WHAT HAPPENED TO THE DEBT?
LINDSAY TANNER ON WILLS
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PROBLEM POLICE
SUPERMARKET SHOPPING
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The fact that this was a by-election is important. The natural advantage that party machines enjoy over independents—money, resources, and full-time staff—were minimised.

This was accentuated by Cleary’s late entry into the race; after fighting a phoney war for several weeks, the ALP and Liberals were left flat-footed by the late emergence of a high profile candidate fighting on real issues. Both major parties seemed to take an inordinate length of time to realise that a Cleary victory was a distinct possibility and were ultimately reduced to hollowcries of “an independent member won’t be able to fix unemployment in Wills”. Perhaps the voters were smart enough to realise that no member for Wills, be they party member or independent, can be anything more than completely peripheral to what happens to unemployment: national and international factors overwhelmingly determine that outcome.

The successful candidate is also unusual. Phil Cleary has a much broader appeal than the vast majority of would-be independent parliamentarians. He appeals to the politically aware minority because he is an articulate and intelligent person with a well-developed worldview. He also appeals to the unaware because he is a current local sporting hero who is very well known in the electorate and outside it. With the Liberals tagging him as a “Labor stooge”, Hawke describing him as a “good bloke”, and the Labor camp not really seriously attacking him, what reason did an ordinary Labor voter have for not voting for Phil Cleary?

The Wills electorate is also unusual. It is based on one of the very few municipalities in the country that has a lengthy tradition of independent Labor MPs. Many political activists and disillusioned ex-Labor members live in or near the electorate. Wills incorporates much of the Brunswick municipality, currently governed by one of the most leftwing councils in Australia. And Wills has suffered the consequences of ‘economic rationalism’ much more than most electorates.

The role of unemployment in the election has been a fraction inflated. It was obviously a dominant theme in all major candidates’ campaigns, but I doubt very much whether by itself it was a dominant determinant of voter behaviour. If the ALP simply shrugs its shoulders and writes off the result as a response to very high regional unemployment, it will be making a very serious mistake: unemployment was part of a broader patchwork of issues.

In fact, the vote for Phil Cleary was a rejection of almost everything the ALP now seems to stand for. In particular, it was a rejection of the party’s recently acquired born-to-rule mentality. It was a rejection of arrogance; a rejection of smart operators adept at electoral manipulation but light on substance; a rejection not only of ‘economic rationalism’ but also of the managerial/technocratic mentality which allows contemporary Labor to embrace that alien philosophy. It is not so much specific Labor policies that have alienated the electorate: it is a general sense of what Labor has become. Phil Cleary won because he was ‘one of us’, a fighter who stood for something, and a down-to-earth character light years removed from the slick real estate agent parody that is all too common in the major parties.

Twice this year—in Tasmania and Wills—the ALP has polled less than 30% of the vote in areas where it has traditionally dominated. Although there are many unusual features in Phil Cleary’s win unlikely to be reflected elsewhere, it is sobering to reflect that Cleary didn’t just win: he bolted home by the length of the straight. He could have handed back 6 or 7% of his 34% to Labor and still won. Despite the tentative signs of movement away from the appalling Labor culture of the 80s, which are inherent in One Nation, and Paul Keating’s forays into republicanism, the ALP remains in a very precarious position.

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How then does Hun Sen differ from his predecessors? How is he similar? What kind of national leader does Hun Sen wish to be in the eyes of his citizens?

Clearly, he cannot expect the popular, subject-to-ruler veneration that Sihanouk continues to enjoy. Even after two decades of social upheaval, royalist nationalism remains a force in Cambodia especially among the older generations. Cambodia's strong tradition of oral history means that veneration of royalty is passed on to the younger generations. Hun Sen clearly recognises the significance of royalist nationalism and has pursued every opportunity to align himself with Sihanouk. So far, he is in a good position to gain from Sihanouk's popularity.

For many years Hun Sen depended on the Communist Party and his administration for political support. Now, however, he has distanced himself from the party which has lately come under the unchallenged control of conservative Chea Sim. Student protests in Phnom Penh have revealed the startling dissipation of the Phnom Penh administration. State assets have been entirely sold off to private interests by renegade bureaucrats. Yet Hun Sen's inaction in the face of these events indicates serious shortcomings in his political authority. His popular credibility has also been harmed by evidence of corruption within his own family network.

With recent institution of the Supreme National Council (SNC) as the peak ruling body in Cambodia, representatives from each faction—and therefore of each past tradition of Cambodian nationalism—are in Phnom Penh vying for their share of political influence. Hun Sen, while positioned carefully by Sihanouk's side, is forced to deal with the current political malaise from the position of a politician with a rapidly dissolving support base.

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a succession of partisan Tory governments.

Only in the past year has the penny begun to drop with the Labour Party that the two-party system is dead. Britain’s unfair first past the post method of election is delivering a one-party system and will go on doing so unless something happens. During the lifetime of this government, a redistribution of electoral districts will take about 20 seats away from Labour due to population changes. Labour, however, entered this election with no firm commitment to introduce proportional representation (PR) and no attempt to create a limited electoral pact with the Liberals. Although the Tories have a substantial margin over Labour, 336 to 271 seats, they needed to lose just 12 more seats to be unable to form a government. There are a good many seats where the Conservatives’ majority is 1,000 or less. Ultimately, therefore, some 10,000 floating voters in a few constituencies decided the result. A determined effort by Labour and the Liberals in key marginals could have unseated the Conservatives. A Labour commitment to PR could have shifted a small but vital percentage of Liberals and floating voters. A promise of PR would give Liberals once and for all a reason to vote Labour, and it would convince wavering voters that Labour did not intend to govern as an old-style partisan party.

Labour entered the election with the most radical program of constitutional change it has ever offered: an elected assembly and devolved government for Scotland, regional governments in England and Wales, the abolition of the House of Lords and its replacement by an elected (on a PR basis) second chamber, a program of anti-discrimination legislation, a Freedom of Information Act, among others. Missing were two items: PR and a real Bill of Rights. Yet these were the only two, apart from greater autonomy for Scotland, which mattered. Labour’s reforms became an issue in the last week of the campaign; they were radical enough to be frightening to institutional conservatives and yet not radical enough to inspire people to vote Labour or change people’s minds about the party. Labour’s fearful conservatism betrayed it into being prepared to interfere with the British Constitution but not to rewrite it. It has therefore paid the price for its timorous attempt to appease its own anti-PR lobby led by deputy leader Roy Hattersley.

Hattersley has now resigned—along with leader Neil Kinnock. One can only hope that the Labour Party will now embrace PR and accept the need for a strategy of co-operation with the Liberals in bringing it about. If Labour still fails to do this, then it is finished as a radical and reforming party.

Pro-Labour intellectuals are numb with shock and wringing their hands about an historic defeat and the end of socialism as we know it. They did this in 1987 too, when some of them even convinced themselves that Mrs Thatcher had staged a British economic miracle. It is curious that a government that has staged two major recessions in a decade, that has a record of unique ineptitude in economic management in the advanced industrial world, should be returned to office. What does this say about Labour?

The truth is that Labour’s economic strategy was completely wrong—and this despite the fact that John Smith, the Shadow Chancellor, and likely next party leader, was very popular with the voters. Firstly, its monetary policy was slavishly conservative. John Smith was committed about Labour? As their natural party. It is easy to blame their unspeakable tabloid press, which treated Neil Kinnock as a cross between Godzilla and a leper. It is all too easy to remember that the 20th century has been the Tories’ golden age—they have ruled alone or in coalition for 50 of the past 70 years. The fact is, however, that they have ruled since 1979 on a declining minority share of the vote. Only a strong performance by Labour in the marginal seats denied the Tories an even larger parliamentary majority: they got 42% of the vote to Labour’s 35%. Since 1979 the bulk of British people have not voted Tory, and they have been marginalised, excluded and treated as objects of tutelage by

If you look at the post-election map of Britain you can see the reason for the Conservatives’ victory. Instantly: England is blue. There are red blobs marking Labour’s strongholds in the major conurbations and orange blobs for the odd Liberal bastion, but suburban and rural England is solidly Conservative. Scotland by contrast is now Labour’s heartland; Labour holds two-thirds of the seats, and Scotland represents 49 out of the 271 Labour MPs at Westminster.

It is easy to turn snobbish about the awful semi-detached respectable English and to see the Conservatives as their natural party. It is easy to blame their unspeakable tabloid press, which treated Neil Kinnock as a cross between Godzilla and a leper. It is all too easy to remember that the 20th century has been the Tories’ golden age—they have ruled alone or in coalition for 50 of the past 70 years. The fact is, however, that they have ruled since 1979 on a declining minority share of the vote. Only a strong performance by Labour in the marginal seats denied the Tories an even larger parliamentary majority: they got 42% of the vote to Labour’s 35%. Since 1979 the bulk of British people have not voted Tory, and they have been marginalised, excluded and treated as objects of tutelage by
the middle of a recession to finance limited and ineffectual changes in social spending and a small increase in Child Benefit, a modest rise in pensions, and small extra amounts for the National Health Service (NHS) and education. As the Tories pointed out, with a chutzpah unique to the pin-striped breed, the middle classes were being asked to make sacrifices for small changes in spending that couldn’t possibly sort out the under-funding crisis of the public sector that the Tories themselves had created in the last 13 years! However, the claim is quite true: Labour did not offer a real alternative in economic and social policy. One can only conclude that key sections of the electorate looked at their wallets and decided to keep the change.

Labour’s mistake in my view was not their proposal to raise taxes, but what they proposed to spend them on. Had they concentrated on manufacturing investment, industrial training and transport infrastructure—explaining the extent of the Tories’ neglect of manufacturing and the need to reverse industrial decline—they might have had some hope. Factories before pensions, trained workers before the NHS, roads before Child Benefit, is a hard set of priorities for a traditionally welfare state party to offer. However, Labour tried to have it all, while being fiscally ‘responsible’ and practising ‘sound money’. It was at once too conservative on economic policy and too committed to a diverse range of under-funded spending initiatives. If it had put industrial renewal first, and concentrated all its efforts on the Tories’ economic failures, it might have had some chance of denting traditional opinion. As it was, it appeared to be a high-tax, soft-on-spending party that wasn’t going to do anything dramatic: better the devil you know.

Labour will now have to decide what kind of party it wants to be. It will have to face the fact that Britain cannot afford a major increase in social spending, given middle income earners’ attitudes, unless it is able to achieve a much better rate of sustainable economic growth. It will have to work out how to achieve such growth, and move away from the current mixture of macro-economic caution and half-hearted advocacy of an industrial policy. It will have to decide that a key component of economic modernisation is constitutional reform, to create a more equitable balance between the parties and a more collaborative political culture that allows long-run co-operation to manage the economy. If it does these two things it may have a future as a party of government. If it does not, it can remain a party of the poor, of the public sector and of opposition.

The intellectuals’ angst about the future is easy to understand. The Conservatives don’t like them. Britain is economically and culturally stagnant, and will remain so while mainstream Toryism rules. But ignore the idle chatter of the ‘death of socialism’. Labour on 35% of the vote is one of the few remaining strong parties of the Left in Europe. The reason Labour is out of government is that it has been too stupid to see the need to change the electoral system while in government (in 1974-79) and too conservative to make this a major plank on its policy platform while in opposition. Major’s victory is far from good news, but it means that the opposition in Britain has to get up, dust itself off and get back to fighting the Tories. Anything else is just designer agonising by people who are upset they aren’t on the winning side, and who thought things were going to be easy this time around because the Tories were forced to fight an election in a recession.

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COMING UP IN ALR

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* Censorship: time for a rethink?
* The new South Africa
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Love's Labours Lost

John Major limped to victory in April's British elections sustained by an instinct for individual self-interest and middle class greed. In the marginals the aspiring classes kept Labour out, reaffirming Britain as a one-party state. British Majorettes were driven less by what they were voting for than longstanding prejudices about how not to vote. Many were disillusioned with the Conservative government but not angry enough to vote Labour or sufficiently reckless to vote Liberal Democrat.

Although they did not pull off a great electoral victory, the Conservative's achievement is that they avoided a much-heralded loss. Labour, for its part, snatched an ignominious defeat from the jaws of victory, gaining only a 3% swing overall when they needed over 8% to form a majority government and around 5% to offer a minority government in a hung parliament. Labour commentators have responded that since the Tories lost a net 40 seats and captured only 41.9% of the total vote, they have thereby lost the moral right to govern and their mandate to introduce policy changes. But Labour itself only managed 34.4% of the vote after 12 years of divisive Thatcherism and in an election held in the worst postwar recession.

This seems the essence of Majorism: a capacity to forge unpopularity into a political base when it matters. Displaying non-threatening images of moderation, predictability, security, nothingness rather than being, John Major has provided Britons with a welcome relief from Thatcherism without requiring them to oust the Conservatives. The 1990s is the decade of the benign uncle, not the bullying school mistress.

But it would be wrong to underestimate the new Tory leadership. It may be grey, lacklustre and the object of cartoonists' mirth (John Major's Y-fronts and breakfast kippers provide daily copy for the satirists), but the new leadership team also contains political and administrative talent—at least in an amount sufficient to hold the government together while slowly, almost imperceptibly, modifying but consolidating the Thatcher legacy.

So far, evidence of policy changes has been implied rather than real. A Cabinet and ministerial reshuffle has attempted to mend old wounds and rehabilitate previous dissidents within the party, as Major distances his style of government from that of his predecessor.

Major will undoubtedly seek to increase British influence in Europe, while possibly granting some limited forms of regional devolution to Scotland and Wales (but not self-government). The disastrous poll tax has been retaileed to reduce the 'head tax' component and include property rates. Further privatisation is likely, with British Rail the next target. More pressing will be the fiscal problems of the British state, which will require substantial tax increases or a further wave of cuts in public spending. Figures released during the election pointed to an £18 billion deficit for this year alone on recurrent spending and rising public debt for capital spend-

ing. Given what we know so far, Britain is headed for a decade of limited government with the executive absolving itself from responsibility and pushing the ideology of self-reliance.

Meanwhile, Britain's endemic problems remain unattended. Large sections of the economy are terminally ill, urban blight is chronic, people in entire regions have lost the chance and will to work, many live in appalling conditions without basic facilities, homelessness and street begging are prevalent, low pay affects around a third of employed workers, public health is poor and hygiene-related diseases are increasing, schools are underfunded. Industrial conditions are poor by international standards and still discriminatory towards women. Tourism based on the historical quaintness of the British Isles seems to be the only expanding business; Britain is becoming a nation of teashops.

And what of Labour? Is it now unelectable? Despite the plight of Britain and the unpopularity of the Conservatives, Labour only managed to be neck-and-neck with the government in the polls, and only attracted one-third of all voters on election day. It is salutary to remember that Labour has been in majority government for only 17 years in the 20th century.

Now the post mortem has begun in earnest; already much of the obvious has been aired, along with the usual array of labourist myths. The defeat has been blamed on the electoral system, and the huge number of seats (97) needed to be won to form government. The polls misled them; the divided anti-Conservative parties (Labour, Liberal Democrats, Scottish Nationalists, Greens) blunted the challenge. The tawdry tabloids conducted a vitriolic campaign against Labour and particularly against Neil Kinnock.

Other familiar explanations for the defeat have been trotted out. Labour offered no real alternative; it had moderated its position so much it had lost its capacity to appeal. They were
Two contenders have reluctantly come forward for the Labour crown: the shadow Chancellor John Smith (a 54-year-old Scottish MP from Labour's Right) and Bryan Gould (a New Zealand born moderate with some Left support). The larger unions with 40% of the vote at the electoral college attempted to pre-empt the vote by 'bouncing' the party into choosing Smith before any other viable contender could assemble sufficient support. This strategy appears to have at last partly succeeded; an early conference has been called and unions (so they say) will not "have time" to ballot their members before the event, thus allowing union leaders to cast a block vote for their candidate.

Neither candidate for the leadership has as yet outlined his analysis of the defeat or a future policy orientation. Gould has criticised Smith as one of the "architects of the defeat", arguing that his alternative budget was not attractive enough to hold voters. He has also implied that Smith would be hostage to the unions and unprepared to make changes. Meanwhile, Gould has been cagey about his own intentions, though he would probably drag Labour more in the direction of a European-style social democratic party, severing formal union links and aiming for wider policy appeal.

Whichever of the hopefuls emerges as leader in July, it is clear that Labour has much to do before the next election and needs to resolve many of the issues it has attempted to remain equivocal about. The party needs to shed its negative image as the only high-taxing party, especially when self-interest determines the voting habits of the majority. It needs to resolve its attitudes to devolution and constitutional reform, towards Europe, towards the unions, towards third parties and electoral reform. A Smith leadership will probably aim to make the party a better economic manager than the Conservatives. Gould may hold out more hope that these issues will be addressed, but the history of the Labour Party suggests that major changes are unlikely.

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Clean Bill of Health

It took months. Women's health workers were deflected from their important constructive tasks to fight a defensive battle for the survival of the services, and for the survival of women's health centres all over the country. There were four days of hearings, hundreds of pages of evidence, submissions and transcripts. Distinguished witnesses presented affidavits and gave evidence defending women's health initiatives. Three barristers, four solicitors and numerous public servants from the ACT and the Commonwealth applied their expertise to the matter.

No one knows how expensive it has all been.

Finally, the President of the Human Rights Commission handed down his judgment in April in the discrimination case against women's health services in the ACT, reported in ALR's last issue ('The Body in Question', ALR 138). The bottom line—quite literally—of Justice Wilson's decision was that he found "all the complaints unsubstantiated. They are therefore dismissed". All the effort produced no positive advance, nor could this case have ever produced any improvement in anyone's well-being. It resulted simply in legal legitimation for women's health services to continue doing what they were doing before they were interrupted by the intrusion of the complaint. Wilson found that the services are discriminatory under the Sex Discrimination Act, but that they are exempted, either by Section 32 (which permits "services the nature of which is such that they can only be provided to members of one sex") or Section 33 (the so-called "affirmative action" or special measures section). Thus, the women's health services in the ACT are lawful, and so, presumably, are similar services around the country. The complainants did not lodge an appeal.

Women's health services are now free to get on with the job. The judgment acknowledged that women are disadvantaged in obtaining adequate and appropriate health services, that some of their health needs (not only reproductive and gynaecological) are
best addressed through special, targeted services. Furthermore, it confirms that it is not unlawful to fund or deliver such services. However, even though supporters of women’s health services won, they cannot completely relax. More effort is required if Australia is to protect its unique and precious heritage of community-based women’s health services, which constitute a vital part of its overall network of community health services. Three issues in particular remain on the agenda.

