



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: "... Now that I've visited our new Melbourne Museum I almost sympathise with the man who pied Steve Bracks at last month's opening. Stuffing a pie down the Premier's throat was the ideal way to mark the birth of a museum dedicated to ramming diverse ideology down ours. It's tragic to see one of our finest cultural jewels turned to trash. The old, venerable museum – devoted to displaying objects which allowed us to reach our own conclusions about our past – has been replaced by a \$290 million propaganda unit, presenting a skewed, inaccurate account of our history and culture. But how typical this vandalism is of our cultural decline... For years now universities have taught that facts are just points of view, and its better to learn the 'right' opinions..."

– Andrew Bolt, "*Herald Sun*", November, 2000

STONE-THROWING by Jeremy Lee:

In mid-October *On Target*, the weekly newsletter of the Australian League of Rights, was taken to task by Paul Barry, compere of the ABC's *Media Watch*, for reprinting a letter-to-the-Editor which appeared in *The Cairns Post* almost four months earlier (June 12th).

The implication of Paul Barry's censure was that the League of Rights, a nasty, racist, anti-semitic organisation may have had something to do with this letter, as the author, Lennie Creek, did not live at the address given, and people in the vicinity said he did not exist.

Suitably chastened, the League printed a correction in *On Target*, October 20th.

In his zeal to single out the League for excoriation Barry somehow failed to mention that the matter of Lennie Creek's existence had been dealt with shortly after its publication in *The Cairns Post* by a seasoned and well-respected journalist, Lawrie Kavanagh, in Queensland's main paper, *The Courier-Mail* on June 27th – a couple of weeks after the letter first appeared (and well before *On Target* carried it).

After pointing out that a number of Aborigines disagreed with some of the claims made about the Stolen Generation issue, Kavanagh continued:

" One man with similar ideas is Lenny Creek, a mysterious north Queensland Aborigine, who

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recently wrote to *The Cairns Post* stating in reasoned tones that he and some of his mates were fed up 'with all this harping about stolen children, land rights and reconciliation'.

"The children were not stolen, they were taken away for their own good, as they did not fit in with the full-bloods,' he wrote in a letter to the editor which has raised eyebrows in the north.

"Land rights are a joke. Some tribes are claiming land they never had anything to do with. I know because being an Aborigine I hear all these things. The white lawyers are a lot to blame ...'

It was a commonsense letter for those of us not caught up with the breast-beating minority and gave hope that there might be light way down the reconciliation tunnel. To ancient blokes like me and the man who sent me the newspaper cutting of Creek's letter, Ingham's 83-year-old Bob Dunbar, a Protector of Aborigines in the Gulf Country during the '50s, it was not so much the contents of the letter, but the guts of the writer that impressed us.

"As old Bob wrote, 'That Creek bloke will have the bone pointed at him for sure by Mr. Perkins and the like'

"It would have taken a very brave Aboriginal man to write it and yesterday I contacted a northern Aboriginal acquaintance to track down Creek for an interview, or simply to shake his hand. The best I could get was that Lenny Creek does exist.

"He's the man who wrote the letter,' said my contact. 'He's from the grassroots level and that's his idea of the situation. Whatever he went through he's probably just gotten sick of it. We read the letter and it's caused a big bloomin' ruckus up here, all right.'

"Creek's letter speaks volumes and one particular section held special interest for old Bob Dunbar, whose job as Normanton's Chief of Petty Sessions made him responsible for Aboriginal welfare from Burketown to Weipa in 1950-55.

"It said: 'If there is to be reconciliation between whites and blacks then the truth has to be told about what both sides did to each other'

"According to Dunbar, that's not the way it is...."

Kavanagh's article went on to disclose Bob Dunbar's scathing criticism of Sir Ronald Wilson's report from the Stolen Generations Inquiry. Dunbar wrote:

"They gave me a book on the Commission which investigated the alleged stolen generation – about 700 pages. In it they interviewed about 550, mostly Aborigines and mixed-bloods – most of them appeared biased and on the side of trying to make this episode as disgraceful as possible.

"There was not one person interviewed who gave the commission the other side ... the white side ... of it all. To my mind it's a gigantic scam, a total fantasy. I believe white lawyers could see that there was the possibility of lots and lots of compensation being made to the 'terribly hurt, injured and damaged' people who were removed and that they wanted a share of the spoils."

