantee that no student will learn a LOTE. ‘Undemocratic’ streaming or some other kind of selection is essential.

- Anglo-Saxons, and Australians in particular, appear to have an inbuilt difficulty with the pronunciation of foreign words.

There is one way, perhaps the only one, of acquiring fluency in a foreign language. First ensure that the student has an ability to learn foreign languages. Girls will be in the majority. Then apply rigorous teaching, including grammar, syntax and an extensive vocabulary, from the first to the final year of school; all the time practise talking. Follow this with three years’ tertiary language study and two years’ practice in a country where the language is widely spoken.

In other words, if young Australians are to become multi-lingual, as the Government intends, we need to insist on standards, proficiency, correctness, precision, grammar and syntax in our schools. Are we prepared to push that line, and risk being seen as ‘undemocratic’ in the process?
If our results were any more consistent, they'd be predictable.

Amcor, a global leader in packaging and paper, has an impressive record of growth over the past five years. In the year to June 1995 sales, profits, earnings per share and dividends were at record levels. And for the first quarter of 1995-96, the group's profits before and after tax were comfortably ahead of results for the September quarter last year. Shareholders can look forward to continued growth from Amcor and further improvement in shareholder returns.
LET'S NOT GET TOO NOSTALGIC: LIFE FOR MOST PEOPLE USED TO BE POOR, NASTY, BRUTISH AND SHORT.

It is fashionable in some quarters to disparage the contribution that science and technology have made to our well-being. There are health food writers, such as Vaughan Bullivant, who lament the loss of "a way of life enjoyed by almost everyone, now envied by our modern synthetic generation." The Australian Conservation Foundation's Bob Phelps writes: "... many of our most pressing health, environmental and social problems are created by technologies and lifestyles."

I recently came across a rather striking set of figures that highlights the fallacy of these statements. The figures list the life expectancies of French women from the mid-18th century up to 1992. You can see them over the page in Figure 1.

Figure 1 reveals a massive increase in life expectancies since the Industrial Revolution began to build a head of steam. Since the 1740s the life expectancies of women in France have increased from about 25 years to about 81 years in 1992. Similar increases have occurred all around the globe (although in the developing world, where they are less afflicted by the health, environmental and social problems created by technology, life
expectancies are considerably lower than those in modern France).

Given the dramatic rise in life expectancies over the past 250 years, I thought it worth considering some of the ‘terrible’ technologies and lifestyles that have made us so ‘unhealthy’.

Poor, Arduous and Short: To put our modern synthetic generation in perspective, I’ll start with lifestyles of 18th-century France. Back then, thirty years of age was so far ‘over the hill’ that the life expectancy of the average French woman did not reach it until the 1790s.

These were tough times. It has been estimated that 50 per cent of the French population were permanently destitute. The average French family probably spent half its income buying bread alone. The results of wheat price rises were disastrous: there were 16 general famines in France between 1701 and 1800. Clive Ponting notes in his book A Green History of the World that in large areas of 18th-century France, the bulk of the population had to subsist on chestnuts for two to three months a year, and probably had a food intake no more than 1800 calories (about the level of the average Bangladeshi today).

It was in this context that French Queen Marie-Antoinette, on being told that the peasants could not afford bread, uttered the immortal phrase: "Let them eat cake." Such an overwhelming display of sensitivity clearly shows why Marie-Antoinette was ahead of her time.

Starvation was not the only problem that women faced in the 18th century. Germaine Greer comments that "maternity was a hazardous business, and high infant mortality made married life one continuous pregnancy." Furthermore, according to Greer, "Childbearing was an essential, full-time, dangerous job in those days of high mother- and child-mortality, plague and sporadic warfare." To give an idea of just how dangerous a job maternity was, in some hospitals as many as one woman in three died in childbirth. In northern Europe today the rate is more like one in 10,000.

The poverty of the time had other major impacts on family life. Ponting reports that in 1780 alone, 8,000 Parisian children were abandoned because their parents could not afford to keep them. That’s about a quarter of all those born in Paris that year.

This situation was not unusual for
Europe at the time. Ponting estimates that in 16th- and 17th-century Italy about 10 per cent of children were abandoned in the streets. According to Sir Peter Medewar, a foundling hospital in St Petersburg in Russia had 25,000 children on its rolls in the mid-1830s and admitted another 5,000 annually. Barely a third of the children in this hospital lived to their sixth birthday.

In the closing decade of the 18th century, the lot of French women began to improve. Their longevity soared to an average of 32 years. By 1825, their life expectancy at birth had climbed to 39 years.

The longer life expectancy occurred mainly in rural areas at first. It was largely due to improvements in agricultural productivity, through the adoption of new farming techniques and new crops such as the potato (which became popular in France in the last 20 years of the 18th century). The last major famine in continental Europe occurred during the Napoleonic wars.

The turning point for smallpox occurred when Edward Jenner showed that vaccination with cowpox virus made people immune to the deadlier smallpox virus. 1.7 million French people were vaccinated between 1808 and 1811.

By the middle of the 19th century, the city dwellers were beginning to benefit from the general rise in living standards that resulted from increasing industrial productivity. International trade in food increased with the development of steamships. People in the cities began to eat better food. This made them healthier and urban life expectancies began to improve. Better food also made people taller. At times in the 19th century, teenagers from rich English families were about 20 centimetres taller than malnourished youths from London.

In addition, a better understanding of the role of cleanliness in preventing disease came out of scientific investigations. In 1847, a Hungarian doctor named Ignaz Semmelweiss linked childbirth fever (which at the
time killed up to 30 per cent of women giving birth in the Vienna General Hospital) with doctors' dirty hands. He insisted that doctors used disinfectant before delivering children. This cut the maternal death rate to about one per cent. Unfortunately, Semmelweis was ignored at the time, and it was not until the 1870s that this became a standard practice.

Even such a simple thing as using soap and the availability of affordable clothes had an effect on life expectancy. Personal hygiene and clean clothes reduced the occurrence of typhus fever, which is spread by lice.

Other victories over death resulted from the construction of sewerage systems and water treatment plants. Ponting estimated that these activities alone account for about a fifth of the decline in the death rates that occurred during the 19th century.

Continuing progress in science and technology, and the accompanying rises in living standards, have seen life expectancy continue to increase during the 20th century. There has been an increase in French women's life expectancy of over 30 years since 1900, more than the increase that took place in the previous 150 years.

FALL IN INFANT MORTALITY. This improvement in the quality of life has been brought about by an enormous drop in the infant mortality rate and by the introduction of effective drugs and vaccines to fight bacteria and other germs. The infant mortality rate in Australia in 1881 was 115.8 per thousand live births. That means that about one child in every nine born died before it reached its first birthday. By 1992 the Australian infant mortality rate had plummeted to seven per thousand. The French infant mortality rate had fallen to eight per thousand by 1985.

This decline in the infant mortality rate has several causes. Science and technology have enabled people to become wealthier and better educated. This increases the chances of an infant surviving its first year. In addition, there have been major public health programs aimed at reducing infant mortality in developed countries such as France and Australia.

The development of effective drugs has been another major factor. First there were the sulfa drugs, developed in the 1930s, which were followed by antibiotics in the 1940s. New vaccines have also been developed to fight polio, diphtheria, whooping cough and measles. The children of today don't understand the terror their great-grandparents felt at the sound of a cough.

HEALTHY ADVICE: Nutrition still plays an important role. Research this century has given us a much better idea of what constitutes a healthy diet. The name 'vitamin' was invented in 1912, and many deficiency diseases were subsequently linked to shortages of vitamins or minerals in the diet. We are urged to eat from the five food groups each day to ensure that we get the nutrients that our bodies need.

As late as 1896, US government scientists were urging people not to buy fresh fruit and vegetables because they were too expensive. Nutritionists at the time understood the importance of proteins and calories, but not vitamins. Wheat was a cheap source of both protein and calories, and therefore government advice was to eat lots of bread and some meat, but not fruit and vegetables.

The result of all this scientific and technological development is that people in the 1990s enjoy longer life expectancies, and better health, than at any time in the past. In the 1940s, an American 65-year-old had a one in fourteen chance of living to 90. By 1980, the odds had improved to one in four. In 1990, an American 65 year old had almost a one in three chance of making it to 90. Today, it is not the infectious diseases that strike the young that we fear, but the insidious diseases of old age: cancer, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

We must not, however, take this long life for granted. A dramatic drop in life expectancy in Russia illustrates what can happen should living standards take a dive. The Russian death rate is estimated to have increased by 30 per cent between 1989 and 1993. Russian life expectancy at birth fell from 62 years to 59 years between 1992 and 1993.

The economic crisis in Russia has made good food expensive and cut health funding; infectious diseases are now returning with a vengeance (the number of reported cases of diphtheria in Russia rose from 839 in 1989 to 47,802 in 1992). Russian lives will be even shorter if they don't get their economy on track soon.

Western countries should be careful not to get themselves into the same situation. As Alvin Toffler warned: "In the Powershift Era ahead, the primary ideological struggle will no longer be between capitalist democracy and communist totalitarianism, but between 21st century democracy and 11th century darkness." The French life expectancy data clearly show what life would be like without the help of science and technology. Anyone over about 25 years of age is living on borrowed time.
HERE has been much discussion of Opposition Leader John Howard's thesis that, since the recession of the early 1990s, Australians experienced only "five minutes of economic sunshine" before the economy again started to slow. The Government strongly challenges this thesis, arguing that the slowing is in line with policy intentions and is needed to ensure that economic activity is kept at 'sustainable' levels. Indeed, the Prime Minister suggested on 29 August that "we have got the economy where we want it," and the Reserve Bank Governor told a Parliamentary Committee on 19 October that "I think we're in better shape than we've ever been".

UNCERTAINTY: However, there is considerable evidence to support the "five minutes of economic sunshine" thesis. The slow-down in economic growth which has undeniably occurred since mid-1994, the 'blow-out' in the current account deficit to levels reached in the late 1980s, the continued high rate of unemployment, and the tightening of monetary and (to a very minor extent) budgetary policies have all added to a level of uncertainty and insecurity already heightened by the experience of the 1980s, the recession of the early 1990s, and the more competitive environment in which both businesses and their employees now operate. This uncertainty has been further increased by the Prime Minister's decision to conduct a 'phony' election campaign, which means that the adverse economic effects that election campaigns normally have will occur over an extended period.