1. Public and private discussion of the matter revealed widespread ignorance among both women and men as to the activities of women’s health services. The public interest aroused by the case provides an opportunity to set the record straight, to inform people of what would have been lost if the complainants had succeeded.

2. The Sex Discrimination Act is currently under review by parliamentary committees. The relevant sections of the Act need to be amended so similar actions are more difficult in future. Women have been successful in seeking remedies for discrimination through the courts, and it is therefore essential that the Act is revised so that it can serve more effectively its original intention: to eliminate discrimination against women.

3. Men working positively for improvements in men’s health have not been assisted by the action. The case has, however, focused attention on ways that men’s health—as well as women’s health—may be inflected by gender, although discussion around the case has tended to imply that there is, somehow, a masculine equivalent for every women’s health concern. Perhaps the case will prompt a fuller exploration of how many health concerns and risk factors could be addressed more effectively if we recognise their gendered character, and develop better understandings of the distinctive and different patterns of women’s and men’s health needs.

DOROTHY BROOM is the author of Damned If We Do: Contradictions in Women's Health Care (Allen & Unwin, 1991).

Donations to the Canberra Women’s Health Centre, to help defray the expenses of the case, should be sent to the Centre, PO Box 1492, Woden, ACT 2616.

No Legal Refuge

Cases in which women kill a violent partner or ex-partner are relatively rare in Australia and yet they have a profound effect upon legal and cultural representations of domestic violence.

Throughout the 1980s public campaigns around cases such as those of Violet and Bruce Roberts in NSW, Beryl Birch in Queensland and the so-called axe murder case in South Australia were significant in putting the issue of domestic violence on the political agenda. They were also successful in gaining some legislative reforms. In NSW for instance, changes to the legal requirements for the defence of provocation, the removal of the mandatory life sentence for a murder conviction and the introduction of new legislation concerning domestic violence were all significant outcomes of such campaigns.

However the actions of women who kill a violent partner are still poorly understood, and they are more likely to be depicted as an expression of evil or as due to mental illness or psychological dysfunction than as justifiable actions undertaken in desperate circumstances. Courts have not interpreted the existing defences available to such women in a sympathetic manner.

The defences available to a charge of murder include self defence, provocation, insanity and/or diminished responsibility, and automatism. Each of these defences possesses a basic rationale as to when a killing will be justifiable or excusable. All of the defences rely, in the application of legal doctrine to the facts of the particular case, on commonly held standards. This is manifested formally by the incorporation of standards of ‘reasonableness’ or ‘ordinariness’ against which the individual accused’s behaviour are to be measured. However, these allegedly neutral standards are founded upon the experiences and perceptions of white, middle class men.

Battered women are diverse individuals caught up in unique situations. Nevertheless they share in common a culture of violence, fear and a lack of power. They also share the fact that as women, women who kill, and women who have been subject to abuse within their relationships, their life experiences and perceptions do not neatly coincide with the doctrinal rules, the communal norms, or the conceptual categories that comprise and underlie the defences of murder.

One mechanism which has been used to bring woman battering to the attention of the courts, usually in the context of explaining the behaviour of a woman defendant who has killed a violent man, is the ‘battered woman syndrome’ (BWS). It does not constitute a separate defence, but is used in conjunction with other defences. Such syndrome evidence has been widely used in the United States over the past decade.

Ironically, though, while BWS has arisen as a response to the inadequacies and limitations in prevailing law and legal practice, it may serve to reinforce those very problems. The BWS does not challenge legal and cultural stereotypes about women and about woman battering. Rather it reconstructs and accommodates women’s experiences to fit the requirements of existing legal doctrine.

BWS was first accepted in the Australian court in May 1991. The South Australian Court of Criminal Appeal ruled that a trial judge erred in not allowing expert testimony concerning BWS to be put during the trial of two women for the false imprisonment and assault occasioning grievous bodily harm of a third woman. The women argued they had not been party to inflicting the violence, and in addition they had acted under duress. That is, they claimed that they were in fear of the likely violence of the man named Hill.
Jic Hill was brutal to both women; he quitted by the South Australian Australian case was Erika Kotinnen. One of the women tried in the South women and a co-accused who had been hospitalised with severe injuries her de facto spouse Hill, and Runjanjic. Evidence concerning the battered woman named Runjanjic and a child. Evidence the trial in support of her claim that she had acted in self-defence. The trial has attracted enormous attention and engendered a great deal of debate.

Kotinnen lived in a menage a trois with her de facto spouse Hill, and Runjanjic. Hill was brutal to both women; he treated them as slaves and referred to them as 'number one' and 'number two'. According to press reports of the case Hill admired Charles Manson and wanted to establish a 'Manson style' family. Runjanjic had previously been hospitalised with severe injuries inflicted by Hill. The women's attempts to seek protection from police and other agencies had been unsuccessful. The women were terrorised by Hill and felt unable to escape the violent relationship.

But what is the battered woman syndrome? The term is associated with the work of clinical psychologist Dr Lenore Walker and describes the psychological characteristics of women who have suffered domestic violence. Walker has defined a battered woman in the following terms:

A woman who is repeatedly subjected to any forceful physical or psychological behaviour by a man in order to coerce her to do something he wants her to do without any concern for her rights. Battered women include wives or women in any form of intimate relationships with men. Furthermore, in order to be classified as a battered woman, the couple must go through the cycle at least twice. Any woman may find herself in an abusive relationship with a man once. If it occurs a second time, and she remains in the situation, she is defined as a battered woman.

The 'cycle' referred to is the creation of Walker herself. It is said to have three phases: the first phase is one of tension building, the second is one of acute battering and the third is that of contrite and loving behaviour.

The syndrome is associated with the psychological state known as 'learned helplessness'. This term is borrowed from the animal experiments of Martin Seligman, in which dogs subjected to inescapable electric shocks became passive and helpless. Walker and others argue that after a history of experiencing violence at the hands of her partner, and possibly unsuccessful attempts to avoid the violence, a woman may begin to believe that he is omnipotent, that she is powerless, and that no one can help her. She loses her motivation and becomes helpless and fatalistic.

Expert evidence concerning BWS is not automatically admissible in court. It must meet a number of technical requirements before a judge will allow it to be admitted. For example, it must be an accepted body of scientific knowledge, and it must be beyond the understanding of the average layperson or juror. These requirements have a number of consequences.

First, the testimony of an expert is preferred to the account of the woman herself (although it must be acknowledged that there will be cases where a woman would prefer not to give evidence herself or may be judged by her counsel not to be a good witness). Again the experiences of the woman on trial are by necessity reconstructed to fit the scientific or medical discourse of the expert, who is usually a psychologist or psychiatrist. The fact of the man's violence and the social and political realities which limit women's choices in dealing with life-threatening violence become secondary to the consideration of the woman's psychology. Her actions may be rendered explicable in terms of her psychology rather than justifiable as a desperate act of self-help.

The use of psychological or psychiatric testimony also has the potential to reinforce cultural stereotypes about women—particularly their supposed irrationality and emotionality. BWS does not challenge such stereotypes; rather, it is consistent with the depiction of women as irrational.

The threshold for the admission of expert evidence requires the representation of domestic violence as rare, unusual and beyond the understanding of a layperson—an ironic outcome given the incidence of such violence in the community.

There are other potential problems with the use of BWS as evidence. It is most often used in the context of the defence of a woman who has committed an offence. Most cases to date have concerned homicide or assault. BWS is used to explain why the woman committed a criminal act rather than leave a violent relationship. The presumption is that leaving a violent relationship is the 'normal', 'rational' response to violence and that any other course must be explained.

Characterising leaving a relationship as 'normal' presumes that women always have a choice. This is of course obscures many social and structural impediments to women leaving violent relationships. It also ignores the fact that violent coercion keeps some women in abusive relationships. Finally it presumes that violence ceases when a woman leaves her home.

Research has shown that of women killed by a partner or ex-partner, half had been killed after they had separated or during the course of the woman's attempts to separate. The establishment of a growing network of women's refuges and the demands for more effective protective legislation provide further evidence that violence does not necessarily cease if a woman is able to leave the relationship.

The use of BWS is also a problem because it fails to confront the male standards which underlie legal concepts such as that of reasonableness. If a defendant's actions are to be judged by their reasonableness, it might seem fair that the definition of reasonableness be sufficiently broad as to include the circumstances and context of her actions. BWS does not contribute to a broad interpretation of reasonableness, but rather provides a psychological explanation for the departure of a battered woman's conduct from the existing standard. In doing so a new norm is constructed—that of the 'reasonable battered woman'.

There are real dangers in constructing a new standard of reasonableness with which battered women must
comply. On Lenore Walker’s own evidence not all battered women experience the cycle of violence, nor the learned helplessness which are features of BWS. There is the risk that women who do not conform to the prescribed pattern will be judged harshly for failing two tests of reasonableness—the allegedly neutral male standard of existing legal doctrine and the BWS standard. This has occurred in some jurisdictions in the US, where women have been deemed to be ineligible to use BWS in support of their defence because they do not conform precisely to the criteria of the syndrome. In such cases a construct—the battered woman syndrome—which may have value in describing the experiences and behaviour of some battered women, has been interpreted in such a way as to prescribe what can be considered to be reasonable responses by battered women.

The use of BWS evidence is likely to leave fundamental problems in legal doctrine and legal practice unchallenged. The account offered of the actions of a woman who kills a violent partner will continue to be re-interpreted by the courts and the media as a departure from conventional standards of reasonableness. It will also be viewed as consistent with cultural representations of women as victims or as psychologically dysfunctional. Finally, it is likely to contribute to a distorted representation of women and woman battering—one which highlights individual psychology and fails to emphasise the social, structural and political dimensions of the problem. This is to the detriment of all women.

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Countback!

Lights! Camera! Action! The curtains parted and the Great Dirty Tricks Campaign commenced. In a remarkable coalition of forces, the Treasury, the ABS, the Teachers’ Union and, for all we know, the Queensland supermarket that filled Dr Hewson’s ‘representative as far as it went’ basket with Harpic and dog food, conspired with Prime Minister Keating to denigrate the notion that everyone will benefit immediately by adoption of the Fightback! package. Except that ‘smokers are losers’. Well, possibly they are in more ways than one.

The lights have now gone out and the journalists have moved to the next media event, but Australians are still left with the stark reality of the Treasury analysis. In March, three months after the release of the Fightback! package, Treasury finally concluded its distribution analysis of the winners and losers.

According to Treasury, far from providing net benefits to all groups in the community, the Opposition package would lead to over 70% of full-time wage and salary earner households and 60% of self-employed and farm households becoming worse off. The major beneficiaries would be the top 10%. For the average Australian worker on $25,000 a year, struggling to hold on to a job, with dependent spouse and kids to support, the choice is between a gain of $39.25 a week according to Fightback! and a loss of $7.50 a week according to Treasury; a difference of $46.75 a week or nearly $2,500 a year.

As claim and counter-claim fly, who should we believe? Well, let’s ignore the rhetoric and resort to logic of argument. First, Treasury adopts most of the underlying assumptions of the Opposition model and in fact assumes the package will have even less effect on prices than did the Opposition. That’s why the Treasury analysis suggests a greater benefit for the average sole parent under Fightback! than even the authors of the document.

But having conceded, and even enhanced, the price effect of the GST, Treasury then point out two major drawbacks. Fightback! ignores the costs to households of expenditure cuts and health policy changes; and it underestimates the compensation required to compensate households fully for the GST price effect and tax bracket creep.

Treasury has a valid point in respect of the so-called ‘nasties’. In fact it is a point that Fightback! itself acknowledges, or rather explicitly fails to incorporate. In a footnote to the relevant table of Fightback! the Opposition claims that the Net Benefits takes into account a whole range of factors but no mention is made of the net $6.5 billion expenditure cuts, increases in other taxes, or the medicare levy surcharge.

Treasury in its analysis has incorporated: the introduction of the proposed family income test for the dependent spouse rebate; lowering the income test threshold for family allowance; tightening of the income and assets tests; removing AUSTUDY where present eligibility is less than $30 a week; and introducing a Medicare levy surcharge for higher income groups.

However, Treasury has not calculated other directly redistributive expenditure cuts totalling $600m. These include raising the pension age for women to 65, a three-week extension of the waiting period for Job Search Allowance, or possible increases in
This debate is really about the level of wages or prices? Treasury's argument is constructed, the appropriate result will appear. The danger is that the underlying parameters are often hidden and these are critical in determining the outcomes. Treasury has, in fact, been remarkably kind to the Fightback! model in not exposing its workings and critical assumptions by assuming the same underlying parameters. Hence, for example, its GST induced price effects are virtually the same.

Again, while accepting evasion and avoidance of the income tax system, both models appear to assume absolutely no evasion and avoidance of the GST. In 1985, Treasury assumed a yield impact of 5% on evasion of the then proposed 12.5% consumption tax. In international terms this was very low. Admittedly, a broad-based consumption tax is more amenable to evasion than the VAT-like goods and services tax. However, the extension into the previously untaxed services area raises the spectre of evasion, particularly when there is very little tax already paid on few intermediate goods to be recouped.

Just 1% evasion would cut revenue yield by $272m and certainly affect the capacity to provide compensation. If evasion reached 10% then this would wipe out almost entirely the return benefits of bracket creep.

Finally, both 'models' appear to assume that all of the cost reductions from the elimination of wholesale sales tax and fuel excise and half the payroll tax reductions will be passed on in lower prices. In view of the sheer number of transactions involved, Sir William Cole and his 'tax-busters' team are going to be very busy people indeed, ensuring that every shopkeeper passes on every tax reduction. If they don't succeed, then the optimistic price impacts of both 'models' used for determining compensation spell despair for the recipients.

Treasury has accepted without question the most favourable assumptions for the Fightback! package. Prime Minister Keating might like to ask them why—because they have certainly bent over backwards to ensure maximum benefits for Fightback!. The unfortunate consequence is that the proper modelling of distributional consequences and effects may well get a bad name from such exercises.

Dr Hewson is to be congratulated in being the first opposition leader to have the courage and vision to attempt such an exercise rather than hide behind rhetoric and untested promises. He has at least forced the government to produce its vision in One Nation. The Australian people now have a clear set of alternative policies to judge.

The tragedy is that the 'modelling' differences are essentially technical ones which can be verified by reference to other Australian data and overseas experience. They are essentially questions of fact.

Australians are being forced to make a choice solely on the basis of who they believe. This is a gamble involving thousands of dollars for the average family. The very bare minimum that Australians should be able to expect from their politicians is the truth, to the extent it is known, about the impact of prospective economic policies.

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Phil Cleary's win in Wills was trumpeted as the death of 'economic rationalism'. But just what is (or was) it?

Denise Meredyth argues that the liberal academy's picture of the 'rationalist' bureaucracy is a mite simplistic.

Economic Rationalism in Canberra, Michael Pusey's colourful account of the 'locust plague' of 'economic rationalism' in the Australian public service, has been one of the most popular academic contributions to public debate for some time. As a polemic, the book deserves its success. It is lively and emphatic in style, equivalent in appeal to the histories of Manning Clarke and Ross Fitzgerald, those favourites of The Bulletin. Unlike much academic debate, it is also accessible to a wide audience, partly because it evokes the economic winds whistling through the empty city centre of Canberra, but also because it calls upon a number of strong ideal figures, including that of the principled social reformer, the callous yuppies public servant and the econocrat—not to mention the fearless social critic and universal intellectual.

The book piled high in bookshops over Christmas, and Pusey's appearance in the press provided a starting point for many dinner parties and academic papers. Although many of the academic arguments had been in circulation for some time before the appearance of the book, its release has meant that the terms of its discussion have been widely adopted. And in the process, the term 'economic rationalism' has become a shorthand for some very sweeping dismissals of various Labor policies and of bureaucracy in general.

Used precisely, the term 'economic rationalism' can be useful in identifying a particular form of governmental rationality and political vocabulary. In some usages, it refers to a specific kind of economic and political
rationality, involving limitations to the activity of the state and support for the unfettered freedom of the market. But in the present debate it is the focus of some confusion, being used to refer to seemingly random combinations of the 'rational' and the 'economic', including various accountability measures, almost any cutback in governmental expenditure, and most forms of bureaucratic procedure which do not correspond to global goals, claims and critiques.

Pusey’s key argument—for those who weren’t given the book for Christmas—is that there has been a fundamental change in Australian public administration. The public service, once the home of social democratic reform, has been overtaken by 'economic rationalism' and corporate managerialism. Since more and more economics graduates have been recruited into the most powerful sections of public administration, the public service has been colonised by a particularly repellent species, that of the ambitious young ‘econocrat’.

Thee ‘econocrat’, we are told, is a conservative yuppie, usually male, from a private school and trained in economics or management. These comparatively young economics graduates now fill the senior ranks of the central agency departments of Treasury, Finance and Prime Minister and Cabinet, forming a powerful cadre force within government. Ambitious, hardworking and clever they
may be, but this species of econocrats lacks the ethics and social insight possessed by the earlier generation of ‘social democratic intellectuals’ who once staffed the public service.

The conservatism of today’s Senior Executive Service officers is specified by means of questionnaires and interviews on such questions as the deregulation of the Australian dollar and of the Australian capital and financial markets, their judgments about the distribution of GDP, their attitude to unions and their position on the deregulation of the labour market. The respondents, it appears, have little or no commitment to central government and state intervention, oppose unionism and support free market economics. They are preoccupied with economic, utilitarian and technical concerns, at the expense of broader social principles. Furthermore, they deny that their professional work is shaped by personal values or principles, insisting instead that the protocols of their professional lives are politically neutral. These responses are taken as symptoms of a more fundamental problem: a rejection of the key values of the social democratic ‘people-servicing’ state.

There are two kinds of reason given for this change in values. One is a shift in the educational background of graduate recruits to the public service, resulting in much smaller numbers of senior officers with a liberal humanist educational background and many more with training in economics, law and management. The other strand of argument concerns itself with general flaws in the national conscience and character; describing how anti-intellectualism, cynicism and lack of vision have allowed ‘economic rationalism’ to become acceptable to the Australian public.

The contrast is most strongly marked by comparison with the social reforms of 20 years ago under Whitlam. In the 70s, so the story goes, there was a strong public sector commitment to liberal social democratic goals and support for radical governmental intervention in education, health and community development. State policy and action were determined by a partnership between bureaucracy and ‘the community’, and bureaucratic language and rationality was organic with the ‘lived culture’ of the community.

