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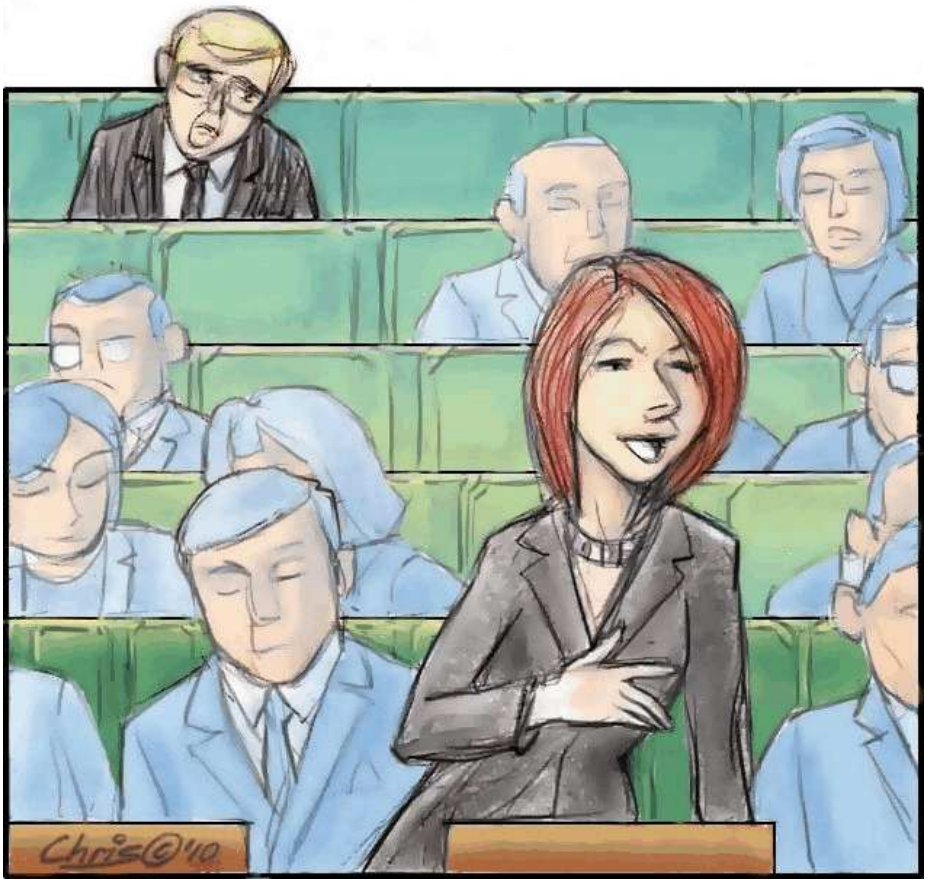

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Church implicated in Canada's reconciliation project

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Tom Clark and Ravi de Costa

Aboriginal reconciliation in Canada is a project with numerous parallels to the Australian experience. Notably they include a conceptual looseness around the meaning of 'reconciliation' itself. Canada's reconciliation project got a serious roll-on in June, when the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) held its first hearings into the so-called Indian Residential Schools at the Forks in Winnipeg.

The TRC has been a long time coming in Canada. These church-run schools began forcibly co-opting Aboriginal children in the 1870s. When the last one closed in 1996, about 150,000 children had been through the system. Along the way, the anger of survivors became a groundswell that forced an out-of-court settlement with the churches and the federal government in 2006. That agreement mandated the TRC, along with funds for commemoration and compensation provisions totalling CA$1.9 billion.

Over the four days of the event, survivors of the schools 'told their stories' before 'sharing circles' of their peers, or in private testimonies delivered out of the public gaze. All these testimonies showed that Canadian policies of removing children from their homes and depriving those homes of children involved a fundamental violence.

A relatively fortunate minority of survivors took pains to assert they had not been abused at their residential schools, typically attributing this to the goodness of specific teachers. They still testified to the basic trauma of the separation from family, friends, culture and language, which remained a burden on the rest of their lives.

But most survivors who testified complained of shocking treatment. Violence was the norm, not an exception. Most described sexual abuse by the staff employed to teach and look after them and/or by fellow students, themselves already brutalised. Testimonies at the Winnipeg event leave no doubt that Canada's churches were heavily culpable for the abuse — particularly the Catholic religious orders, who ran 70 per cent of the schools.

Many children who went into residential schools did not come out alive, without any record of escape or death. Before the Winnipeg event, the TRC's chief commissioner Justice Murray Sinclair declared that the missing may number 3000 children, and that it would be an urgent priority to findout what happened to them.

Historical witnesses from the early 20th century onwards reported that less than 50 per cent of children survived at some residential schools, especially in the west. At the Winnipeg event, a survivor from one prairie school remembered the graves on its grounds. Only in his

adulthood did it occur to him how weird it was for a school to need a graveyard.

