

GOUGH WHITLAM IN CONTEXT: A REVISIONIST EXERCISE

Barry Jones

This article is based on the 33rd Daniel Mannix Memorial Lecture given by Barry Jones on 8 August 2012 to the Newman College Students' Club, University of Melbourne.

I was honoured to have been invited to deliver the Daniel Mannix Memorial Lecture. Before I turn to the advertised topic, I want to make three short tributes.

First, I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation.

Second, it is important to recognise the contribution of Archbishop Daniel Mannix, not only as an important figure in Ireland's struggle for independence, but in the definition of a national identity in his country of adoption, Australia.

Born near Cork in March 1864, when Abraham Lincoln was still in his first term as President of the United States, he died in November 1963, just weeks before John F. Kennedy's assassination. Both radical and conservative, he played a central role in the defeat of the two Referenda on Conscriptation in 1916 and 1917, and the ALP split in the time of Billy Hughes.

His support for Bob Santamaria and the Movement was a decisive factor in the ALP split of 1954–55, which kept Labor out of office, nationally, until Gough Whitlam's 'It's Time!' victory in 1972. Cardinal Gilroy and the Sydney Archdiocese kept a very low profile, starved the DLP and maintained a working (if unenthusiastic) relationship with NSW Labor.

Archbishop Mannix was himself a victim of ecclesiastical politics and, despite his very long service, in 1946 was denied the red hat, which went to Sydney. Dr Mannix retained some radicalism. Although a fervent anti-Communist, he signed a petition against the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in the United States for espionage in 1953.

I saw him occasionally as he walked from St Patrick's Cathedral to Raheen. I often attended the St Patrick's Day procession in Melbourne, to observe him at close quarters, to the horror of my fundamentalist relatives.

Third, I dedicate this lecture to the late Fr Peter Steele, SJ (1939–2012). He was distinguished as Jesuit, scholar, Emeritus Professor, poet, essayist and biographer of Swift.

I came to know him through Professor Margaret Manion and was distressed by his illness, although he retained a luminous quality until the end. He died on 27 June at the age of 73.

I repeat the glowing words of Morag Fraser, who wrote:

Peter's poetry evoked two strong aspects of his personality — the watcher, with such careful recording eyes 'alive to splendour' and the man alone, sieving the 'bright particulars' of his mind.... We are all beneficiaries of that watching of Peter's ... The inheritors of those bright particulars. They are all there, but they're incised now in his poetry, in his essays, in his homilies. They'll be there forever, now, as long as we read, and as long as we aspire. Because of them, perhaps we'll be better able to see what hope looks like — the 'morning beginning to lace the darkness'.

GOUGH WHITLAM IN CONTEXT: A REVISIONIST EXERCISE

Since its revival in 1977, this is the 33rd Daniel Mannix Memorial Lecture. Its emphasis is biographical. Only two subjects have been spoken about twice: Sir Robert Menzies by Paul Hasluck in 1979 and Malcolm Fraser in 1987; and Gough Whitlam, first commemorated by Kim Beazley in 1999, now by me.

Edward Gough Whitlam was born in Kew on 11 July 1916 and is now in his 97th year.

This has not been a year for celebration. His dearly beloved wife, Margaret — his shrewdest and sharpest critic, and hubris deflator — died in Sydney on 17 March 2012, aged 92. It was a heavy, and until the last weeks, unexpected, blow for Gough Whitlam. They had married in April 1942, and stayed together for 69 years, 10 months and 24 days, as he would count it.

The Whitlams had three sons and one daughter: Tony, barrister, MHR and Federal Court judge; Nick, merchant banker and company director; Stephen, diplomat and administrator; and Catherine, teacher and public servant.

Margaret, an expert swimmer, became a social worker, involving herself in many important causes, including literacy, promoting music and dance, gender equality and family welfare. She and Gough were both named as Living National Treasures in 1997. Her interpersonal skills and tact were of a higher order than Gough's and she was both loved and admired. She had a dry wit and exquisite sense of proportion.

Gough Whitlam was deeply moved by the warmth and intensity of the tributes paid to Margaret as a great life enhancer and character in her own right.