With high numbers of humanities graduates recruited into the public service, senior public servants were filled with the values provided by a broad liberal education. Equipped with the social insight provided by humanist sociology, psychology and human relations theory, bureaucrats were able to be in touch with social situations in the real world beyond Canberra. There was no split between the bureaucratic and the social, the human and the technical, the principled and utility, the social and the economic.

But since this time, Pusey argues, universalistic principles and the promise of culture have been forsaken for ‘modern utilitarianism’, a tougher and colder reliance on the judicial and administrative arms of the state. The nation’s faith is now placed not in general social principles, but in “the more modern universalism of judicial and administrative deliberation, decision, and above all, ‘fair’ allocation”. The poor substitute for the greater ends of culture and equality is the limited administrative goal of formal democracy, citizenship, equity and accountability.

What we have, then, is something like a family saga of the Australian state, marking the decline from ethical vigour to degeneracy. The pioneering postwar generation of Keynesian reconstructionists are the heroes here. They held staunchly to a program of social reconstruction stemming from their “own distinctively Australian vision of a nation-building state”. But the present generation of senior public servants is preoccupied only with mean goals. As it turns out, these unworthy goals include “fair allocation” and the administration of equity norms within bureaucratic procedures.

The political ambiguities of the book become clearer if we note how comforting it is both for the broad Left and for the Right. For the Right, it confirms the allegation that Left political analysis remains both romantically oppositional and too clumsy to handle the machinery of government. For the Left, a return to the rhetoric of romantic oppositionalism is appealing, at a time when it appears that both Labor Party politics and Left academic analysis have sold out.

On the face of it, Australian political culture has changed substantially since the 70s. Theoretical shifts have meant that it is no longer so clear that ‘Australian society’ is either progressing towards a historical goal (whether cultural identity and emancipation or their opposites). Nor can we speak so confidently of ‘Australian culture’, ‘national character’ or ‘society as a whole’. Other changes have made it difficult to treat social democratic politics as ‘oppositional’, or to assume that there is a clear separation between the principled positions of the Left and the calculations of government. For instance, the last 15 years have seen the governmental adoption and translation of a number of oppositional Left and feminist reform campaigns. Many of those who participated in these campaigns have become part of ‘management’. At the same time a number of ‘progressive principles’ have become incorporated within areas of social policy. In equal opportunity programs, for instance, equity, participation and representation have become routine standards and targets administered and monitored by complex bureaucratic procedures.

For some, these changes are symptoms of a creeping political compromise caused by a generational shift towards co-option and cynicism. For Pusey and others, what has been lost is the broad and global vision, the commitment to absolute principles rather than to targets and quotas. In response, readers are invited to identify with a tradition of social reformist struggle and radical nationalism, strongly associated with the campaigns of the 70s—a time which now seems untroubled by present confusions about the goals of the broad Left or by the painstaking disassembly of the more global elements of Left political analysis.
It may be reassuring to have suspicions of collaboration confirmed and to be told that there is a clear and principled opposition between a tradition of social democratic principle and the interests of the state. But there is much for the broad Left to be wary of here. Such forms of critique contain some comfortably familiar elements of a romantic oppositionalism still strong within the Left. But for all their familiarity and appeal, they provide little connection to the work of those actually engaged in social policy. Consequently, they cannot hope to provide much access to policy debates—and perhaps this is the point.

One of the striking features of *Economic Rationalism in Canberra* is its relentless insistence on global oppositions: between bureaucracy and culture, between the technical and the human, the economic and the social and so on. The use of this rhetoric is a clue that this is a particular type of cultural criticism, one conducted within highly formulaic terms, usually concentrating on dialectical oppositions and the possibility of transcending those oppositions in a new synthesis.

As Ian Hunter has pointed out recently (ALR 136, February), the rhetoric of cultural critique is deeply imbued with romanticism. In the case of Pusey, this is true in a loose sense, in that his forms of social criticism are explicitly utopian and dismissive of pragmatism and the 'instrumentalist' focus on the practical utility of ideas rather than ideas themselves. But the comment also applies in a more strictly historical sense, identifying the influence of romanticism in the ethos and vocation of 'critique'. This perspective on 'critique' as an exercise allows us to see the 'universal intellectual' and cultural critic as quite curious figures, attributed with surprising claims to possess special and transcendent vision. And despite the usual contradiction between the human and the technical, these are in fact quite technical and highly specialised exercises.

Reflecting on the 'social whole', the cultural critic finds it centrally lacking, riven by splits between culture and utility, the economic and the social, the human and the technical, the feminine and the masculine. The expectation is that the dialectic between these opposed elements will be resolved in a moment of historical and political transcendence. Usually this takes the form of a lost historical moment—in this case, the 1970s. However, the possibility of achieving reconciliation in the future constitutes the kind of 'political vision' to which we are urged to be true (the vision of complete equality, human emancipation and social self-realisation). And until this moment comes, social and political existence will be found fundamentally wanting, split into contradictions between culture and utility, the economic and the social, the organic and the technical, calculation and 'principle'—and, in this case, the bureaucratic and the democratic.

Such a moment, it is clear, becomes possible only when government is in the hands of a certain type of person. This special kind of person is, of course, the 'social democratic intellectual' or cultural critic. Possessed of humanistic (in this case, sociological) forms of analysis, they are capable of performing a certain kind of social critique, balancing within themselves the instrumental and the principled, the human and the technical and transcending them within special moments of social insight. The reader is offered identification with this attractive figure through the narrator's exemplification of the role. Pusey's adoption of the persona of the cultural critic allows him to claim a transcendent social and historical vision—even while criticising public servants for their "lack of 'connectedness' to a population with boring jobs".

Put in these terms, these claims seem more than a little immodest. The assumption is that the effect of social policy and public administration can be measured against 'social principle'—a set of absolute political values faithfully maintained within the ethos of cultural critique. In this scale, social administration will always be found wanting, being unable to exhibit a conscience as sensitive as that of the cultural critic.

There is a dual and reciprocal problem here. On the one hand, the scope and effect of academic liberal humanism is dramatically overestimated. On the other, the account is guilty of significantly underestimating the complexity of the bureaucratic ethos. And in the rest of this article, I want to argue that some indications of this complexity can be found within Pusey's research—but only if we are prepared to read against the grain of his argument.

As John Wanna recently pointed out (ALR 136, February), Pusey's account of the characteristics of Australian public administration is limited by a very narrow scope. There is, for instance, a concentration on the attitudes and background of individuals, at the expense of a more systematic treatment of the effects of induction and retraining within the workplace. A surprising amount of attention is paid to the effect of university education, whether economic or humanistic: as Wanna points out, the assumption is that officers' opinions come directly from their academic training. Part of the problem here is the humanist preoccupation with individuals and their attitudes and personal styles, rather than with the more formal aspects of the bureaucratic department of existence.

The problem is that the emphasis upon 'personality' excludes attention to the routines and norms which make up the ethos of bureaucratic work—an ethos which is in fact designed to reshape conduct, to regulate the expression of personal opinion and to require officers to distinguish between the 'values' appropriate to the political sphere and the analytical decisions involved in the implementation of particular policies. Surprisingly little attention is given to the process by which bureaucratic work translates and reshapes the capacities of the persons who work within it. Nor is there any sense that the bureaucratic ethos requires
individuals to conduct themselves according to the duties and responsibilities attached to a particular status.

Pusey does mention that many of the interviewees had sophisticated rationales for their responses, and he notes that a number of them claimed in fact to be social reformers, with a sophisticated grasp of the intellectual technical technology of the state. Nevertheless, responses which are not couched in the terms of humanist sociology are characterised as assenting to a 'classically technocratic and positivistic view'. Senior public servants are described and treated as specialised intellectuals—and taken to task for not using a particular intellectual vocabulary. But at the same time, Pusey is quite unwilling to treat bureaucratic work as either intellectual or principled, since the operational standards and technical calculations of government are not completely consonant with 'value' and 'principle' as they are understood by cultural critique.

What's remarkable is how little concession is made to the argument that modern government (social democratic or not) requires particular instruments in order to function. Pusey does acknowledge that government programs depend upon a process of translating social or political goals into standards and targets, but his assumption is that such processes of translation are necessarily sinister. But is it really possible to imagine programs of social reform which do not rely on setting goals and targets and making them the objects of decisions? While these standards and targets used by social administration might be more or less sensitive to particular classes and contexts, they are necessarily formal and abstract. In what way, then, is it useful to criticise social administration for using abstract, formal and systematic procedures or for conducting itself within the ethos of disinterest? To put the question another way, is it realistic to suggest the possibility that the criteria used in social administration could be grounded in what Pusey calls 'real tasks and situations'? This is equivalent to imagining modern government without statistics, censuses and demographic information, or any other of the instruments and techniques on which the organisation of modern life has relied since at least the 18th century.

These are complex issues, recently recast within new historical investigations of citizenship, democracy, social rights and the building of states and societies. Addressing them fully would require a much more elaborate account of the theoretical and historical work on various intellectual and political technologies of the modern state. For now, it is perhaps enough to outline some arguments to the effect that we cannot expect social administration to dispense with the various instruments of government, including particular forms of bureaucratic accounting, conduct and rationality.

We can begin with the visionary conception of the complete society which Pusey holds up as the alternative to bureaucratic rationality. The vision is one in which government could be conducted entirely within the language of 'the people', organic with the community and free of formal and abstract concerns. But despite the reference to the lost indigenous tradition of the social democratic state, the vision bears little relation to the forms and procedures in which sociological terms such as 'society', 'community' become thinkable. Following the work of the French thinkers Michel Foucault and Jacques Donzelot, it is possible to say that the domain which we call 'the social'—and the divisions which we discover within it—are in fact the product of particular instruments and strategies of government, produced with definite and limited historical circumstances. Rather than being the result of an organic evolution towards social self-realisation, they are the technical effect of particular forms of governmental investigation and co-ordination.

Since Weber, it has been clear that the modern state is constituted by a definite range of instruments and techniques, including rational economic planning and systems of accountability. These instruments are a central component of many schemes of social reform and social accounting—whether now, in the 1970s, or in the 1790s. These measures also include the elements which form an ethos of disinterest within bureaucracy, incorporating protocols and procedures designed to make decisions independent of the attitudes of personnel and which require the subordination of 'the personal'.

To anticipate objections, let me insist that these instruments of government are far from 'natural' or 'neutral'. But nor, in themselves, are they the tools of political 'interests'. To draw on Foucault's terms, they form parts of particular apparatuses of government which now, as it happens, operate almost independently, and which cannot be described as either 'progressive' or 'regressive' in themselves. Neither the broad Left nor the broad Right would be able to operate without recourse to abstract and formalising instruments of government, whether statistical, demographic, economic or sociological. It is hard, for instance, to imagine any program of equity-related social reform which could dispense with means to identify goals and objects of decisions.

Perhaps it is time to acknowledge that government involves processes which are both intellectual and technical, both ethical and goal-oriented—and that social administration involves kinds of training and conduct which are in many ways quite distinct from both democratic discourse and the ethos of cultural criticism. We need to recognise that the notion of trying to make governmental procedures 'fit' with the principles espoused by cultural critics is quite utopian and politically unhelpful. Agreeing to these propositions might entail renouncing some of the appeal of oppositionalism. But it might also stimulate forms of political evaluation which avoid political romanticism and which bear more relation to the work of those actually involved in social administration.

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WHATEVER happened to THE DEBT?

Paul Keating's One Nation made a clear break with some of the economic orthodoxies of the 1980s. In the process, however, it contrived to write out of the picture our national obsession of the 80s: the national debt. Here Trevor Stegman argues the debt problem hasn't gone away: if anything it's got more pressing. And below Greg Mahony and David Burchell insist that the politics of austerity isn't going to go away, either.
Paul Keating's February *One Nation* statement represented a significant change of vision in the government's conduct of macroeconomic policy. It recognised both the need for a fiscal stimulus (by increased government spending) to a stagnant economy with an unacceptably high level of unemployment, and the importance of public infrastructure and social investment in providing enhanced national productive capacity. The statement's most startling feature, however, was the absence of any significant initiatives specifically directed at that problem which, for the last decade, has been Australia's chief policy preoccupation—the external constraint on domestic economic growth. *One Nation*'s failure to attack this issue adequately, or even to acknowledge the failure of past policy strategies, highlights its inadequacy as a blueprint for future policy directions.

There seems no reason for disagreement about the general nature of Australia's external constraint problem. We spend about 17-18% of the national income generated by domestic production (GDP) on imports of goods and services. This percentage has remained remarkably stable over the boom and bust cycles of the 1980s and early 1990s. The level of expenditure on imports rises (and falls) with the level of GDP, not just because, with higher national income, households spend more on imported consumer goods, but also because higher productive activity implies higher imports of capital equipment.

Since increases in GDP inevitably result in increases in expenditure on imports, unless there is an adequate contribution to the increase in production from export growth, strong GDP growth will lead to a deterioration in the balance of payments on current account. Thus the ability of the Australian economy to generate the GDP growth necessary for increased employment and living standards is constrained by our export performance. This external constraint, and the failure of policies to deal with it, have provided the main problem for the Labor government since it was first elected in 1983.

In the first years of the Labor government (from 1983 to 1985) the combination of expansionary, pro-growth fiscal policy, and a wages policy based around the Accord had demonstrated an ability to generate GDP and employment growth without an accompanying surge in inflation. However, the deteriorating current account position and the consequent increases in external debt meant that by 1985 there was perceived to be an urgent need for policy to ease the external constraint. There was at the time general agreement about the requirements necessary for easing this external constraint: a restructuring of the composition of aggregate production of goods and services in favour of production for increased and new export markets and (more controversially) some import replacement. Without restructuring we would be left reliant on a narrow range of commodity-based exports, the markets for which are subject to short term volatility and poor longer term prospects. The alternative to restructuring is a policy of restriction: tailoring GDP growth to the performance of existing export markets. Or, put more bluntly, a policy of subordinating domestic economic growth to the economic fortunes of our trading partners.

The policy strategy to achieve this restructuring was to allow a substantial depreciation in the value of the A$ in 1985, to ensure through supportive wages policy that this was translated into increased international competitiveness for Australian industry, and to rely on the increased competitiveness to provide the incentive for restructuring.

While a degree of industry-government co-operative planning remained in some areas (eg, the motor vehicle and steel industries), the thrust of government strategy was to eschew direct involvement in the redirection of resources and to provide a 'level playing field' on which to allow market forces to provide the reallocative signals. In line with this strategy the government began the move away from quotas and tailored-to-measure tariff protection and toward the removal of industry specific tax incentives and subsidies.

Some immediate adverse effects on the current account from the 1985 depreciation were expected (the 'J-curve' phenomenon). However, continual failure of the trade ac-
count to respond indicated the lack of capacity of Australian industry to exploit the opportunities of increased international competitiveness. Industrial restructuring requires new capital expenditure to provide the capacity to meet new export and import replacement opportunities. The prerequisite for a restructuring of productive capacity is therefore not only an adequate level of overall investment expenditure but also a shift in its composition between different sectors in the economy toward investment in those sectors with new export and import-replacement potential. If Australia is to change the structure of its production the first thing we should see is a change in the pattern of its investment expenditure.

In the budget speeches of 1987 and 1988 then Treasurer Paul Keating asserted that this structural shift in the composition of investments was in fact taking place, with a shift towards the "traded goods sector" (defined by Treasury as mining and manufacturing). However, a more detailed analysis of the sectoral composition of Australian investment expenditure, undertaken at The Centre for Applied Economic Research at the University of New South Wales, concluded that by the end of 1988 there had been no significant changes in the sectoral composition of aggregate investment as a result of the currency depreciation. The results of this study suggested that the "restructuring through currency depreciation" strategy had failed. The government's retreat in 1989 to a policy of restriction of the level of economic activity with tight fiscal policy and high interest rates appeared to constitute a tacit admission of this failure. Rather than an explicit acknowledgment, however, policy statements from 1989 presented a different perspective on the current account problem, to justify the "recession we had to have". Rather than a structural problem (too high a proportion of aggregate expenditure on imports and too low a proportion of aggregate production devoted to exports), the current account deficit was now simply represented in policy statements as the excess of total spending over total domestic production. The cure was to be simply public expenditure restraint.

It should be evident that a policy of restricting the level of economic activity (like the tourniquet for the bleeding limb) provides no long term solution to the balance of payments problem—however necessary it might be in the short run. It is a dangerous oversimplification to see Australia's current account problem as merely the excess of domestic expenditure over production or, in consequence, as capable of correction through the restriction of domestic expenditure. As expenditure in general is reduced through tight fiscal and monetary policy, so is domestic production. The trade balance only improves to the extent that lower levels of economic growth (or even negative growth) mean lower imports for a given level of exports. Since restricting the amount of domestic expenditure does not directly increase exports, nor change the composition of expenditure between imports and domestically produced goods, it only allows a cyclical improvement in the trade balance. It comes at the cost of increased unemployment. And as economic growth and employment recover, the current account problem will re-emerge.

There are two additional reasons why the restrictive policies of 1989 and 1990 could provide no real solution to Australia's current account problem. Firstly, the use of high interest rates to restrict expenditure is likely to be harmful to export industries by raising their costs and tending to push the exchange rate up. Secondly, by far the biggest debit item on the current account is the interest payments to service foreign debts—the accumulated result of past current account deficits. In view of the nature of Australia's current account deficit and the substantial contribution of debt-service payments, clearly the solution lies not in a recession-induced fall in import demand, but in a stronger and more diversified export performance.

The recession of late 1990 deepened over 1991 and was still at its trough in early 1992. The One Nation statement was a correct, if belated, shift in policy priority to employment growth in this dire situation. The awful arithmetic of labour force, employment and output growth rates means that the economy must grow by approximately 3% p.a. just to keep the unemployment rate from increasing. A fall in the unemployment rate will require a faster rate of growth.

The crucial question for the government's recovery strategy remains: can Australia afford this rate of GDP growth without a deterioration in the current account and unsustainable or undesirable increases in foreign debt levels? We could not afford economic growth rates of a level sufficient to reduce unemployment over the 1980s and 1990s. What then has changed with regard to our export markets or the domestic economy to ease the external constraint?

Momentous events in Europe, South Africa and Asia, and in US international relations make prediction about future international trade patterns and therefore Australia's export performance, at best, uncertain. Our capacity for growth then depends on the extent to which we are now in a better structural position to cope with the uncertainties of the world economy.

To the limited extent that One Nation addresses these questions, it is surprisingly sanguine and unconvincingly optimistic.

