

From the Editor

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MR Stuart Littlemore has put beyond doubt the question of bias, staff capture and poor standards within the ABC.

His entire programme of Monday 9 April 2001 on ABC-TV was devoted to an attack on the IPA and its recent conference, *Their ABC or Our ABC?* Littlemore's report stands as a classic example of jackboot journalism designed to silence critics.

The Conference brought together people from a wide range of political and professional perspectives, including people with a great deal of knowledge of, and commitment to, the ABC. It took a constructive approach, providing detailed evidence of the lack of balance in the ABC and what might sensibly be done about it.

One of the speakers was Keith Mackriell, whose talk at the conference is reproduced on pages 10–12 of this issue. Keith is a strong supporter of the ABC, having spent most of his working life with the organization—including ten years as Head of ABC Radio. Indeed, six of the ten speakers were, or are, currently employed by, or contracted to, the ABC and have collectively clocked up over 90 years with the organization. Yet, Littlemore dismissed them as the 'usual coterie of harmless duffers'.

Not surprisingly, the Conference received extensive press coverage—with the exception of the ABC—as the issues raised and the calibre of the speakers were clearly newsworthy.

What was Littlemore's response? Lies, distortion, libel and character assassination designed to inflict maximum damage to the IPA's credibility, reputation and funding.

He lied about our support base; he lied about our purpose and approach; and he lied about our position on key issues. He accused us of being money-eyed, right-wing propagandists. He related us to Hitler. [The transcript of



the Littlemore programme together with our detailed critique are available at www.ipa.org.au]

What was the ABC's response? It stuck by its man. The IPA made a formal complaint to Jonathan Shier, the Managing Director of the ABC. The ABC replied that it is '...satisfied that the program presented appropriate comment within the context of its brief'.

Littlemore's approach to us is not unique, indeed it is his standard fare. The week after he did a number on us, because we dared question 'his' ABC, he did a number on the Australian Democrats' new leader Senator Stott-Despoja. His actions were again aggressive, abusive, and self-serving. His apparent motivation was that he did not like the leadership transition in the party from left-wing baby-boomers (like him) to the generation-X (like her).

The fact that the ABC even allows Littlemore and Co. on the air with a programme of this format brings into question its ethical and journalistic standards. That ABC management gives them unquestioned support—even when confronted with clear evidence of gross misconduct—proves that the organization is seriously flawed.

We have made a complaint to the ABC's Independent Complaints Review Panel. We wait to see whether it warrants its name.

On a more positive note, the ABC has announced that it will shortly introduce a 'right of reply' programme on which the IPA will have an opportunity to appear. It is also worth noting that Gail Jarvis, Director of Television, who was responsible for commissioning the Littlemore programme, and who defended it against our complaints, has resigned, in part, over this incident.

Now to another depressing topic—the slouch from freedom and reason.

In the early 1980s, Australia began to adopt a new national vision, one based on the belief that the best path to prosperity lay with a free and open economy.

Of course, Australia was not alone. Indeed, most countries have at least flirted with economic freedom and many have embraced it.

As I outline in 'Prospering from Freedom's Riches' (page 3–4), the pursuit of economic freedom has not only resulted in higher incomes and faster growth, but also in less corruption and a higher quality of life. The benefits of a free economy are also discussed by John Hyde in his review of a new booklet from the Chamber of Commerce of Western Australia entitled *In Support of Free Enterprise*. And as a recent study by the Commonwealth Treasury shows (see Jim Hoggett's 'Global Poverty and Inequality', on page 5) the benefits have not come at the cost of higher poverty or greater disparity of incomes.

The political pendulum is now clearly moving away from freedom both here and abroad (see Tom Switzer 'Economic Nationalism: It's Back to the Future', pages 6–7; and Alan Moran 'The Pendulum Swings', pages 8–9). The swing is being driven by a number of forces, including a strong yearning for the 'good old days', the fragmentation of politics, and a return of old foes in new battle-dress and with new strategies.

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