The Government's claim that the seventeen consecutive quarters of economic growth to the September quarter of 1995 is Australia's "best result in 24 years" is highly misleading. In particular, the recovery:

- has not been the longest period of consecutive growth. Using trend estimates of growth in GDP (the appropriate measure), the longest period is 33 quarters in the late 1960s and early 1970s;
- follows the longest period of recession experienced by Australia in the post-World War II period;
- in terms of growth per head of population, measures up much less favourably internationally than Government claims based on total growth figures, and now appears to be coming back to the field;
- has, since the bottom in the June quarter of 1991, been the slowest of any — except for the two weak recoveries following the enormous government-induced real wages increase in mid-1974;
- follows the longest period of recession experienced by Australia in the post-World War II period;
- resulted in a 'blow out' in the current account deficit up to the middle of 1995. This suggests that Australia remains far too susceptible to the risk of external debt 'crises' and is still only able to avoid such 'crises' by slowing growth to below rates at which unemployment will be reduced;
- led to the recent upward movement in 'underlying' inflation to over 3 per cent p.a. from recession-induced lows, and an intimation by Reserve Bank Governor Fraser that it may go a "lot higher", giving rise to similar concerns about speed limits to growth in a context where real interest...
rates rose by the December quarter of 1994 to levels (8.7 per cent) likely on past experience to produce a quite marked slow-down about a year later;

- produced improved corporate profitability (measured by net rates of return on capital) but not back to even pre-recession, let alone pre-1974-75, rates;
- eventually produced a strong increase in business investment starting about two years ago, but from an all time low base which has left it still only around its past average of about 11 per cent of GDP in a context where business investment plans are now being considerably scaled back;
- involved no domestic saving over the whole recovery period once allowance is made for depreciation and inflation;
- produced a strong growth in labour productivity, but has left it unclear if that reflects any structural improvement, particularly as productivity growth now appears to be slowing sharply.

MARKED SLOW-DOWN: Moreover, there is now clear evidence of a marked slow-down in the recovery, starting in mid-1994. GDP growth seems likely to fall well short of the Budget forecast of 3.75 per cent. It would not be surprising if it turned out to be below 3 per cent, and if unemployment in the June quarter of 1996 were significantly above the 8 per cent Government forecast. Such an outcome would warrant a 'B minus' mark, especially when measured against the growth rate of 4-4.5 per cent acknowledged by the Government itself as necessary to keep unemployment falling to achieve 5 per cent unemployment by 2000. Taken together with the points made in the preceding paragraph, such a sub-par growth performance would substantially validate the perception of only five minutes of economic sunshine.

An important cause of the slow-down since mid-1994 — which commenced about the same time as the tightening in monetary and (to a lesser extent) budgetary policy (the effects of which are generally assumed to lag by up to a year or more) — was an ongoing and widespread perception of a serious risk that the Government would repeat the policy mistakes of the 1980s. The experience of the 1980s, and the recession at the end of them, created a greater aversion to risk-taking on the part of both businesses and (to a lesser extent) consumers. This produced what economists would describe as a 'rational expectations' reaction, with many businesses and consumers taking precautionary action to ensure that they did not become over-committed.

The (belated and very minor) tightening in fiscal policy in the 1995-96 Budget, and the 'pre-emptive' tightening of monetary policy in the last half of 1994, may have alleviated this perception to some extent. However, both budgetary and monetary policies still have serious inadequacies and need to be set much more convincingly in a medium-term framework that itself provides much more conviction that they will improve Australia's performance in regard to both savings and inflation and, hence, economic growth.

CULTURAL CHANGE: While the micro-economic reforms of the 1980s should have resulted in a structural improvement in productivity, the statistical evidence to date is not encouraging. Moreover, even if improved growth potential has been created, that may not be realized if the Government's approach to macro-economic policy, and to providing an economic 'climate' conducive to investment and profit-making, continues to make businesses and consumers unduly averse to risk-taking. The most important need, little recognized in most discussions about the economy, is to create a culture that encourages genuine entrepreneurship and profit in the mutual interests of labour and capital.

Australia is a good way from having such a culture, with opposition to such reforms by various interest groups being a major inhibiting factor which neither major political party appears able to handle particularly well. This is particularly true of groups which focus more on the possible effect of reforms on the inequality of income than on the likely increases in total income and employment.

However, the biggest obstacle to economic reform is the trade union movement, which seeks to protect existing workers from competition from their unemployed fellows. The present government, while claiming mostly spurious benefits from an Accord which excludes those who are the main source of capital and employment, appears to be particularly inept at handling its close relationship with unions. And the Opposition seems unduly scared of tackling the problem, notwithstanding the dwindling number of trade union members and what appears to be the widespread community support for action to reduce union power.

The reality is that 'the fundamentals' still fall a good way short of the levels needed to sustain economic growth at a pace that is unemployment-reducing and foreign-debt-stabilizing. Until there is greater recognition of the need for a cultural change, the general economic climate will remain clouded and the prospects of achieving growth rates sufficient to improve Australia's relative international performance on a sustained basis, and reduce unemployment even to the Government's 5 per cent target by 2000, will remain dim.

Yet the potential is enormous. In a resource-rich country with a relatively highly-skilled workforce and political stability, the opportunities for investment and economic growth are almost unlimited — if the economic environment is right.
Greenhouse: the nuclear option

IF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS SERIOUS ABOUT REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS, IT WOULD RECONSIDER ITS PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR-POWER GENERATION.

BRIAN TUCKER

A lack of realism characterizes world attitudes to the greenhouse-climate change issue: a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions may be unnecessary, unachievable and undesirable.¹ Unnecessary because if climate change induced by greenhouse gases occurs it may not be a net detriment to society. Unachievable because fossil-fuel combustion causing carbon-dioxide increases and agricultural production causing methane and nitrous-oxide increases are an outcome of satisfying the energy and food requirements of an increasing world population. And undesirable because the economic and social consequences of restrictions imposed upon energy and food production may make adaptation to any likely climate change a preferred option.

Countries which are party to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) have grossly underestimated the reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions that would be required to achieve a stabilization of worldwide gas concentrations in the atmosphere (in this context 'emissions' are what is put into the atmosphere, 'concentrations' are what stay there). They have also studiously ignored the declared refusal of developing countries to curb their industrial development for this purpose. An approach to stable emissions may be possible, however, when world population and associated development expectations have themselves stabilized — probably several centuries hence — or when an acceptable alternative to fossil fuel as a major energy source becomes acceptable. Nuclear power is a candidate for the latter.

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Over the past three years, Australia's uranium exports have been sufficient to provide the fuel requirements of 16 1000-megawatt reactors, thus replacing coal burning that would have released 7,000,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide from each one into the atmosphere.

Diablo Canyon, USA.

Courtesy Uranium Information Centre.

Fossil fuel combustion accounts for some 75 per cent of worldwide carbon-dioxide emissions. Examination of carbon-dioxide emissions for France shows a remarkable 40 per cent reduction during the 1980s. This coincides with an increase in nuclear-powered electricity capacity from 10,000 to 56,000 megawatts. By 1994 about 78 per cent of France's electricity was generated by nuclear power.

No other country has undertaken quite such a massive transfer from fossil fuel to nuclear energy as France although several other industrialized countries that have moved in this direction — Sweden, South Korea, Switzerland and Spain — have some of the lowest per capita rates of carbon-dioxide emissions. Even the country with the highest per capita emissions, the United States, in 1993 would have had 30 per cent more such emissions if it were not for her 109 nuclear-powered electricity-generating stations. Indeed for the world as a whole, without the existing nuclear production of electricity, the amount of carbon dioxide from fossil-fuel burning accumulating in the atmosphere would be some 10 per cent greater than at present.

HYPOCRISY: The point has been made many times in different contexts that it is hypocritical of Australia to claim the moral high-ground of allowing no national nuclear-power generation but at the same time selling uranium to countries that do. Over the past three years, Australia's uranium exports have been sufficient to provide the fuel requirements of 16 1000-megawatt reactors, thus replacing coal burning that would have released 7,000,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide from each one into the atmosphere. Indeed it could be claimed that, for this period, not only have our uranium exports offset the carbon dioxide produced by our own coal-burning power stations, they have earned a small net credit for Australia in the balance of world emissions. If this were to be argued in the
international accounting negotiations, in the same way that New Zealand claims that her forest planting offsets national coal-burning, it would seem to make something of a farce of the whole lamentable FCCC international negotiating procedures (lamentable because of their self-delusion, hypocrisy and lack of realism).

For some this should represent an interesting conflict of moral imperatives. Which is worse: embracing nuclear power, imposing draconian restrictions on world energy and agriculture or putting up with climate change? But the dissimulation endemic in greenhouse considerations within Australia has meant that no such debate has taken place here. Our government has been silent on the implications for nuclear power of the greenhouse gas emission targets. This may well have something to do with the environmental lobby being in the forefront of both the greenhouse-climate change panic and the hysterical rejection of nuclear power.

Government policy seems to be based on wishful thinking. It is increasingly clear that policies fostering energy conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy cannot stabilize emissions, far less atmospheric concentrations; the drastic decrease in consumption required for the latter would lead to an unacceptable reduction in our standard of living. On the other hand, stabilization of emissions might be achieved within perhaps 50 years if there were immediate national and international policy decisions to maximize nuclear-powered electricity production.

SAFETY: As someone who flew over Chernobyl in a Soviet helicopter two years after the 1986 disaster, I can attest to it being an emotional experience. Safety aspects regarding the competence everywhere of the operation of even modern nuclear-power stations is not something to be idly dismissed, even if one were satisfied that problems of disposal of low-, intermediate- and high-level waste had been solved.

Currently 436 nuclear power reactors in some 31 countries currently supply approximately 17 per cent of the world's electricity needs. Obviously safety aspects have been and continue to be extensively studied. Indeed, technically it can be fairly argued that today nuclear power is safer and less of an environmental threat than other means of generating electricity — in circumstances where both reactor operation and waste-management procedures are undertaken scrupulously and with a high degree of technical competence.5,6 How to cater for situations when such high standards might not be maintained would seem to remain a problem.

COST: There is also the question of the cost of nuclear power relative to fossil fuel. While the costs of operating the two types of electricity-generating stations are closing, it is difficult to get a comparison that includes the capital costs of building the plant and, particularly, of handling the waste. Nevertheless, if the reduction of carbon-dioxide emissions is regarded as vital, any extra cost of nuclear-power generation is likely to be significantly less than the cost of economic and social disruption consequent upon drastic energy curtailment.

Rational considerations indicate that the stabilization of atmospheric greenhouse-gas concentrations is probably impossible for several centuries, and then only at levels three or more times those at present. Consequently, if climate change occurs it will be necessary to adapt to it whether we like it or not. But why is the gamut of these issues not openly debated? Is Australia's present policy designed as an anodyne to assuage concerns about the inevitable consequences of our own existence?

On this issue those of us who have made a vocation in science, in industry or even in politics are in danger of becoming puppets on strings manipulated by environmental activists and their bureaucratic acolytes; the audience being "the most unnecessarily fearful generation of mankind that ever populated the earth".

2. Trends '93, World Data Center-A for atmospheric trace gases, Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, Tennessee.
4. Uranium Information Centre Newsletter, Number 1, January/February 1995.
In the early 1980s governments in many countries became concerned about the poor performance of and lack of effective accountability in government trading enterprises (GTEs). In Australia there was evidence of overstaffing in public enterprises, such as the water supply authorities and Telecom. Water and electricity were sold at prices well below cost, thereby requiring excessive investment to satisfy demand. Elcom, the publicly-owned electric-power monopoly in New South Wales, had excess generating capacity greater than was required for commercial prudence. Elcom’s coal requirements could have been produced from five of the 10 mines it operated. State-owned railways were incurring massive losses.