One Nation points to some shift in the pattern of exports. A higher proportion of exports, it is assumed, will go to Asia—a region whose future growth prospects are expected to be better than for Europe and the US. The statement also emphasises what in reality is an extremely small increase in non-commodity exports (an increase from 29% to 31% of total exports over the last decade) as evidence of structural adjustment.

There have been some suggestions that, in response to the collapse in domestic demand, some manufacturers have shifted products overseas at 'dumped' prices. If this is the case, these manufacturing exports are likely to fall again with a recovery in domestic demand. On this point it is ironic that the only two significant manufacturing industries with long term export strategies are the motor vehicle industry and the steel industry—the two industries
where there has been some government-industry co-operative planning.

While Paul Keating appears to want to believe that there must have been some gain from the pain of the recession, a more realistic view would find no reason to conclude that we are better off structurally now than we were in 1989. Indeed, since the recession has brought a dramatic collapse in investment expenditure on plant and equipment, one might suspect that we are worse off.

The recovery strategy does include some initiatives aimed at stimulating the level of private investment: more generous depreciation allowances and improved access to finance for certain types of investment expenditure. The latter proposal betokens some small hint of a more targeted approach, since the criteria include industry efficiency standards (the absence of tariff protection, efficient work practices). However, there is no attempt to provide specific incentives for investment in, or even to identify, particular industries whose development can provide an improved basis for economic growth by easing the external constraint. The argument that governments cannot pick winners, and that structural adjustment must be left to market forces, dies hard, especially in the light of the examples provided by the recent debacles of several state governments. Nevertheless, the high levels of private investment expenditure of the late 1980s, the direction of which was driven by market forces, did not flow into areas which might have improved the structure of the Australian economy.

Without an easing of the external constraint, we are condemned to more of the stop-go policies of the last decade. The One Nation document’s illustrative ‘scenarios’ concede that the forecast 4.75% GDP growth for 1992-93 will entail a deterioration in the current account—yet, according to the ‘scenario’ the current account magically improves down the track even though strong economic growth continues. A more likely scenario if the projected growth rates are achieved is a continuing deterioration in the current account—a deterioration which will require the reapplying of the monetary and fiscal brakes.

There is evidence of some breakout in official thinking about economic policy in Australia, from the sterile and narrow prejudices of recent years. For those who see advantages in a more active role for the federal government in the structural development of the Australian economy, and the scope for increased government-industry co-operative planning, One Nation was certainly a step in the right direction—but without some attention to the fundamental structural problems, it will not be nearly enough.

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The logic of austerity

There is a story about in Left-of-centre politics which goes something like this. In the 1980s public policy was dominated by the set of ideas conventionally summed up in shorthand fashion as ‘economic rationalism’—meaning, variously, a belief in the superior allocative skills of ‘free’ markets over governments, or an irrational prejudice in favour of the private as against the public sector or, again, a belief in the need for government spending to be continually curtailed. As a result the public sector, in relative terms, contracted, welfare became more closely targeted, and public infrastructure ran down.

Over the last few months, however, so the argument runs, there has been a seachange in the public debate—one marked, ironically, by Paul Keating’s accession to the prime ministership. The One Nation statement is sometimes taken as the token of this seachange. According to this argument, One Nation marks a vital point of departure from the orthodoxies of the 80s. It revives the idea of public spending as an antidote to economic slump; it places new importance on infrastructure spending; it hints at new
initiatives to stimulate industry. Keynes may not be dead after all. (This is, of course, the mere skeleton off the story. In another, 'Left', variation, 'economic rationalism' is still alive and well, and won't be going away until Labor is magically replaced as the major force in Left-of-centre politics by any one of a number of competing 'alternatives'.)

We want to argue here that this story, while a seductive one, is not a very plausible analysis either of the current economic climate or of the shift in emphasis, such as it is, in public policy. We do not seek to do this out of a spirit of wilful perversity. Nor are we suggesting that the language of economic constraint is somehow good for the soul. Still less are we motivated by misplaced sympathy with the goals of 'economic rationalism'. Rather, we aim to explain why it is that the waning of the (as marxists used to call it) subjective belief in certain economic and political doctrines is essentially unrelated to the real and 'objective' economic constraints which continue to trap public policy in Australia today.

There's no doubt that in certain (mostly modest) respects the One Nation statement represents a tangible shift in thinking from the non-interventionist stance towards industry and infrastructure of the 1980s. However, there are two essentially distinct issues here. The first is the economic and political assumptions upon which the policy is based. If 'policy dexterity' means a shift away from the intellectual straitjacket of anti-interventionism then, in principle at least, that is all to the good. At the practical level, of course, this is only the first hurdle: the fact of being more disposed towards intervention does not for a moment suggest that the forms of intervention adopted must necessarily be wise ones—as the evidence of various state-level interventionist failures in the 1980s attests.

But it is the most arrant wishful thinking (or worse) to suggest that something has happened over the last few months to abolish the real ('objective') constraints on public policy's room to move. And this is, of course, precisely what One Nation tries to do. Its 'scenarios' for Australia's economic development over the next five years are almost universally regarded by independent commentators as laughable; as Peter Walsh implied in our last issue, they were probably dreamt up in the prime minister's office. And to the extent that One Nation's bodgie figures serve to spirit away some of the genuine imperatives for economic austerity in the last few years, we think that it should be condemned by anyone on the Left with a concern for intellectual rigour and consistency.

(i) The magnitude of the problem
As Trevor Stegman argues above, there is a single issue which overshadows Australian public policy today, and it is the nature and extent of the external constraint on Australia's ability to achieve sustainable economic growth. Partly perhaps as a result of Paul Keating's success in banishing the problem from public debate over the last few months, there seems to a certain forgetfulness at present about quite how monstrous is the degree of this incubus. One statistic may be enough to focus our minds on the problem. The Sydney Morning Herald's Paul Cleary notes (20.4.92) that the most optimistic scenario in the Opposition's Fightback! package is scenario C. Under scenario C, 'in the best of all possible worlds', Australia's foreign debt is predicted to rise to 54% of GDP by 2001. This, as Cleary notes, is some constraint. It would dwarf the impact of foreign investment in real estate in this country which regularly works righteous Left pundits into a lather. It would remove virtually any freedom to move for Australian policymakers.

The current account constraint dominates economic policy more narrowly, but it also casts its shadow over all other areas of policy which rely on the fruits of economic growth for their wellbeing. For the fundamental dilemma of our economic situation for Left-of-centre politics is this. The political compromise of postwar society required that increases in social expenditure be funded through economic growth rather than redistribution. Yet our external constraint is such that, in the absence of any fundamental change in the structure of the Australian economy, any increase in economic growth serves only to increase our indebtedness and further tighten the screws on the room to move of public policy.

(ii) The theory
There is, of course, an attitude on the Left which says that this need not be our concern. After all, the bulk of the debt is private; why should governments have to tighten their belts to make up for the foolishness of our failed 'entrepreneurs'? And this has been mirrored by similar arguments from the Right—most notably from Professor John Pitchford of the Australian National University, who suggests that governments ought to leave the debt problem to the private sector to solve. There are sound practical reasons for finding this point of view absurd; after all, surely the Left more than anyone else ought to be concerned with the consequences of objective economic forces which threaten to rob us of whatever level of economic sovereignty persists in this world of internationalised economies.

However, there are also compelling theoretical reasons for suggesting that economic dissidents in particular ought to take the external constraint more seriously than does
However, there are also compelling theoretical reasons for suggesting that economic dissidents in particular ought to take the external constraint more seriously than does Professor Pitchford. Here a historical parallel comes to mind. In the 1930s, Keynes' economics provided legitimacy for the instinct of many policy-makers that the slump ought to be alleviated by increasing public spending, particularly on public works. Less well-known, however, is that the bulk of orthodox economists tacitly went along with Keynes' view, even though their theory strongly rejected it. Only a few diehards, notably at the London School of Economics (LSE), continued to argue, Canute-like, that the best response to slump was to further reduce public spending.

Professor Pitchford bears an uncanny resemblance to those old diehards of the LSE. He wants orthodox economists to take their theory seriously. And, strictly speaking, he is right. For orthodox economic theory, as Tony Aspromourgos has elsewhere pointed out, has no answer to the question of why countries like Australia develop permanent structurally-based balance of payments problems. The assumption of orthodox theory is that any current account constraint will be only a transitory one. Put crudely, the theory believes that, left to itself, the market will move to solve the problem by readjusting the nation's real exchange rate at a more appropriate level, and the system will fairly quickly return unaided to equilibrium. There is no need for any regime of fiscal austerity, any more than there is a need for active industrial policy to try to alter the structure of the economy.

Political and economic dissidents, however, have a different body of theory at their disposal, and it comes to quite different conclusions. In this view, the current account constraint of nations with a persistent trade deficit cannot be left to 'solution' by market forces, for two reasons. First, there is no reason to assume that market forces will establish an appropriate real exchange rate, or establish it quickly. Second, there is no reason to assume that market forces, left to themselves, will restructure the economy in such a fashion as to boost exports sufficiently to remove the current account restraint.

Nor is this merely a question of theoretical nicety. The case for an activist industrial policy in Australia today depends precisely upon this assumption that the market does not spontaneously restructure economies like ours onto economically sustainable paths. But this assumption comes at a cost—the cost of taking the dissident theory seriously, and following its logic even when it happens to be inconvenient to the political preferences of leftish-minded people generally.

(iii) 'N+1'

A senior Labor parliamentarian has a joke about the Left he terms 'n+1'. The expression refers to the self-created role of the Left as the big spenders in the decision-making processes of Labor governments. The joke runs like this. When the government draws up a major policy initiative such as the One Nation statement, the Left gathers in a huddle (or two) and decides on a collective policy position (or positions). The preference on Cabinet's part is that the initiative should involve the spending of $n million. The Left decides unfailingly that the government ought to spend $n+1 million. Cabinet 'takes the Left's views into consideration', and emerges with the original figure of $n million.

Of course, it's not really a joke; it's too close to the bone to the role the Left often plays in policy debates. Rather than having a clear, coherent strategy and making that the basis for its policy positions, the Left takes on the persona of kind-hearted aunt and proposes simply to offer more, to spend more, to demand more.

In the case of the One Nation statement, the position adopted by the more thoughtful figures on the Left was that 'there is more room to move than the orthodoxy allows', as a rationale for arguing for a much larger injection of public funds into the economy. It's difficult to avoid the suspicion that this was just a more polite version of 'n+1'. The extent and nature of the external constraint on growth in Australia is such that any source of growth can be a problem. To argue that 'there is more room to move than the orthodoxy allows' is to hint at some more detailed analysis of what the effects of addi-
We argued above that economic and political dissenters need to take the propositions of their economic theory seriously. Part of the 'n+1' problem is that the 'dissenting academy' chooses to subscribe only to a conveniently truncated version of this theory. According to this point of view, Keynesianism is concerned with the need for higher levels of public spending in general, and a larger public sector in particular. It thus makes 'economic sense' to always simply argue for more—for 'n+1'.

But the political significance of Keynes' economics in fact has little to do with this. Keynes was concerned primarily with the level and composition of effective demand—in other words, with the various components of economic growth. In itself, this has nothing to do with the size of government or the level of government expenditure. This suggests that in the light of the external constraint thoughtful economic dissenters should focus more on the allocation of public sector expenditure rather than stressing the need for greater public expenditure for its own sake, and be less concerned with the level of economic growth in itself than with the question of its composition. In short, that thoughtful dissenters should be less concerned with advocating 'more of everything' than with how to generate the conditions to sustain the levels of expenditure they might prefer.

(iv) Consequences
All of this may make some readers feel gloomy, or even irritated. After all, isn't this just an argument for acquiescing in the status quo? Where's the radicalism, the fire in the belly? And there's no doubt that austerity is an acquisitiveness which is unpalatable. The 'dissenting academy' has nothing to fear from, to borrow a phrase, 'a will to truth'; rather, wilful self-deception is, as so often, its greatest temptation and danger.

However, the fact that there is a logic to the politics of austerity doesn't mean that there's nothing to be done but accept the status quo. In the short term, it's an argument for insisting that public expenditure restraint be shared more equitably than it is at present—an argument which, if followed conscientiously enough, might lead the Left into some unpopular postures on tertiary education funding and telecommunications, for instance.

In the medium term, the arguments advanced here provide a compelling logic for a more activist industrial policy in order to restructure the Australian economy along a more sustainable path. However, such an industrial policy would need to be based on a wider analysis of the structure of the economy and the possible sources of economic success—the sort of sectoral analysis which it's rumoured John Dawkins wants to impose on a presumably reluctant Industry Commission. And specific industry proposals will have to be justifiable within such an analysis, not just as items on a shopping-list; after all, industry policy itself will have adverse effects on the current account, to the extent that it stimulates domestic demand.

Finally, in the longer term (and as Tony Aspromourgos argues in the article cited above), these arguments suggest the need for international alliances with like-minded countries in the region and elsewhere, to try to co-ordinate macroeconomic policy and policies of structural adjustment. For the current account problems we face are ultimately international problems which, within a far more integrated world economy than in the past, will become the sine qua non of progressive advance.

These are unpopular arguments to mount at a moment like this. Paul Keating is trying to sidetrack concerns with the economic constraint in his all-out drive to keep the Coalition from office late this year or early next year. In the process he may make a few more spending promises in the August Budget, to try to raise consumer confidence further prior to the poll. That is politically understandable. At the same time, there is a strong urge in Left-of-centre politics to be rid of the language of austerity which bedevilled the late 1980s, and to dismiss all arguments for austerity as the ravings of 'economic rationalists'. That is less understandable, and somewhat ineffectual. After the 1992/93 election, however, we may rest assured that the language of austerity will return, and that Paul Keating's brand new day will begin to seem rather like yesterday (except, maybe, rather stormier). It would be as well that political dissenters were prepared for this eventuality, and understood the economic processes that underlie it, rather than succumbing to the fashionable comforting myths.

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2. The basis for this economic corpus, for those readers interested in such things, being the Keynesian theory of effective demand and the classical theory of distribution, as reformulated in Piero Sraffa's *Production of Commodities by means of Commodity* (1960).
3. In fact, one such analysis was prepared at the University of Newcastle by Roy Green, Bill Mitchell and Martin Watts: see 'Too Little too Late?' ALR 138, March.
PROBLEM:

Police

Police racism has recently hurtled across our TV screens in full glowing colour. It was accompanied by much wailing and gnashing of teeth. But what is to be done about the police and their attitudes? Chris Cunneen investigates.

We have recently been treated to some breathtaking examples of overt police racism in the public sphere. The amateur video of NSW police officers with their faces darkened, portraying with levity the deaths of David Gundy and Lloyd Boney caused revulsion amongst many Australians across the nation.

The ABC documentary Cop it Sweet showed Redfern police openly referring to Aboriginal people as "coons", self-consciously using Aboriginality as a reason for suspicion and questioning, and at the same time arresting Aboriginal people for using language identical to that frequently employed by the police officers themselves. Meanwhile complaints of police violence, harassment and intimidation against Aboriginal youth and adults continued to be heard from the outstations and communities in the Northern Territory to the streets of Sydney's Glebe and Ultimo.

These events have unfolded against the backdrop of the findings of several official reports and inquiries. The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody concluded in 1991 with 339 recommendations, many of which were directed at reforming police practices. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission’s National Inquiry into Racist Violence, also completed in 1991, found that racist violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was nation-wide and severe, and that Aboriginal/police relations had reached a critical point due to widespread police involvement in acts of racist violence. Several of the 67 recommendations were aimed at reforming the police.

Other reports have continued to surface. A study released in March 1992 by Sydney University’s Institute of Criminology found that the number of Aboriginal people imprisoned nationally had actually risen by 25% during the four year period of the Royal Commission. Another report issued at the same time by the International Commission of Jurists found that in north west New South Wales:
The criminal justice system is of doubtful relevance to the Aboriginal community... what was observed was a series of small communities which were heavily policed and in which street offences were the subject of arrest and prosecution even in circumstances where no useful purpose could be served by intervention of the criminal process.

Finally the US State Department in its 1991 report on human rights in Australia found that there was "credible evidence that Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders in custody are frequently mistreated."

Before attempting to answer the question of what can be done to change the situation of police racism, it is worth exploring the nature of that racism. It is evident that the way in which racism is conceptualised will influence the types of policy interventions which are formulated to deal with it. It is stated often enough that the police simply reflect the racist attitudes prevalent in society generally, but how useful is such a blanket approach in developing anti-racist strategies? Similarly, the move to screen racist police may be ineffective if the strongest factors in determining police racism are the institutional processes of police work and a range of police subcultural values.

A useful starting point in attempting to unravel the dynamics of police racism has been suggested by John Lea in his work on racism among British police. Lea suggests that a classification of the types of racism can be obtained through combining two polarities: direct and indirect racism, and institutional and individual racism. Direct racism refers to practices or policies which are overtly and consciously racist in their intent and application; indirect racism refers to practices or policies which, while not racist in their intent, are racist in their effects. The polarity between individual and institutional racism refers to where the action originates.

There are many examples which could be drawn of these different facets of police racism. For instance, many of the incidents related by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
people to the National Inquiry into Racist Violence were simple examples of direct individual racism by police officers. Over 80% of young Aboriginal people who were interviewed in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia complained of violence and verbal racist abuse by police officers. There were also many examples of direct institutional racism by police forces. The use of the NSW Tactical Response Group to raid 10 houses in Eveleigh Street, Redfern in 1990 was an example of direct institutional racism because "race" was used to guide fundamental policy decisions in relation to the use of specialist police squads. For this reason the National Inquiry found the raid to be a significant act of racist violence.

It is also not difficult to draw attention to indirect forms of individual and institutional racism in policing. In particular the practical application of existing legislation may constitute indirect racism. The NSW Summary Offences Act, which reintroduced the offence of offensive language with a potential three month gaol sentence, does not, in its drafting, mention Aboriginal people. Yet clearly in its application it has a far greater impact upon Aboriginal people.

The legislation legitimises racist policing. It does this in its potential application to behaviour in public places and through its broad and discretionary definition of what may constitute an offence. The recent report by the International Commission of Jurists, referred to above, draws attention to street drinking legislation which may well constitute indirect discrimination because of its application to areas where large numbers of Aboriginal people live. Similarly the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody noted that

In some places the laws which police officers have been directed to enforce have been based on unfair and racist assumptions that Aboriginal people, by their very presence in a community, offend non-Aboriginal codes of conduct.

So where do we attack racism by the police? At the individual level? The institutional level? And which is more important to eradicate, direct or indirect racism?