On 8 June, Malcolm Fraser delivered the 2012 Whitlam Oration at the Whitlam Institute at the University of Western Sydney. In an outstanding speech he praised Gough Whitlam, emphasising that, notwithstanding the political trauma of 1975 and the events leading up to 'The Dismissal', he and Whitlam had common cause on many issues. They included foreign policy, especially the recognition of the People's Republic of China, unease about automatic acquiescence in all aspects of United States foreign policy,

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White Australia, multiculturalism, the ownership of newspapers, immigration, refugees, Aborigines and Native Title, the (mostly covert) revival of racism in Australian politics, the environment, constitutional reform and the Republic.

During the 1999 Referendum campaign for a Republic they made a television advertisement together, emphasising the key words, 'It's time!'

Fraser's Whitlam Oration is strong and radical, particularly so in the context of 2012. It is hard to name anybody in the current Australian Parliament, with the possible exceptions of Malcolm Turnbull, Kevin Rudd and John Faulkner, who would attempt to be so bold, courageous, far-sighted and generous.

A POLITICAL SINGULARITY

A singularity can be defined in several ways, most commonly as the quality of being different. In science and mathematics, a singularity often appears as a spike on a graph, something that soars up and then falls back to the norm. Gough Whitlam was a political singularity who transformed Australian politics in unprecedented ways and, despite his relatively short tenure as prime minister (2 years 11 months 7 days), was a major change agent.

E.G. Whitlam was Leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party for a record term, from February 1967 to December 1977 (10 years and 10 months), 13 months longer than John Curtin. In December 1972 he held, simultaneously, the largest number of portfolios — thirteen.

He was not only the longest lived Australian prime minister but the longest lived democratically elected (or appointed) head of government in the English-speaking world, outliving Prime Minister Charles Tupper (Canada), President Gerald Ford (US), Prime Minister Jim Callaghan (UK), President Eamon de Valera (Ireland) and Prime Minister Walter Nash (New Zealand). He also outlived Chancellor Konrad Adenauer (Germany) and Oscar Scalfaro (Italy), to list only prominent nonagenarians.

It must be conceded that Morarji Desai (1896–1996), Prime Minister of India from 1977 to 1979, lived longer (so far), dying in his 100th year, having attracted some notoriety for drinking his own urine. Gough Whitlam hoped for an opportunity to ask him whether it was served at room temperature, or on the rocks. (Another Indian Prime Minister, Gulzarilal Nanda (1964; 1966), lived five months longer than Desai.)

The increase in Australian longevity generally in the last 50 years has been unprecedented. Of 32 ministers who served in the Whitlam government, most of them above middle age on appointment, 13 were still alive in August 2012, more than 36 years after The Dismissal. This is a striking measure of their physical toughness. The proportionality with the Fraser government is similar.

Incidentally, Gough Whitlam still reads without glasses.

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A graduate of Sydney University, Whitlam served in the RAAF as a navigator during World War II, then was admitted to the bar, became active in the ALP in Darlinghurst, then moved to Cronulla in 1947 and Cabramatta in 1957. Elected as MHR for Werriwa (NSW) at a by-election in November 1952, he served until his resignation in July 1978.

I first met him in September 1954.

In 1960, when Dr H.V. Evatt, having lost three elections, was coerced into retirement, Arthur Calwell succeeded him as Federal Leader of the ALP. Gough Whitlam — not yet widely known — was a surprise (and to Calwell, unwelcome) choice as Deputy Leader. It was not a happy relationship.

Calwell, with his Irish Catholic background, had been shaped by the sectarian bitterness of Conscription and its aftermath in World War I, the Depression, the Labor split of 1954–55 and the resulting schism in Victoria's Catholic community, and a decade of difficulty with Evatt.

Whitlam was 20 years younger, an urbane humanist, cosmopolitan in style and superbly equipped, it seemed, for dealing with television and the problems associated with the coming of age of the post-war boom babies.

Although not a racist, Calwell was firmly committed to White Australia on social and economic grounds. A strong protectionist, he became increasingly, and embarrassingly, dependent on the support of the 'hard Left' Victorian branch of the ALP, and its dogmatic and authoritarian style repelled voters.