A large part of the micro-economic reform programs of Commonwealth and State governments has been an attempt to induce or oblige GTEs to act ‘more commercially’, in some cases by privatizing them, in others by restructuring them in some way so that they resemble private-sector corporations more closely. This restructuring is widely referred to as ‘corporatization’, although the term has been given widely different meanings.

Many other public-sector activities have been commercialized: universities have been encouraged to seek fee-paying students from overseas; public hospitals have engaged in joint ventures with private hospitals; the CSIRO and agriculture departments provide services such as testing agricultural products under contracts with private firms; public-sector engineering establishments sell services locally and overseas; and organizations such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade sell data to private-sector and public-sector clients. The recently established National Registration Authority for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals, which regulates the use of pesticides and fertilizers, is to be a self-funding regulatory agency (in UK parlance, a SEFRA). The Australian Securities Commission obtains the bulk of its revenue from fees.

However, the approach to commercialization and micro-economic reform in Australia has been ad hoc, particularly in comparison with New Zealand where typically a ‘policy framework’, derived from ‘first principles’, provides guidelines for developing the policy and procedures for implementing it. This helps to ensure that the desired outcome is achieved.

New Zealand’s approach to corporatization has been carefully designed and implemented; Australia’s has been largely ad hoc.

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nent enterprises

prospect of obtaining information on how closely service quantities and qualities match people's willingness to pay, a fundamental component of efficient resource use. The same is true of our education systems. One reason the architects of New Zealand's GTE reforms adopted the managerial incentive — the 'carrot' — approach was to create conditions which would generate this crucial information.

The New Zealand model has been designed to overcome what Adam Smith called (in relation to joint-stock companies) the 'principal-agent problem' or 'agency problem': where a principal (or group of principals) employs an agent to act on his (or their) behalf, the agent is likely to pursue his own interests to the detriment of the principal(s). In such organizations, Smith's theory predicts, there is a strong tendency for behaviour such as shirking, featherbedding and embezzling by employees.

The approach of New Zealand's public-sector reformers has been systematic. It has aimed to create robust incentives for managers of GTEs to use resources efficiently by emulating the organizational form of joint-stock companies as closely as possible, so as to apply market disciplines to managers wherever feasible. (A statement of the principles underlying the reforms is set out in A Policy Framework for Improving the Performance of Government Trading Enterprises. This document, produced in 1988 by the New South Wales Government, was intended as a blueprint for GTE reform in that State based on the New Zealand model.)

Three conditions are essential to creating effective managerial incentives. First, there must be some means of measuring the performance of the enterprise so that managerial rewards can be scaled accordingly. Second, if incentives for managers of GTEs are to be of similar magnitude to those for comparable private-sector enterprises then the rewards and sanctions faced by GTE managers must also be of similar magnitude. Third, it must be feasible to hold the manager(s) accountable for the performance of the enterprise. Performance and accountability are inextricably related and inherently difficult to establish in entities within the public sector.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT: Traditionally, most GTEs were assigned multiple goals: delivery of private goods or services; delivery of Community Service Obligations; and policy or regulatory functions. Where these goals conflict (as they frequently do), reliable measurement of performance becomes virtually impossible.

To overcome this problem, New Zealand corporatization emulates the joint-stock corporation by assigning GTE managers the single objective of maximizing the value of the enterprise (or, less rigorously, maximising profits). To preserve this single goal, other functions are either conducted under commercial contracts between a GTE and the government (e.g. contracts to fulfil Community Service Obligations) or re-assigned to a non-commercial arm of government (e.g. regulatory functions).

The New Zealand model assigns frontline responsibility for performance measurement to the Board of the GTE. This requires the Board to include people skilled in the subjective assessment of enterprise performance, people such as experienced managers and members of Boards of (preferably similar) private-sector enterprises.

Monitoring by the shareholding Ministers is limited to that necessary to assess whether the Board is performing satisfactorily. The monitoring process as a whole is not heavily dependent on the commercial acumen of the Minister and the bureaucracy.

In practice under the New Zealand model, a GTE's performance is assessed against a Statement of Corporate Intent, which forms the basis of a contract, agreed annually between the Board and the shareholding Ministers. This instrument is required by law to provide information on, amongst other things, the objectives of the organization; the nature and scope of its activities; performance targets for the ensuing
three years and other measurements by which the performance of the organization can be judged; an asset valuation; and financial structure and policies, including dividend policies.

GTEs provide annual and half-yearly reports which include the information required under the Statement of Corporate Intent and against which shareholding Ministers assess performance.

Yet, measurement of the performance of GTEs will inevitably have a large subjective component. How, for example, should the performance of a water-supply enterprise be measured in a period of drought? There is simply no mechanism to measure the performance of a GTE as reliable as the stock market in its evaluation of the performance of joint-stock companies.

MANAGERIAL ACCOUNTABILITY: A manager cannot reasonably be held accountable for the performance of an enterprise where decisions which influence its performance are made by people outside the control of the manager. Much of the process of corporatization under the New Zealand model is designed to establish the conditions for accountability: in particular, what is often referred to as an 'arm's-length' relationship between the shareholding Ministers and the Board and CEO of the GTE.

Procedures for appointing the Board and CEO and the conditions of appointment are crucial to establishing genuine accountability. Clearly managers cannot be held accountable if the shareholding Ministers interfere in the management. Consequently, the power of a GTE's shareholding Ministers is restricted largely to appointing and dismissing the Board. The Board (and ultimately the Chairman of the Board) rather than the CEO, is accountable to the shareholding Ministers. More specifically, the shareholding Ministers appoint the Chairman of the Board, who in turn chooses other members of the Board, subject to the approval of the shareholders. This procedure parallels the joint-stock company.

As is the norm in the joint-stock company, the Board has the power to appoint and dismiss the CEO. The Board is also responsible for ratifying business plans brought to it by the CEO; for monitoring the implementation of the plans and the performance of the enterprise; and for determining the rewards and sanctions to be applied to the CEO.

The sole criterion for appointment to the Board is — or is supposed to be — the ability to add value to the GTE — although, as in the private sector, 'capacity to add value' can be interpreted broadly. Political appointments and the appointment of representatives of interest groups (e.g. trade union officials or consumer representatives) are not appropriate unless they are
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somehow consistent with the objective of maximizing the value of the enterprise.

The New Zealand model emphasizes the need for a clear division between the decision-making powers of the CEO, the Board and the shareholders.

If the government wishes to influence the quantity, quality or price of goods and services supplied by the enterprise, then this must be done through a formal contract negotiated with the management of the GTE.

In Practice: Beginning with the formation of Electricorp and CoalCorp in 1987, intense efforts were made to apply the corporatization model rigorously to GTEs in New Zealand. The reforms were generally successful in separating commercial activities from advisory and regulatory activities, and commercializing the delivery of Community Service Obligations, to enable the GTEs to pursue the single goal of value maximization. Arm's-length relationships between shareholding Ministers and GTEs were established by designating the former as residual claimants and assigning to them the task of monitoring Board performance.

Businessmen with strong reputations as managers were recruited to chair the formation of corporatized GTEs. For example, Sir Ron Trotter (Chairman of Fletcher Challenge Limited) was recruited as the Chairman of NZ Telecom; John Fernyhough, a director of several substantial New Zealand companies, was appointed Chairman of Electricity Corporation of New Zealand. In most cases, the procedures required to achieve accountability were followed closely. Boards selected CEOs who, in many cases, were appointed from outside the enterprise. The corporatization was generally driven by the Chairman and the Board rather than the incumbent management team. There were strong attempts to create competitively-neutral operating environments, notably to remove the government guarantee on debts. Persistent attempts have been made to find workable solutions to the problems associated with natural monopoly, albeit with limited success.

Some problems were encountered at the implementation stage. Initial enterprise valuations, crucial for performance evaluation and for determining rewards and sanctions, proved to be contentious, with management teams tending to undervalue the enterprise and the government tending to overvalue it.

A 1995 study, Key Factors in Successful SOE Transitions: Lessons and Insights from Five New Zealand State-Owned Enterprises, prepared by three Auckland University economists (Barry Spicer, David Emanuel and Michael Powell), suggests that clarification of objectives was important in the success of the GTE reforms in that country. The authors state that the legislated requirement that a GTE operate as an efficient and profitable business set an unambiguous objective which, together with the Statement of Corporate Intent, establishes a firm basis for performance monitoring. They note that following corporatization “Treasury files on GTEs become more clearly focused on business objectives, planning and monitoring issues; and are much more business-like in style and tone.”

Where objectives were diffuse, as in the case of Television New Zealand Limited, which had a mixture of commercial and social objectives, difficulties were encountered subsequent to corporatization.

The report draws attention to...
ORGANIZATIONAL FLAWS

The conditions for creating genuine accountability and robust managerial incentives are stringent. The managerial structures of two problem GTEs, AIDC Ltd and ANL Limited, violate those conditions in a number of ways:

Enterprise objective: The existence of multiple or diffuse objectives complicates the evaluation of enterprise and managerial performance. AIDC’s managers are required by legislation to give ‘priority’ to funding, amongst other things, the development or use of new or improved technology. If AIDC invests in a new technology venture which fails, is this because of poor management or the inherent riskiness of new technology? Equally, accountability is undermined because managers can reasonably justify low rates of return on funds by citing the directive to pursue subsidiary objectives.

Direct government grants are a better way of promoting new technologies because they are transparent.

Board Composition: According to the New Zealand model, Boards of directors should be drawn from people who are known to be valued by the market. At least in recent years, the board of the AIDC has comprised only four people: two of them are senior public servants, presumably with little commercial management experience.

The conflicting interests of employee representatives on Boards undermine accountability.

In common with many other GTEs, ANL Limited has a staff-appointed member of the Board of directors. Other members of the Board could reasonably argue that this may have exacerbated, say, ANL’s chronic labour-relations problems.

Competitive Neutrality: The Commonwealth Government’s guarantee on funds borrowed by AIDC Ltd gives it a competitive advantage over comparable private-sector enterprises. This complicates evaluation of AIDC’s performance.

Government constraints on ANL’s ability to rationalize its labour force can reasonably be used by the Board to excuse its poor performance.

problems inherent in government ownership: weak incentives for shareholding Ministers to monitor performance; the pressure for shareholding Ministers to use corporatized GTEs to pursue non-commercial objectives; and special difficulties in managing risk, a problem which is especially acute in GTEs (such as a television broadcaster) subject to rapid change to keep abreast of developing technology or which require injections of risk capital (or both).

The high turnover in shareholding Ministers exacerbates the problem of evaluating Board performance, thereby weakening the monitoring process. The Crown Company Monitoring Advisory Group has been formed in an attempt to overcome this problem.