It seems apparent that considerable public debate has been focused on the level of direct racism by individuals. Various policies and recommendations have been designed to counteract this level of racism. Recommendations made by the Royal Commission include a proposal to screen police recruits for racism, to improve police training to include an understanding Aboriginal issues, and an increased employment of Aboriginal people as police officers. Where cases of individual racism are identified it is recommended that the conduct be dealt with as a serious breach of discipline.

In his discussion of the British police Lea has referred to these arguments as centring around a ‘bad apple’ approach. The theory is that it is only normal that the police force, like any other public body, will contain its fair share of racist individuals. An implication of this argument is that there is nothing specific about the nature of police work or the broader functions of policing as a state institution which might develop or sustain particular types of racist activity. Such a position of course draws attention away from the issue that the institution itself may be racist. Furthermore a fundamentally conservative implication of this approach is that the police as an institution cannot be held responsible for the actions of some of its members.

This type of argument was paramount after the release of the ABC documentary Cop it Sweet. Senior police officers and the police association warned against "scapegoating" a few individuals, preferring to rely on the argument that "society" was racist and these officers simply reflected the wider social values. The logic of this argument was then used to justify taking no disciplinary action against the individuals involved in the use of racist abuse. The failure to take action was contrary to recommendation 60 of the Royal Commission and recommendation 24 of the National Inquiry into Racist Violence. The message from this incident seemed to be that despite a certain level of moral indignation and approbation, police officers could behave in an overtly racist manner without the fear of disciplinary action.

Other approaches which tend to individualise the problem of police racism concentrate on the "personality" or social characteristics of individuals attracted to the police force. The policy implications which flow from such an approach tend to rely on more socially diversified recruitment practices and improved training in "race awareness" or "community relations".

What are the general social characteristics of police officers? An analysis of 1981 Census data showed the typical police officer to be a young male born in Australia who had left school at 14-16 years of age. More than nine out of ten police officers were male and most were likely to be married. Police women tended to be younger and unmarried. The age of police officers was considerably younger than the general workforce, and they tended to be far more culturally homogeneous. Some 86.5% of police were born in Australia. For 94% of these, their parents were also born in Australia. Of the 13.5% of officers born overseas, some 9.3% were born in the U.K. or Ireland. In the past decade EEO strategies may have made some indent on the age, gender and cultural homogeneity of the police, although comprehensive and contemporary national analysis is lacking.

There have been some moves to increase the entry of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and non-English speaking background people into the police forces as fully qualified officers. However the commitment varies across jurisdictions. For instance at the time of the Inquiry into Racist Violence neither the Australian Federal police nor the Tasmanian police had any program to actively recruit Aboriginal people or people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

It is also worth noting that recommendations concerning the increased employment of Aboriginal people have been
reiterated by a number of Federal and State Inquires and Commissions over the last 15 years including the Laverton Royal Commission (WA), the Commonwealth House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs Report on Aboriginal Legal Aid, the Australian Law Reform Commission's Report on the Recognition of Aboriginal Customary Law, the Human Rights Commission's Racist Violence Report and the Royal Commission Into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

Recommendations have been made by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the Human Rights Commission proposing changes to procedures in the training, selection and promotion of police officers. The Human Rights Commission noted that the extent of training in "community relations" varies across jurisdictions. For instance, in comparison to other States, NSW recruits receive relatively extensive training. By contrast new recruits in Western Australia receive their training in Aboriginal issues in a single day.

It is difficult to judge the overall impact of training; one day seminars may simply constitute public relations exercises and have no impact on day-to-day policing practices. The NSW experience suggests that the impact of more extensive training may be either negligible or slow in producing any tangible effects.

Another and related way of conceptualising police racism is to see such racism as developing in the occupational culture through the nature of police work itself. According to this view racism develops out of the nature of interaction between the police, Aboriginal people and other "ethnic minorities". A policy implication of this approach is the development of a panoply of community liaison schemes. Both the Human Rights Commission and the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody reviewed various aspects of community relations strategies, some of which involved liaison schemes and others which could more properly be considered as community justice mechanisms. The Human Rights Commission noted that in a number of States there were substantial criticisms by Aboriginal people of some liaison schemes. Indeed there were a number of cases of police violence where Aboriginal police aides had been present during the alleged assaults.

The most positive responses were associated with the Victorian Community Justice Panels and various community policing schemes by Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. Clearly a major criterion for deciding the value of any liaison or community based scheme must be the extent of Aboriginal control over the scheme. Otherwise such schemes could be dismissed as simply constituting part of the indigenisation of social control. There is a point of view which argues that the recruitment of indigenous people to enforce the laws of the colonial state masks the coercive nature of the state, relies essentially on a model of integration into colonial legal relations, and is likely to impede the processes of self-determination.

The final way of conceptualising police racism which I wish to consider concerns institutional racism by the state. An emphasis on state racism draws attention to the direct and indirect institutional practices of the police as a state apparatus. Such an approach would need to consider the historical functions of police in enforcing the legal relations of a colonial society, the contemporary work practices of the police, and the nature of legislation which is enforced.

Again both the Royal Commission and the Human Rights Commission paid some attention to the institutional level of policing. Consideration was also given to the nature of over-policing in Aboriginal communities. Both inquiries draw attention to the way in which Aboriginal people had in many areas of Australia come to be defined as a "law and order problem" and the way such definitions had legitimised extraordinary police responses. Finally, both inquiries considered the historical function of police in controlling Aboriginal resistance to colonisation. One of the main benefits of considering police racism at this broad level is to focus on the colonial nature of the Australian state and to generate discussion on the issue of self-determination and sovereignty.

On the one hand there is no simple way to change the processes of police racism effectively. The extensive nature of recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the Human Rights Commission’s National Inquiry into Racist Violence reflect the diversity of possible approaches with their attempts to promote structural change as well as focusing on issues such as screening, selection, training and promotion. On the other hand the most straightforward approach, in theory at least, to eliminating police racism would be to remove the police from being in a position of control over Aboriginal people; in other words to make police racism irrelevant to Aboriginal people.

Ultimately discussions must return to the fundamental questions of self-determination and recognition of sovereignty. Many non-indigenous Australians have still to recognize the fact that indigenous people have a right to self-determination. The exercise of such self-determination may well mean the right to control indigenous justice systems. Certainly the evidence so far is that the most effective and humane justice mechanisms applied to Aboriginal people are those that are under direct community control and involve self-policing. This is not to say that other forms of reforming police racism should not be supported. It is simply to recognize that they must be contingent on the recognition of self-determination as the first principle.

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The Comrade’s CAP

The new East European governments have been keen to make a clean break with the past. In fact, they’ve been keen to forget the past. Paul Hockenos contends that this collective amnesia bodes ill for a democratic political culture in the old Soviet bloc.

Milan Kundera opens The Book of Laughter and Forgetting with a parable about the treatment of history under communism. On a snowy winter’s day in 1948, Czech communist leader Klement Gottwald posed for a photo with his inner circle. Next to him stood Comrade Clementis, who took off his own fur cap and set it on Gottwald’s bare head. After the purges four years later, Clementis was air-brushed out of the photo. All that remained of him was his cap on Gottwald’s head.

When the revolutions of 1989 brought down the Eastern bloc dictatorships, they swept away the facade of historical half-truths, distortions and lies upon which the ruling elites grounded their legitimacy. If “the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting”, as Kundera puts it, then in 1989 memory was victorious.

The close of a discredited historical epoch, however, poses new questions about remembrance and forgetting, about the new relationship between ‘man’ and power. In a region so steeped in historical tragedy as Eastern and Central Europe, the form of democracy that evolves is implicitly informed by the post-communist systems’ relation to their pasts.

In a word, at least, all of Europe’s new member-states concur that the dissolution of single-party rule constitutes a clean break with the communist era. But like the will to erase a bad dream, the East Europeans have tried to put the last four decades behind them as if they had never existed. To the detriment of their societies, the people of the former Eastern bloc have concentrated their collective energy on forgetting.

Of the many aspects of political transition, the Central and East Europeans have taken little pain to confront the legacy of Stalinism in their countries. Certainly, previously sup-
pressed knowledge about the political gulags and the Gestapo tactics of the secret police have done much to underline the totalitarian core of even the 'soft' regimes such as Hungary. Yet that examination has stopped drastically short of a searching investigation into the past. As quickly as Romanian revolutionaries changed Lenin Strada to Strada Demokratiei, the complex questions of responsibility and guilt were brushed aside to clear the way for the new era. The necessity of a penetrating Aufarbeitung der Geschichte, or coming to terms with the past, is nowhere on the young democracies' agendas.

Immediately after the Eastern bloc regimes tumbled, even the top nomenklatura professed that they had been closet democrats all along, pushing relentlessly for change from within the structures of power. For the discontented populations, the fact that the state outlawed political opposition and ruthlessly crushed popular uprisings served as a handy and not altogether unconvincing alibi for their own political conformism. Admittedly, communism pressed the average citizen into active complicity with the system, unless she or he was prepared to sacrifice a normal life. As party member, low-level bureaucrat or obedient fellow-traveller, the average person struck his or her compromise with power. In former East Germany today, weekly revelations about the co-operation of even leading figures in the pre-1989 underground opposition with the secret police has exposed the shocking totality of society's complicity. In hindsight, the Vaclav Havels and the Adam Michniks stand out as the precious few.

This broad collaboration with the powers-that-were explains the readiness to skip over a full coming-to-accounts with the past. With the single exception of former East Germany, the calls of yesterday's dissidents to open the secret police files have run into brick walls. Nor is it simply a matter of politics that most of the democratic dissident-led parties fared poorly at the polls. The majority of the populus not only identifies better with the careerist-turned-nationalist, but finds its conscience better protected there, too.

It is that sort of bad conscience which demands that somebody from the very top be indicted for the crimes of the systems as a whole. The trials of Bulgaria's former dictator or a handful of Ceausescu's secret police are aimed at scapegoating a few of the ringleaders and putting the issue to rest. Perhaps the pinnacle of absurdity is the Federal Republic's demand that former German Democratic Republic (GDR) President Erich Honecker be retrieved from his death bed (at the moment in the Chilean Embassy in Moscow) to face trial for the state's shoot-to-kill order along the former German-German border. If Honecker is convicted, the implication is that the majority is absolved from responsibility for the years of dutiful voting in the GDR's showcase elections.

Czechoslovakia's far-reaching new law that bans all members of the 'old structures' from a public office for five years purports to solve the problem of the past with a simple administrative stroke of the pen. The blanket 'collective guilt' of the nomenklatura (including reform-minded Prague Spring communists such as Alexander Dubcek) again effectively translates into society's 'collective innocence'.

The release of the individual (or at least most individuals) from accountability lays a precarious basis for a new democratic political culture. Most importantly, it fails to replace the individual's consciously hypocritical acquiescence to state power with an active ethic of civic responsibility or political obligation. Despite the introduction of multi-party electoral democracy, the implication persists that the system and its ruling elite alone shoulder the burden of social accountability. In Hungary, for example, the Germans are to blame for the Hungarian holocaust, the 'Russians' for Soviet communism and now, in some circles,
the Jews for the failures of capitalism. Turn-outs for local elections in Hungary have dropped from 40% to 20% and, in some recent votes down below 15%. There are more than a few Hungarians who would happily revert to the good old days of Kadarism, when Hungarian President Janos Kadar (1956-1986) offered the ‘cheeriest barracks’ in Eastern Europe a relatively high standard of living in return for its political passivity.

The illusionary tabula rasa also undermines the need for society to reflect upon the consciousness that evolved under the conditions of the past 40 years. Since communism, as well as ‘socialism’, has been forever assigned to history’s dustbin, there appears no pressing need for society to come to terms with just what that system was or how it continues to manifest itself in the present. In depoliticised societies, the totalitarian thought-structures of the old systems fuel today’s chauvinism. In the political sphere, a familiar authoritarianism, intolerance and provincialism, persist in the reigning power structures—although now under the name of nationalism, ‘communism’s opposite’. And, by definitively closing the book on the past, the language of socialism also remains trapped in Stalinism’s wreckage. Thus, the possibility of social democracy is also neatly nipped in the bud.

The denial of the communist era has led political forces in Central and Eastern Europe to two general directions. In liberal democratic circles—those most strongly identified with the dissident tradition—the 1989 revolutions are seen as the chance to embark upon a qualitatively new political future. Their model is contemporary western democracy, something that most of them admit has never existed in its modern form in Eastern Europe. The second and stronger tendency is a conservative nationalism that views the communist era as a Soviet-imposed interruption of a national democratic tradition which had flourished prior to World War Two. The nationalists’ rhetoric is of a return to the past, to the interwar period when Hungarians ruled Hungary and Poles ruled Poland.

Unfortunately, today’s elected rulers have sought refuge in historical myths no less pernicious than those of their communist predecessors. The nationalist revivals throughout the region have prompted sweeping historical revisions which uncritically glorify the nation’s past from the Middle Ages to the present. Amid a new vacuum of power and ideology, these embellished histories remain one of the few threads underpinning the legitimacy of many of the post-communist governments. With economic collapse and political instability looming, liberals too have stooped to tap that national sentiment. The deficit of alternative politi-
cal ideas has presented conservative nationalists with an open field to define the nascent political culture.

The contention that the national culture stands firmly in the tradition of modern democracy enables political conservatives to anchor their own undemocratic ideologies in whitewashed national precedent. As the much-maligned object of communist propaganda, the fairytales of lost national glory are easily marketed. In Poland, the interwar period and its strong-arm leader, Marshal Jozef Pilsudski, is today held up as a model of Polish democracy. In fact, Pilsudski came to power in a bloody putsch four years before Poland’s first free elections and presided over gross human rights violations, the brutal crushing of strikes and virtual civil war with the national minorities.

Hungary’s conservative ruling coalition, led by the Hungarian Democratic Forum (HDF), harks back to the populist political culture of the country’s Christian Course during the 1920s and 30s. Picking up where that era left off, the new government restored the power of the Catholic Church and the unabashed exaltation of Hungarianism. The weak interwar democracy serves as the model for a style of rule today in which parliamentary opposition and public criticism are at best resentfully tolerated. Complete with the ugly chauvinism of a bygone age, it is an historical brand of political conservatism considerably less sophisticated than its modern counterparts in Western Europe.

After the humiliation of communism, the positive appraisal of the interwar years soothes bruised pride. First, it absolves the nation from the reality of its often ignominious prewar and wartime past. Second, it bolsters the logic that ‘we, the nation’ were always democrats and communism an inflicted aberration. Under the supra-collective cloak of the nation, individuals are relieved of responsibility for their actions and inaction.

Any criticism of the popular revisionism therefore strikes a sensitive nerve, making it difficult for real debate over domestic nationalism to enter political discourse. Anti-Semitism, for example, is alive and well in Hungary. In the government-friendly media, HDF populists continue to manipulate the anti-Jewish sentiment that proved so damaging to the intellectual-led free Democratic Party in the 1990 election. Yet in Hungary anti-Semitism itself is not discussed in terms of posing an impediment to democracy. Rather, it is criticism of the government’s anti-Semitic posturing which sometimes finds its way into public discussion that supposedly jeopardises the country’s return to Europe. The governing coalition’s supporters brand their critics as ‘un-Hungarian’ and ‘unpatriotic’ for libelling the nation (of which they consider themselves the sole representative) and discrediting Hungary in the eyes of the international community. This modus vivendi enables the regime to continue to stir anti-Semitic feelings with impunity.

Elsewhere, governments and oppositions alike have bound their fragile democracies to heritages with even darker pasts. In Romania, the rehabilitation of the World War Two fascist military dictator, Marshal Ion Antonescu, has near-unanimous public consent. The entire spectrum of political
parties are virtually at each others' throats to claim the legacy of "Romania's greatest national hero". On 1 June 1991, the 51st anniversary of Antonescu's execution, the Romanian parliament observed a minute's silence for its nation's misjudged son. "After 44 years, history has finally allowed the Romanians to shed a tear and light a candle for Ion Antonescu," wrote the leading democratic opposition daily, Romania Libra.

During Antonescu's rule (between 1940 and 1944) 400,000 Jews and tens of thousands of gypsies lost their lives. In Eichmann in Jerusalem, Hannah Arendt describes the horrors of the Romanian concentration camps as "more elaborate and more atrocious than anything in Germany". She writes that, in August 1941, before the Final Solution orders were given, Goebbels complained to Hitler that "Antonescu proceeds in these matters in a far more radical fashion than we have done up to the present".

Typically, the revisionists kindle the image of the nationalist leader as the anti-communist patriot, the martyred saviour of their misunderstood and long-suffering country. It was Antonescu, Romanians point out, who won back Romania's eastern territories in Bessarabia, annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940 under the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. The marshal's partnership with the fascist Iron Guard and Nazi Germany was simply a matter of national Realpolitik, they say, the unlucky fate of being squeezed between the Soviet Union and the Axis alliance. As for the Romanian Holocaust, they argue, it is a lie that Antonescu killed the Jews. In fact, he saved them. And the gypsies, well...

"Nationalist historians helped rouse the hatreds that had lain dormant for years in Yugoslavia."

Intellectuals, too, have jumped on the nationalist bandwagon. For many, the new religion serves as convenient therapy for their years of hack scholarship under communism. The nationalist fervour in Romania has fueled virulent anti-Semitism, a thriving ultra-right, and Nazi Germany was simply a matter of national Realpolitik, they say, the unlucky fate of being squeezed between the Soviet Union and the Axis alliance. As for the Romanian Holocaust, they argue, it is a lie that Antonescu killed the Jews. In fact, he saved them. And the gypsies, well...

The legacy of World War Two is a painful one for all Yugoslavs. Of the nearly one million people killed, as many died in inter-ethnic strife among themselves as died fighting the nazis. Today, the Croats insist that the number of Serbs, Gypsies and Jews massacred in the camps of the quisling Axis-allied Croatian state was only a tiny fraction of that claimed by the communists. Rather, Serbian royalist Chetniks were the real butchers. Croatia's President Franjo Tudjman (elected in 1990) made his name in the 1960s as a maverick historian who charged that only 30,000 people perished at the hands of the Ustashe fascists. One of Tudjman's first acts in office was to order that the Square for the Victims of fascism in the capital of Zagreb be renamed the square of the Croatian Giants. In the president's nationalist speeches, the words and symbols of the brutal wartime state appear again and again.

For Serbian politicians, meanwhile, Tudjman's nationalist party is synonymous with the Ustashe itself. Radical historians have stoked the fires, arguing that the bloodthirsty Ustashe slaughtered well over one million Serbs alone. The real memories and exaggerated horror stories have combined to strike the fear of God into the Serbian minority in Croatia. It is the legacy of the genocidal Ustashe state, the minority insists, that has driven them to take up arms against an independent Croatia.