According to the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the fact of systemically removing children of specified races from their families was an act of genocide. Non-Aboriginal Canadians, much like Australians, have generally rejected that word in discussion of their country's history.

But uncovering the truth of the missing children may well make the genocidal reality of residential schools more apparent. It may demonstrate that D. C. Scott's infamous policy objective for the schools, 'to kill the Indian in the child', was a euphemism for what happened on the ground.

Many questions can be asked about the the scope and rationale of the TRC's work. It is still not clear who is supposed to reconcile with what. Nor is it clear how comprehensive a picture of 'the truth' the TRC can draw, given the very narrow limits placed on its powers of investigation. This question of the brief is important. In several speeches both before and during the Winnipeg event, Sinclair observed that one of the tasks of the TRC will be to provide a clear definition of its concept of 'reconciliation'. According to its mandate, it has until 2014 to do this.

The faltering Australian experience suggests that a too inclusive definition of reconciliation for Canadians is unlikely to lead to change. The term 'practical reconciliation' is one version that reluctant Australians have used to underwrite a highly paternalist approach to addressing Aboriginal social disadvantage that sustains the legacy of invasion. Canada's TRC will do well to close the door to such appropriations, if significant numbers of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are to engage with its work and with each other.

The 'Julia Gillard' of theology

VIDEO

Peter Kirkwood

When Julia Gillard last week became Australia's first female Prime Minister, there was general acknowledgement that feminist history was being made. But attention on her gender was in the background, and there was certainly no discussion about her fitness for the job as a woman. This signifies community acceptance that it is right and proper for a woman to take on this role.

In a similar vein, Val Webb , who is featured in this interview on Eureka Street TV, is very comfortable and confident speaking as a theologian. She represents a growing acceptance of the female voice in the realm of Christian theology which, until very recently, was dominated by ordained men. Though women are still in the minority, increasingly they are stepping up and making themselves heard.

Webb's interview was recorded at the Common Dreams conference for religious progressives held in April at St Kilda Town Hall in Melbourne. She talks about our troubled modern times providing an opportunity for renewal of religion, the need for all believers to start 'doing' their own theology, and a new openness in recognising revelation in other religions. (Continues below)

Webb has had a multi-facetted career straddling science, business administration, the arts and theology. She was born and brought up in Brisbane in a Presbyterian home, and is now a member of the Uniting Church. Her first degree was in microbiology from the University of Queensland, and after graduating she worked as a researcher in this field.

For most of the last 30 years she has lived in Rochester, Minnesota, USA, where her husband was an oncologist at the Mayo Clinic. She owned and operated an art gallery in Rochester, as well as working as an artist.

Back in Brisbane in the 1980s she led the Communications and Public Relations department at the Wesley Hospital. She began courses in religious studies at the University of Queensland, and completed her PhD in theology at Luther Seminary in St Paul, Minnesota after her family returned to live in America.

She has taught religious studies at the University of Minnesota and Augsburg College in the USA and at Whitley College in Melbourne, and has published half a dozen books including *In Defense of Doubt* and *Why We're Equal: Introducing Feminist Theology*.

Her latest book, *Like Catching Water in a Net: Human Attempts to Describe the Divine*, won the 'general religion' category of the USA Best Books Awards in 2007. Her next book, *Stepping Out With the Sacred: Human Attempts to Engage the Divine*, is due to be released at the end of 2010.

Repressed matriarch's unsafe sex

FILMS

Tim Kroenert

***I Am Love* (MA). Director: Luca Guadagnino. Starring: Tilda Swinton, Flavio Parenti, Edoardo Gabbriellini, Alba Rohrwacher, Pippo Delbono. 120 minutes**

Two notable pieces of trivia about Sicilian filmmaker Luca Guadagnino's lavish, tragic period drama *Io sono l'amore (I Am Love*). First, it features Scottish actor Tilda Swinton speaking Italian with a Russian accent. Second, it is the first film to which renowned American composer John Adams has put his name.

The first point is important because it highlights how incredible the fiercely talented Swinton's performance is. She plays Emma Recchi, Russian born matriarch of an Italian textiles dynasty. Emma is an image of propriety, dutiful wife to her husband Tancredi (Delbono) and adoring mother to their three adult children, particularly her eldest son, Edoardo (Parenti), who seems to share her melancholic Russian soul.

Emma conducts social gatherings especially the comings and goings of the service staff) with joyless precision. Hers is a controlled, repressed existence, and we can sense her alienation even when she is in the midst of a crowd.

Emma becomes inspired by her gay daughter Elisabetta's (Rohrwacher) impassioned break from familial conventions. More importantly, she finds herself suddenly, intensely inflamed by the sensual cooking of rugged young chef, Antonio (Gabbriellini), who happens to be Edoardo's best friend.

I Am Love is the story of Emma's Chatterleyesque escape into Antonio's arms. Their charged, animalistic affair provides respite from her crystalline existence. But as a tawdry, closely held secret, the affair also becomes the catalyst for a sinister positive feedback loop that could ultimately cause the glass to shatter.