The report notes that appointment of representatives of special interests to a Board undermines accountability and, concomitantly, increases the difficulty of recruiting qualified Board members (and, probably also, executives). There is a risk that politicization of a corporatized GTE will increase over time, and especially a danger that, feeling obliged to consult with shareholding Ministers, Boards will not be sufficiently decisive.

But the report, on balance, is sanguine about the process of corporatization in New Zealand. Based on the five enterprises studied, it concludes that corporatization "has been successful in turning what were bureaucratic and often wasteful organizations with mixed and confusing objectives into well-focused, commercially oriented corporations."

This view, however, is not shared by all. An earlier study by the New Zealand Business Roundtable (The Public Benefit of Private Ownership: The Case for Privatisation) points to inherent flaws in the corporatization model, including the weakness of managerial incentives relative to the private sector; the problem of access to risk capital; the difficulty of establishing competitive neutrality (a ‘level playing field’); and the erosion over time of commercial disciplines by political objectives.

The failure to resolve conflicts between political and commercial goals is apparent in friction between the management of corporatized enterprises and the New Zealand Government; political influence in Board appointments; in political intervention in pricing decisions; and in the influence of politics in determining managerial rewards and sanctions.

The study concludes that: "the SOE model is unstable in that over time political and bureaucratic pressures will tend to reassert themselves. Ultimately, state-owned trading enterprises could revert to their previous departmental status — which is so inimical to the employment of commercial expertise and to the efficient management of the Crown's assets."

THE AUSTRALIAN WAY: Many GTEs in Australia, including government banks and airlines, have for many years oper-
MAKING GOVERNMENT ENTERPRISES MORE COMMERCIAL

PREDATORY PRICING

Competitive advantages enjoyed by GTEs may allow them to set artificially low prices for their services. This may destabilize an industry and cause the demise of more efficient competitors.

For example, because pressures on Tricontinental's managers to achieve a reasonable rate of return were weak, they may have loaned funds at artificially low interest rates in order to gain market share. This may have exacerbated the turmoil in the financial sector following deregulation because, in attempting to maintain market share, other banks may have incurred losses by following Tricontinental's lead (albeit unwisely).

With only weak pressure to perform, the management of Australian Airlines may have been able to reduce Compass Airlines to insolvency by setting artificially low fares without incurring financial penalties themselves. As is well known, the Commonwealth Government's failure to create a 'level playing field' by ensuring reasonable access to airport facilities almost certainly hastened the demise of Compass. At the very least, until the recent privatization, government ownership must have exacerbated the risk faced by domestic and international airlines competing with Australian Airlines and Qantas.

Medibank Private and Medicare use the same office facilities. To what extent does this give Medibank Private an artificial advantage over competing private health insurance funds?

As more activities of governments are 'commercialized', the issue of the competitive advantages enjoyed by government service-suppliers will assume greater prominence. We now have an organization, the new Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, charged with the task of 'levelling the playing field' between commercial entities in the public and private sectors. Its policy stance will have important implications for the efficiency with which resources are used in Australia.

ated on a corporatized basis. However, the process of corporatization has been largely ad hoc.

In 1988, the New South Wales Government model as a blueprint for reform of its GTEs, but it has been applied to only two organizations in that State — the Hunter Water Corporation and the State Bank of NSW — and even in those cases not rigorously. The Boards and executives of the two organizations were assembled essentially by bureaucratic procedures rather than according to the requirements of accountability. Existing management teams have been relied on to implement reforms.

In recent years many Commonwealth GTEs and GTEs in States other than New South Wales have been restructured to resemble private-sector corporations. However, in few if any cases has the New Zealand model been closely followed. For example, many GTEs in the field of transport and communications are vehicles for delivering Community Service Obligations (cross-subsidies or tax-financed subsidies, many of which are massive). Qantas operates under regulatory protection from competition and other artificial barriers to entry (as previously did Australian Airlines). There has been little if any attempt to remove government guarantees on debt. Many Boards have members appointed more for political reasons than for their capacity to add value to the enterprise. Quite a few include trade union officials.

Although there have been big improvements in the performance of GTEs on both sides of the Tasman, it seems to me that the results of corporatization in Australia are less consistent and more likely to be ephemeral than on the other side of the Tasman. For example, the Commonwealth Government has continued having problems with its shipping line ANL and the performance of AIDC has not been good. After some improvements the performance of ports appears to have deteriorated and there are some disturbing stories in NSW about activities in the State Rail Authority.

The two New Zealand reports show that privatization is the preferred approach to GTE reform because it can be expected to bring more substantial and (importantly in the light of the recent Bureau of Industry Economics international benchmarking study) more enduring improvements in enterprise performance. However, there are some public-sector enterprises, including radio and television broadcasting, hospitals, schools and universities, which can be expected to remain under government control for the foreseeable future. For these, corporatization may well be an appropriate vehicle for reform. Experience in New Zealand strongly indicates that carefully designed and implemented corporatization procedures will produce better results than the ad hoc approaches characteristic of 'micro-economic' reform in Australia.
NO ART WITHOUT THE TEXT:
Giles Auty, The Australian newspaper's art critic (formerly with The Spectator), is no friend of the post-modernists. In an interview in November's Independent, he blithely admits that not only does he dislike a large proportion of their works, but he doesn't even read their journals. Of the Sydney journal Art and Text, without whose authoritative guidance an important new art installation might be mistaken for an act of vandalism, Auty pleads ignorance —in response to which the journal's editor sniffs: "You can quote me on this: who's Giles Auty?"

What is Auty missing by ignoring Art and Text? Judging by recent editions, not very much, or at least not very much of artistic value (satirical value is another matter). The cover of a recent issue features a work by Jan Nelson. "Nelson," says the journal, "has levered the lid off Piero Manzoni's Artist's Shit in the 1995 work Untitled ... and laid a long winding white turd on a pedestal for our viewing pleasure."

Viewers who find their pleasures in fields other than scatology can turn to Incident 1960, which, Art and Text claims, is evidence of "Nelson's recent inventiveness". It consists of pieces of a broken flowerpot sitting on a pedestal. A work which would stir some viewers to reach for the broom and pan, inspires Art and Text to proclaim: "In their shattered state [the pieces] have become null and void while simultaneously achieving new status as objets d'art."

Then things begin to get really silly: "In a 1993 work, Nelson extruded the word Oops! in dough-like plaster and put it on a plinth. Incident links up with Oops!, and other works like Boo! and Spill!, to continue her project of initiating and then depicting this sense of accidents causing other actions ..."

Just when even the most dedicated disciple of the avant-garde begins to suspect that he is being had, theory comes to the rescue: "Encoded into the substance of Jan Nelson's white objects are a multitude of theories and histories," Art and Text reassures us. "Einstein's idea of the 'other dimension', Darwin's discourse on evolution and reproduction, Freud's speculations on hysteria, and Irigaray's hypothesis on female fluids ..." Indeed, those who view Nelson's works as infantile are merely demonstrating their own lack of sophistication.

WHAT NEXT?: Who are the 'rising stars' of the international art world? A special 1995 issue of ARTnews, published in New York, lists them. They include José Antonio Hernandez-Diez who "elevates street culture to heroic levels in his video installations, sculptures, and painted portraits. Among his most recent works is a series of 30 skateboards mounted on a wall, each with a portrait of a young street tough on the bottom." Then there is British artist Sarah Lucas, who "creates paintings and irreverently comic constructions about sex using such things as fruit, vegetables, sawhorses, and fake vomit." It could be worse: the vomit could be real.

The 'Marvellous Sightings' section of ARTnews includes an account of Abigail Lane's installation Skin of the Teeth, shown at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London and described as "a discreet assault on the sensibilities. The wallpaper, at first glance an attractive speckled design in red on white, was derived from a New York Police Department photograph of bloodstains on a wall".

MARTYRED TREE: On Sunday 19 November, more than 300 environmentalist Christians held a "liturgy in the forest" at Mount Dom Dom near Narbethong, Victoria. Organized, according to The Age, by ministers, lay people and artists, the tree-hugging throng carried a large cross. And, yes, the cross was made from wood.

STONE BROKE: A 21-year-old car worker has appeared in court in Gosford charged with dealing in marijuana, reports The Sydney Morning Herald. The man had been buying the drug in 'ounce' lots for $400 and dividing each lot up into 15 smaller bags which he
then retained for $25 each. Police arrest saved him from bankruptcy. Magistrate Stephen Scarlett gave him a bond, a fine, 300 hours’ community service and a recommendation that in future he steer clear of any career requiring mathematics.

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN: One of SBS’s primary goals is to promote ethnic tolerance and multicultural understanding. Yet Michael Sutherland, Assistant Federal Secretary of the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, told Australia/Israel Review in October that SBS does not always practise what it preaches: “SBS is a place where racist behaviour is extremely common.” He says it is “ingrained in the organization”. SBS maintains that there is no problem, but Sutherland says “That’s crap, complete crap.” On one occasion, according to the report, the term ‘Auschwitz’ was used by a sports journalist to refer to a news producer, mistakenly believed to be Jewish. The journalist later denied that he had meant any harm. Perhaps SBS is simply doing as its promotional slogan claims: “Bringing the world to you.”

A REVOLT: The Victorian Government’s moves to ‘privatize’ municipal libraries and restructure local government have provoked a community-wide revolt: ordinary people everywhere are organizing to protect their democratic heritage. Well, that’s the way the Labor Opposition would like it to seem. So much so that, as The Hon. Bruce Atkinson revealed in Parliament in October, the ALP has given the popular resistance a nudge along.

It seems that many of the new community-based protest groups, which have recently arisen, are top-heavy with individuals known to Mr Atkinson and even more familiar to the other side of Parliament: the President of the North Fitzroy Friends of Libraries is also the electorate officer for the ALP member for Richmond; the President of the Friends of the Greater Dandenong Mobile Library Service is also the electorate officer for the ALP member for Dandenong; the Spokesman for the Defend Public Libraries Campaign is also the Secretary of the Richmond branch of the ALP; the Spokesman for the Friends of the Essendon Library is also the ALP candidate for Essendon; the Spokesman for the Friends of the Fitzroy Library is also a member of the ALP’s housing and local government policy committee; the Spokesman for the Friends of Moreland Libraries is also the secretary of the Brunswick branch of the ALP. Mr Atkinson continued to identify other Friends of the Labor Party in the Citizens for a Democratic Melbourne, the Preston Return to Local Democracy Group, the Victorian Local Government Association, the Darebin People for Local Democracy and other so-called community-based organizations.

SEXUAL LANGUAGE: English ain’t what it used to be, at least not in the classroom. Ray Misson writes in English in Australia, the journal of the Australian Association for the Teaching of English, that “English teachers tend to be the ones who take on board social issues — feminist issues, issues of ethnicity and other kinds of social inequity — and they are increasingly taking on questions revolving around discrimination on grounds of sexuality.”