The political vacuum in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe is one explanation for the ready embrace of rightwing ideologies of the inter-war era. Nor was the legacy of those nations' fascist collaboration constructively addressed, however, in the tense climate of post-war Eastern Europe. Since communism supposedly represented the final victory over nationalism and fascism, the new states simply denied the sources and continuities of those ideologies in society. At the same time, under the guise of socialist rhetoric, the ruling elites ruthlessly manipulated nationalism from above and perpetuated many of the totalitarian structures of fascism in the communist systems. When those historical nationalist ideologies raised their heads in the form of anti-communist opposition, the regimes quashed the 'counter-revolutionary' movements and imprisoned their leaders.

Nor can the majority of the Western Left get off scot-free from its responsibility for the situation in post-communist Eastern Europe. The Left's muted criticisms of the Eastern bloc dictatorships only contributed to the tarnished reputation of socialism of any kind in Eastern and Central Europe. Western Leftists wax indignant about the East Europeans' refusal to differentiate between a democratic socialism and stalinism, when they themselves never drew a clear line.

But, it seems, that part of history is quickly forgotten too.

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After the WALL

East Germany's introduction to capitalism has resulted in burgeoning inequality and social misery. Right? Wrong. Bruce Headey reports on the surprising results of the first in-depth analysis of social conditions there. The results suggest that old-style social democratic redistribution may have life left in it yet.

In retrospect it seems clear that most East Germans supported unification with the Federal Republic for two main reasons: they wanted Western-style democracy and a much improved standard of living. They have got the first. But what about the second?

Examination of changes in incomes, income inequality and satisfaction with living standards in 1990-91 reveals some surprising results. A recent survey tested some 'commonsense' hypotheses about the transition to a market economy, based on data collected both before and after the fall of the communist regime. These were:

- During the first stage of transition most East Germans suffered a decline in living standards.
- The income distribution became more unequal.
- People who were previously relatively advantaged became better-off, while disadvantaged people became worse-off. That is, in the transition to capitalism, the 'rich' became richer and the 'poor' became poorer.
- East Germans became increasingly dissatisfied with their incomes, standard of living and life-as-a-whole.
- Those whose standard of living actually improved became more satisfied, while those whose standard of living declined were dissatisfied.
- In the last year East Germans became more pessimistic about the future.

The results show that most of these 'commonsense' hypotheses are false. Why does 'reality' appear to defy commonsense? One major factor has been the impact of the federal government's taxes and benefits, which have redistributed incomes in ways that may not have been
These results astonished us and led us to search for an explanation. After much trial and error, it became clear that the main explanation was that the influence of the market, which increases inequality, is only coming slowly to East Germany, whereas the impact of the federal republic’s welfare state has been immediate and dramatic.

In trying to assess the relative impact of the market and the welfare state, we first examined shares of labour market earnings, excluding individuals with no earnings. This indicated a moderate increase in inequality. If the entire sample is considered, the share of the bottom 20% declined by 0.5% and the top was 2.8% better off. The equivalent figures excluding the commuters are 0.3% and 1.1%.

So the market has not yet greatly increased inequality for individuals who have remained in work. However, many people have lost their jobs, others have gone into early retirement, and still others are in short-time work.

Taking these people into account, it can be seen that, whether or not commuters are included, inequality of household earnings per capita (excluding government benefits) increased quite sharply between 1990 and 1991. The share of the bottom 20% declined by about 3%, and the top 20% gained 3-4%. The reason for the difference is that, although the market has not yet made individual earnings more unequal, it has had a substantial effect in reducing the effect of market forces has been to increase unemployment. The households earning the least are mainly those in which one or more people have lost their job, whereas households in the higher ranges are mainly those in which everyone has kept a job.

Under the former GDR’s tax-benefit system in 1990, 8.9% of income was transferred from the top 60% to the bottom 40% of households. Under the federal republic in 1991, 12.7% of total income was transferred to the bottom 40%. Presumably this result will surprise most readers, as it surprised us. In retrospect, however, it can be understood. The GDR government maintained a low degree of income inequality primarily by enforcing a fairly egalitarian gross income distribution. Its tax-benefit system was not exceptionally progressive. In particular, one should note that income tax was levied on most incomes at around 8%. In other words, it was close to being a flat rate tax. By contrast, the German federal government, in principle, leaves gross factor incomes to be determined by the market and then intervenes in favour of lower income groups.

In trying to understand the workings of the market in comparison with the welfare state, we have excluded pensioner households (head aged 65 or over). The federal government has been even more ‘generous’ to these households than to households on lower incomes. In January 1991, all pensions were increased by 45%, a policy action which at a stroke greatly improved the standard of living of nearly 20% of the population.

It is clear that so far in East Germany politics have been more important than economics. The federal government has been keen to improve the living standards of East Germans, and so have trade unions. Welfare state benefits have flowed generously since the unification of the two economies on July 1 1990, and this has mitigated the already patchy impact of the market on income inequality. Labour incomes have not yet become more unequal, but the effect of market forces has been to increase unemployment and so increase inequality of household earnings.
It is a common assumption that the demise of a command economy would enable those who were already relatively well off in East Germany to become better off, and would cause those who were worse off to decline further. This, too, appears to be unambiguously false.

Far from becoming better off, those who had been relatively advantaged in 1990 suffered a decline in real incomes, whereas those who were disadvantaged recorded an increase in income. Lest these results appear too surprising, it should be noted that somewhat similar figures for consecutive years are normal for Western countries, mainly due to changes in household size and to entries and exits from the labour force by members of the household. The main point here, however, is that we can reject the idea that people who had been 'rich' in East Germany in 1990 became richer by 1991, and the people who had been poor became poorer.

The figures also show an exceptional degree of volatility in the East German income distribution in 1990-91, compared to West Germany. Who have been the initial winners and who the initial losers after the revolution? The winners are virtually all households in which everyone kept a job. The losers are those households in which one or more members left the labour force (whether voluntarily or involuntarily). It should be remembered that, in many sectors of the economy, trade unions and professional associations were pressing for wage parity with the West. Virtually all people who have kept their jobs (except some who have gone on short-time work) have recorded remarkable increases. But of course many people have not kept their jobs.

In most households, labour force participation remained unchanged and earnings increased. However, more households lost than gained workers (by a ratio of nearly three to one) and in these households earnings substantially declined. In the small minority of households where labour force participation increased, earnings were well up.

We could suggest some more specific groups of winners. East Germans who commute to the West to work had average incomes in March 1991 which placed them in the top 20%, whereas in the previous year, these same people had incomes virtually the same as the East German average. A second group who were doing well in 1991 were the self-employed (the new entrepreneurs?), many of who had previously been wage or salary earners. A third group who benefited particularly, as we have already mentioned, were old-age pensioners.

Despite the fact that most real household incomes increased between May 1990 and March 1991, most respondents became less, not more satisfied with their incomes and standard of living. Satisfaction with household income declined from an average of 5.6 (on the 0-10 scale) to 4.8, and satisfaction with living standards dropped from 6.3 to 5.9. The former decline must be one of the largest ever observed in any life domain in any country in a single year.

Presumably a major reason for these results is that the standard of comparison used by East Germans in arriving at their judgements has changed. More directly than before, they compare themselves with counterparts in the West. People in most occupations can see that their counterparts in the West are better paid, and everyone is aware that living standards are much higher in the West. The revolution of 1989 raised expectations, so that even some people whose real incomes have risen, as well as those who have lost money, have disappointed expectations and feel dissatisfied. Dissatisfaction probably also resulted from heightened anxiety due to much greater insecurity of jobs and living standards and uncertainty about the effects of the imminent abolition of job and rental subsidies scheduled for later in 1991.

People in East Germany only reported increased satisfaction with their incomes and standard of living if their real incomes increased by more than a quarter. In other words, only a very large (unsustainably large?) increase in real income was sufficient to meet rising post-revolutionary expectations and the new standards of comparison used in assessing one's living standards.

Everything one reads about East Germany in the media suggests that people feel pessimistic. However, the data indicates that optimism remains high, and is virtually unchanged from 1990. The levels of optimism are much the same as in West Germany.

So the overall picture is that incomes have risen significantly in real terms, while satisfaction with income and living standards has fallen. Nevertheless, optimism about the future remains high. But although the picture is complicated, it is not incomprehensible. Comparisons with the West are probably the key. East Germans are dissatisfied because their material standards are still well below those of West Germans, but they expect, eventually, to attain those standards and so feel optimistic about the future. It is worth repeating that all these conclusions relate to the period between May 1990 and March 1991. These dates mark the first stage in the transition from communism and a command economy to Western-style democracy and a market (or social market economy). However, based on these results, it would seem very unwise to make any 'commonsense' predictions about what is likely to have happened in the former GDR since that time, or about what will happen in the future.

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Note:
1. The East German Socio-Economic Panel Study
Missionary Positions

Dennis O'Rourke's Good Woman of Bangkok stirred up a storm. Supporters thought it a heartfelt document; others criticised the standpoint of the filmmaker, and the camera. Here Jeannie Martin makes a case for the prosecution. Below, Martha Ansara responds defending the film.

By its author's own account, The Good Woman of Bangkok is a fictionalised rendition of the life of a Bangkok woman working as a prostitute, written from the West, by a white Australian male, in the late 1980s.

According to the flyer that accompanied the preview of the film, the representation of the life of the prostitute is a metaphor for the social relations between the sexes that hold sway under capitalism. In particular, the life of the prostitute stands for the relations between men and women in conditions where capitalist relations also entail racism, and where racism is a product of colonisation. Hence, the location of the film in Bangkok rather than, for instance, Sydney's Kings Cross.

Franz Fanon, in his A Dying Colonialism, argued that one aspect of a dying colonialism is the harnessing of a Western rhetoric of progress, a rhetoric of women's liberation, to a forced link between colonising men and colonised women. Here, male agents of a one-time colonial power assert their privileged position by an aggressive intervention on behalf of one-time (or metaphorically) colonised women.

The important points here are that this action rewrites the forced sexual link (rape) typical of the colonial period as a salvationist activity; and restates the power of the coloniser in the post-colonial period in the language of sexuality. The purpose of this rewriting is the active exclusion of the colonised male so as to fracture communal solidarity among once colonised people (divide and conquer). The effect is to rewrite the struggle against colonial domination as a struggle initiated by the West; to represent post-colonial domination as a victory for liberation; to locate domination as a battle over the possession of women.

Wittingly or not, The Good Woman of Bangkok is almost a textbook example of this process—right down to the exclusion of the post-colonial male. What struck me first about the film was not the treatment of 'women'—just more of the same—but the treatment of men; in particular, the absence of Thai men. In fact, in a symbolic gesture worthy of the colonial task, the only Thai men who speak in the film are a pimp and a blind beggar. Apart from these, the only other Thai men in the film are Aio's ex-husband and her dead father—and these features as disembodied catalogues of sins and failings endlessly reiterated throughout the film.

Compare this with the images of Western men. In The Good Woman of Bangkok Western men are either racist, sexist boors, driven by aggressive, drunken sexuality (for instance, the Western clients of the prostitutes—the working class, the contemporary rapists), or they are disembodied Knights, solitary heroes (i.e. the filmmaker, the contemporary missionary) committed to the salvation of fallen maidens (whores) distributing largesse and moral education as a product of their privileged position.

And the imagery is clear enough. Thai men are emasculated, crippled, pimps: they are corrupt servents in a vast seraglio. The seraglio is Thailand (meaning Asia); the Master is the West. Thailand/Asia gives up its women to the Master. The currency is women, and the arrangements are strictly feudal. It is 'woman' that is the metaphor here, not the relations between men and women. 'Woman' functions as a metaphor in an allegory of relations among men in a global battle about the control of resources.

In The Good Woman of Bangkok the shift from colonial to post-colonial domination is faithfully recorded in the language and morality of sexuality, as relations among men played out across the bodies of women (i.e. the land). Indeed the film itself—and specifically the confessionnal technique employed in the film—actively contributes to the process.

It has also been argued that one aim of the colonising period was to produce colonised subjects stripped of their will. Once achieved, colonised subjects function as the bearers of the coloniser's will, or at least are represented as such.

In many films post-colonial women, older women, mothers, are scripted as the moral voice of the community, as the guardians of tradition. This is especially the case in relation to those forms of behaviour of post-colonial men at odds with Western morality, and at odds with their projected role in systems of global domination (drunkenness, fighting, financial irresponsibility and so on). In The Good Woman of Bangkok, a similar mechanism works in a minor way: for instance, the village aunt was scripted thus, as was Dennis O'Rourke's lover Aoi, particularly in relation to the behaviour of men.

And these sets of meaning are doubly coded. For example, the sexual language pertaining to post-colonial societies mimics the internal sexual division of labour of the dominating power. An image of the role of Western women is captured inside the discourse on the post-colonial society. And it functions to tell the women of the West what they should be (i.e. grateful, but replaceable, whores—who should realise they are well off).
The same is true of class. The film’s images of post-colonial domination are also depicted in class terms internal to the West, as well as between the West and the ‘other culture’ represented in the film. For example, it is the Western working class which inherits the role of colonial rapist: the brutish client of the Bangkok whose exhibits behaviour appropriate to his low social status. (In fact, in the film, there is a curious affinity between the emasculated Thai men and the brutishly sexual Western working class, linked together in an inchoate way by their social status.) The Western middle class (i.e. the filmmaker) is only there to orchestrate affairs, to pass judgment from a superior position, to intervene when things run out of control.

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A Man’s World

Dennis O’Rourke’s remarkable achievement with his documentary fiction, The Good Woman of Bangkok, is a challenge to the present state of documentary filmmaking. Its exploratory and subjective treatment of third world prostitution contrasts vividly with the moralising, thesis-driven approach of so many of today’s social documentaries. In making it, O’Rourke has deliberately renounced the overdetermined way of working in which you first do your ‘objective’ research, then piece together your ‘objective’ film—rarely stopping to consider what ideological preconceptions and unconscious projections you impose upon the material in order to fulfil your thesis. Given the way most social documentaries are made, it seems quite incredible that they still present themselves, and are generally perceived by their audiences, as virtually unmediated representations of reality.

Theoretically most film makers admit that every documentary film is constructed as fiction—albeit a fiction unlike any other—but Dennis O’Rourke is one of the few prepared to come to grips with this proposition. A highly self-conscious ‘artist’, his interests constitute a relentless obsession to, at once, deepen his exploration of society’s inner processes and relationships, position his audience in a different way towards his subject matter and play out fully his own subjective role in the filmmaking process.

O’Rourke’s past work (including Yap—How Did You know We’d Like TV, Half-Life and Cannibal Tours) can be broadly characterised as a critique of imperialism and development in the Pacific. Now, with The Good Woman of Bangkok, he focuses a similar interest upon Bangkok prostitution. But this film is as much O’Rourke’s response to his own film practice and personal position as it is to third world prostitution for first world men. The power of the film originates in the paradoxical correlations between his own personal relationships and the complex social relationships he documents.

The now highly controversial vehicle for exposing these relationships is their actual enactment by O’Rourke himself in the character of ‘the Filmmaker’, exploring the life of ‘Aoi’, a Thai woman working as a prostitute. He pays her for the illusion of sexual ‘love’ and to be a subject in his film. Significantly, in the opening subtitles, the filmmaker suggests the breakdown of his marriage as the impetus for this personal search for ‘the meaning of love’. In this he is basically no different to the western males around him. And Aoi, both as film subject and as love object/prostitute, is thus positioned to express most profoundly many levels of objectification and exploitation.

Working with his one-person rig, O’Rourke devoted resources usually spent on crew and equipment to the nine months of intimacy it took first to ‘cast’ Aoi and then to establish and explore his relationship with her. He also shot considerable footage of himself which he ultimately deleted, believing that this would undercut his more important focus on Aoi. It is through her life that he creates such a forceful picture of the destructive workings of capitalist development—development which has always ridden, one way or another, on the backs of women.

While Aoi in no way comes across as a ‘victim’, it is clear that great damage has been done to her. We learn, particularly through Aoi’s aunt in the village, that the damage began in childhood with a gambling father and family relationships under severe economic stress. A bad marriage intensified Aoi’s own sense of rejection, self-hatred, hatred of men and duty to her family in Thailand’s patriarchal system; and this, in circumstances of acute poverty, has led her into prostitution. At the time of filming she has abandoned all hope of love but nevertheless survives with dignity.

This emotionally complex dynamic is revealed through O’Rourke’s relationship with Aoi in a way which no other film method would have been capable of. Aoi is reacting on film to an intimate personification of the exploiter and O’Rourke does not soften the film with any expression of love or forgiveness towards him from her.

While his critics have reacted with indignation to the fact that he participates in the prostitution of Thai women, I do not share their outrage. Firstly, such critics should be reminded that there is a great deal of artifice involved in making a film. O’Rourke didn’t just happen to capture some sort of pre-existing reality ‘out there’; he filmed what he chose to film (and often provoked it into expression) and then, sensitively, carefully and consciously, put these bits
together to give meaning to the final film. Events did not necessarily unfold as he portrayed them.

O'Rourke has very deliberately constructed a parallel between the other men in the film and his own character—nowhere more to the point than in shattering the excuses which exploitative men make about the liberating benefits of their cash payments to needy women. When the filmmaker—believing himself motivated by love and concern—buys Aoi a rice farm, this gesture is deliberately shown as a self-interested and inadequate response to her complex economic/emotional needs. Linked with this is the hatred and horror the prostitutes feel for the men who use them, which is shown vividly in sequence after sequence. Likewise, O'Rourke shows Aoi's rejection of his use of her, in words which he does not heed (“This is not for your film.”) and most strongly in the prolonged shot, early in the film, of Aoi in bed. There, O'Rourke's camera remains trained sensually upon her as she dismissively, resignedly, resentfully and gracefully draws the covers up to hide her body and her face.

Nowhere does O'Rourke exonerate or seek to create sympathetic understanding for the men with whom he himself clearly identifies. The film works against vicarious thrills and fantasies. The viewer can romanticise neither the world of prostitution nor the intrepid filmmaker. This is an exceptional accomplishment for such a foray into the exotic.

The process between filmmaker and subject which O'Rourke makes explicit in The Good Woman of Bangkok was always present in his previous work. In those films, however, this power relationship was obscured by formal construction and audience acceptance of the filmmaker as cultural hero—that is, as the righteous, objective author who aligns himself with good against evil, thereby aligning his viewers in the same way and exonerating them and himself from complicity in the documented crime. Here, the power relationship is not only a central issue, but occurs within an area of emotional pain which exists far beyond the specific circumstances of a Thai bargirl. No wonder the critics have been provoked.

