

BRIEFINGS

Moonlight Media

The hype preceding the release of Queensland's long-awaited Fitzgerald Report seemed to confirm that any expectation of change in the media's role in the Deep North's politics was ill-founded. It was billed as the event of the year - all television stations and ABC radio mounted live coverage - and it is significant that all media found it difficult to cope when Commissioner Tony Fitzgerald failed to provide a simple solution: a list of the culprits would have been enough!

Perhaps the fact that a number of people are now before the court on charges arising from the inquiry will appease most. But, in his report Fitzgerald acknowledged the role played by the media in the corruption of the Queensland system. In the aftermath, perhaps predictably, this crucial element has been effectively buried in the barrage of information which has pointed the finger at everyone - except the Fourth Estate.

Fitzgerald trod a finely-balanced path with the media throughout the inquiry: journalists were 'on balance' helpful, but the commissioner identified a high level of ignorance of the law - confusion over the different between direct evidence and hearsay, for one - and criticised (although ignoring) the many defamatory statements published, and the contempts committed, during the two-year inquiry. Subjects of Fitzgerald Inquiry allegations, along with some

lawyers, influenced journalists to mis-report events. Other allegations, based on rumour or misinformation from sources opposed to the commission's work, surfaced in both local print media in Queensland - *The Courier Mail* and *The Sun*. By the nature of Queensland journalism the issues were dutifully taken up by the electronic media, virtually without questioning the sources. Fitzgerald accused the media of showing "insufficient or reasoned media analysis of the Commission's work" and he argued that most criticism was ill-considered and based on misconceptions. But he went much further, accusing some "damaging" reports of being "blatant propaganda" with some creating unrealistic community expectations or eroding public support for the inquiry. The irony is that the media played a part in the setting up of the Fitzgerald Inquiry - chiefly through the efforts of Chris Masters' *Four Corners* expose, and a series of articles in *The Courier-Mail* by Phil Dickie - and equally, played a part in the growth of corruption.

Fitzgerald singled out "journalists' uncritical dependence on their sources, orchestrated government leaks and the operations of public-funded government media units and press secretaries" as responsible for having contributed to the media becoming a dependent mouthpiece for vested interests.

Of course, such observations are nothing new and those who are surprised by Fitzgerald's modest findings are deluding themselves. Although the precise relationship between media and audience is problematic, media influence on swaying public opinion is generally acknowledged - especially when media are the only sources of information available. For years, the Queensland media have been accused of failing to take control of the news they cover and of being manipulated by establishment sources.

Recent revelations have linked Queensland Newspapers' managing editor Ron Richards with former Queensland Police Commissioner Terry Lewis - the two have been friends for years. Lewis, now before the court on corruption and perjury charges, was able to convince Richards of the need to publish the top cop's exclusive story. Richards has not confirmed or denied that Lewis was paid \$30,000 for the series of articles. It was one of several

articles published in *The Courier-Mail* which appeared to favour Lewis' position - "an ordinary journalistic exercise" Richards has claimed. Bjelke-Petersen's efficient media management by his former press secretary, Allan Callaghan - recently released from prison on fraud charges - is often cited by journalists as a compelling reason why it took so long for a program such as *The Moonlight State* to be broadcast nationally.

Conveniently missing are explanations which recognise the high level of self-censorship among journalists, and their unquestioned reliance on government handouts and leaks - it was common knowledge in state political reporting that self-confessed tax cheat and former Queensland Cabinet Minister Don Lane was a key source of state cabinet leaks ... his nickname was 'the tap'. For years, a publicly-funded political propaganda program for the National Party, called *Queensland Unlimited*, was broadcast on commercial television throughout the state. Few journalists bothered to question its costs - more than \$1 million a year - or its message. It was laughingly referred to as the *Joh Show* - a harmless product of good old Joh. A joke.

How many times were Bjelke-Petersen's predictable 15-second retorts published and referred to as "classic Joh", apparently regardless of the need to seek answers to pressing political questions? How often did journalists - particularly television and radio journalists - get together to decide on a questioning strategy with the elusive Premier instead of slugging out individual egos at a convenient (for Bjelke-Petersen) all-in news conference? It was all part of the journalism culture which grew in parallel with other forms of institutionalised corruption.