Indeed, English in Australia devoted its entire July issue to ‘Gender and Sexuality’. Misson himself wrote on the importance of English teachers engaging positively with homosexuality in class. He ends by quoting from Man Gahill’s The Making of Men. A gay student says: “Teachers, especially male teachers, assume your being gay is a problem but there are a lot of pluses. In fact, I think that one of the main reasons that male straights hate us is because they really know that emotionally we are more worked out than them. We can talk about and express our feelings, our emotions in a positive way. They can only express negative feelings like hatred, anger and dominance. Who would like to be like them?” Misson suggests that “the quality of insights” in remarks such as this is a reward of giving gay and lesbian students support in the classroom. But why is stigmatizing heterosexual men (“They can only express negative feelings like hatred, anger and dominance”) more enlightened than stigmatizing homosexuals?

IN CONCRETE: The University of Melbourne’s underground car park has been declared a protected historic site in the Victorian Heritage Register and hailed as an “innovative and imaginative solution to the mundane and utilitarian problem of car parking and an unusual use of reinforced concrete.” No doubt adding to its historic value, the carpark was used in the filming of Mad Max. It was constructed as long ago as 1972, a year not generally recognized as great for architecture, although possibly a great year for reinforced concrete.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER: People migrate to Australia for all sorts of reasons. Chilean immigrant Paulina Campos, now a Community Development Officer, explains in AsianMigrant magazine her reason: “In Australia, I have gained the impression that many think that people only migrate for political and economic reasons, but this is not always so. For me, it was also an opportunity to recreate my understanding of my role as a woman and therefore to contribute to the deconstruction of male dominance.”
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HE Australian on 14 December 1994 gave front page publicity, including a large photograph, to a publication called We Women Decide, which was released in Adelaide at that time. On 3 January 1995 the same newspaper published an entirely uncritical piece by Rosemary Neill on We Women Decide. During the three-week interval, The Australian could find space for only three letters of dissent. It was clear enough, then, what kind of news management The Australian was pursuing.

We Women Decide is 200 pages long, and may be obtained for $20 post paid from an abortion referral agency in Adelaide. There are three authors, Lyndall Ryan, Margie Ripper and Barbara Buttfield, one of whom works in that agency, the other two in university departments of women’s studies. The publisher seems to be the Women’s Studies Unit in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Flinders University.

The document is instructive as a sample from the bottom end of what now passes for academic research. The authors will no doubt cite it on their CVs, and perhaps win further academic honours on the strength of this work. They call it a ‘study’, but that is not an apt word, since they are not, in fact, studying anything at all: theirs is a work of advocacy. They never make any attempt at, or any pretence of, academic detachment and balance.

The pro-lifers’ position on ‘foetal rights’ (has anyone ever heard a pro-lifer talking about foetal rights?) is not subjected to critical argument, but simply dismissed as “madness” (p. 194) and pro-lifers are in several places said to be voracious (presumably the authors mean vociferous). Adverse physical effects that can follow abortion are either denied (the association of abortion with infertility is flatly called a “myth” on p. 199), or omitted entirely (the link with breast cancer is simply not mentioned). The careful report of the British Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the physical and psycho-social effects of abortion on women, which appeared five months before We Women Decide, is dealt with in the same effective way, by not mentioning it.

S
ELECTION BIAS: The authors make quite clear in the first 14 pages what their conclusions are going to be, and how they propose to
WHICH WOMEN DECIDE?

A PUBLICLY-FUNDED REPORT THAT PRESENTS ABORTION AS NO DIFFERENT FROM AN APPENDECTOMY OR ANY OTHER MEDICAL PROCEDURE IS UNBALANCED AND UNCONVINCING.

The pro-lifers' position on 'foetal rights' (has anyone ever heard of a pro-lifer talking about foetal rights?) is not subjected to critical argument but simply dismissed as "madness".

even the word foetus, and even the recognition that the foetus is a separate thing: "throughout this report the foetus is rarely distinguished as an entity separate from the woman" (p. 4). Despite the authors' care for terminology, many of the aborted women kept using the offending four-letter and five-letter words to identify what had been killed, e.g.:

"... it was bloody obvious that I wasn't going to have the baby and that was that" (p. 133);

"... I was not going to have a child" (p. 134);

"... I sort of couldn't think of it ... in any other terms other than a child of mine which was comparable to the other two" (p. 139);

"... my other kids" (p. 106);

"... he looked fine in the photograph" (of a 20-week foetus aborted following diagnosis of Down's syndrome, p. 132);

"... and I thought, how can a gynaecologist do that? I couldn't sort of work out how you could bring babies into the world and then get rid of them" (p. 106);

"Because it's a baby" (in answer to a question about the main obstacle to decriminalizing abortion, p. 154).

conduct their 'study' in order to arrive at those conclusions. They are setting out to "establish the optimum conditions needed for the provision of safe, legal, affordable and accessible abortion services in Australia in the 1990s", etc. (p. 3). They know what they want, then, and they explain how they select people for interview. Aborted women were sought for interview through "women's information services, women's health and community health organizations and abortion referral agencies" (p. 9). Is a woman who later regrets an abortion likely to go back to the same people, or the same kind of people, who referred her for the abortion? The sampling, then, was heavily biased in the authors' direction, though a couple of stray dissenters did manage to slip in. The other people interviewed were "counsellors, doctors, nurses and social workers involved in referral for abortion and medical personnel who perform or assist with abortion provision" (p. 11). No stray dissenters here: they all said that they were in favour of abortion. What else would we expect them to say?

In conducting their "guided conversations" (p. 91) with the aborted women, the authors were no doubt careful never to refer to the terminated organism as a child, etc., since they proposed to make some effort to speak entirely of "the pregnancy", avoiding...
Numbers of these women accept and use the authors' rhetoric about a "woman's right to choose", but none of them show the authors' ingenuity in redescribing (e.g., "an abortion ends a bodily process, a pregnancy, of which the foetus is a constituent part, rather than eradicating a separable entity", p. 4) what the choice of abortion is: a choice to kill what some of the women in this study do not hesitate to call their child, baby, etc. That is the 'right' they are claiming, and that is the description under which some of them are making the claim. It is hard to say which is more distasteful, the shamelessness of those who openly recognize what they are demanding, or the sophistry of the report's authors in devising euphemisms so as not to recognize what the demand of a "right to abortion" entails.

JUST A MEDICAL PROCEDURE: The authors and their interviewees, particularly those who are working in the industry, constantly reiterate their insistence that abortion is no different from any other medical procedure, and should be treated no differently; one interviewed "provider" draws an explicit comparison between having an abortion and having an appendix out (p. 179). So there is much talk of health, procedures, treatment, and professional decisions, of the need for "quality of care", and even for a "relaxed, warm and caring atmosphere" (p. 180). But they do not even begin to sustain their attempt to "normalize" (p. 178) abortion as just another medical procedure.

None of the women interviewed represents herself as needing an abortion for medical reasons, in the way that we may need to have an appendix out for medical reasons. Pregnancy is not an illness. Even if it were, the condition is self-limiting, and so can be treated by non-intervention or minimum intervention. Nor does any of the women interviewed represent herself as needing an abortion for psychiatric reasons; indeed, several of them, and the authors, are scornful about the practice of doctors, particularly in Tasmania, who go through the charade of recording a psychiatric diagnosis as grounds for abortion in cases where doctor and woman both know that the pregnancy poses no threat whatever to her psychic health (p. 112-3).

Again there are constant complaints in the report about doctors who insist on satisfying themselves that an abortion is needed before they will perform it or refer for it, even where a woman has clearly told them that she wants it! Would they complain in the same way of surgeons who insist on satisfying themselves that an appendix is infected before they will remove it, even where the patient has clearly told them that he wants it out?

Their comparison of abortion with appendectomy or any other genuine medical procedure, then, fails completely. They end up presenting abortion as entirely unlike any medical procedure. We understand medical treatment by reference to the goals of medicine: restoring and maintaining health as far as that is possible, and palliating symptoms. Anything that can properly be called medical treatment has some identifiable therapeutic and/or palliative function. Abortion has not, and the authors of this report do not even try to pretend that is has; in their own inimitable language, "we will focus on the premise that women's decision making is the central basis for discussion" (p. 2).

Hence the authors' hostility towards doctors, nurses and counselors who are reluctant to refer for abortion or to participate in performing abortions. Hence also the unmistakable menace in their Recommendation 8 (p. 206) that "current knowledge and practice pertaining to technical, social and emotional aspects of the abortion experience" be taught to all "general practitioners, counsellors, social workers and nurses", and "recognised as a required element in the discharge of the normal duty of care by health professionals". Admittedly the meaning of these opaque phrases is not entirely clear; but if the authors don't mean that any nurse, doctor or social worker who refuses to refer for abortion should be sued, prosecuted or sacked for failing in their "normal duty of care", what do they mean?

This is, then, a report that lets a number of cats out of the bag. The authors make other disclosures on such matters as the abortion-contraception link, the nature of the counselling offered at some abortion clinics, the conduct of some abortionists towards their clients, the pressure on some women to abort and their reluctance to do so, the low standing of abortionists among doctors and the shortage of young doctors going into the business, and the existence of post-abortion infections.

They acknowledge that abortion may cause infections by asserting that "innovations and improvements in abortion procedure have outstripped innovation in virtually all other strategies for fertility control", and that these improvements include "improved antibiotic regimes to prevent and treat post operative infection" (p. 197). If there were no mechanism...
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Medical treatment is something that some people need. Abortion is something that some women want. It is not need, but want (or as it is usually called, "choice"), that is central to the authors' standpoint.

for spreading infection (they make particular mention of chlamydia), there would be no need for antibiotics. By calling abortion-related infertility a "myth" (p. 199), the authors imply that abortion-spreading infection can always be controlled, and so can never cause infertility by such mechanisms as tubal scarring. Could anyone but the most reckless promoter of abortion suggest anything so optimistic?

ABORTION PROVIDERS: The authors are worried about future supplies of "abortion providers" as ageing abortionists approach retirement and as so few young medics are interested in entering the trade (and indeed, aside from the money, what kind of doctor would want to?). An abortion nurse is quoted as saying that "all the (abortion) providers I have spoken with have said they fear getting known as the abortionist and becoming stigmatized" (p. 183). Evidently the great increase in abortion numbers over the past two decades has done nothing to raise the social standing to those who perform them.

The report suggests that it is uncommon for women to abort reluctantly in response to "overt coercion" (p. 146) by husbands, etc. How common it is would be difficult to establish even in the most careful study, and quite impossible in an amateurish job like We Women Decide. But once we recognize what abortion is, there is nothing implausible in the idea that involvement in abortion might affect a person's professional attitudes and practice more generally.

The counselling offered by a Queensland abortion clinic was what attracted one interviewee to go there. But she reports that the counsellor "wouldn't hear any of my doubts ... It's a money making business and you are processed. She is like a salesperson, the counsellor. They all were, as if they were all working for the team. I wouldn't be surprised if she's not making commission ... there's no counselling as such ... " (p. 104). She might well have encountered similarly unreceptive attitudes from counsellors who did not work for an abortionist, but this is not a possibility that she or the authors examine.