Perhaps those who excoriate O'Rourke for making The Good Woman of Bangkok would prefer serious filmmakers to leave the subject of third world prostitution to the superficial shock-horror merchants of current affairs. Perhaps they would prefer no critique at all in the hope that the requisite ideologically-sound female filmmaker will arrive on the scene and hand over control to a Thai prostitute. Perhaps O'Rourke should be obliged to stick to his own broken marriage in the Canberra suburbs if he wants to explore love and exploitation. Perhaps he should be a different man altogether to the person he is. Or if he must explore the consequences of his own behaviour, he should just go to Thailand like all the others and shut up about it. Let us sleep in peace.

The world of creative social documentary is not a perfect place. It is not an arena of totally considered actions, no matter what rationale we give our impulses. Every filmmaker has at least some inkling of the deep personal function which making any film fulfils. We all project our personal dilemmas upon our choice and treatment of subject, but we rarely acknowledge this in our work.

Ideology cannot direct creative work, only inform it. No area of human experience should be taboo for the serious filmmaker. The ultimate moral question for me is to what degree a film will deepen or alleviate human oppression. This is a question which The Good Woman of Bangkok answers to my satisfaction. While I am hardly overjoyed that Dennis O'Rourke shares so many of the characteristics which make men so difficult to live with, it gives me hope that at least one of them can produce a film on such a subject so thoughtful and so beautifully realised.

MARTHA ANSARA's most recent film was The Pursuit of Happiness.
Silence of the Lambs cleaned up at the Academy Awards, amid passionate protests. Brett Farmer thinks the protesters had a big point.

In the 1933 musical *Going Hollywood*, Bing Crosby crooned, "Out where they say, let us be gay, I'm going Hollywood"; he could not have been further from the truth. Jonathan Demme's *Silence of the Lambs* cleaned up at the 64th Annual Academy Awards in April, in the teeth of concerted demonstrations against it by gay and lesbian activists. But the film is only the latest instalment in Hollywood's long and tawdry record of representing homosexuality in film. Under the iron-clad rule of the Production Code Association, the self-regulatory body established in the late 1920s to monitor Hollywood's 'moral content', the representation of homosexuality "or any inference to it" in Hollywood films was strictly forbidden. As a result, mainstream cinema refused even to acknowledge the existence of homosexuality for decades, creating a celluloid world of insistently heterosexual characters with equally heterosexual ideals.

There is an anecdote about studio magnate Samuel Goldwin who, when informed that his proposed plans to make a film of Radclyffe Hall's controversial novel *The Well of Loneliness* would never pass the censors because the main character was a lesbian, responded "So? We'll make her an gentleman." Homosexuality was traditionally seen in Hollywood as an unmentionable evil, as socially and morally subversive and thoroughly 'un-American'. Indeed, the moral panic that gripped Hollywood in the late 1940s and which culminated in the circus known as the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings identified homosexuality as one of the two greatest threats to national and social stability, the other being, of course, communism.

Even after the relaxation and final disbandment of the Production Code in the late 1950s, this notion of homosexuality as inherently dangerous and socially subversive continued to influence Hollywood's view of gays and lesbians. Joseph Mankiewicz' 1959 screen adaptation of Tennessee Williams' *Suddenly Last Summer* was one of the first Hollywood films to make any direct reference to homosexuality. Centred around the 'dark secret' of dead poet Sebastian Venable, Williams' rather bizarre play about Southern madness and perversion was extensively 'cleaned up' and transformed into a creepy Freudian horror story or morality tale. In the film, Sebastian's 'secret' dooms him to a horrible fate of outraged moral retribution (eaten alive by a mob of Hispanic street kids, no less) and leads directly to insanity for both his cousin, Elizabeth Taylor, and mother, Katharine Hepburn.

Homosexuality in *Suddenly Last Summer* is an insidiously evil force and the male homosexual is a monstrous alien, almost contagious in his dangerous depravity. In an unprecedented move, Hollywood's Catholic watchdog, the Legion of Decency, awarded *Suddenly Last Summer* a special classification prior to release arguing that, "Since the film illustrates the horrors of such a lifestyle, it can be considered moral in theme even though it deals with sexual perversion".


Robin Wood argues that horror films turn on a formalic structure of "normality, the Monster, and, crucially, the relationship between the two". The Monster in the Hollywood horror film functions as both social and textual Other, simultaneously threatening as well as reassuring 'normality'. By defining the homosexual as the monstrous other, as a threat that must be contained, these films help not only to reinscribe heterosexuality as ideal but also serve to legitimate the often violent ethos of homophobia.

In this way, the homosexual monster helps to define and assert socially prescribed categories of gender and sexuality, while at the same time playing out, and thus allaying, fears and insecurities about the stability and legitimacy of heterosexual social dominance. Mainstream cinematic representations of homosexuality and the homosexual often tell far more about the fantasies and insecurities of heterosexuality, and the cultural mechanisms through which its continued hegemony is ensured, than they ever reveal about homosexuality.

For the handful of readers who may not have yet seen the film, *Silence of the Lambs* is a psychological thriller/horror film that charts the unusual relationship between FBI trainee Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster) and the brilliant psychiatrist turned psychopath, Dr Hannibal "The Cannibal" Lecter (Anthony Hopkins). Starling is sent to visit Lecter in his ultra-maximum security prison by the head of the FBI Behavioural Science Unit, Jack Crawford (Scott Glen), in the hope that Lecter might help the authorities capture "Buffalo Bill"/Jame Gumb (Ted Levine), a serial killer who has committed a number of grisly murders of young women. Lecter agrees to help Starling and provide her with a psychological
Jonathan Demme, asserts that he in one of which Lecter escapes imprisonment, Starling utilises the skills and techniques taught her by Lecter to track down and finally kill the murderer.

While most discussions of Silence have focused on the relationship between Starling and Lecter, it is the figure of "Buffalo Bill" or Jame Gumb, described by one critic as "the most terrifying monster to appear on the screen since Linda Blair raised hell in The Exorcist", which is the film's most startling aspect. Indeed, the comparison between Bill and the possessed Regan in The Exorcist may be far from simply perfunctory, for both embody, quite literally, a grotesque performance of sexual transgression. Just as the pubescent body of Linda Blair distorts, putrefies and suppurates with the emergence of a female sexuality in the metaphor of the Devil itself, so too Bill enacts a disgusting corporeal transformation impelled by the murderous drive of a chancerous homosexuality.

An American cultural theorist, Leo Bersani, argues that behind even the most trivial scenario of homophobia against gay men is "the infinitely more seductive and intolerable image of a grown man, legs high in the air, unable to refuse the suicidal ecstasy of being a woman". "Suicidal" because masculinity is constitutively defined in terms of activity, male anal passivity can only ever signify the negation of masculinity. The representation of Buffalo Bill in Silence accords with this argument. Bill's "psychopathological condition" is related to his transgression of gender categories—epitomised in his desire to become a woman, a perversion that leads him to murder.

The climactic scene of horror in the film spells this out with unavoidable brutality. Deep within the cavernous basement world of Bill's hideaway, the true nature of his abject monstrosity is revealed to us in all its repulsive glory. We watch Bill carefully apply his make-up and don his jewellery. Then, with the camera in extreme close-up on his painted lips, he taunts, "would you fuck me?", dances around the room, wrapped in nothing but a shawl, one of his victims' scalps placed on his head as a gruesome wig. Obviously rearranging his genitals, he steps back with his arms outstretched and his penis clamped back behind his closed thighs to approximate the appearance of female genitals. The true nature of Bill's monstrosity is crystallised in his desire to be fucked, to identify with the despised position of feminine passivity.

Indeed, this scene of mock castration in Silence is presented as its crowning moment of visual horror, the supreme shock in a film that assaults its viewers visually and emotionally from beginning to end. And, judging by the disbeliefing gazes of the audience at the two screenings I attended at least, it is effective in its aim. Silence of the Lambs features a wide range of psychosexual perversions—sadism, cannibalism, necrophilia, exhibitionism—yet it is homosexual anality that is portrayed as the most intolerable, the most threatening and the most horrific.

Yet, like all horror films, Silence restores the balance of social normality by destroying the dreaded monster at the close of the film. Starling hunts Bill down and blasts him away, clear through the wall of his basement lair, letting in a flood of symbolic sunlight, thereby dispelling the threat of homosexual monstrosity and restoring the spectator to heterosexual equilibrium.

BRETT FARMER is a research student in humanities at Griffith University.

New Subscribers' Draw

Our competition for new subscribers will be drawn in May, and the results announced in ALR's June issue.
Dearly Beloved

North Korea's Glorious Leader, Kim Il Sung, celebrated his 80th birthday last month. Eric Aarons recalls his journeys around the various museums and monuments to the Glorious Leader—including The Chair Kim Il Sung Didn't Sit On.

In September 1980, a close friend and I travelled to Pyongyang to attend the sixth congress of the Korean Workers' (communist) Party, in response to a long-standing invitation to the Communist Party of Australia to send a delegation. To be truthful, however, our main purpose was to see what was happening in China, which was opening up to the world after its decade-long isolation arising from the upheaval of the Cultural Revolution.

At Beijing we were met by an untypical North Korean who, to us, resembled an Australian ocker city lair. He installed us in the new section of the Beijing Hotel, whose large restaurant was filled with foreign business people. When we were due to leave to catch the plane to Pyongyang, our Korean arrived an hour late, all dishevelled and bustling. There followed a frantic drive to the airport with our chauffeur outdoing even the death-defying Chinese drivers—that is, those who defy pedestrians and cyclists to avoid death.

Pyongyang is a fine city with many beautiful, well-constructed buildings with a pleasing and innovative architecture of both western and eastern styles, and blends of both. Then there was the museum, the museum and the museum...We were conducted through five or six. A number of them are magnificent and huge, with scores of rooms, each containing dozens of exhibits. And every one of them features you know who. Kim Il Sung here, there and everywhere. His binoculars, His toothbrush, His bed, His whatever...He at this battle and that, He launching a ship, addressing a multitude, teaching the peasants, the workers, the intellectuals...

Readers have probably experienced the mind-numbing effects of traipsing around large exhibitions, and in Korea, when you are showing signs of wear they take you to a reception room for reviving cups of tea. Then they produce The Book while you are still in your weakened state and ask you to write something in it. We did, complimenting the Korean people on their great accomplishments. But this wasn’t quite what they wanted. "Wouldn’t you like", they cajoled, "to write something about our Great and Dearly Beloved leader, Comrade Kim Il Sung?" "Thank you very much, no", we replied, "we have written what we thought." We knew that one word of praise for the Great and Dearly Beloved Leader would be widely quoted, tying the visitors and their party into the monstrous cult.

But they are a tough as well as a talented people, and weren’t about to give up without a fight. So they dragged us around to still more exhibits of Him to soften us up. The last exhibit in the second museum we visited was unusual—it was a large painting of a woman and a teenage boy, with no Kim Il Sung in sight. "Who’s that?" we asked. Our keeper and guide went into quite a huddle, but knowing we would persist with the question, finally decided on their reply: "That is our Great and Dearly Beloved Leader’s constant companion." "And the boy?" After another huddle: "That is our Dear Leader, Comrade Kim Jong Il (Kim Il Sung’s son and long-designated successor)." "And," we said, again out of genuine interest, "how many children does Comrade Kim Il Sung have?" Once more a huddle, then this response: "We do not discuss the private life of our Great and Dearly
“Ah!” I thought to myself, “I’ve got them; the pattern is broken.” “What’s this?” I said innocently pointing to the chair. “That”, said the lovely guide, not missing a beat, “is the chair that our Great and Dearly Beloved Leader Kim Il Sung didn’t sit on.” It was too much; “Ah! come off it” I said, “you’re putting me on!”

Not a bit of it, as the tale was solemnly told; the Great and Dearly Beloved Leader had visited the village to tell the peasants how to grow rice, or whatever it was, and the villagers had prepared carefully for the meeting, bringing out their best chair to accommodate the heavenly bottom. But being the democrat that he was, the Great and Dearly Beloved Leader sat instead on the humble concrete block.

But a delegate from another country with whom we got friendly was a little less circumspect. He genuinely felt that he should respond to the lavish hospitality by making some sympathetic noises about the Great and Dearly Beloved Leader and, as a consequence, became increasingly enmeshed.

On the last day of the congress the leaders of delegations were introduced to He Himself, and had their hands shaken. The interpreters seemed to be really moved at the sight of the right hands of their charges, which had touched something beyond the mortal. Our friend was taken to the dentist for treatment soon after, and the wondrous tale told by his interpreter. Then the dentist had an idea. He produced a bandage and wound it round The Hand so that it would remain uncontaminated.

Later that day our friend was put on television to sing praises of the congress and the Great and Dearly Beloved Leader. When he had finished and the lights were turned off, the interpreter told the story of the bandaged hand, so the lights went on again, and its owner had to recount the tale to the TV crew in a second stint.

When the time came for us to leave, our friend seemed rather glum. “What’s the trouble?” we asked. He had to stay on, go to a mountain retreat and write a poem in praise of...I hope he’s not still there.

These few personal experiences of the cult of Kim Il Sung may convey some feeling of its truly bizarre quality, unmatched even by the cults of Stalin, Mao, or the Japanese emperors. But I would not like to leave it there without making two more serious points.

Firstly, and however the blame for the war is apportioned, when the US and other armies were forced back to the 38th parallel by the Chinese counter-attack, they had orders to systematically demolish every building, bridge and culvert, and this they thoroughly did. For his role in the reconstruction of the country from the ground up, Kim Il Sung earned great support among his people, so the cult, however repellent, was not entirely imposed from the top.

Secondly, the cult, and the rigid social discipline it helped to impose, has not saved the North Korean economy from the same kind of failings which have become evident in every country designated as socialist. The fact that, whatever the nature of the historical origins, traditions and political regimes involved, major problems of essentially the same nature have emerged in all cases should impel socialists towards a more searching scrutiny of their project than has yet been in evidence.

ERIC AARONS is a member of ALR’s editorial collective. His memoirs will be published by Penguin Books.

For New Times’ Sake

It finally happened. Marxism Today, the glossy and controversial British counterpart to ALR and scourge of yuppie-hating socialist traditionalists, has closed. The magazine which probably had more impact on leftwing thought in Britain than any other publication of the 80s, and which was responsible for formulating the dominant critique of Thatcherism, appeared for the last time in December.

It became the intellectual flagship of the soft Left, the broad grouping which wrestled the ideological high ground of the Left from its electorally alienating leadership of the early 80s. But the divide between MT’s supporters and detractors was about more than just matters of electoral realism; it was also a cultural and attitudinal one. Its readership was largely young, educated, moneyed and iconoclastic, not wedded to particular forms of socialist organisation (never mind the labourist and statist programs whose day they saw as having passed), and prepared to slaughter sacred cows in the search for ends rather than means. The paradox is why, when its ideas had finally triumphed and the magazine was still at a creative high tide, it ran out of steam.

Most commentators saw nothing unexpected or strange about the magazine’s closure, since MT was, officially at least, the “Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party” (until the October 1991 edition, which carried the tag “Sponsored by the Communist Party”). The party had recently taken the fashionable bolshevik suicide option by voting itself out of existence. Surely this was a good time for a marxist journal to file itself into the waste paper basket of
history? Not so. There was nothing historically inevitable about MT’s decline. Its philosophy was, by the end, nothing if not triumphal over the descent of marxism-leninism. Having become the standard bearer of the softer and more post-modernist Left, the current political landscape in many ways represents victory for the struggle that the editor and writers had waged.

Editor Martin Jacques, the living embodiment of MT’s intellectual and presentational sharpness (one suspects that the term “designer socialism” was coined with him in mind) agrees that the magazine was still in “top form” in 1991. But to a tired editorial staff the end of the CPGB perhaps signalled the end of an era, suggesting an opportune moment to move on to bigger and better things in the more mainstream media world.

This is not to suggest that MT was in any way a fringe magazine or party-line rag; far from it. Gramsci had taught these dissident Eurocommunists the need to reach out to society at large, to try to influence the ideas of all social classes. Recognising the futility of sectarian politics, it sought instead a more popular niche in the media market—not just among the self-sacrificing radical underworld but also the liberal and upwardly mobile young professionals to whom style, affluence and equality are not incompatible objectives. The magazine proclaimed that it was OK for socialists to enjoy a ‘bourgeois’ lifestyle. In a sense, Jacques and his staff (always underpaid and overworked in the grand tradition of socialist employment) wanted to taste some of the liberating freedom that they had advocated for their readers. As the editor said, one day in 1987 “I began to realise in my bones that my time was up. I wanted to move on. I was tired, I was fed up with being broke, and I wanted a new challenge.”

1977 was the year of the rebirth of MT which had existed as a quarto-sized theoretical journal for the party faithful since 1957. It ranked low in the party’s priorities, and lead articles focused on such riveting issues as, for instance, the statement of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. Under Jacques, circulation rose from 3,500 to 17,000 by October 1988. This marketing awareness was complemented by other manifestations of 1980s consciousness—innovative layout, the excision of dogmatic marxist phraseology, and excursions into mainstream contemporary political debate.

Party loyalty or at least party identification had constrained the previous editor who summed up the magazine’s philosophy in his departing editorial. “The desire was developed,” he said, “to overcome dogmatic approaches, whilst resisting temptations, advanced sometimes in the name of combating dogmatism, to lose the essential tenets of marxish-leninism, its essential class and revolutionary content.”

No such reluctance to endanger ideological purity held back the new editorial team whose increasingly youthful and post-modernist intellectual vanguard began systematically ripping up the tracks of the party’s old direction. Contrast the line above with that of Jacques who has written that “Marxism Today was a free spirit. We may have come from the CP, but we were never of it. We may have been in the Left, but we were never imprisoned by it. We were dissidents, living on the edge, occupying an intellectual diaspora. It gave the magazine enormous energy, intellectual freedom and a capacity for lateral thinking.”

This approach was the key to the impact that the magazine was to have on mainstream political debate in Britain in the Thatcher era. The journal’s Eurocommunist heavyweights trig-
Moving its strategy, tactics and goals. This was one of the first to recognise another notable piece ("The Great Temporary sociological developments Hobsbawm argued that such contemporaneous Wilson and Callaghan. farther rent by the militant but essen­
tionalism of those who agreed with Hall's frank analysis, even to the extent of accepting the validity of cer­
tain elements of Thatcher's counter­
revolution. Tony Benn himself had been a frequent contributor until he formally split with the magazine in 1983 but, by the end,

MT's ideological development reached its peak in 1988 with its New Times manifesto. The old political divide based mainly on class, it proclaimed, was being replaced by a more post-modernist world typified by the decline of 'Fordist' production and social organisation. In­
dividualism, as well as ethnic-­
environmental-­ and gender-related issues, it said, must now be seriously championed by the Left.