Sources are vital for journalists, with the constraints of deadlines, few resources and often unsupportive management - particularly in Australia which boasts one of the most concentrated systems of media ownership in the developed world. This may partly explain why there is so much reliance on public relations handouts in Australian journalism.

For too many journalists, a slick, apparently well-researched news release - whether hard copy, audio or video - is much easier to process than making a

dozen or so telephone calls to verify the information or even to reveal another aspect of the story not quite so complimentary to the particular source involved.

The Australian Journalists Association has so far failed to come to grips with the formidable task of tackling professional education of its members. The association is under-funded, under-resourced and barely able to keep up with industrial matters. A 10-clause *Code of Ethics* for journalists is vague and contradictory and is seldom, if ever, found pinned on the walls of newsrooms. Journalism education addresses many of these issues but the

socialisation process within newsrooms is a powerful neutralising force. The agenda followed by journalists in Queensland has been - and will continue to be - essentially that set by the government propaganda machine. The Queensland government - not alone in this - employs more than 100 journalists to ensure the media get the right message across. And it does this very well.

The lack of self-awareness displayed by the Queensland media means that the prospect for change is grim. Information relating to criticism of the media's role in the Queensland corruption system has itself effectively been shielded from public scrutiny - a few passing

references (mainly by ABC radio) hardly constitute a serious examination. There is an almost obsessive desire to secrete media processes behind the hallowed veil of editorial interference. Already, the media are beginning to lose interest in repeated calls for reform of electoral, criminal justice and administrative systems in Queensland. And the very structure of Queensland culture demands that the media, for so long either unwilling or unable to analyse their position, will inevitably continue to represent the dominant ideological viewpoint at the expense of responsible and much-needed reform.

Michael Meadows

Left in the Limelight

On the last weekend in July the Sydney media were given an ideal opportunity for a light article. Two conferences at the same place and time - one to discuss yet another united Green Party, the other to launch yet another Left party. The *Sydney Morning Herald* didn't miss the chance and ran twin photos of half a dozen identically grouped people from the two conferences.

The photocap which followed showed something of the media's preoccupations. Greens and the environment, after all, are in the news. And so three quarters of the caption reported their familiar concerns, while the launch of a New Left Party got a couple of tentative paragraphs.

Those who are exercised by images might have read something rather more interesting into the stagey photographs that dominated the article. The New Left Party group in particular may have been a surprise; first because its central figure was Aboriginal, and second, because at least two of its five were women.

It may not be too surprising that a left party today is acutely conscious of the need to dispel the caricatures of socialists as a group of dour, middle

aged male union leaders. It may be a little more surprising that a left group showed itself to be quite as aware as it was of using all mediums to project a message, rather than relying on the laborious mechanisms of conference declarations and press statements.

Of course, it is impossible to predict whether the new party will make the passage to robust political maturity over the next few years. The ailments of political infancy are legion. But there can be very little doubt about the impressiveness of its initial base. Although attendance at the launch was restricted to those who had endorsed its initial statement, and so it was deprived of the usual padding of interested on-lookers, and although few interstate signatories could make it to Sydney, 400 people attended. And an interesting group it was too.

Political groups seem to spring up in one of two ways. Either there is a groundswell of grassroots enthusiasm with little or no participation of people in positions of political influence (and here I am not considering the occasional imported superstar), or they are declared from on high by a handful of political leaders. The New Left Party launch was almost unique in its mix of the two groups. There was no shortage of people with long political histories and in most cases considerable political influence in their areas of work. This

was by no means restricted to those who spoke at the opening session (before the conference got down to two days of more practical work), but they are a good indication.

The spread of conference participants was impressive. Perhaps most important, it joined together people with years of political experience in a number of political parties and across a range of areas with others whose commitment to a new party is simply their disenchantment with Australian politics today. Half the participants are currently not members of any party and come from more diverse areas of work than might be expected. No doubt the majority were trade unionists. But a very large number were from the community welfare sector; and there were plenty of environmentalists, peace activists and some Aboriginal people.