CONTRACEPTION: Contraception is still often promoted as an alternative to abortion, particularly in the young: contraceptives for everyone in high school, with copious instruction in their use, could prevent all teenage pregnancies, and so make teenage abortions unnecessary, so we are told. The authors of We Women Decide will have none of it (p. 35-5).

"Contraceptive education", they assert, will have little or no effect on the rate of abortions, and in any case, why should the rate of abortions be reduced? It is completely up to the woman, they insist, whether she chooses to prevent a conception, or to abort a foetus which has been conceived. They profess no preference at all for contraception over abortion. They don't care how high the abortion rate is.

The authors make a related point which some readers opposed to abortion but in favour of contraception may find disturbing. It is that some widely used "contraceptives" are in reality abortifacients, since they work, not by preventing ovulation or fertilization, but by preventing the implantation of an embryo that has already been conceived, so that it dies (p. 197). This, of course, is true (though not much talked about), but it is less useful to their cause than they think. For if they have an argument here, it would seem to be something like this:

IUDs, hormonal contraceptives, etc. kill immature humans,

Abortion kills immature humans.

IUDs, hormonal contraceptives, etc., are all right.

Therefore abortion is all right.

But if we have difficulty in justifying abortion, the argument must face in the opposite direction: abortion may not be all right, therefore IUDs, (some) hormonal contraceptives, etc., which do the same thing at an earlier stage of development may not be all right either.

REAL OBJECTIVES: Although We Women Decide is all but illiterate in places, and about as worthless academically as any publication can be, and although it has absorbed a great deal of public money to circulate the authors' private opinions,
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DON'T MENTION THE A-WORD

TWENTY-TWO years ago abortion was made an individual right by the Supreme Court. Today it is a public institution - one of the most carefully cultivated institutions in America. It is protected by courts, subsidized by legislatures, performed in government-run hospitals and clinics, and promoted as a "fundamental right" by our State Department ... With this difference: unlike other American rights, abortion cannot be discussed in plain English. Its warmest supporters do not like to call it by its name.

Abortion is a "reproductive health procedure" or a "termination of pregnancy." Abortion clinics are "reproductive health clinics" (more recently, "women's clinics"), and the right to obtain an abortion is "reproductive freedom." Sometimes the word "abortion" is unavoidable, as in media accounts of the abortion controversy, but then it is almost invariably preceded by a line of nicer-sounding words: "the right of a woman to choose" abortion. This is still not enough to satisfy some in the abortion movement. In an op-ed piece that appeared in The New York Times shortly after a gunman killed some employees and wounded others at two Brookline, Massachusetts, abortion clinics, a counselor at one of the clinics complained that the media kept referring to her workplace as an abortion clinic. "I hate that term," she declared. At the end of the piece she suggested that her abortion clinic ought to be called "a place of healing and care."

The Clinton Administration, the first Administration clearly committed to abortion, seems to be trying hard to promote it without mentioning it. President Bill Clinton's 1993 health-care bill would have nationalized the funding of abortion, forcing everyone to buy a 'standard package' that included it. Yet nowhere in the bill's 1,342 pages was the word "abortion" ever used. In various interviews both Clintons acknowledged that it was their intention to include abortion under the category of "services for pregnant women."

Why, in a decade when public discourse about sex has become determinedly forthright, is "abortion" so hard to say? No one hesitates to say "abortion" in other contexts - in referring, for example, to aborting a plane's takeoff. Why not say "abortion of a foetus"? Why substitute a spongy expression like "termination of pregnancy"? And why do abortion clinics get called "reproductive health clinics" when their manifest purpose is to stop reproduction? Why all this strange language? What is going on here?

The answer, it seems to me, is unavoidable. Even defenders and promoters of abortion sense that there is something not quite right about the procedure.

(From 'On Abortion: A Lincolnian Position' by George McKenna in The Atlantic Monthly, September 1995.)

we should be glad that it has been published, because it has brought the real objectives of the 'abortion lobby' out into the open, as never before. The authors of this report hold senior appointments in their fields, and have access to research funds and to like-minded people in the media who will promote their cause. They are not at all coy about where they stand: they have no need to be.

So this publication makes it much clearer what the 'abortion debate' is about. We now have no excuse for supposing, from their talk of abortion as a "normal medical procedure", that pro-abortionists are promoting abortion for the sake of women's health. Virtually no abortions are performed on medical grounds anyway, and the legal fiction of 'danger to mental health', on which almost all abortions are performed in Australia, is rejected by the authors of this report as medically fraudulent. Likewise, we now have no excuse for supposing that they think of abortion as a desperate last resort: to them, abortion is simply one among many "strategies for fertility control".

They have a positive vision of a world where women would think no more of aborting their unborn offspring than of preventing their conception, where no woman who happens to want an abortion would feel it incumbent on her to offer any reason at all for her having it, where she would not even have to pay for it herself because the taxpayer would meet the cost, and where any doctor, nurse or counsellor unwilling to take part in this process if called upon would be hounded out of professional practice for shirking their 'normal duty of care'. And all this on the basis, not of any kind of need, but simply of choice: *Hoc volo, sic iubeo, sit pro ratione voluntas*, as Juvenal put it (I want it! I demand it! Let my will take the place of reason). Is there any comparable instance of a momentous change in social mores being advocated on a more trivial basis? ■
ARGARET Thatcher became Prime Minister in 1979, at the lowest point of Britain's post-imperial decline. The economy was not growing and unemployment had risen dramatically to around five per cent of the labour force. The worst strike year since 1926 had seen the dead unburied, the streets piled with garbage, and critically ill patients turned away from hospitals by pickets. The miners' union had proved its ability to hold the country to ransom, forcing the earlier Conservative government to institute a three-day week to save energy, and finally to appeal to the electorate with the question 'Who governs Britain?' They had lost the election. Inflation had already once risen to 25 per cent and was again rising towards 20 per cent. Internationally, Britain's reputation was lower than at any previous time.

Worst of all, perhaps, it looked increasingly uncertain whether democracy was working in Britain. The ruling establishment and the media were out of sympathy with the people. In 1968, a single speech by a relatively little known Conservative politician — Enoch Powell — had made him overnight the most popular man in the country. Simultaneously it had earned him the unanimous execration of the British media and dismissal from the Opposition shadow cabinet. In 1979, Powell was still there on the fringes of politics, with an enormous but largely inarticulate following, a daily reminder of the apparent irreconcilability of the rulers of Britain
with the interests and attitudes of the people they ruled.

Seldom (except in war) can a government have come to office under less auspicious circumstances. Did Mrs Thatcher and her ministers solve the problems they were faced with? Did she at least begin to solve them? Or are those problems no nearer solution to this day?

The Thatcher Record:
Unemployment never fell below five per cent during Mrs Thatcher's entire period of office; it reached 12 per cent in 1983 and was rising towards a similar level when she resigned. Here her achievement was presentational rather than statesmanlike: in common with other Western leaders, she depoliticized unemployment; it came to be seen — at least by politicians and the media — as a factor outside government control and influence. In other respects, the economy unquestionably did better; there was a notable improvement in efficiency, particularly in the state-run industries, most of which were privatized. Trade union irresponsibility was successfully curbed, partly by legislation, partly by a long and decisive battle with the miners, partly by the high unemployment rate.

Inflation, it seemed at first, had been conquered; but it returned in a new form. Property prices, fuelled by a borrower's market in deregulated credit, rose dramatically and then fell, causing business failures and leaving too many house-owners with mortgage debts greater than the value of their property. This new problem of negative equity, coupled with a much more volatile employment market and widespread executive retrenchments, introduced an entirely new sense of insecurity into the lives of the suburban middle class who vote Conservative.

Internationally, Britain recovered prestige. The Falklands War proved more successful (and seemed more just) than any other recent exercise of Western military power. Britain played an important part in the stiffening of Western policies that helped to precipitate the sudden collapse of communism; and led the way in a new worldwide belief in economic freedom. Mrs Thatcher herself became an international figure as no British leader had been since Churchill. Perhaps at last Britain had begun to emerge from the shadow of America. But British foreign policy could hardly be called successful. Continued membership of the European Economic Community compromised the very principle of independent sovereignty. Withdrawal was judged politically impracticable at present, and was not attempted. But a continued refusal to enter into the spirit of Europeanism made useful dialogue with our European associates very difficult, and often united the Continent against us. And the centuries-old problem of Ireland had still not been solved.

Where does Britain stand now? In economic terms, much where Australia and our European neighbours stand. Unemployment levels, living standards and economic growth are (like Australia's) not far from the OECD average. Any sense of a specifically British disease, if it was ever appropriate, is so no longer; our diseases are the diseases of the West. But these diseases — unemployment, the breakdown of the family, the declining sense of the sanctity of human life — Mrs Thatcher, despite her talk of Victorian family values, did not effectively diagnose or even attempt to cure. Perhaps they cannot be cured by government action in any case; the best that can be said is that the process of moral decline may have been slower in Britain in recent years than in most of the other countries of the West.

Better Government:
Mrs Thatcher did not solve all our problems. Nevertheless Britain has changed greatly since 1979, and in certain important respects the change has been for the better. Despite some failures, there is a sense that Britain is better governed. Taxes are being collected more efficiently and government expenditure is under control. Despite screams of protest from the medical profession and the media, much has been done to improve the financial accountability of the Health Service. The problem of the railways is still perhaps only beginning to be solved; but at least we now have a first-rate national road network; and our national airline has been privatized and exposed to some real competition, to become one of the more efficient and profitable in the world.

The public education system is not much better yet; but at least some serious attempts have been made to improve it. It has been difficult to find educational administrators and inspectors who really want to improve academic standards and are willing to discard mistaken principles of social engineering and equality of outcome. There are plenty of grass-roots teachers who agree fundamentally with what the Government has been trying to do; but their voices are not heard in
the Department of Education, the local authorities or the teaching unions. The obvious Tharcherite solution — to give parents back responsibility for arranging and paying for their children's education, and so the power ultimately to control it — is not yet practical politics; nevertheless some useful moves have been made in that direction.

A NEW SPIRIT: Perhaps most important of all, there is something more intangible — a new and positive spirit; a revived sense of national self-confidence, the beginnings of a new willingness to criticize accepted values. Not all of the new spirit stems directly from Mrs Thatcher; in his courageous criticism of the fashionable consensus, Prince Charles has had his own independent importance. The sudden sense that the establishment might be challenged not only impotently from below, but from above, has introduced a refreshing new sense of national potential.

It was exciting to see Nigel Lawson defying the 364 academic economists (“one for every day of the year except Christmas”) who wrote to The Times to predict failure for his monetary policy — and to watch his monetary policy succeed. It was exhilarating to hear Prince Charles castigating the architectural mistakes that had defaced London — and at least to see a revised and more suitable design go up for the National Gallery extension. There was a quite new sense that the fresh air of commonsense might be entering the stuffy world of public discussion — and at the very top.

