

region—one at each election.

Drawing Senators from a smaller area within a State and being accountable to that area would go some way to restoring the original intent of the founding fathers for a strong State perspective to be present in the Federal Parliament without requiring any change to our proven institutions. This imperative to preserve our proven institutions underscored my support for an Australian head of state involving only minimal change to our Constitution. I still see, some time in the future, an Australian head of state providing a powerful and stabilizing symbol without detracting from our proud history and the stability of our institutions.

My last seven years working with the top end of town suggest to me that our capacity for risk-taking is fading. Our great entrepreneurial spirit is residing in fewer and fewer people. Perhaps

our self-belief is being eroded. The clamour for endless reporting, misplaced accountability and draconian regulations are choking the boldness of business and need a serious rethink. In my view, you cannot legislate for ethical behaviour. The values of a society and its institutions dictate acceptable ethical behaviour.

From the perspective of personal responsibility within the national and international context, I do expect that two types of security issues will dominate in the years ahead. The first is our national security. The world has changed dramatically since 9/11. Terrorists have declared war on us for ideological reasons of their own, and there is no easy way out of this conflict, which is not of our making. Appeasement is not an option. It will be a long fight, and we will need our traditional friends.

The second security issue is one of

personal security. My years of political observation have led me to understand very clearly that what the majority of Australians aspire to most is a secure life—put simply, food on the table, a job, a manageable mortgage, a holiday, a movie with the kids, an ability to exercise some choices. To this end, maintaining a strong economy is paramount. In particular, I would like to convey, especially to our young people, that true happiness and true freedom come from achievement—using whatever God-given talents we have to chart our own course, to take the consequences of our decisions, to have a go. If we do this, success and security will follow.

Andrew Robb is the Federal Liberal member for Goldstein, Victoria.

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Failing to Indoctrinate

Kevin Donnelly

Is education too politically correct and are students in danger of being indoctrinated? Judged by the actions of Professor Wayne Sawyer, President of the NSW English Teachers Association and editor of *English in Australia*, the answer is 'yes'.

In the current issue of the journal, Sawyer bemoans the fact that ex-students voted to re-elect the Howard Government and argues that this is evidence that English teachers have failed in their job.

Sawyer states: 'We knew the truth about Iraq before the election. Did our former students just not care? We knew before the election that 'children overboard' was a crock, but, as it was yesterday's news, did they not care about that either? Has English failed not only to create critical generations, but also failed to create humane ones?'

Such is the current state of English

teaching that it is possible for a senior representative of the subject's professional association, the AATE, to openly argue that it is the role of the English teacher to teach students, as future voters, the correct way to think and the correct way to decide controversial political matters.

In Sawyer's defence, he does make it clear that the editorial is only his opinion and that teachers in the classroom are balanced in their approach. Whether teachers, as a profession, are politically biased, is difficult to prove either way, but what is in no doubt is that professional associations, teacher unions and curriculum guidelines consistently adopt a left-wing, New Age approach to education.

One obvious example of political activism in the classroom is the call to arms made by the Australian Education Union and the NSW Teachers Federa-

tion in response to Australia's involvement in the war in Iraq. When the conflict began, teachers were told to protest against the war and to support those students who wanted to demonstrate publicly.

The AEU curriculum policy also argues that such is the capitalist nature of Australian society that our community is inherently inequitable and socially unjust. As the education system reinforces this inequality, it is the role of teachers to oppose competitive assessment, the academic curriculum and a belief in meritocracy and equality of opportunity.