This is an astonishing film, whose imposing tragedy is swathed in garish sheaves of Adams' superb score. His compositions burst through unexpectedly to expose characters' inner worlds, sometimes with great humour. Hear how he plays off against cinematographer Yorick Le Saux's use of saturated colour to evoke Emma's erogenous experience of eating a plate of Antonio's prawns. A scene where Emma half stalks, half hides from Antonio on a busy shopping strip becomes a luscious Hitchcockian setpiece thanks to Adams' brilliant yet uneasy symphony.

Risk is clearly an aspect of titillation for the buttoned-down Emma. This is represented symbolically after Emma and Antonio have consummated their attraction and surrendered to

an intense and uninhibited outdoor coupling. Close-up vision of the scurry and flutter of stinging insects, perhaps agitated by Adams' darkly elated score, are juxtaposed with microcosms of human carnal ecstasy; fingers and mouths traversing yards of stretch-marked, pocked and freckled skin. (Visually sumptuous, this is a film for the cinema more than the home theatre.)

I Am Love is an unforgettable film, anchored by an unforgettable performance from Swinton. Her Emma is at once powerful and fragile. The crystal of her existence is both fortified and tested by poor choices, though they are choices made in suffocating circumstances. Her affair with Antonio is a desperate lurch toward freedom, but one wonders whether 'love' is justification enough for the tragic outcome.

Gillard sustains population myth

POLITICS

Ruby J. Murray

When politicians use the word 'sustainability', it usually triggers red warning lights in my head, rather than flagging the presence of green policies. Political discussion of sustainability encourages misdirection and mirror play. The result departs as far as possible from true environmental policy.

One of Julia Gillard's first moves as Prime Minister was to change Tony Burke's title from Minister for Population to Minister for Sustainable Population.

It might seem to be an innocuous shift. After all, what's wrong with asking for a sustainable population? What's wrong with that mystic number that, as Gillard told Fairfax, 'our environment, our water, our soil, our roads and freeways, our busses, our trains and our services can sustain'?

Burke told ABC Radio National on Monday that his new job description 'puts a high priority on us making sure we can develop forms of measurement as to what's the environmental footprint, and to look at some of these environmental questions as well as transport, infrastructure questions, probably with a higher degree of focus'.

Cue the blinking of a thousand tiny red lights.

The shift towards a political discourse of 'sustainable' population growth allows parties on both the left and the right to associate a growing environmental consciousness with fears over immigration. Recently, internal Labor Party polling has shown that in Western Sydney, where the Labor Party's primary vote has dropped to 30 per cent, people's main political concern is the government's policy on asylum seekers.

At the weekend Gillard explained that, although she wasn't reopening the immigration debate, she was in touch with the pressures facing urban voters. Tapping into their fears, she said, 'If you spoke to the people of Western Sydney, for example, about a 'big Australia', they would laugh at you and ask you a very simple question: where will these 40 million people go?'

The number '40 million', which seems to suggest we're about to invite the entire population of Canada to come hang out with us next week, is in fact an exaggerated treasury estimate of Australia's population in 2050 based on current trends. But even apart from that, it's hard not to see this new discourse in a cynical light.

Burke agreed that it's 'true that if you're in an area where you can't get a seat on the bus,

can't get a seat on the train, you're locked in gridlock in traffic, that you would ask the question that Julia posed ... where on earth would you put extra people?'

I don't know about you, but last time I got on an outrageously late, over-crowded train at peak hour full of apparently longstanding Aussies in business suits, the first thing I thought was: I really wish Australia accepted fewer immigrants.

Of course, I might have wished that public transport hadn't been privatised and subsequently ruined by business interests. I might have wished that something would be done about the constant cancellations, breakdowns, and lateness. I might have wished that even a fraction of the taxpayer dollars spent on roads was spent on alternative forms of transport. I might have wished that we spent more time looking for viable, non-polluting energy sources, and less time waiting anxiously for polluting industries to clean themselves up.

But no, what I thought was: I really wish our population growth was more sustainable, and that someone would stop letting refugees flee their war-torn countries for ours, where they cause trains to be cancelled on a daily basis, and make us all very crowded.

There are sensible elements in the change to the portfolio, especially in the potential to disaggregate the issues involved and include regional areas in the analysis of the population. But we must remember that despite being a comparatively very small nation (roughly 0.3 per cent of the global population), Australia has one of the highest per capita greenhouse gas emission rates in the world and regularly tops global emitter lists.

Despite the evidence, we have yet to grasp that the larger problem is not how many people we have, but how they use resources. We know very well what we have to do if we are to be sustainable. It has nothing to do with turning back asylum seekers, and everything to do with examining our environmental behaviour.

The question politicians should be seeking to solve is not 'How will immigrants and refugees hurt our environment and crowd our buses?' but 'How come we're already hurting our environment, and why aren't there more buses?' And the government should not be looking for a level of population that our environment can support. It should ask how our population can support the environment.