Britain still faces many problems, and the establishment has had its revenge on both Thatcher and Charles. But the problems that remain are the same problems as are faced by all other Western countries; and the Thatcher experience may give us a certain advantage in tackling those problems. There has been a fundamental change in the mood of Britain, generating a certain amount of new confidence in the face of a world of established but often irrational and mistaken assumptions.

HOW IT STARTED: Mrs Thatcher was important because she gave partial expression to the repressed instincts of the British people. To understand what has happened in Britain, we need to go back to 1968 and Enoch Powell’s celebrated speech. Before he made it, Powell was relatively little known to the electorate. But he had already established himself as the intellectual leader of a new kind of conservatism. In a series of speeches,
people on these issues that cost him the opportunity to put his other policies into practice.

His speech, by using language chosen deliberately to reach a wide audience, caused a dramatic polarization of attitudes. It may seem extravagant to say that the polarization was between the establishment on the one side and the people on the other; but such a divide was clearly documented. Public opinion polls, unpublished at the time, showed clear majority support for Enoch Powell, who overnight became a major political figure, the centre of a potential new national consensus. Yet to the media, he immediately became a pariah.

This consensus included not only middle-class Conservative voters but Labour voters also, who found in a revived patriotism an alternative solidarity to that which they were increasingly doubtful about finding in the trade unions. Powell’s support came as much from parts of the country untouched by immigration as from places where it had become a major factor. He had touched a note of suppressed national feeling, which in the long years of British denigration had not been allowed to find expression.

As time went on, levels of immigration to Britain were reduced, the new communities stabilized and ‘race relations’ became less of an issue, particularly with the younger generation. Nevertheless, patriotism did not go away. Without the wide patriotic support that Mrs Thatcher gained from the Falklands War, she would almost certainly have lost her second election, and would never have been able to complete her economic program. Without the sense of national solidarity aroused by that war, she might easily have lost her battle with the trade unions.

**Patriotism, Freedom and Democracy:** But it would be wrong to see the Thatcher government as merely opportunist, using the political appeal of patriotism as a means to carry through economic policies which would otherwise have been unacceptable to the British electorate. Within the limits of political practicality, Mrs Thatcher was much more of a democrat than any other recent British prime minister. She demonstrated in practical achievements, as Powell had previously demonstrated in theory, the natural link between economic freedom and patriotism; a link admirably expressed by Nigel Lawson in *The View from Number 11*:

> "There is a parallel between self-interest and nationalism, the two strongest emotions with which politicians have to contend. Both can be unattractive and contemptuous of others. But just as self-interest, channelled through a well-ordered economy and capitalist system can — as Adam Smith pointed out two centuries ago — confer benefits on all mankind; so nationalism, if channelled into a loyalty to a liberal, democratic nation state, can equally be a force for good, and something to be cherished. By contrast, the politician who is foolish enough to ignore or deny either, does so at his very considerable peril."

There is also another link between patriotism and economic freedom. Taken together, they imply a relationship of trust between government and people. Patriotism implies that the people trust the government not to abuse their loyalty; freedom that the government trusts the people not to abuse their liberty. Mutual trust between government and people is the only worthwhile basis for democracy. A government which believes in the country and people which it rules is likely also to believe that the people are fit to make decisions for themselves, and that given the opportunity, they are likely to make better decisions for their own special circumstances than can be made for them by those in authority.

The importance of the Thatcher period in Britain was that it commenced a process — by no means yet complete — by which the British people started to regain confidence in themselves and their government. The establishment, which was never reconciled to Mrs Thatcher, is (although weakened) still very powerful, particularly in the media; and the problems of unemployment and personal economic insecurity have not been solved. For these reasons, Mrs Thatcher and her successor are currently unpopular with both media and people. A Labour government would be unlikely to cure unemployment either, but the electorate rightly or wrongly will not admit unemployment to be an insoluble problem. Margaret Thatcher failed to address the problem of unemployment, she has fallen; but she gave Britain a fresh start.
The intellectual resurgence of liberalism in the 1980s was driven by economic arguments and a shrill anti-statism. It coincided with the collapse of communism and the rise of Oriental capitalism: both coincidences fortified the neo-liberal drive. Its strengths were its commitment to free trade, its rediscovery of competition and market-derived efficiencies, and its hostility to cultures of state dependence. Its weaknesses were its neglect of civil society, its ignorance of ethical and spiritual bases for human conduct, and its lack of a convincing foundation for social and political order. Did the strengths outweigh the weaknesses? Hardly, says Gregory Melleuish; in Australia the search for a balanced liberalism has still a long way to run.

Against 'contemporary liberalism', Melleuish sets out to recover a tradition of 'Cultural Liberalism in Australia'. The search for tradition is a deliberate undertaking, for Melleuish argues that contemporary liberalism possesses little or no historical memory. Might not the imbalance in contemporary liberalism be put right by recalling the features of past liberalisms?

The author's 'tradition' comprises a disparate collection of administrators, academics, functionaries and authors whose intellectual and cultural work from the 1880s to the 1960s was bound by three common features: an approach to human nature which recognized an ethical and spiritual basis for human identity and activity; an attempt to apply principles of rationality and scientific inquiry to the workings of human society; and an ethos of 'service' to society and state (or 'civic humanism'). Thus defined, the tradition encompasses, amongst others, free trader B.R. Wise, philosophers Charles Badham, Francis Anderson and G.A. Wood, educationalists Peter Board and P.R. Cole, social scientists R.F. Irvine, Clarence Northcott and Elton Mayo, Ministers of the Crown Charles Pearson and Frederick Eggleston, and Ministers of the Cloth Ernest Burgmann and G.V. Portus.

I have no quarrel with this team selection; my initial reservations about V. Gordon Childe (given his professed Marxism), and Burgmann (the 'Red' Bishop of Goulburn) gave way before the author's relentlessly rigorous application of selection criteria. Nor do I quarrel with the cultural unity of the tradition: spirituality, science and service were blended to form a highly distinctive cultural outlook, "an amalgam of rationalism, spiritual humanism and liberalism". As a cultural outlook, it rested on a "faith in evolution as a process through which the world becomes more enlightened, rational and spiritual".

Self-destruction: Ultimately, as the author clearly demonstrates, this faith in evolution carried the seed of the tradition's self-destruction: Australia in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s did not become a more enlightened, rational or spiritual society. Keith Hancock and Clarence Northcott ('Realists') responded by modifying their expectations; Frederick Eggleston, Elton Mayo, Marjorie Barnard and Flora Elershaw ('Idealists') responded with utopianism. By the 1960s, the tradition had exhausted itself: James McAuley and Manning Clark denied the possibility of a liberal via media between Rome and Moscow, Catholicism and communism: "they came to bury liberalism not to praise it".

There is no denying the strength of this argument. Cultural Liberalism was immersed in evolutionist assumptions about human perfectibility, societal progress and the efficacy of rationality. Those assumptions inevitably ran aground, bringing the tradition down with it. Melleuish's explanation for the death of Cultural Liberalism in the 1960s is compelling, and it enlarges our understanding of the 'mad mosaic' of post-modernism which succeeded it.

My quarrel is with the author's
claim that the tradition provides useful resources with which to tackle the dilemmas confronting contemporary liberalism. When all is said and done, Cultural Liberalism was a statist doctrine: it accompanied the extension of state functions, offered an ethos of the monocularisation of enlarged state activity with individual and social ‘personality’. It characteristically blurred the identities of individual, society and state, leaving no conceptual space for civil society. It equated citizenship with service within state institutions.

"Why," asks Melleuish, "should Australian intellectuals have been so attracted to a civic humanist and statist variety of liberalism?"

In the years which immediately followed the First World War, the assumptions and practices of Australian statism were subject to their first ideological and political challenge. Catholic social theory found its first Australian exposition in the journal *Australia* in 1917, and produced its first breakaway party, the NSW Democratic Party, in 1920. The Workers’ Educational Association, formed in 1913, generated 10 years of social criticism of Australian statism based on the virtue of voluntary association. Guild Socialism emerged as a major ideological current in the labour movement in 1917, challenging State Socialism. Eggleston, Hancock, Palmer, Childe, Mayo, Irvine and Portus were youthful participants in these debates; with the political defeat of the anti-statist currents in the 1920s, Cultural Liberalism absorbed the activities of these individuals. There was nowhere else to go.

For those Cultural Liberals who came to prominence before the war, the issue is more difficult. Perhaps it is the case, as Melleuish suggests, that Australia was 'born modern', and modernity and statism, in the Australian context, walked hand in hand. In any case, we may still profit from a reading of the second thoughts of a thoroughly modern nation-builder such as C.H. Pearson, whose *National Life and Character*, written in 1892, provides a rich reflection on the Australian predicament.

It blurred the identities of individual, society and state, leaving no conceptual space for civil society.

**RENEWAL:** If contemporary liberalism is to acquire a convincing foundation for social and political order, and renew its acquaintance with civil society, it would do well to examine the traditions of mutual aid and voluntary co-operation in this country, and review our 19th-century interest in the constitutional devices of citizen initiative, referendum and recall. Both will generate more valuable resources for the renovation of liberalism in our time than will a review of the tradition of Cultural Liberalism.

A similar observation may be made in relation to spirituality. Cultural Liberalism was characterized by a recognition that human beings possess a spiritual dimension, yet few of its exponents were intellectually orthodox, and fewer still were active participants in mainstream Christian churches. Theosophy held its attraction for many; even Bishop Burgmann was an unorthodox Platonist. For most of the Cultural Liberals, spirituality meshed all too easily with problematic notions of human and societal perfectibility.

In renewing itself, contemporary liberalism would do well to re-examine the radical orthodoxy of a Reinhold Niebuhr, with his insistence upon human imperfectibility and a radical dependence upon grace. In the end, as Michael Novak has noted of Niebuhr, this theological stance acts as a mighty safeguard against economic, environmental and scientific determinisms. It predisposes individuals and communities against placing faith in rationalism and then seeking refuge in utopianism when rationalism fails to deliver.

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**RENEWAL:**

**Derek Parker**

**Codename Downfall:**

*The Secret Plan to Invade Japan*

*by Thomas B. Allen and Norman Polmar*

Hodder Headline

**FIFTY** years after the end of the Second World War, an army of revisionist historians is hard at work. One of their central arguments is that in 1945 Japan was a beaten opponent, desperate to surrender, and that the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were a calculated atrocity, the opening shots in America’s cold war against the Russians.

Utter rubbish, say Allen and Polmar, in this comprehensive, detailed book. Historians rather than ideologues, they provide a wealth of data showing the extent to which the Japanese were prepared to repel an invasion, pointing out that suicide aircraft and boats were being built by the hundred, and even schoolchildren were being trained to make suicide attacks against American tanks.

**NO PEACE:** Neither was there any political desire for peace.
The first action of the Suzuki Government, installed after the fateful battle for the key island of Okinawa, was to jail hundreds of political figures who had discussed the possibility of an armistice. It began to adopt the rhetoric of national suicide, although Allen and Polmar believe that the goal of the Japanese military was to make the invasion so costly that the Allies would settle for a peace that would allow Japan to keep its conquered territories in mainland Asia.

