

Comment

Echo

Vol 19 #08

JULY 13, 2004

Road to Reconciliation

The case for reconciliation with indigenous Australians seems to be on the backburner for both major political parties, and with the major news media, at the end of NAIDOC (National Aboriginal Islander Day Observance Committee) Week. The theme of 'self-determination' is particularly poignant given the federal government's plans to disband a peak indigenous body (ATSIC).

As Acting ATSIC Chairman Lionel Quartermaine notes, 'As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples we need now, more than ever, to stand up for our culture, our way of life and ourselves. The scourges of substances abuse and family violence can only be contained and eradicated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples taking control of our own communities and developing our own solutions.'

'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples also need the help and support of their fellow Australians to ensure that all of us have access to the same opportunities and a fair go.'

'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can only move forward, however, if they are allowed to consolidate upon the measure of self-determination already achieved during many decades of struggle. It is nonsense to suggest that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are somehow less capable of governing their own futures than all other Australians.'

It is a nonsense perpetuated by paternalistic government and those who still believe that somehow indigenous Australians should be absorbed into a mythic whitebread culture, when our nation now thrives upon pluralism.

Nevertheless, indigenous communities still carry the scars of the invasion of an aggressive nation over 200 years ago and its 'shock and awe' tactics which took their land and suppressed their culture.

Locally, the Arakwal people at least have had some success in an historic agreement with the state government. The naming of the Byron headland national park after them recognises their claim to and history of living with the land. The employment opportunities within the national parks service and the handover by Council of the Broken Head caravan park provide some measure of income and control.

We note, however, the ageing Arakwal custodians still wait on the houses and cultural centre promised to them. The wheels of government need to move faster if this promise is to have real meaning in terms of reconciliation.

There has also been some backlash on the Arakwal opinion on the proposed zonings for the new marine park. It needs to be remembered that although settlers over the last 100 years have a long tradition in using the waters off Byron Bay, the indigenous claim goes back further and deserves respect in any debate over the marine park's future.

If we can't get the path to reconciliation clear in a Shire as supposedly enlightened as Byron's, then the road there for the nation seems a long and bumpy one.

The Byron Shire Echo (established 1986)



Nicholas Shand
1948-1996
Founding Editor

Consulting Editor **David Lovejoy**
Editor **Michael McDonald**
Photographer **Jeff Dawson**
Advertising Manager **Geoff Williams**
Accounts Manager **Simon Haslam**

© 2004 Echo Publications P/L
Village Way, Stuart St, Mullumbimby
Ph 02 6684 1777 Fax 02 6684 1719
Byron Bay: 3/6 Jonson St. Ph 6685 5222
editor@echo.net.au (editorial)
adcop@echo.net.au (advertising)
Web Page: <http://www.echo.net.au>
Printer: PMP Print
Reg. by Aust. Post Pub. No. NBF9237.
The Echo's printrun is certified by the
Circulation Audit Board.

Unsolicited contributions are welcome but, given the volume of material we receive, not all submissions will be acknowledged. Email to editor@echo.net.au is the preferred means of receipt.

Time for a reciprocal look at Howard

At least we know now why Mark Latham appeared to go over the top about inquiries into his past; just because you're paranoid it doesn't mean that you're not being persecuted.

Last week so-called political journalism in Australia hit a new low in its investigations into the Labor leader. To be precise, it hit two new lows. The first, predictably, came from the man the Liberals call their greatest asset, Alan Jones, who asked Latham for an interview about his policy. The request was a lie; when Latham turned up all Jones wanted to talk about was the rumours about his last marriage, using disinformation based on an anonymous phone call and the collected works of the *Daily Telegraph's* resident hatchet man Piers Akerman - works which Latham claims (and Akerman and Jones do not deny) largely originated in the bowels of the Liberal Party.

Nasty as this was, it was pretty much par for the course; by going anywhere near the Jones-Akerman axis of innuendo Latham must have known the risks he ran. But what followed, as they say in the ads, was totally unexpected.

On Saturday the *Sydney Morning Herald* emerged with what was billed as a profile of Latham. It was nothing of the kind. It did not deal with his ideas, achievements, policies or vision at all and it barely touched on his career in parliament. Instead, it regurgitated every rumour it could find relating to what the Americans call 'character' - by which they mean a kind of puritan morality, especially in regard to sex.

The piece was both grubby and impertinent. It was the

sort of journalism you'd prefer to handle with tongs; Akerman would have been proud of it. It was also grossly unbalanced - unless we're going to see a similar muck-raking exercise on the life and times of John Winston Howard next week, which is not very likely. However, just

Why do all - not some, but all - of the Liberal leaders under whom he served loathe him? Why do they call him, variously, treacherous, untrustworthy, racist, pig-headed, short-sighted, dishonest, stupid and vicious?

by Mungo MacCallum



in case, may I suggest a few lines of inquiry the intrepid investigators Damien Murphy and Deborah Hope might like to follow, along the same pattern they employed while digging the dirt on Latham.