How my English teacher saved my life

NON-FICTION

Fiona Douglas

One year ago I met my Saving Grace. And as miraculously as she entered my life I understand that soon she must exit, as her work with me is done. For this I now steel myself, as it is I who must cut the ties. I must be the first to say 'goodbye'.

Ours is a strange story. To this day I cannot fathom why she bothered. But bother she did, in correspondence totalling some 6000 emails from across the world and across time zones. She was my guide and my companion. I think I owe her my life, and more.

Time differences didn't matter to me throughout this time, as day was night and night was day.

It started quite pathetically really. Lost in my own muddled world I had, by instinct for survival, turned all my energy and focus to one of my great loves: writing. Novel writing soon subsumed all other things, offering, as it did, a flash of hope for a future: a purpose to live; a new role?

My first attempt at a novel was titled *Eat worms geranium*. Intensely I had penned the first few chapters; but what to do with it? It was mostly set in my childhood, a place where at that time I commonly dwelt.

And then it occurred to me (exceedingly logical at the time) to approach my school English teacher for her thoughts. This would perhaps be normal enough, if not for the fact that she had been my teacher some three decades prior, in 1978. But this time gap did not faze me from making an overture. Nor the fact that she had subsequently become a successful novelist, nor the fact that she now lived overseas, nor — most significantly — that she probably wouldn't remember me from Adam.

And so it was in late February 2009 I emailed my secondary school English teacher, complete with an attachment of the first few chapters of my novel.

At some level I must have understood I was not acting normally, as I plainly stated to my teacher that I was not good with boundaries and I would fully understand if she did not reply, 'no message being the most complete message of all', I wrote.

To my surprise and elation, she did reply. And over ensuing months she replied and replied and replied. In the blackness she was there. In the blackness she guided me. She was to soon become everything in a world of nothingness. Up to 20 emails a day came her way.

Emails which were at times confronting, often awkward and frequently challenging. Yet she did not shy away.

For four months of major depression she was my saving grace. An accident on our farm then seemingly tipped me that bit further over and she was still there ... advising me to get to hospital in the middle of the night here: day time where she was. I recall the hospital ED staff at 4am asking if anyone knew I was there. I said, 'Yes, *she* knows', omitting the fact that she was no relation at all and thousands of miles away. But to me, with phone in hand, she had never left my side.

She was soon joined by Psych Services staff and a few close friends and my lovely husband. And so it was that after an eight month battle with depression, I was to succumb (as I saw it at the time) to medication.

It's hard now to say what went on: what transpired between her and me in all those correspondences. I know I pushed the boundaries, but push as I might I could not get her to give up on me. She would take it in her stride and offer her wisdom, her calmness, her guidance. And when I was really off the mark and might later, in a rare flash of normality, realise this and lament, she would quietly reply that she appreciates how people occupy different head-spaces at such times and I should not worry myself.

'Worse things happen at sea' and 'There is nothing new under the sun' are two such replies I recall. So she would assure me that I should not feel my stated embarrassment or shame.

Psych Services spent the first few weeks finding the right drugs for me, with daily one to two-hour home visits and twice daily phone calls. At one stage, when one lot of unsuccessful meds was crossing over with replacement meds, I found myself trying to emerge from the fog and my greatest fear was in motion. I somehow found my phone and emailed her from my bed. An extract from 7 July 2009 reads:

'I am fading.'

'But this is a typical 3 am feeling. Snooze time again. Think of Gran; recite your poems if you can (even a few words will do) and drift off. xx'

'Okay.'

'Good girl. Teacher's pet. xx'

This exchange and many others meant the world to me ... literally my whole world. Gentle, caring and 'there'.

Many people would have run a mile when my first unstable email blundered through. In fact she had every reason to duck: her sister, just one year younger than herself, had suffered mental illness most of her life which culminated in her suicide at age 50 in 1996. But she didn't duck, and I am so grateful.

But now, one year on, the time has come for Teacher's Pet to let go and stand strong. A strength emanating in a large part from a precious relationship that happen-chanced my way 31 years after the classroom door closed. A relationship captured forever in 6000 emails in an Outlook Express Inbox.

Campaigning to Christians

POLITICS

John Warhurst

Although Christians are an extremely diverse group, successful political lobbying depends on common priorities. But Christians, who share many basic beliefs, rarely agree on what they really want from government. They can occasionally be successful as individual churches, but agreement between churches is still the exception.

That was the context for the Make it Count 2010 forum hosted by the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) at Old Parliament House last Monday night. The theme was 'What values will define the nation after the election'? Kevin Rudd, in one of his final public appearances, and Tony Abbott addressed Christian leaders with a webcast live to churches around the country. This follows the successful formula used by ACL for Rudd and John Howard in 2007.

The winning formula depends on organising ability and credibility. Political leaders go where they see voters.