All up, the launch presented a group of people from across Australia which promised a party with both the breadth and depth that will clearly be needed if a major new voice for the left is to appear. But appear to do what?

There is no doubt that there were a number of different answers to this from participants. Some of the hopes were imported from the variety of political backgrounds which have gone into the mix that makes up the new party. Many ex-ALP members are anxious for an electoral party along the lines of the best of the left of the ALP. Some members of the Communist Party (CPA), and of the Association of Communist Unity (ACU) want a reinvigorated marxist party which arrests the fragmentation and decline of existing mainstream socialist parties. In between these there

is a large group - some from existing parties, some non-aligned activists - who want to combine the strength and experience of the labour movement with the interests, approaches and activism of the widest range of social movements in a new mix and a new kind of party.

One wouldn't have to be too cynical to see this as a recipe for conflict and disaster. Unless there is an unprecedented willingness to understand other perspectives, to include objectives which are unfamiliar and, most of all, to make a realistic assessment of what can be achieved and when (without ruling out future objectives), the party can only tear itself apart.

But against all the odds, the auguries were good. The tearing apart might have begun at the conference (as it did at the attempted launch of the Charter process in Melbourne two years ago) when for the first time the competing interests gathered together en masse. But it didn't.

One event stands out - perhaps as a symbol - measuring this new spirit. At the request of the women's caucus a majority of the men attending the conference also met together to discuss is-

ues raised by women participants. Significantly, it wasn't just the inner city 'new men' who attended this group. One leading trade unionist and leading figure in a traditional party was overheard to say that his credibility depended on being at the meeting, and his subsequent contribution was constructive and to the point.

There were no conversions on the road to Damascus. All the predictable complaints about workshop discussion, 50 percent representation of women on party bodies and the request that sexual politics be discussed were voiced in a style more like traditional union meetings than anything seen elsewhere in the conference. But there were also remarkable examples of lifelong communists and blue collar unionists smashing all the stereotypes as they argued passionately that unless the demands of women members were met the party would not be worth having. And there was an overwhelming commitment to continue such meetings.

As an example of forms of organisation the conference itself largely failed. Many workshop discussions fed into nothing, and those that were meant to, sometimes went badly awry. It is true

that the discussions were largely intended to contribute to and provide a framework for the process of policy and platform development in the months leading up to a foundation conference early next year. But it was hard to escape the feeling that while the party was clear *what* it wanted to achieve, far too little thought had gone into *how* to achieve it.

Perhaps the greatest disappointment of the conference comes down to this. The final plenary was intended to finalise the Statement of Intention, discussed in earlier workshops, which was to announce the work of the party in coming months. Most agree that this plenary was something of a disaster, although a statement was agreed with overwhelming support.

There's no doubt it was an unfortunate way to end. But at the same time it wasn't an ending. It was only the beginning of months of work to hammer out the forms of a new party. And it might be just as well that the participants didn't leave with a rosy illusion that it's all in the bag.

Adam Farrar

Liberty and Death

The tragic murders of Kanak leaders Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Yéinene Yéinene back in May was a big setback for the Kanak independence movement. At its congress in September, the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS) will have a good deal of rebuilding to do. The significance of the assassinations for the Kanak struggle was, however, all but obscured by an inept coverage in the overseas media.

In France and Australia, most media coverage of the assassinations presented the issue as a clash between 'moderates' and 'extremists' within the independence movement - with hints, or even outright accusations, that the assassin Djubelli Wea was part of a con-

spiracy supported by outside forces. Early reports named Wea as a member of the *Front Uni de Liberation Kanak* (FULK), a small party which has consistently opposed the Matignon agreement, and has gained international notoriety for its contacts with Libya. In fact, Djubelli Wea was not a FULK member. In the 1970s he had supported the *Union Multiraciale*, a party led by FULK leader Yann Celene Uregei, which broke away from *Union Caledonienne* and campaigned for independence from France. More recently, he had been a member of *Palika*, the second largest party in the FLNKS.