For starters, Howard's brief legal career included stints with Stephen Jacques and Stephen and with Truman, Nelson and Howard. Let's talk to his bosses: how competent was he? Was he involved in any serious cases or was he just a nondescript little clerk? Did they entrust him with the keys to the safe? How did his fellow employees feel about him? Did the women find him a bit creepy? Did he ever try and trap them by the water cooler?

Then there are his political colleagues. Why do all - not some, but all - of the Liberal leaders under whom he served loathe him? Why do they call him, variously, treacherous, untrustworthy, racist, pig-headed, short-sighted, dishonest, stupid and vicious? And that's just the people on his own side. What are the fatal flaws that

bring him into such contempt among his own peer group?

Then there are the parties he used to throw in his office in the old Parliament House, events which gained some notoriety as 'Howard's meat markets.' Numbers of young female staffers were lured to

these functions for the delectation of lonely members. Howard was effectively acting as a procurer, as a pimp. How does he feel about promoting promiscuity, adultery, marriage break up, unintended pregnancies and abortions?

And what of his own activities? For a time he shared a flat with Warwick Parer, a minister he unconsciously and inexplicably forgave for a blatant conflict of interest. Did Parer witness something he shouldn't have during those years? Were there overnight visitors? Did Howard ever suggest that one of his Treasury staffers might like to get a feel of the private sector?

And can he explain the rumours that the real reason the Howards stayed in Kirribilli House rather than move to The Lodge was that Janette did not trust him alone in Canberra? So: has Howard ever had sex with anyone other than his wife? And while we're at it, could he explain the precise nature of his relationship with Barbara Williams?

Confronted with such an interrogation our beloved Prime Minister would undoubtedly say that he would not dignify it with acknowledgement, let alone answers, and he would be perfectly within his rights to do so. But this was just the kind of sludge the *Herald* expected Latham to wade through to justify his credentials as a political leader. A garbage proposition, and garbage journalism to match.

And while we're on the subject of garbage, last week Howard returned to the concept of the headland speech, the idea he employed to avoid discussing policies for his first term in 1996. The term for the oration in which he avoided discussing policy for his fourth term was 'over the horizon'; it could equally have been called 'round the bend', or perhaps 'off the planet'.

Its theme was that Howard was looking to create in Australia an enterprise culture, a sustainable continent, and a fair and decent society - well, after eight and a half years it's about time. Just why he had not attempted these laudable ideals to date, or how he was going to move on them in the future was not part of the speech. He did, however, deplore the 'coarsening' of our culture, which included road rage, misconduct on football clubs and death of cricketer David Hookes.

Curiously, the breakdown of all traditional standards of political ethics over which he has lovingly presided did not get a mention. But that, of course, is something for his successors to clean up. Over the horizon indeed - just not on Howard's radar.

Brunswick Heads Holistic Dental Centre

Centre for biological & biocompatible dentistry

Introducing - Dr Gavin Stuart

I graduated from Manchester University in July 1999 and worked in the local area for two years and have since been working in Australia. I enjoy all aspects of dentistry but am particularly interested in cosmetic dentistry, general restorative dentistry, surgery, phobic patients, worn dentition and night grinders. My philosophy is to 'treat patients as people and not as a set of teeth'. I am very gentle and really enjoy treating children as I come from a large Irish family and have a lot of experience with children. Away from work I enjoy literature, music, playing the guitar and am hoping to learn how to play the piano. I also enjoy various sports including swimming, scuba diving and keeping fit. I will be treating patients from Monday August 2 and look forward to meeting you!

Dr Nigel Cluer (Principal) B.D.Sc (Hons)
Dr Marcus O'Meara B.D.Sc.
Dr Michael Darveniza Ph. D, M.D. Sc (Qld) F.R.A.C.D.S
T.M.J. Crown & Bridge Specialist
Julie Woods RN, Health Sciences, Nutrition Medicine

6/18 Mullumbimbi Street,
Brunswick Heads, NSW 2483. Ph: 6685 1264

Echo this week	
	pages
Letters.....	9-12
Articles.....	13-15
TV Guide.....	16-17
Holidays.....	18,31
<hr/>	
Seven Entertainment Centre	
Mandy Nolan's Roundup.....	2-5
Writers Festival.....	6
Cinema Reviews.....	7
Gig Guide.....	8-9
Eating Out Guide.....	10-11
Alphabet Feature.....	12
<hr/>	
Service Directory.....	32-35
Classifieds.....	35-41
Sport.....	42-43
Real Estate.....	45-47