Then a group needs the clout to bring its leaders to Canberra to be part of the political theatre. Religious leaders take the risk of submerging their own identities within a carefully crafted Christian consensus.

They must also ask themselves how this event fits in with their own election plans. Each of the major churches, Anglican, Catholic and Uniting, issue its own election advice directly to its members, as do other Christian groups.

Reconciling priorities is always difficult. Ultimately, whether it is beliefs or values, priority is what matters. Rodney Smith of the University of Sydney has calculated that the various 2007 Christian election guides raised as many as 47 separate issues. He concluded, in *How would Jesus Vote?* that, 'rather than speaking in unison, churches and para-church groups were competing to draw attention to different issues'.

The final factor is establishing links to churches across Australia who can sign up their own congregations. The chance to be involved is marketed as an opportunity to 'weigh up the major political parties' policies and to pray as a church for the election'.

Last time the ACL followed up with meetings at the grassroots level in 52 federal electorates. It also consulted its own Christian membership, advocating that the top five Christian priorities, a mixture of social justice and social conservatism, were: support for traditional marriage and family; fighting poverty in Australia; opposing abortion; addressing drug and/or substance abuse, and ameliorating third world poverty.

This year's forum was again a technically sound and well-organised occasion, though the elevation of Julia Gillard means that the Christian lobby jumped the gun and will now need to engage afresh with the new Prime Minister. Gillard is a non-religious person quite different from Rudd and Abbott. But Abbott did firmly tell the forum that he was not a Christian politician but a Christian in politics and that, if elected, he would lead an orthodox Coalition government not one distinguished by religious beliefs.

The broad representation at Old Parliament House and among the participating churches around the country was impressive, though still clearly tilted towards smaller evangelical churches and socially conservative Christians rather than the big established churches. But no church had more senior representation than the Catholic Church. Both Archbishop Philip Wilson of Adelaide, President of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, and Cardinal George Pell of Sydney participated.

The follow-up questions asked of each leader covered seven topics: Indigenous affairs and the Northern Territory Intervention, the continuation of parliamentary prayers, the treatment of asylum seekers, defence of traditional marriage and opposition to same sex unions, the continuation of the school chaplaincy program, the alarming sexualisation of young girls, and climate change issues.

Although priorities among participants would certainly vary, the format treated all items equally. Some of these questions would have graced any secular forum while others clearly played to church audiences. Some, including climate change, welfare and asylum seekers, will be mainstream election issues. Others will interest only specialist audiences.

There are two questions for individual churches and agencies. The first is how to intervene in the forthcoming election, if at all. The second is, if they do intervene, what issues should they prioritise in order to engage with the mainstream contest while remaining true to their Christian principles?

Lost and found

POETRY

Paul Scully

Lost and found

Out there, on that stub of deck,
testament to the tentativeness of his ambitions
from the time long ago when Father Raymund had decided
the calling he still grieved was more wish than summons.
To be wrapped in a yielding black,
identified with a communion of others
ritualising hope in their daily lives ... ever since
he had lived a consolation life, truth be told,
and anxiety had become his vocation.
Some things were best left suppressed.

He looked towards the clumps of mangrove
grasping at a past profusion.
Beyond them the water rippled
with distance or activity beneath,
it was hard to tell which,
and the sun slanted across it.

In the yard
an excess of pavers clamoured at the steps
to the deck, weaved downhill past the clothesline,
then petered out near the bins
standing archly by the drains.

He had not much ken for things,

their doggedness, their obsession with function,

the certainty of their witness.

Even this momentary exertion could exhaust him,

so he came back inside.

He caught a whiff of himself, sour disuse of age,

toasty in flannelette with the heater turned up high.

Washing was now timetable, not release, eating

perfunctory, the beer he sure-footedly avoided

as he huffed down into his chair, even that.

He pushed the bulges of his shoulder blades

into the worn padding and realised how stooped he was —

too much sitting, hunching forward in expectation?
No crane would admit to a neck like that!

But skin still smooth, like his father's, in his nineties what's more.

His mouth gaped involuntarily.

Those Campion days,

a ferment of faith, a substitute fellowship now falling one-by-one

to death's rifle shot, like the man-tassels of Lark Force

streaming south, more or less, along the bush tracks of Rabaul.

Him, he took the east coast, and saw the flying boat

from the shore. He waded first, then stroked to it.

The pilot had to jettison supplies to fit him in.

The news trickled in, prayers excised from shock,

from sadness. That, too, will be her lot, to remain,

inevitable as plastic tubing connected to an oxygen bottle,
septum rubbed raw.
Lilies were what he wanted,
his mother's name, not much to savour of her.
His sisters still argued who was the most dutiful.
The coming night was leeching light from the sky.
Chill descending; the heater would earn its keep.