The Hansard Index records Gough Whitlam's astounding industry. He spoke more and asked or answered more questions, with or without notice, on a far wider range of subjects than any member in the history of the House of Representatives. Working on an average of 72 items in each column of the Index, I calculated that in the 10 years from 1969 to 1978, Whitlam made 11,360 contributions. The highest number was in 1971 (2,412 entries) and the lowest in 1978 (580), the year he resigned. The numbers fell in the years of his Prime Ministership because he was limited to answering questions and unable to ask them, which must have been frustrating.

After Calwell had himself lost three elections (1961, 1963, 1966), Whitlam became leader in February 1967. In the first Caucus ballot, Whitlam won 32 primary votes, followed by Jim Cairns (15), Frank Crean (12), Fred Daly (6) and Kim Beazley Sr (3). He won comfortably in the second ballot. Lance Barnard, from Tasmania, was elected as his deputy.

In the turbulent 1960s, four controversial figures changed the face of the ALP: Gough Whitlam, Don Dunstan, Lionel Murphy and Jim Cairns; but of the quartet Gough proved to be *prima donna assoluta*. Whitlam and Dunstan shared a wary respect, but operated in different spheres, Dunstan remaining in South Australia. While Cairns and Murphy were both suspicious of Whitlam, Murphy hoped to be able to transfer to the House of Representatives (as John Gorton had done) and become leader — and, to that extent, saw Cairns as a potential rival. On many major issues, such as White Australia,

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multiculturalism, the death penalty, Aboriginal rights, censorship, affirmative action and gender issues, all four agreed. Cairns and Murphy resisted Whitlam on modernising the party structure and transforming the Victorian branch.

In his essay in *Australian Prime Ministers* (2000), edited by Michelle Grattan, the late journalist and academic Clem Lloyd wrote, correctly, that Whitlam:

brought sophistication of structure and process to the moribund machinery of the Australian Labor Party, which he set out to reform in the early 1960s. This involved a display of raw political courage unwaveringly sustained over a decade, contemptuous of even the most basic tenets of political self-preservation. The ALP's successes over 25 years were anchored in the bedrock of the Whitlam-driven reform of the administration and political process ... Whitlam's task on entering the cabalistic world of Labor branch politics was to convince a dubious branch membership of his Labor sympathies. His remorseless didacticism aroused incredulity among traditional Laborites steeped in class struggle and militant socialism ... Whitlam prevailed through a combination of persistence, patience, intelligence, geniality and ubiquity. His opponents had no answer to his vitality, consuming presence and perpetual advocacy.

The reference to Whitlam's 'remorseless didacticism' deserves elaboration. Whitlam liked to speak at length and on the subjects that engaged him — ratification of ILO Conventions, uniform railway gauges, UNESCO's World Heritage system, altering the Commonwealth Constitution. He gave long, lucid speeches, incorporating the odd witticism, but devoted to explaining, explaining, explaining. Sometimes he went on too long and audiences could feel fatigued, but he never short-changed them or talked down to them.

The range of Whitlam's achievement is extraordinary, especially in the face of what seemed like insurmountable odds. He transformed the ALP and made it electable, but he did it by emphasising his policy agenda, much of it non-economic, and did so largely through sheer force of personality, a mastery of evidence, and outstanding debating skills.

His interests were patrician. In addition, his role model, in appearance, colouring, stature, dress and debating style, seemed to be Robert Gordon Menzies rather than any figure in the Labor tradition, even H.V. Evatt. I don't ever recall seeing him on television wearing a hard hat and pretending to be interested in what was going on at a mine site.

His verbal skills and his performances in unarmed combat defy reproduction here. His knowledge and range of interests were encyclopaedic. His humour was sharp, often savage, usually erudite. He once provided a favourite joke to *The Age*, but it leaves listeners blank unless they have strong Bonapartist interests.

Talleyrand once asked Napoleon, 'Why is it that your brothers hate you so much?' Napoleon pondered for a moment and replied: 'They believe I have robbed them of the patrimony of our late father the king.'

His achievements are exceptional because he had no power base other than his head, his family and his faithful staff; no faction, no coterie of intimates inside Caucus.