One of the essential strengths of MT was its refusal to abandon politics in this era of 'New Times'. Despite pres­
sure from within its own editorial team, MT never gave itself over totally to the critique of culture at the expense of electoral and political realities. The changing role of the state in the provision of welfare and in the enhan­
cement of individual rights and freedoms was meticulously analysed, as was the question of just how the Left was to obtain its elusive parliamen­
tary majority (most notably in Eric Hobsbawm's repeated calls for tactical voting and electoral reform).

The politics espoused by Marxism Today helped many of my genera­
tion—the people who received their political education during the 80s era of deregulation and militant Thatcherism—to find a space some­where amid the disciplined and workerist syndicalism of the old Left, the radical liberalism of parties such as the Liberal Democrats and the Australian Democrats, and the personal anarchism-cum-elitism of the post-modernist intelligentsia. Above all, it proposed a philosophy of radical questioning and self reassessment throughout a time of enormous trauma for the Left.

DENNIS GLOVER is a research student at King's College, Cambridge and a former ALP activist.
ALR's interview with Peter Walsh stirred up some controversy in early April. For a day or two the action was fast and furious. The federal Opposition moved to censure the government, purportedly on the basis of Senator Walsh's comments. Paul Keating professed to think we were dead. And, in a master-stroke of detective work, Treasurer John Dawkins revealed the entire episode to be part of a hitherto well-disguised conspiracy between ALR, the Opposition and Senator Walsh to undermine the Accord. Despite the competition, however, the comic highlight of the week was John Clarke's weekly sketch on Channel Nine's A Current Affair. Here is the transcript.

Senator Walsh, thanks for coming in.
Mmm?
Thanks for your time.
Oh, it's about five to seven.
You've been critical of the One Nation package.
I have, yes, although I wouldn't say I was completely alone in that.
What are your criticisms?
Well, I made a well-reasoned argument. I would suggest if you're interested in what I think, that you read what I had to say.
I have read it.

Well, why are you asking me what my argument is?
Well, a lot of people aren't aware of what you're saying...
And are you interested in this because of your breathtaking ability to get across macroeconomic issues, or do you just want to stir up as much trouble as possible for the government?
I'm interested in the economic package, obviously.
Well, there's not much point in talking to me, then.
Why?
I'm just interested in stirring up as much trouble as I possibly can for the government.
But you were a member of Cabinet until recently.
Yes, it was a bit difficult during that period, but I've put a few laps on the field since I got out, I'll tell you that for nothing.
Why did you get out?
Good behaviour.
No, what I mean is, wouldn't you have been better placed to improve economic policy if you'd stayed on as an economic minister?
It's a bit difficult to dump on economic policy if you're running one of the economic ministries.
Why do you want to dump on economic policy? Isn't that the job of the Opposition?
Well, it would be if they showed the slightest inclination to do it, but they don't.
So you're helping them.
Helping the Opposition?
Yes.
I wouldn't give them the time of day. I'm helping the government.

How?
By keeping the Opposition out of the papers.
Yes, but you're doing it by criticising government policy.
Well, someone's got to do it. They don't know what they're doing. The Governor General got thrown out of the local RSL because of his Republican views the other night. I've got a feeling we're out of radio range.
And what have you been doing since you left Cabinet?
Just running the charm school, and a little paper folding. I make these rather beautiful birds out of folded paper. I fold the paper in such a way as to render a rather exquisite bird.
What do you do with them?
When I've finished them?
Yes.
I sit on them.

ALR: MAY 1992

JOHN CLARKE's Great Interviews of the Twentieth Century is published by Allen and Unwin. This script published courtesy of John Clarke.
Of course, in some of these films you don’t even get a glimpse of any actual nooky taking place, but the ‘lesbian’ character still swings. And yet, like so many other pathetic members of the sad and shadowy underworld of the invert, I’ve trundled off to see every single film with even a hint of a lesbian theme. Why do I keep fronting up to receive my punishment? I can only conclude that I’m hungry for images of my sexual reality on the screen. And I know I’m not alone. How else can we explain why so many sophisticated and cynical women gathered in excited groups all over the world to watch ‘the kiss’ on LA Law? One crumbly kiss!

The Gay and Lesbian Film Festivals and SBS television have provided some sustenance to the starving in recent years. But it’s the mainstream TV stations and movies that are going to reach the isolated adults and the majority of teenagers growing up with ‘those feelings’. These are the people who are searching for the language, images and ideas that can help them build a positive self-image and a comprehensive lifestyle.

Enough of the problem. Into this desert a few weeks ago came the BBC TV series Portrait of a Marriage (based on the book of the same name, by Nigel Nicolson).

One Sunday night I was driving home to Sydney through the Blue Mountains. The trucks were menacing and the road was wet, so my girlfriend and I pulled into a cheap motel to ‘revive and survive’. I turned on the telly and there were two women in bed, naked except for loose robes. They were looking at each other and smiling in a satisfied way. (I recognised the look, but I’d never seen it on the telly before.) Then the dark-haired woman (Vita Sackville-West, played by the lanky and magnificent Janet McTeer) pushed open the blonde’s (Violet Trefusis, played by the seductive and insistent Cathryn Harrison) robe with her toe, revealing her naked breast. I cried out to my girlfriend to come to the screen:

“Something’s happening on the telly!”

A moment later Violet was lying on top of Vita, gazing into her eyes with a look of frank and urgent sexual hunger, pleading, “Mitya, please”. It was a tender and utterly convincing piece of acting.

The four episodes faithfully captured the real life experiences of two love-struck and self-indulgent aristocratic women in the 1920s—experiences described by Vita in a confessional manuscript that her son found after her death in a locked Gladstone bag. For the first time ever, I saw on screen the urgent passionate lovemaking, the experience of transcendent physical and emotional fulfilment, and the sense of glorious freedom and fun that I and so many other women have experienced with each other. I also saw the tragic savagery that can erupt under the terrible pressure exerted by family, friends and society.

I have always been annoyed by the common misconception that lesbian lovemaking is not ‘real sex’. As Vita put it in a letter to her husband Harold in December 1919, “I don’t think you realise, except in a tiny degree, what is going on. I don’t think you have taken the thing seriously. You can’t think that I’ve gone away from you and risked all that I have risked—your love, Mama’s love, Dada’s love and my own reputation—for a whim? Don’t you realise that only a very great force could have brought me to risk these things.”

In one of her countless letters, Violet wrote to Vita, “You could do anything with me...I don’t care if you were married six times over, or if you had fourteen children. I have more right to you than anyone on this earth.” It is this sense of living out a forbidden passion in extremis that is captured so uniquely by this TV series. If you missed it, don’t worry. Just ask any lesbian friend. We’ve all got it on video.

JULIE McCROSSIN has been known to masquerade as Dr Mary Hartman.
DISCUSSION

Ferocious

The ferocity of the criticisms by Michael Costa and Mark Duffy of our Politics and the Accord (ALR 137, March) seems a little over-sensitive, since we start from a position similar to theirs in their book Labor, Prosperity and the Nineties.

Like them, we locate unionism's current difficulties in the crisis of labourism, the strategy used by organised labour to protect Australian workers through tariff protection, the arbitration system and occupational demarcations defended by craft unions.

The issue, then, is not whether this organising practice is in crisis, as it clearly is, but whether the union movement can formulate a coherent replacement for it. The choices are twofold. One course would replace the occupational divisions within the union movement with enterprise bargaining, breaking the links between workers in different workplaces and tying workers to individual employers through in-house and non-portable training.

The alternative we put forward is based on a more collective vision, of genuine industry unionism supported by a national and more universal training system which would move beyond the current emphasis we place on trade and degree-level training. By neglecting to put the debate in these terms, Costa and Duffy escape the need to address the criticisms we make of the enterprise bargaining option:

Australian unionism needs urgently to improve the ability of its constituency to deal with economic dislocation. Without portable training which is nationally recognised, long-term unemployment will continue to be the lot of workers displaced by restructuring.

Far from the rigidity imagined by Costa and Duffy, such a training framework would actually increase labour 'flexibility' by helping workers to move from industries in decline to those in growth. But in the current gushing enthusiasm for all things located within the enterprise, this form of flexibility is a very welcome intruder. Whatever the economic arguments, enterprise bargaining has more to do with breaking the mobilising capacity of unionism. By uncritically embracing the new 'workplace culture' which equates the interest of workers with those of individual employers, unionism stands to break its own foundation stones of solidarity and collectivism.

With the industrial relations 'reforms' of the federal government, it would seem that this threat to unionism will intensify. Thus the ability of the Industrial Relations Commission to rationalise union coverage has been strengthened, a process which Costa and Duffy find 'creative' and 'innovative' (Union Issues, Summer 1992). Simply repeating that enterprise bargaining is the only viable option for unionism neatly closes down debate on the real issues. Thus Costa and Duffy can move on to make a range of more particular complaints against us.

Our work is supposedly 'ahistorical' because we do not recognise the recurring balance of payments problems Australia has endured. Our balance of payments weaknesses are, in their view, not policy-derived, but rooted in the 'structure' of the Australian economy (as though this was determined by something other than by political processes). The implication seems to be that we should get used to external imbalance, because economic 'structure' so demands. And why? Could it not be that rightwing unions, covering the commodity-based industries, find our role as a quarry for the world mighty comfortable.

Costa and Duffy go on to suggest that our opposition to the 'market' is crude. It is true that our theoretical coverage in this area is a little shorthand, but we are not unaware of Left debate about the role of the market in a socialist economy, as a perusal of Politics and the Accord (pp 117-119) would confirm. On the other hand, they seem unaware of the positive role the state can play in capitalist economic development. Thus they argue that our interventionist prescriptions are irrelevant, since 'non-market economic systems' have disintegrated (Union Issues, Summer 1992). However, it is precisely state direction of such 'market' economies as Japan and Germany, not to mention our Asian neighbours like Taiwan, that explains their success.

Costa and Duffy set themselves up as arbiters of what the 'thoughtful Left' should be reading. Whether they do so with a straight face we do not know, but to imply that Politics and the Accord fails to take debate in union circles further really cannot go unchallenged. We question the worth of many traditional practices on the Left and the broader union movement. The divisive nature of trade elitism, the inability of the Left to attach industrial militancy to a wider and more equitable strategy of social change and the shortcomings of the industry development strategy in the 1980s are all tackled with as much frankness as we could muster.

In the post-Gorbachev age, Costa and Duffy could not, of course, resist the temptation to portray our work as the ravings of unreconstructed central planners. This pejorative as-

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sociation has little to do with the arguments actually contained in Politics and the Accord. In fact, we go to some effort to wean the labour movement off the notion that a parliamentary route to socialism exists. Instead, we argue that the fate of unionism hinges very much on putting the ‘movement’ back into labour. This means that union members themselves must be responsible for the development and implementation of union policy.

If anyone retains faith in ‘top-down’ strategies for organised labour, it is Costa and Duffy. Just as they avoid discussing the anti-democratic nature of the sort of enterprise bargaining they advocate, their argument for ‘service delivery’ by unions is unconvincing. Unions are not businesses. ‘Service delivery’ will not be a substitute for the participation of members in the affairs of their unions.

We wrote Politics and the Accord to further the debate in union circles over the movement’s future. We expected thoughtful criticism. Regrettably, Costa and Duffy’s review does not provide that criticism. We can only conclude that our exposure of the NSW Right’s comfortable tradition of deal-making with employers has struck a little too close to home.

Peter Ewer, Ian Hampson, Chris Lloyd, John Rainford, Stephen Rix and Meg Smith are the authors of Politics and the Accord.

Royal Nonsense

Did anyone in an editorial capacity read Wanda Jamrozik’s ‘Profile: Elizabeth R’ before it was published?

The article is deeply disturbing on a number of counts. First, it maintains the discredited practice of the interpretation of women’s minds and worth through their conformity or otherwise to current fashion in clothing. Jamrozik disdains her subject for “sensible shoes” and concludes that because Elizabeth chooses sometimes to wear a head-scarf she “must be the only person who was actually there who is nostalgic for Britain after the war”.

Secondly, there is a flow of superficial over-generalisation beginning with “We’re terminal adolescents, we Australians”.

Finally, you have published material on a constitutional monarch written by one who clearly hasn’t the least knowledge of what constitutes constitutional monarchy as it has evolved with the parliamentary system; eg, because Elizabeth maintains the requirement of public impartiality Jamrozik disdains her as without “strong opinions” and “never having voiced an opinion on anything of import”.

Such nonsense would not ordinarily matter very much except that at this time of probable transition to a republic there seems to be considerable public confusion on the facts involved in the head of state/head of government issue. Some people even believe we need an American type presidency to be a republic. I find it sad that a journal of the Left should be contributing to ignorance on this matter.

Evelyn Moore-Eyman
Armidale, NSW.

Judy Horacek

Voodoo Penguins

Aaargh!!!
These hold the soap and stick to the basin thus eliminating the unsightly and potentially dangerous problem of ordinary soap holders slipping around like banana skins in a Marx Brothers film. I was looking for flour but instead came away with a packet of special party candles, presumably designed for kids’ parties, which are intended to resemble various cute animals allegedly loved by the younger folk. The only problem is that they are too small to look like anything but badly formed lumps of wax. Perhaps the fabled innocence of childhood will metamorphose them into fun pets, but somehow I doubt it.

Once one starts examining these items it’s hard to stop. Suction soap holders soon joined the magnets. They hold the soap and stick to the basin thus eliminating the unsightly and potentially dangerous problem of ordinary soap holders slipping around like banana skins in a Marx Brothers film. I was looking for flour but instead came away with a packet of special party candles, presumably designed for kids’ parties, which are intended to resemble various cute animals allegedly loved by the younger folk. The only problem is that they are too small to look like anything but badly formed lumps of wax. Perhaps the fabled innocence of childhood will metamorphose them into fun pets, but somehow I doubt it.

My personal favourite gadget on display was the pack of bag sealers “By Insights”. Designed to keep plastic bags from coming apart, the pack informed me that “each sealer has an integral write-on/wipe-off date and identification tab (Use any water-based fibre tip pen)”. The picture shows a plastic bag full of peas, with the word ‘peas’ written on the sealer which holds it together so that the householder could recall what was in the see-through bag if he or she forgot what the little round green things are.

One of the major worries in a good bourgeois life is how to eat sweet corn. Corn skewers are the answer if one wants to avoid butter running down one’s wrists and smearing one’s Country Road shirts. These delightful items screw into both ends of the sweet corn and are, of course, shaped like sweet corn. Keep your elbows in and your legs crossed and you will look perfectly ladylike as you tackle the dreaded vegetable. Problems with lipstick and butter combining remain unsolved as yet, but no doubt a gadget will eventually be invented to deal with this. Plastic lip covers, perhaps.

The future of manufacturing can be read on these packages. All of them are manufactured in Asia, primarily in China, but also in Hong Kong and Taiwan where nimble, underpaid fingers create the novelties for wages which would barely buy a single ‘Collapsible Drinking Cup with Built In Pill Box’, a fun item that retails for $1.00. What, I wonder, do the workers who make these things think of us, the consumers of Decoration Picks and Ice Balls? The latter’s pack states that “This ice balls keep the drink cool” (sic) and the packet contains slices of plastic in the shape of lemon and orange segments. The Decorator Picks are to stick in food or, I presume, on fruit decorating cocktails, and feature paper giant pandas, peacocks and pineapples. The package shows a pineapple stuck in a hamburger.

Is this the heaven dreamed of by Chinese workers? Festooned hamburgers, hair swinging in ponytails, hands clasping an icedball cocktail? Corn skewered by the barbecue, and diet fridge magnets to remind them to go easy on the butter? Party loot bags (ten for a dollar) for the kids, which portray a clown lifting his hat over the slogan “This bag belongs to ......?”

This bag seems to belong to us all in Australia, where we are free to buy Suncatchers Stained Glass Look Window Decorations with thermometer, which portray Nordic cottages complete with snow on roofs (made in Taiwan) and shoe dips, bows decorated with rhinestones, for our feet as we waltz down the aisles of Woolworths, the Kings and Queens of our world, our trolleys filled with wonder, or at least with shiny and appetite suppressant magnets to decorate the overburdened fridge.

Penelope Cottier
Last November’s unprovoked slaughter of over 100 young Timorese in Dili’s Santa Cruz cemetery re-awakened the world’s conscience about a long ignored crime against humanity.

This searing indictment of Indonesian policies since the illegal invasion of East Timor in 1975 is by two well-known unionists — NSW Branch President of the Public Sector Union and ABC Broadcaster, MARK AARONS, and Waterside Workers’ Federation Industrial Officer, ROBERT DOMM. It places Canberra and Washington in the dock as accomplices to Indonesia’s genocide against the Timorese.

The authors have travelled widely in Timor and, in 1990, Robert Domm trekked through Indonesian lines in the rugged mountains to make the first direct contact with the resistance since 1975. His ABC Radio interview with guerilla leader, Xanana Gusmao, made headlines around the world.

PRICE: $5.95. Available now from some bookshops and direct from the LEFT BOOK CLUB, Box 22 Trades Hall, 4 Goulburn St, Sydney 2000 for $5.95 posted. Orders of five or more for $4.50 each posted.
BACK FROM THE DEAD

Mr SPEAKER - The honourable member for Menzies will cease interjecting.

Mr KEATING - I think the only thing that Senator Walsh has done is bring the *Australian Left Review* back to life. I thought it had gone out of business - no offence intended to my colleagues on the Left, no offence at all. I thought it had actually faded away quietly, that it had quietly gone out of business, but Walshie has brought it back to life. It is an ill wind that blows no good, I suppose, from that perspective.

It's not easy to keep in touch with the issues when you've got a busy job, like being prime minister. But, as thousands of others have noticed, *Australian Left Review* is well and truly alive, and even kicking. In the last few months, we've challenged economic orthodoxy, debated citizenship and nationalism, and dissected the views of such diverse figures as Eric Hobsbawn, restauranteur Stephanie Alexander and Desmond Morris (oh, and Peter Walsh). We're sure even Paul could find something to interest him in *ALR* if he really tried.

I wish to subscribe to *ALR* and be better informed than Paul Keating:

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