The double-layered curtains were stretched to their fullest expanse.
He sought the prayer cards stuffed beneath the cushions.
They were there yesterday!
All that remained of the daily office denied him:
a rag-and-bone manliness of intonement.
Still, the old worships, words of others
dependable as railway tracks, his own contained
too much distraction, he reserved them for
the incidental and profane these days.
The wind buffeted
the windows, mocked his pretence of warmth.

She'd had the walls painted an unusual yellow,
verging on garish. They needed refreshing, she'd said;
an oxymoron at their age, he'd thought, but a powerful symbol,
the ultimate symbol. A stone rolled back
in the throaty morn and him, swathed in night's linens,
ready to eke out another day, when believing was easier.
Night had multiple thresholds

and failure was forever lurking,

God was as furtive as sleep.

Prayer fenced at the inner darkness.

He crossed himself and mumbled a few lines.

How did his unbelieving children weather those slow chiming hours?

No, one believed, and had even embraced a ministry,

though of the wrong stripe.

He'd resented it at first — impudence, rejection, envy?
When he saw fulfilment where there had been incoherence,

he'd relented and been reconciled, welcoming even

the more recondite of his son's musings.

The others, they probably slept! Plenty of time

for the interruptions of age to find them out.

God bless them now, anyway.

A final puzzle — his instructions:

no room for her, nor for them,

on his military headstone.

Anti poverty protesters miss the language of justice

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ben Coleridge

'Making poverty history' and 'an end to poverty' are mantras that have been part of public conversation for the last five years. They have galvanised activists across the world, from Norway to Australia. Although 'making poverty history' may be a little tired now as a slogan, it still has pulling power.

Recently, under the 'make poverty history' banner, a group of young Australians launched a 'roadtrip' to Canberra to advocate that Australia raise its foreign aid commitment to 0.7 per cent of GDP. And although the white 'make poverty history' arm bands weren't as ubiquitous as they were in 2005, strong feeling about taking action to alleviate poverty certainly survives. The recent Canadian G8 meeting sparked new protests at the failure of rich countries to honour the promises they made five years ago at Gleneagles to increase aid by up to $50 billion by 2010.

Yet these latest protests, ritualistic at G8 meetings, point not only to the failures of the G8 governments, but also to the limitations of those mantras, 'make poverty history' and 'an end to poverty'. Much of the anger and debate that accompanies G8 meetings focuses on numbers. The monetary pledges made by governments are either met or broken, and the public responds accordingly. So the movement to 'end poverty' is tied to the numbers that emerge from each international summit. Progress is measured by the amount of money pledged and ultimately spent on aid and development.

In the cacophony of pledges and broken promises, one question is not clearly answered: what does an 'end to poverty' actually mean? Is it in fact a question of arriving at a world where everyone lives above some pre-determined 'poverty-line'?

The language of 'ending poverty' focuses on economic improvement. And that is where aid comes in. Aid seeks to rectify an imbalance of the basic goods which people need in order to live and to realise opportunities to do what they like with their lives.

But, as the economist and philosopher Amartya Sen has argued, primary goods don't necessarily translate into substantive freedoms. Poverty is not a one dimensional affliction.Communities enduring poverty are almost always torn by multiple afflictions, for example, ethnic or class discrimination or corruption. A person in a poor community may not simply suffer from a lack of primary goods (food, shelter, healthcare), but also from various forms of discrimination or poor access to institutional protection. In India, for example there are on average 11 judges for every 1 million people.

Is it possible to conceive another way of thinking and talking about overcoming the harm we see caused by poverty?

Perhaps a more holistic and far reaching approach — and a different mantra — can be found in the idea of 'justice'. People's desire to assist poor communities — to 'make poverty history' — surely arises out of a sense of injustice. So any campaign to lift people out of poverty is moved by a desire for justice. By making 'justice' the stated goal of the 'anti-poverty' movement, success would be measured not only by material outcomes, such as the quantity of aid delivered or the number of schools opened, but by the impact made on people's lives.

'Justice' is a more ambitious goal than 'ending poverty'. If we pursue justice, then we are not only working for higher average incomes or more housing. We are also working to empower people.

By adopting the idea of 'justice' as a new watchword for the fight against poverty we would recognise the complexity of human communities. Even though we might fund the construction of 1000 schools across a poor country, discrimination on racial, gender or religious grounds, corruption or lack of legal representation could prevent this 'achievement' from really vanquishing the injustices we visualise when we want to 'make poverty history'.

Making justice our goal overcomes another weakness inherent in the 'end to poverty' slogan. The movement to 'end poverty' has in practice worked with conventional concepts of what is a 'poor' community and what is a 'rich' community. Thus the focus has been on Africa and South East Asia.

In the late 18th century, Mary Wollstonecraft criticised Edmund Burke's support for American independence because Burke did not also support the emancipation of slaves. Wollstonecraft argued that if we desire justice for one group of people, then we have to desire it for everyone.

While the slogan 'an end to poverty' has channeled energy towards assisting the world's poor nations (measured by GDP and general welfare statistics), people suffering from poverty are not confined to these nations.