The neat media portrayal of Union Caledonienne as the moderates of the FLNKS, challenged by 'Libyan-backed extremists' of FULK or the marxist Palika, does not correspond with a more complex reality. The marxist leaders of Palika have often called for the use of non-violent mobilisations, realising that the balance of forces does not favour armed struggle against thousands of armed French troops. FULK has also sometimes opposed FLNKS 'active' boycotts. It was the UC

general secretary Eloi Machoro who first accompanied Yann Celene Uregei to Libya in 1984 to raise the stakes in the campaign against France. The November 1984 electoral boycott was symbolised by Machoro smashing a ballot box with an axe, a photo that flashed around the world making Machoro a target for the French authorities who shot him down in 1985.

The leader of the group who took French hostages in 1988 was Alphonse Dianou, the youth leader of UC. Dianou, who had studied theology in Fiji, was a key organiser of the September 1987 balloon protest when men, women and children armed with balloons had rallied peacefully in Noumea's central square only to be ruthlessly beaten by French police. All members of the FLNKS have endorsed and practised a range of tactics, and Tjibaou, sometimes dubbed the 'Gandhi of the South Pacific', has also supported 'muscular mobilisations'.

One doesn't have to look to Libya or 'outside forces' to see how Kanak activists could have been forced to take up arms, nor to see how Djubelli Wea

could be driven to the tragic assassination of his own leaders. The legacy of bitterness on Ouvea - site of the massacre of nineteen Kanaks in May 1988 - was context enough for Wea's desperate act. Many Kanaks feel pushed to violence by the intransigence of the French authorities and the settler population. Jean-Marie Tjibaou was capable of calling for calm and negotiations even after two of his brothers were among the ten Kanaks massacred by settlers in December 1984. Others saw the threat and reality of colonial violence as justifying their own resistance, yet the FLNKS has always tried to reach out to the 'victims of history', those long-term residents of Kanaky from other communities who must be won over if independence is to be achieved.

The FLNKS is a coalition of different interests and histories. At its founding congress in September 1984, the FLNKS brought together five political parties, a trade union confederation, a women's group and other supporters from church, land rights and human rights organisations.

Union Caledonienne remains the largest party in the coalition. A driving force in its foundation was Maurice Lenormand, a European sympathetic to Kanak aspirations who was elected to the National Assembly in Paris in 1951. Lenormand gained much of his support from associations created by the Catholic and Protestant churches which brought Kanaks and sympathetic whites together, and provided the Kanak population with an opening into territorial politics when UC was formed in 1953. It was not until the late 1970s, when others had called for independence and the territory had polarised, that UC adopted a program supporting independence from France.

Palika (*Parti de Liberation Kanak*) is another mainstay of the FLNKS. Palika had its origins in the militant student movement of the late 1960s, the *Foulards Rouges* (Red Scarves), founded by Nidoish Naisseline, the son of a *grand-chef* from Mara, one of the Loyalty Islands. From the outset, the Foulards Rouges and other activist organisations like *Groupe 1878* focussed on independence rather than autonomy and had a preference for direct action.

FULK and the *Union Progressiste Melanesienne* (UPM) are two offshoots of UC. Veteran independence leader