Gough had some outstanding talents working directly with him, and always retained their loyalty. They included Jim Spigelman (later Chief Justice of New South Wales, now Chair of the ABC), John Menadue (later Secretary of the Prime Minister's Department, Ambassador to Japan and CEO of Qantas), Peter Wilenski (Secretary of three departments and Ambassador to the UN), Graham Freudenberg (ranking with Don Watson as an outstanding speech writer), Race Mathews (later Federal MP and State Minister), Carol Summerhayes, Barbara Stewart and Eric Walsh. The great 'Nugget' Coombs joined Whitlam's office as a consultant.

EGW had strong moral and intellectual support from 'the Participants' (aka 'Independents'), a small but perfectly formed group of professionals in the Victorian party, but they had no seats in Caucus, where it counted.

In 1969, as leader for the first time, competing against Prime Minister John Gorton, Gough Whitlam only won silver. Despite a large national swing in Victoria, 14 years after the Split, Labor finished only one seat ahead of where it had been in 1955.

The stormy Federal intervention into the Victorian branch of the ALP in September 1970 resulted in removal of a dogmatic Left junta, which had proved to be electoral poison. The decisive vote on the Federal Executive was cast by Clyde Cameron, MHR for Hindmarsh, a tough ex-shearer and AWU heavyweight from South Australia, but a self-trained scholar, historian and debater, not conspicuously enthusiastic for Whitlam. But Cameron was a devotee of realpolitik and recognised the inexorable logic of Whitlam's campaign against the Victorians. He wanted Labor to win, concluded that only Whitlam could do it, and that the Victorian Branch had to be removed and replaced. (Bob Hawke opposed Federal intervention, fearing that the ALP in Victoria would collapse and trade unions would form an Industrial Labor Party.)

WHITLAM AS CAMPAIGNER — AND 'THE PLATFORM'

Whitlam was an outstanding campaigner who appealed directly to voters, reaching out *over* the Party structure, which basically didn't like him much. Nevertheless the Party's apparatchiki conceded, reluctantly, in 1969, 1972 and 1974 that he was the leader with the best chance of winning.

Whitlam recognised the need to 'crash through or crash' and make the ALP more open and accessible, especially in the age of television. This opening up also occurred in the Liberal and National Parties, to some degree, and much of the credit is Whitlam's.

Whitlam led nine national campaigns. There were two for half the Senate alone (1967, 1970), the last such events in our electoral history; two for the House of Representatives alone (1969, 1972); two double dissolutions (1974, 1975) and only one 'normal' election, for the House of Representatives and half the Senate (1977). There were also national campaigns for Constitutional Referenda: two in December 1973 (to give the Commonwealth power to legislate for prices and incomes) and four in May 1974 (simultaneous elections for Senate and House of Representatives; allowing the Constitution to be altered after a 'Yes' vote in a majority of the population and half the States; electorates

to be redistributed on the basis of population rather than electors; recognising the role of local government in the Constitution). All six were defeated.

He promoted a revolution of rising levels of expectations. Whitlam told the Australian public that it was entitled to expect more of its governments; that governments could and should do more things. If they failed, they should be judged harshly, and replaced. He succeeded in this. He was both a beneficiary (in 1972) of sharper scrutiny and increased expectations and also its victim (1975 and 1977). Fraser was both beneficiary (1975) and victim (1983).

After The Dismissal, in the 1975 election the ALP's primary vote fell to 42.8%, which was regarded as a very bad result. In 2012–13 it would be regarded as a very good figure.

He felt that, as part of a maturation process, nations needed to develop symbols of their own rather than borrowing someone else's. The survival of oaths, flags, portraits in public places, crowns and other insignia will be increasingly subject to generational shifts in opinion. The establishment of the Order of Australia to replace Imperial honours had considerable symbolic significance and the Liberals retained it.

The processes of law reform, often regarded as of limited and esoteric appeal, were very important to Whitlam, who campaigned energetically for them over many years. He was an enthusiastic proponent (with Lionel Murphy) of setting up an Australian Legal Aid Office and a permanent Law Reform Commission, enacting simplified and non-punitive divorce laws, enhanced legal protection for women, abolishing the death penalty and enacting a Bill of Rights. All but the last came to pass. He was attracted by Ralph Nader's program for freedom of information, consumer protection and environmental impact assessments.

Whitlam was excited by the arts and film. John Gorton had set up some new structures, but Whitlam went much further, and was himself an enthusiastic consumer of high culture.