Many African Americans living in inner city neighbourhoods have lower life expectancy than poor people living in less developed nations like Costa Rica. In Russia, a country classified as 'developing', many people suffer from severe lack of opportunity and proper healthcare, just like those in 'under-developed' nations. In the campaign to 'end poverty', must they be forgotten simply because their national statistics (GDP, GNP etc.) tell a different story?

As an articulated goal, 'justice' overcomes this problem. If we are working for justice, then by implication we are seeking to undo injustice wherever it exists and in all its complexity. The

language of 'ending poverty' can inhibit us from seeing reality. The language of 'justice' takes the scales away from our eyes.

The real people of Afghanistan

HUMAN RIGHTS

Jan Forrester

June has been a deadly month for Australian (five dead) and international (70 dead) forces in Afghanistan. At a precarious moment for the US in Afghanistan, and with a major military operation against the Taliban underway in the south, the loose lips of NATO commander in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, have made him a political casualty back in Washington.

Meanwhile in Australia an Essential Research poll shows 61 per cent of respondents say Australia should pull its troops out of Afghanistan.

Returning to Australia from Kabul for a few weeks and catching up on the poll I am struck by lurid online comment, which these days passes for discussion, on whether Aussie troops should go or stay in Afghanistan.

Commentary tracks through a weird miasma of old-left versus new-right trench exchanges, armchair military strategists and conspiracy theorists, including a piece of fabulist psychosis in which Israelis wired explosives to the Twin Towers as they were being constructed.

Back in the real Afghanistan the majority of the country's 28 million people scratch a living each day. Six million refugees (two million each in Iran and Pakistan) have returned to tents, and in some cases land or, if they are really lucky, housing.

During their absence the property of many people was occupied or bought and sold. It is one aspect of a land and resource rights crisis in Afghanistan that fuels ongoing conflict and instability among communities and between ethnic groups. Since Kabul's power is weak outside city limits, according to US Aid 'local elites, warLords and political factions control land and natural resources with intimidation'.

The refugees returning from Pakistan have brought back skills, and a love of cricket: an Afghan team played its first Twenty20 series in the Caribbean in May. They were knocked out pretty early. We didn't care: we cheered.

Unemployment figures whirl between 25 and 40 per cent. *In relation to what?* I wonder, as there are so few full-time jobs as we know them. Reliable data is scratchy in Afghanistan: the last census in 1979 was only partial and not completed.

I ask a young Afghan man during a job interview why he wants this position. 'To feed my family,' he shoots back. 'We don't have careers here.'

An Afghan colleague gives me an insight into what happens when the breadwinner dies.

His friend, a municipal officer who'd recently married, was killed in a suicide bomb attack a few hundred metres from our office in the southern Kabul neighbourhood of Kart-e-Se. At the funeral the other members of the family were so terrorised by the destitution they now faced, they could not properly mourn the young man. In Afghanistan there is no welfare safety net. This is why my driver colleagues give a few afghanis to the older widows on the streets.

Agriculture was once the foundation of Afghanistan's economy, with a flourishing horticultural export market. I've seen paintings of melons and pomegranate gardens in Kandahar in the late 19th century, the same fruits that magically appear in Kabul markets today. Before the Soviet invasion in 1978 there were over a million farming families in the provinces. As local communities resisted communist land reform their food was destroyed. Half the farming workforce disappeared into Pakistan. Skills died along with the resisting farmers. Civil war and enforced neglect did the rest.

Today an Iraqi mate runs projects in the provinces to repair centuries-old irrigation systems and educates communities on how independently to maintain them. As in Australia, water is critical; drought is dreaded. And in Afghanistan famine is familiar.

My exposure to the hopes of young Afghans stops me in my tracks. Some are interested in forms of democratic decision-making, the kinds that might be in early formation in the Afghan Parliament.

Other young Afghans want to bring back the *loya jirga*, the grand council which was used to elect a new king, discuss changes to the constitution or resolve other significant issues.

At the same time they question how warLords with blood on their hands were not, as in the Balkans, called to account by the international community and hauled off to the International Criminal Court. Instead they are sitting in Parliament, legitimised.

I met a young woman from an area still referred to as Little Moscow. She spoke with regret about the strength of ethnic and tribal allegiances. 'It makes it so easy for us to be manipulated by countries around us', she said, referring to Iran and Pakistan. 'I don't know why we did not learn from the Russians to think of the nation.'

Meanwhile, Pentagon surveys track the nebulous game of winning civilian hearts and minds in the south. President Obama reiterates that the US is in Afghanistan to keep their country secure from terror. Australia buys that too. As in the national game of Buzkashi, Afghanistan is playing the role of the goat carcass fought over by a gaggle of teams.

Australian Jesuit's gambling defence

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

Everybody knows that problem gambling, just like binge drinking and illicit drugs, destroys lives. There were no surprises in last week's Productivity Commission report on gambling, which found that 15 per cent of regular poker machine players are problem gamblers, and contribute about 40 per cent of spending on poker machines.