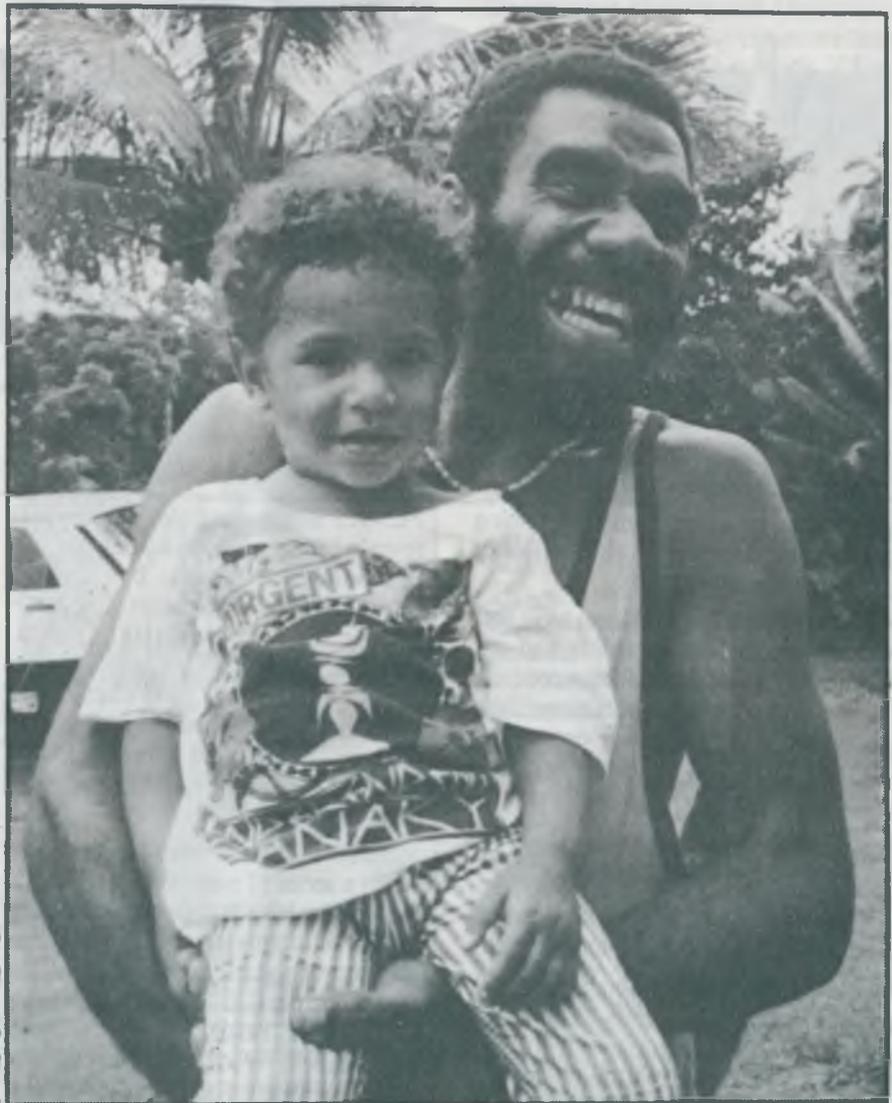


Photo: Carlotta McIntosh

Smiling faces in Canala, Kanaky, earlier this year - there are fewer smiles now

Yann Celene Uregei broke away from UC in 1970 to call for independence from France, and FULK and UPM, though small, are the base for a number of key activists in the wider movement. Other small formations in the FLNKS are the *Parti Socialiste Caledonien* (later the *Parti Socialiste de Kanaky*, PSK) involving a number of European and Caldoche activists; the *Union des Syndicats des Travailleurs Kanaks et Exploites* (USTKE, the Confederation of Kanak and Exploited Workers Unions); and the small feminist organisation *Groupe des Femmes Kanakes et Exploitees en Lutte* (GFKEL: the Group of Kanak and exploited women in struggle).

All these groups are signatories to the FLNKS Charter which defines the aim of the movement as Kanak Socialist Independence.

The strength of the independence movement has been its capacity to

mobilise the Kanak population and other opponents of French rule, creating new tactics and structures which meld Kanak culture and tradition with new ideologies of Christianity and socialism, nationalism and internationalism, custom and modernity.

The movement has long relied on traditions of direct action, with land occupations, boycotts of alcohol or French businesses, barricades and protests. It has also created independent institutions, which have been recognised as 'indispensable structures' of the FLNKS: the local struggle committees; Kanak popular schools which teach the history and languages of the country rather than French culture; new media, like the newspaper *Bwenando*, or radio stations Djiido, Kenu and Mara which challenge the rightwing domination of Noumea and Parisian information services; a network of co-operatives, which offer an alternative to commerce

Photo: Carlotta McIntosh



controlled by large European trading companies, and provide an example of self-managed enterprises.