He was committed to the concept of evidence as a precondition to action. He had a passion for information and education, assuming that if only the facts were revealed, prejudice, ignorance and sectional interest would fall away. It did not always happen.

Contrary to the widely held view, Whitlam understood the fundamentals of economics and the implications of globalisation for Australia, although it was not his topic of choice.

The magnum opus, *The Whitlam Government 1972–75*, contains 20 chapters, one an overview, and 19 on specific policy areas. The chapter on 'The Economy' is comprehensive, well written and well argued, an effective rebuttal to the conventional wisdom that Whitlam was an economic agnostic. The book's range is impressive, with chapters on 'Aborigines', 'Migrants', 'Women', 'Arts, Letters and Media'. Indeed, the only significant omissions are 'Science and Technology' and 'Sport'.

John Hyde's book *Dry* (2003) identifies only two Labor MPs who indicated some understanding of and sympathy for C.R. (Bert) Kelly's long campaign against tariffs.

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Gough Whitlam was one, Reg Pollard, a minister under Chifley and MHR for Lalor, the other.

Whitlam describes himself as a consistent opponent of protection and Cairns as an equivocal supporter of tariffs. He claims credit for the 25 per cent across-the-board cut in protection announced in June 1973, a major change in direction for Labor. However, he concedes (p. 191): 'In government Cairns was rational enough when one could prise him away from his sycophants.'

In the famous 1972 'It's time!' policy speech Whitlam set out 'three great aims, to promote equality, to involve the people of Australia in the decision-making process of our land and to liberate the talents and uplift the horizons of the Australian people'. He invoked the 'touchstone of modern democracy — liberty, equality, fraternity'.

If I had to identify Whitlam's greatest achievement as Prime Minister, it would be that he took the demonology out of foreign policy. It is almost impossible for contemporary audiences to understand the phobias and irrationality generated by the Cold War, fear of China and paranoia that if Vietnam was unified under the Hanoi regime Australia would be in danger of invasion. We no longer see yellow arrows and bloodied hands on our television indicating where the Chinese would probably invade. Now our main fear about China is that it will buy less of our minerals, at a lower price. We happily cooperate with Vietnam in trade, aid and education; it's hard to recall what the long, bloody war in Vietnam was about.

Introducing rationality in foreign affairs was a central element in Whitlam's legacy, and it was continued by Fraser, Hawke, Keating and even — the Iraq War aside — Howard, to a degree.

Whitlam was never a populist. He never resorted to cliché. He was a leader, not a follower. He was antithetical to the current obsession by political professionals with 'polls', 'marketing', 'damage control' and 'spin' generally.

Now, in the era of spin, when a complex issue is involved, leaders do not explain, they find a mantra ('Stop the boats!') and repeat it endlessly, 'staying on message', without explanation or qualification. The word 'because' seems to have fallen out of the political lexicon. Gough was ahead of his time — and out of it too.

THE INFANTILISATION OF DEBATE

Since Gough Whitlam's time, Australia has undergone a serious decline in the quality of debate on public policy — and the same phenomenon has occurred in the United States, Canada and Europe. The British journalist Robert Fisk has called this 'the infantilisation of debate'.

Just over 1,015,000 people (about 900,000 of them locals) are currently studying at Australian universities, both undergraduate and postgraduate. There are probably 2.5 to 3 million graduates living in Australia, far more than the total numbers of traditional

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blue-collar workers. Inevitably these numbers will shift our political culture, but the process is occurring slowly.

Currently we are, by far, the best-educated cohort in our history — on paper, anyway — but it is not reflected in the quality of our political discourse. We appear to be lacking in courage, judgment, capacity to analyse, or even simple curiosity, except about immediate personal needs.

Debates on such issues as climate change, population, taxation, refugees, mandatory detention and offshore processing, plain packaging of cigarettes, limitations on problem gambling, and access to water, have been deformed by both sides resorting to cherry-picking of evidence, denigration of opponents, mere sloganeering, leading to infantilisation of democracy, treating citizens as if they were unable to grasp major issues.

Both Whitlam and Keating emphasised the importance of high culture. Other than Malcolm Turnbull, nobody does now. There is a strong anti-intellectual flavour in public life, sometimes described as philistine or — more commonly — bogan, which leads to a reluctance to engage in complex or sophisticated argument and analysis of evidence, most easily demonstrated in the anti-science push in debate about vaccination, fluoridation, and global warming.