The picture drawn by the statistics and the military documents is not one of a country willing to accept defeat, but of a tough regime ready to go down fighting. Even after the atomic bombs, a faction in the military argued against surrender, and even plotted a coup. Only personal intervention by the emperor ended further bloodshed.

An invasion would have been a huge undertaking, far more complex and dangerous than the invasion of Europe. The death toll would certainly have been over a million. The Americans, drawing on the experience of the battles of Saipan and Okinawa, believed (probably correctly) that civilians would fight just as hard as regular soldiers, and that few would allow themselves to be captured.

After a string of bloody battles across the Pacific and facing such daunting obstacles, it is no surprise that the chance of ending the war without further loss of Allied lives was grasped immediately, even desperately, by the American leaders. Several hundred thousand deaths is awful, but less awful than over a million. It is the fundamental point in this careful analysis of why a grim story was not a much worse one.

Derek Parker is a Melbourne-based writer and a frequent contributor to IPA Review.

DISMISSING THE MYTHS

R. J. Stove

A Radical Tory: Garfield Barwick's Reflections and Recollections by Sir Garfield Barwick

Federation Press

WHEN Leslie Stephen — with uncharacteristic optimism — announced that there was no such thing as a dull autobiography, he spoke as one fortunate enough to have escaped today's more dispiriting samples of the genre. He would surely not have been so sanguine had he been compelled to endure, for instance, the archetypal 'as told to' paperback: wherein some sports 'hero' (not previously noted for authorial activity far above the defacing of locker-room walls) grunts into a cassette-recorder for hours at a stretch.

Thank goodness, then, for a real memoir such as Sir Garfield Barwick's. Australian lawyers' reminiscences are apt to consist of mere self-justificatory plods through court appearances long forgotten except by themselves ("But easily the greatest of all my forensic triumphs came in the 1934 case of Rex v. Analgamated Pencil Sharpeners Inc."): whereas Sir Garfield's, in their unsensational manner, make fascinating and clearly-argued reading.

One of Sir Garfield's priorities has been to rebut David Marr, whose celebrated exercise in pulp-fiction Barwick was hitherto the sole widely-available account of its subject's career. Marr's more eccentric phantasms, any of which could have been avoided by the creatively-demeaning but uncontestably-honourable expedient of checking their verisimilitude with Sir Garfield himself, move their victim to a nicely disingenuous response: "Men in public life must accept, as I do, the slings and arrows of outrageous journalism but ought not to be subjected to factual error ... the writing of [Marr's] book was undertaken at the suggestion of its publishers as a 'quickie' which I understand to be a superficially written book for publication against some publicized event which might enhance its sale ... I quote from his Introduction: 'I began to write Sir Garfield's life with a single purpose: to pin on the man his responsibility for the crimes [sic] of 11 November 1975'; that is to say, that the book was not written as a record of fact but as a polemic to fulfil a slanderous intention."

HUMBLE ORIGINS: Though nothing will ever convince the Keating mentality that childhood indigence and devotion to conservative val-
ues can coexist, Sir Garfield’s own upbringing (like that of Menzies) was distinctly humble. Born in 1903 to a printer and his wife, young Garfield lived in Stanmore, a Sydney suburb which even with today’s exorbitant housing prices has not exactly become a monument to yuppiedom. Of Methodist background, he obtained numerous prizes — generally of books — in that church’s statewide examinations before winning a bursary to Fort Street Boys’ High, alma mater of James McAuley and H. V. Evatt. From his voracious youthful reading he learnt what might now be the most Politically Incorrect lesson of all:

“lack of money did not prevent the full use of what talents one possessed. Indeed, the strictures the lack of wealth imposed on me I have come to see as a blessing in disguise. Consequently I have never bemoaned my origins or my parents’ lack of capital or felt jealous of others whose parents have been better placed. Success has come from my own efforts, and there is an intrinsic satisfaction in that”.

To read this is to realize the true casualty of current pedagogical vandalism: not Gordon Gekko, who is rich enough and cynical enough to buy any sort of education that tickles him, but the bright bookish boy from the working or lower-middle classes. (Bright bookish girls of whatever social standing can always look to the affirmative action gynocracy.) In Sir Garfield’s adolescence such a boy, by means of winning scholarships, would have been launched towards whatever political, judicial, artistic or diplomatic eminence he craved. He was not obliged to endure the torment of his modern counterpart: trapped, till at least his early twenties, in secondary and tertiary ‘schooling’ which has as its whole basis the quaint notion that favouring elitism in any field but sport is ethically indistinguishable from shoving Jews into gas ovens.

IN PARLIAMENT: Already Sir Garfield was 51 when urged to contest the seat of Wentworth, and 55 when elected Liberal MHR for Parramatta. During the Depression’s depths he had admired Jack Lang; after Lang’s downfall he maintained cordial relations with Sir William McKell, J.J. Cahill and Jack Renshaw, while at no stage of his long life does he seem to have been living even on the same planet as Ayn Rand. (He devotes an entire chapter of this book to recounting his passionate and informed support for conservation, in the days before the troglodytes took control of that field.) But any socialist delusions he might once have entertained soon faded into ‘the light of common day’. Partly by the mere fact of having thought out his philosophy — a philosophy as hostile to America’s presidential panem et circenses as to Australia’s own class warfare — he never exemplified the culture of amateurism for which so many late-blooming Liberals have a depressing genius.

To some colleagues, however, he appeared recklessness personified. When he sought as Attorney-General to systematize Australia’s divorce legislation, older hands “expressed their sympathy and told me that it was likely to put an end to my political life ... buoyed by a novice’s ignorance, I felt undaunted”. It requires an almost skull-splitting mental effort to imagine a time when Australia’s church leaders upheld, rather than unctuously contributed to the wreckage of Christendom; yet A Radical Tory reminds us that in 1959 such was indeed the case. Melbourne’s Anglican Archbishop became so vexed at the new Attorney-General’s enthusiasm for the Matrimonial Causes Bill that he required Menzies’ firm assurance as to Sir Garfield’s own religious devotion and marital fidelity.

Among Sir Garfield’s lesser-known virtues in office was a complete refusal to stand for Fourth Estate slovenliness. He learnt this lesson the hard way as External Affairs Minister in 1962, when various off-the-record remarks that he uttered to newspapermen about Indonesia were given the screaming-headline treatment by Melbourne’s Herald (as it then was) the following day. Subsequently he turned for self-defence to his tape-recorder.

“The next time I was interviewed by a journalist there was a microphone on the table. The visitor called attention to it. I said, “That’s something that will always stand between you and me. I will never have an interview but that I have my own record of it”. The experience indicated to me that the press have no real sense of responsibility for the welfare of the country. Their interest is in scoops, exclusive interviews, and tragedies or disasters ...”
ON THE HIGH COURT: About his High Court days Sir Garfield says rather little, in the belief that describing his work there will thrill fellow lawyers more than what Daisy Ashford called The Mere People: “My work as a judge is to be found in the volumes of the Commonwealth Law Reports... there are few decisions of such public interest as to be worth mention here”. He nevertheless maintains a keen enough sense of the ridiculous — sharpened occasionally on what he currently sees as his own shortcomings; more often, and more promisingly, honed on the antics of Whitlam — to be highly informative in this part of his narrative also. Memorable above all is his account of being telephoned by Supergough, eager to announce Murphy’s High Court translation: “He said, and I recall his precise words, ‘Murphy has agreed to accept the appointment’. But he is neither competent nor suitable for the position”, I said. “But he managed to have the Family Law Act passed,” replied Whitlam. “That type of nonsense is likely to have realized.”

Afterwards it became, to put it crudely, a damn sight more insoluble: with first the shotgun marriage of Singapore and Malaysia, then that union’s annulment, and (for the decade’s ultimate party piece) the 1969 riots, which last example of heart-warmingly authentic multicultural dialogue left several hundred corpses blocking the streets of Kuala Lumpur.

His wisdom should commend itself to the Liberals’ more blatant present-day no-hopers, always prone to delude themselves about being able to ‘handle the media’. It appears never to have struck these Pollyannas that the only sure-fire method of ‘handling the media’ in 1995 is to ply its most typical representatives with bowls of Ratsak.

Let us hope, by the way, that Sir Garfield’s recollections of the early 1960s silence forever the mythomaniacs who continue to aver that Australia’s leaders never gave a Fourexx about Asia before the Beatific Vision of Whitlam’s cabinet. Sir Garfield’s own dealings with Tunku Abdul Rahman shed particularly unflattering lights on multicultural nonsense, for which Malaysia’s leader felt only scorn. You would not want the Tunku shooting his mouth off amid an SBS current-affairs panel designed to hymn cultural diversity. Or rather, you would want him, but SBS wouldn’t be crazy enough to have him. The White Australia Policy represented no discernible moral problem for him at all; on the contrary, the only thing it seems to have inspired in him was the question “Where can I get one just like it?” According to Sir Garfield, the Tunku, “understood Australia maintaining a European population: ‘Why should you have my insoluble problem? The problem of ethnic diversity is insoluble. I have Malays, Indians and Chinese and it is insoluble’.”

A Radical Tory’s title derives from Clyde Cameron’s verdict on its author. “He [Cameron] thinks of me,” Sir Garfield told PM listeners in 1991, “as the most Tory man he ever met who had strange radical ideas.” In his skill at thinking his way to the roots of political and statutory issues (a skill which necessarily soured him on modern manias for confusing legal practice with social work), Sir Garfield justified the appellation ‘radical’ with greater etymological completeness than Cameron is likely to have realized.

These recollections’ proof-reading is not of the finest; Federation Press’s copy-editor has not acquired sufficient French to render tour d’horizon correctly, sufficient grammar to avoid using ‘loathe’ as an adjective, or sufficient knowledge of postwar geopolitics to achieve the correct spelling of Indira Gandhi’s and Duncan Sandys’ names. By contrast, the index is well above average. Altogether, the publishing house which took A Radical Tory on (after Allen & Unwin permanently antagonized its author through its determination to inflict Marr’s screed on us a second time) deserves to be rewarded with sales as lively as is Sir Garfield’s own anecdotal style.

R. J. Stove, a Sydney writer and broadcaster, is currently completing a biography of César Franck.
Tall Green Tales edited by Jeff Bennett
A collection of essays by leading Australian physical and social scientists which exposes a number of myths and half-truths about environmental issues, including Greenhouse, recycling, species extinction and land degradation.
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Examines the recent history of Australian human rights legislation: in particular, the tension arising from the standard ‘centralist’ and ‘States’ rights’ positions, with solutions based on US experience.
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(Current Issues – Federalism Project, due for release January 1996)

Clouds in the Economic Sunshine by Des Moore
The perception that there have been only “five minutes of economic sunshine” since the 1990-91 recession is analyzed in this Backgrounder and found to have considerable validity.
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The Unions and Labor by Des Moore
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