These alternative structures have suffered from a lack of funds and experience, but have provided a concrete example of popular mobilisation. Their dispersed and grassroots nature has caused vital and dynamic tensions within the movement, more significant than so-called splits between 'moderate' and 'radical' elements. There has been a constant tension between managing these Kanak-controlled initiatives, and 're-entering the colonial institutions'. When they gained control of three of the four regions established under the 1985 Fabius reforms, FLNKS cadres occupied key positions in the new regional structures of administrative power and economic development. Such structures can share resources and serve a welfare function for the rural population. But working through the institutions is time-consuming; they are not always properly regulated; the flow of information is not always adequate and the effect of strong personalities or customary authority can threaten collective democratic control. The Fabius regions were effectively dismantled when the conservative Chirac government gained power in March 1986. Now the new provinces pose the same opportunities and challenges.

Many FLNKS activists see control of local institutions as vital, providing a link between people in the tribes and the administration in Noumea, and Paris. In last March's municipal elections the pro-independence forces won a majority on twenty of thirty-two municipal councils, increasing their vote at the expense of the RPCR over the previous 1983 result. Despite the

FLNKS advances, the municipals revealed some tensions among the pro-independence forces: by running separate tickets, some areas with a pro-independence majority (Poum, Ouegoa, Iles des Pins) failed to win control of councils, and there were some rumblings when the UC gained mayoral positions with the support of the RPCR rather than other pro-independence activists.

Those tensions were exacerbated when a series of meetings were held in the Loyalty Islands to discuss the run-up to the June provincial elections. Participants or observers came from all the smaller parties (USTKE, FULK, Palika, LKS, UPM, Partie Federale d'Opao, and Djubelli Wea from Ouvea), and there was discussion about the formation of a 'Front anti-neocolonialiste' for the June elections. The meeting could not forge a common purpose, with FULK maintaining its anti-Matignon stand of boycotting the provincials, and other groups refusing to form alliances with centrist groups like Opao. But the perception of an 'anti-UC' bloc lingers, especially after the killings of Tjibaou and Yeiwene. These tensions were exacerbated when UC members challenged activists from FULK and USTKE (as at the funeral service in Noumea, when a strong USTKE delegation wishing to present custom to the dead leaders was turned away by angry UC members).

The June 11 provincial elections have set the direction for the next year.

FULK's call for an active boycott did not eventuate, and a joint FLNKS ticket (with activists from UC, Palika, UPM and PSK) won a majority in the northern and islands provinces. With disarray and disagreement between the National Front and the Caledonian Front on the

extreme Right, the RPCR won a majority in the southern province. However, the RPCR failed narrowly to gain an absolute majority on the Territorial Congress which links councillors from the three largely autonomous provinces. There will have to be ongoing discussions, not only with the FLNKS but other communities. One significant sign was the two seats won by the *Union Oceanienne*, a party supported by the Wallisian community. Traditionally supporters of the Right, the immigrant and guestworker communities from Tahiti and Wallis see the Matignon process passing them by. This election marks a small emergence of these communities as independent players who will ultimately have to decide on their commitment to an independent Kanaky.

The challenge of the FLNKS within the provinces is to see if it can use the institutions of administration to advance the economic and social development of the Kanak people, as part of the transition to independence. One year of direct rule from Paris has seen little if any change for people in the villages, while the capital Noumea bustles with the construction of new apartment blocks and tourist centres, legacy of the last few years of government generosity. The FLNKS has plans to review the provincial system next year and in 1992. It is tragic that Jean-Marie Tjibaou and Yeiwene Yeiwene will not participate in the process they set in train, but for supporters of the independence struggle, the need for solidarity is even greater. Despite disension within the FLNKS, the Kanak people and other supporters of independence are still campaigning for the right to determine their own future.

Nic McLellan

Stumped!

The proposition that English cricket could deteriorate seems ludicrous at first glance. After the Aussies regained the Ashes 3-0, the notion that playing standards could fall any further appeared untenable. The Fifth Test result proves however that they could, and have.