Media — old and new — is partly to blame. Revolutionary changes in IT may be even more important, where we can communicate very rapidly, for example on Twitter, in ways that are shallow and non-reflective. Advocacy and analysis has largely dropped out of politics and been replaced by marketing and sloganeering. Politicians share the blame as well, as consenting adults.

The politics (that is, serious debate on ideological issues) has virtually dropped out of politics and has been replaced by a managerial approach. The use of focus groups and obsessive reliance on polling and the very short news cycle means that the idea of sustained, serious, courageous analysis on a complex issue — the treatment of asylum seekers, for example — has become almost inconceivable.

For decades, politics has been reported as a subset of the entertainment industry, in which it is assumed that audiences look for instant responses and suffer from short-term memory loss. Politics is treated as a sporting contest, with its violence, personality clashes, tribalism and quick outcomes. An alternative model is politics as theatre or drama. The besetting fault of much media reporting is trivialisation, exaggerated stereotyping, playing off personalities, and a general ‘dumbing down’. This encourages the view that there is no point in raising serious issues months or years before an election. This has the effect of reinforcing the status quo, irrespective of which party is in power and at whatever level, State or Federal.

The 2010 Federal election was by common consent the most dismal in living memory, without a single new or courageous idea being proposed on either side. The National Broadband Network (NBN) was announced before the election. After many discussions with people of all political persuasions (or none) I have yet to meet a dissenter to that view.

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In 2010 the assertion that Australia's public debt was getting out of control was largely unchallenged — although figures confirmed we had the lowest percentage in the OECD. Similarly, nobody pointed out that we run 46th in the number of refugees arriving unheralded on our shores. Community withdrawal and disillusion is eroding the strength of our democracy: the tiny numbers of people in major parties (even if we vote for them) confirms this.

By any objective measure, Australia has been more successful than any other OECD nation (Canada comes second) in coping with the aftershocks of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). Recent strong praise by the IMF ranking Australia as first in the world was described by the Opposition, perversely, as a 'warning shot across the bows' and a conclusion that we must do better. Similarly, Wayne Swan's designation by *Euromoney* in 2011 as World's Best Finance Minister was derided. However, NewsPoll and the Neilson Poll indicate that of all sectors of government, economic management is regarded as the area where the Opposition is strongest, and the Gillard government weakest. It flies in the face of common sense but must be recognised, however irrational, as a political reality. In economics, the Opposition has been consistently negative, exploiting the trivial, the vacuous and the populist.

The High Court's decision (June 2012) that Commonwealth funding for school chaplains was unconstitutional was immediately overcome by a cross-party love-in, which hurriedly passed new legislation to nullify the High Court's judgment.

This is a classic example of how a fundamental principle — the separation of church and state — is abandoned for fear of offending powerful interest groups and losing votes. James Madison, in the United States, campaigned until his last breath for the preservation of the separation of church and state. How the Tea Partyists would have loathed him — but then he was not running in 2012, more's the pity.

Despite the exponential increases in public education and access to information in the past century, the quality of political debate appears to have become increasingly unsophisticated, appealing to the lowest common denominator of understanding.

In 1860, more than 150 years ago in New York, Abraham Lincoln began his campaign for the Presidency with a very complex speech about slavery at The Cooper Union, 7,500 words long, sophisticated and nuanced. All four New York newspapers published the full text, which was sent by telegraph across the nation, widely read and discussed. In 1860 the technology was primitive, but the ideas were profound and sophisticated. In 2012, the technology is sophisticated, but the ideas uttered in the Presidential contest so far are, in the most part, embarrassing in their banality, ignorance and naiveté, much of it fuelled by rage or misinformation.

We live in the age of the Information Revolution, but it is also the age of the cult of management. Education (like Health, Sport, the Environment, Law, even Politics) is often treated as a subset of management, with appeals to naked self-interest and protecting the bottom line. At its most brutal, the argument was put that there were no health, education, transport, environment, or media problems, only management problems: get the management right, and all the other problems would disappear. Coupled with the

managerial dogma was the reluctance of senior officials to give what used to be called ‘frank and fearless’ advice — and replacing it with what is now called ‘a whole of government’ approach. This is not telling Ministers what they want to hear — it is actually far worse, a pernicious form of spin doctoring which says: ‘Minister, there are matters on which it is better that you not be informed about, which enables you to engage in plausible deniability.’