All of which, while the truth, may be too 'politically incorrect' for *Media Watch*. Kavanagh went on to say that Territory Patrol officers who volunteered to give evidence at the Inquiry were not called. He went on:

" In 1996, one of them, Leslie Newton Penhall, recorded his experiences as a postwar patrol officer, detailing the grave danger facing children of mixed blood, hoping such first-hand information would assist the Inquiry. But Sir Ronald wasn't interested.

"Although Penhall and former workmates were not given a chance to appear before the Inquiry, all were branded by association with acts of genocide in Wilson's misguided, unquestioned findings.

"These are the fantasies posing as history today. The real history will be buried in Canberra archives along with old Bob Dunbar's first-hand account of his time as Protector of Aborigines in The Gulf.

"That's why I would some day like to shake Lenny Creek's hand because, as he wrote: 'If there is to be any hope of reconciliation between whites and blacks then the truth has to be told about what both sides did to each other'

Can we expect *Media Watch* to at least correct some of the misconceptions for which it was responsible? Frankly, we're doubtful. It doesn't always apply to its own performance the strict objectivity and accuracy it demands from others. Still, we're always prepared to be pleasantly surprised.

OTHERS ALSO HAVE DISPLAYED COURAGE: Frank Devine, another journalist of the old school, wrote in *The Australian* (30/11/2000) of the death at the age of 80 of another courageous Aborigine, Bertha Gollan:

" What she did to become famous and a hero in the 75th year of a life of obscure, dogged achievement was to sit at her kitchen table with her sister-in-law Dulcie Wilson and her best friend Dorothy Wilson and decide with them that there was not a skerrick of truth to the talk in those days about Hindmarsh Island, at the mouth of the Murray River, being a sacred site of secret women's business"

A senior member of the Ngarrindjeri people, Bertha and her friends decided to go public. Devine went on:

"What a storm the three women walked into when they accepted as unavoidable duty the need to speak out against an intrinsically contemptuous exploitation of their heritage We of the media ranged, alas, between indifference and hostility toward the (oddly named) 'dissident women' who grew in number from the original three to about a dozen while the going remained hard They were reviled and threatened – with death more than once – by their own people. Friendships that went back generations blew apart When the dissidents testified at the royal commission, proponents, who had refused to give evidence, cursed them from the spectator area. The astonishingly brave dissidents stood their ground – together

"When royal commissioner Iris Stevens found the secret women's business of Hindmarsh Island to be a falsehood, most of the dissidents, Kenny reported, sat around Bertha's kitchen table, weeping with joy"

There are many other equally courageous stories. That of the Rev. Cedric Jacobs, MBE, a full-blood Aborigine is one. Finding himself at the age of nine suffering malnutrition, he was taken to a Christian Mission at Mogumber. He worked through life to being a member of the National Aboriginal Conference – a precursor to ATSIC – between 1977 and 1981. He also helped found the Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship of Australia. His book "*Healing a Divided Nation*" is a challenging contrast to the attrition which often goes under the name 'reconciliation'.

Neither was Cedric Jacobs 'politically correct' being expelled from the Uniting Church for his disagreement with that Church's line on racial policy.

Behind the public face of ATSIC there is a story waiting to be told, which speaks of strong dissent among both black and white. If *Media Watch* has any claim to fame it is to "keep the Fourth Estate honest". This means in particular it is to make sure all sides of major issues are put objectively. In the case of Lennie Creek and *On Target* it has failed. It has had some spectacular successes – the "Cash-for-Comment" issue obviously being one. The real test is whether it is prepared to put its own house in order.

Merry Christmas, Paul Barry!

ECONOMICS – THREE ALLIED ACTIVITIES by Betty Luks:

Broadly, an economic system is comprised of three allied activities: production, consumption and distribution. Production is the term applied to all those activities and processes of industry whereby things are produced, as goods and services for consumption. Consumption is the term applied to the utilising of the goods and services. Distribution is the term given to the process of transporting the goods and services from production to consumption.

Distribution and not production is the real economic problem in this industrialised, automated, computerised technological age. What is lacking is a guiding philosophy of freedom and service – and the political will.

From a Christian viewpoint, the goal of economics is to join goods and services to needs; if the activities of distribution do this, then economics has reached its true end, the purpose for which it was instituted. The accounting of the distribution system in a money economy – is money! Therefore, we must insist on changes in financial policies to ensure economics reaches its true end.

Until we insist on this economic policy of goods and services meeting the needs of the people, the preference for money, above all other considerations, will continue to result in all the kinds of evil we - and the whole world - are experiencing!

"Policy always has a metaphysical source in Philosophy, whilst Policy and Methods have a cause and effect relationship." (Anthony Cooney).