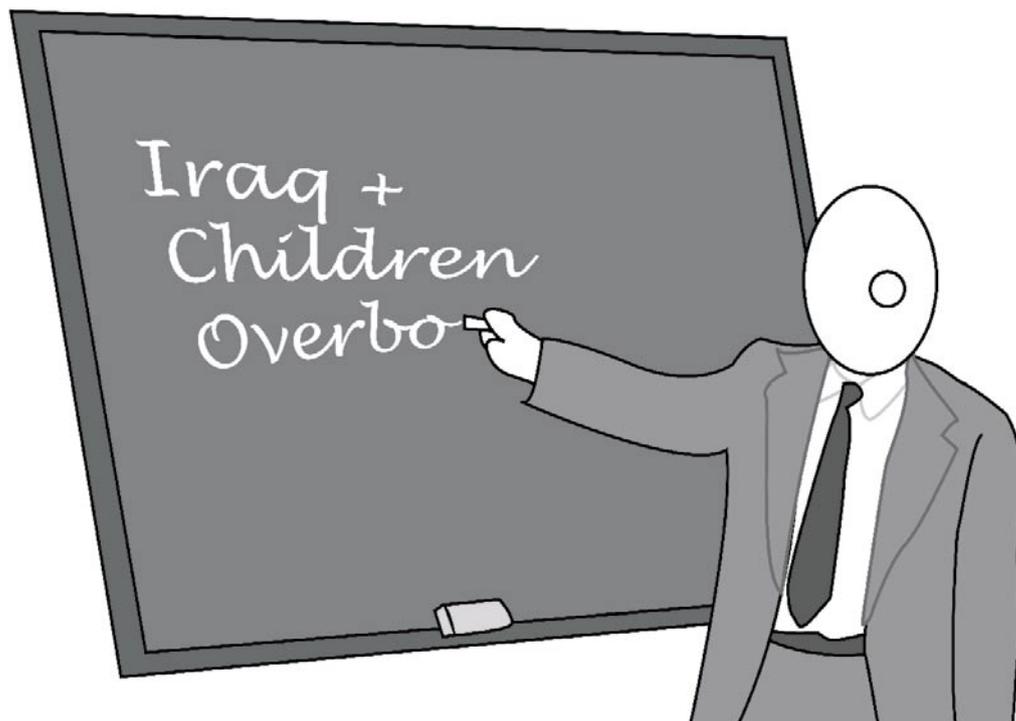
The English Teachers Association has for some years now championed what is termed social-critical literacy. Based on the writings of the Brazilian Marxist, Paulo Freire, the argument is that students must be 'empowered to deconstruct texts' in terms

of power relationships.

Or, in the words of the Tasmanian Education Department, social-critical literacy: '...provides us with ways of thinking that uncover social inequalities and injustices. It enables us to address disadvantage and to become agents of social change'.

If social literacy were taught in a balanced and objective way, there would be no concern, but the reality is that it is used to promote a left-wing, New Age view of issues, especially those related to multiculturalism, gender, peace studies, feminism and the class war.

As noted by the Monash-based teacher educator, Georgina Tsolidis, in her summary of teacher training during the 1980s and 1990s, the prevailing orthodoxy is essentially a political process where students are taught to be 'socially critical' and 'empowered' in order to enable them to 'challenge the status quo'. She argues:



The chilling fact is that the very fabric of a proud and fascinating culture, many thousands of years in the making, has been brought to its knees in less than 30 years by well-intentioned but seriously misguided policy.

Many of us cut our teaching teeth in a climate of advocacy related to student-centred pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. Freirian notions of empowerment have been the 'bread and butter' for those of us concerned with teaching, particularly teaching involving the 'Other'...

Our job was to produce young adults who would challenge the status quo through skills of critical inquiry. Within the classroom of the self-styled liberatory pedagogue there existed clear distinctions between the marginal and the mainstream.

English is not the only subject area targeted by the Left. When it was re-

leased in 2000, such was the public concern about the bias in the Queensland Study of Society and the Environment (SOSE) syllabus that the government was forced to initiate an inquiry.

Whereas education was once based on the assumption that there are some absolutes (objectivity and the disinterested pursuit of truth), in the brave new world of the Queensland curriculum, students are told that everything is 'tentative' and 'shifting' and that the purpose of education is to criticise mainstream society in terms of what has become the new trinity of gender, ethnicity and class.

Thus, students are told that they must 'develop the ability to critically analyse social structures that unjustly disadvantage some individuals or

groups'. Forget that Australian championed such egalitarian measures as the eight-hour day, the conciliation and arbitration system and votes for women.

Thankfully, there are many teachers who teach in a professional and balanced way. Unfortunately, their standing in the community is often undermined by professional associations and teacher academics more attuned to the elites than to those at the chalkface.

Dr Kevin Donnelly, Director of Education Strategies and author of Why Our Schools are Failing, is a former Chief of Staff to Minister Kevin Andrews.

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