Paradoxically, the age of the Information Revolution, which should have been an instrument of personal liberation and an explosion of creativity, has been characterised by domination of public policy by managerialism, replacement of ‘the public good’ by ‘private benefit’, the decline of sustained critical debate on issues leading to gross oversimplification, the relentless ‘dumbing down’ of mass media, linked with the cult of celebrity, substance abuse and retreat into the realm of the personal, and the rise of fundamentalism and an assault on reason. The Knowledge Revolution ought to have been a counter-vailing force: in practice it has been the vector of change.

The cult of management became a dominant factor in public life, exactly as James Burnham had predicted in *The Managerial Revolution* (1941), a book long ahead of its time. In Britain in the Thatcher era, and in Australia after 1983, there was a growing conviction that relying on specialist knowledge and experience might create serious distortions in policy-making, and that generic managers, usually accountants or economists, would provide a more detached view. As a result, expertise was fragmented, otherwise health specialists would push health issues, educators education, scientists science, and so on. It is striking that of eight current Directors-General/CEOs of Education in Australia, judging from their Who’s Who entries, only two (in the ACT and NT) admit to having had any teaching experience or qualifications. Universities have become trading corporations, not just communities of scholars. Sport has become very big business. Political parties are managed by factions, essentially a form of privatisation.

Departments contract out important elements of their core business to consultants. A consultant has been defined as somebody to whom you lend your watch, then ask him to tell you the time. Consultants, eager for repeat business, provide government with exactly the answers that they want to receive. Lobbyists, many of them former politicians or bureaucrats, are part of the decision-making inner circle. Generic managers promote the use of ‘management-speak’, a coded alternative to natural language, only understood by insiders, exactly as George Orwell had predicted.

The managerial revolution involves a covert attack on democratic processes because many important decisions are made without public debate, community knowledge or parliamentary scrutiny.

AFTER PARLIAMENT — AND THE END

Gough served as Professor of Australian Studies at Harvard in 1979; as Ambassador to UNESCO in Paris from 1983 to 1986 and member of its Executive Board from 1985 to 1989; member, then President, of the World Heritage Committee from 1983 to 1989;

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and chair of the National Gallery of Australia from 1987 to 1990. He had a great passion for promoting UNESCO's World Heritage list, and I have followed him in this.

Whitlam was — is — a great achiever, but he would not want me to end by gilding the lily.

Under present arrangements in the ALP, there is no possibility that Gough Whitlam could have been preselected for a winnable seat unless he was a loyal factional member — and the same would have been true of Bill Hayden, Gareth Evans, John Button, Neal Blewett, Don Dunstan or Geoff Gallop.

The central problem for the renewal of Labor is: How can a party with a *contracting* base reach out to an *expanding* society?

I have called this 'the 1954 problem'; 1954 was the year in which membership of trade unions began to contract as a proportion of the total labour force. After 58 years it is starting to look like a trend. In the lifetime of the Prime Minister the ALP as an organisation has become increasingly unrepresentative of the community at large, and even of Labor voters.

Currently, the Party's owners — people like Paul Howes, Tony Sheldon and (until recently) Michael Williamson — think that the highest priority is for them to keep control of their property. They were not unduly worried when the ALP's primary vote in the New South Wales state election in March 2011 fell to 25.6%, after the power brokers had despatched two premiers, Morris Iemma and Nathan Rees. From the Howes-Sheldon perspective, all was well because they were still running the show. They regard the opinions of voters outside their unions as totally irrelevant; after all, they haven't met many.

The ALP must turn outward, embrace democracy and reject oligarchy, understand the past, respect its heritage but embrace the future, thinking in decades, not Twitter moments.

We must all search for the 'shock of recognition' which enables us to find ourselves, expanding our understanding both of the universe and of each other, pursuing arts, science and music as avidly as we pursue sport or the cult of celebrity.

Gough Whitlam was a Homeric figure — as you might expect, he prefers Alexandre Pope's translation — an Odysseus who led Australians into a wider, more confident, grasp of the world.

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