England's defeat is not entirely without honour though. The announcement that some of the team's most experienced players are going on a rebel tour to South Africa led to the Test and County Cricket Board (TCCB - English cricket's governing body) dropping the rebel tourists from the side for the remainder of the Australian tour.

It might seem that Gatting, Foster, Emburey, Broad and the others are no great loss, given their performance so far this tour but, when you're as hard-up as England, even losing the barrel-scraps is a disaster.

The Fifth Test showed that, without its defectors, England no longer has a team of Test standard. It resembles Australia's team in the early 1980's - after Packer, and after Kim Hughes had led Aussie rebels off to South Africa.

The first clue that a rebel tour was imminent came when certain players announced that they 'wouldn't be available' for the England tour of the West Indies during the next northern winter. The riddle was solved during the Fourth Test, when the rebel tour was declared and Gatting was revealed as its captain.

Mike Gatting has had an unhappy couple of years. He wasn't a successful captain and his stand-up row with Pakistani umpire Shakoora Rana, in Faisalabad, ended with the TCCB forcing him to apologise publicly. And then he was sacked as England captain half way through the West Indies tour, after losing his trousers to a barmaid.

It's not then surprising that Gatting should feel like taking a very highly paid holiday in South Africa. A figure of over \$500,000 for two seasons has been mentioned. And he must have greeted the TCCB's demand - that the



Photo: John Fairfax & Sons

*Another England Wicket?
No, just Mike Gatting trying to justify the rebel English cricket tour.*

rebel tourists "first loyalty should be to English cricket" - with derision.

However Gatting's appearance on the political wicket was no more convincing than his sporting performance. He arrived at the moral crease claiming to "know very little about apartheid". (Where does the man live? In a box?) The clumsiness of this defensive stance was clear after only a few minutes. Gatting knocked the ball straight into the air and was soon walking back to the dressing room, caught at Silly Right On.

Even more bizarre developments followed. The chairperson of the apartheid selectors, Margaret Thatcher, sent Colin Moynihan, her Minister for Sport, in to bat. He crouched at the crease, pleading with the rebels not to go. But Thatcher's vociferous opposition to sanctions, and the procession of South African dignitaries she's invited to visit her, put her lads on a very sticky wicket when sportsmen succumb to the lure of the Kruggerand.

Thatcher's gone into bat for Pretoria at every Commonwealth Heads of

Government Meeting and Moynihan's appearance at the moral crease resulted, not surprisingly, in a duck. Clean bowled.

The brief appearance of South African cricket boss, Dr Ali Bacher, was even less impressive. He's never looked comfortable facing the ANC's fast bowling.

His first shot was to point out that the rebel tourists would be doing some coaching in the Black townships during the tour - the equivalent to the one-day stroke known as the 'windy waft', where the player closes both eyes and waves the bat hopefully, somewhere outside off-stump.

Next ball, he claimed that South African cricket was racially integrated. This was the diplomatic equivalent of the 'Gower nibble' - a little half-hearted pat at the ball that was caught effortlessly by the anti-apartheid slips cordon. Ali Bacher, dismissed for another duck.

Last man in was Australian commentator Richie Benaud. A stylish player and very quick on his feet, Benaud wasn't going to fall into the trap of trying to defend apartheid, no more than he'd hook with two men out on the long-leg boundary. Benaud confined himself to a tight forward defensive stroke, claiming that the International Cricket Conference (ICC) had snubbed the South African authorities by not giving them an opportunity to present their case for readmission to world cricket, thus forcing them to go poaching.

The TCCB, said Benaud, should have got the South Africans an invitation to the ICC. Bacher's team were in Britain at the TCCB's invitation, so Benaud's point is like telling someone who's been burgled that it's their own fault for offending the burglars; they should have been invited in and told to help themselves.

It was an inventive stroke but it did him no good; the umpires judged his argument LBA (Liked By Afrikaners) and Benaud was back in the pavilion.

All in all a disappointing day's play. The MCC (Mercenary Cash Cricketers) will have to pick some better players next time, and if they're looking for talent England is the last place they should look.

Jim Endersby