Governments appear slow to implement measures to reduce its incidence, possibly because they are as addicted to gambling revenue as problem gamblers are to gambling. Last year, the NSW and Victorian governments pocketed $1.6 billion each from gambling revenue.

Undoubtedly there are very good arguments for governments to lessen their reliance on gambling revenues. But should they be aiming to eliminate gambling altogether, as they are with smoking?

The Australian Jesuit Michael Kelly thinks not. He recently criticised so-called wowsers who were urging a ban on betting on the World Cup. He called the 'wowser' view Calvinistic, meaning that it regards gambling as evil in itself. For his part, gambling is a pleasure that must be pursued judiciously within a controlled environment.

He says: 'If you're like me, a modest punter, it's fun: a bit of mental stimulation/distraction, the equivalent of the satisfaction others find in crosswords; if you're like me, it's the occasion for socialising with friends gathered about a common interest.'

Gambling, he says, has traditionally been about speculating on an outcome and being prepared to back your judgement with money or its equivalent.

But such good-natured pursuit of pleasure has been corrupted and manipulated by its organisation on an industrial scale by often unscrupulous operators. These individuals are prepared to exploit the vulnerabilities of members of the public with addictive personalities, to feed their own addictions to the accumulation of wealth.

Efforts to control gambling should not be be focused on the demonisation of gambling itself, but in reining in the practices of unscrupulous operators of casinos and other venues who prey on their patrons, who they regard as fodder.

The Productivity Commission has suggested control measures, and organisations such as UnitingCare have highlighted them. UnitingCare National Director Susan Helyar urges the Federal Government to act immediately to reduce poker machine harm by (i) setting the maximum loss to $1 per button push and $120 per hour, (ii) limiting venue opening hours, and

(iii) banning ATMs at venues.

The unscrupulous players who run the gambling industry prefer the value-neutral term 'gaming' to the demonising 'gambling'. So do modest punters. But games only thrive when the play is fair.

It's a girl!

POLITICS

Moira Rayner

It's a girl! *(cross to three wise men looking bewildered)*

At 9.35 this morning I twinged pre-emptively for Julia Gillard. Being Prime Minister is not so much grasping a poisoned chalice as throwing yourself at Damocles' throne. Rudd was thrust onto rather than fell upon his sword. All political careers end in disgrace — who said that? — which is why a lot of women don't want them (some of us can act disgracefully without a Party).

Gillard's moment was thrust upon her, as was Rudd's decision not to contest. Factional politics, media interest and big advertising provoked exactly the crisis that neither wanted, at least not now.

As a woman, a lawyer, a Victorian, and a feminist, I am delighted to have such a smart, confident, self-assured, genuine woman leading my country. Especially after such a hard struggle within the ALP to make sure women political candidates are treated as serious contenders for winnable seats so that they can demonstrate how good they are, and bring a different and important awareness of community and electorate issues to the table.

The importance of a woman getting the highest political post in the land — remember that our Governor General is a progressive, savvy woman as well — is not so much in its being a 'first', but that the new Prime Minister is her own woman. She has not turned into an 'honorary bloke'. The singular attribute of Julia has been her obvious sincerity and the genuineness of her public conversations. And she can laugh.

Women do have a different experience of the world, not least in our socialisation (playground politics tend to carry on into the grown-up workplace), but also in our opportunities. It takes a particular kind of woman to, so obviously, revel in her role as a minister and deputy PM, and a particularly strong character to have leveraged a grudging respect from her factional foes and overcome the truism that nobody from 'the Left' could ever gain overall ALP support.

Gillard has been a long-standing member of the 'left' in the ALP, and supporter of Emily's List, the NGO committed to mentoring, supporting and providing 'early money' to endorsed ALP women candidates from any faction or none, who support choice, equity, diversity, childcare and equal pay.

In her work in the industrial relations portfolio she has spoken for and delivered on paid

parental leave, flexible working conditions, and the eradication of the pernicious and bullying effects of Work Choices, so that women can integrate their working and personal lives and responsibilities.

In Australia, becoming Prime Minister means losing privacy, sleep andpersonal liberty commensurate with media exposure. The turning of the media pack on 'lovable Rudd' — our golden lad, our TinTin — was dramatic, fierce and destructive. I'm not sure it was fullydeserved. Gillard will know the lesson to be learnt. Today's media darling, Gillard, could be tomorrow's dead Jezebel, eaten by dogs.

Iknow Gillard can deal with it, and I want her to keep her sense of proportion, humour and the ridiculous. I would be very sorry if it meantthat Julia will have to be 'careful' from now on: so many pits to stumble at, so much personality to bland.

What I like most about the Gillard we have seen to date is that she has always spoken as a woman, with a good, solid working class accent and in language that anyone can understand. She has been a politician without turning herself into anything much different from the Labor Lawyer she was back in Melbourne: neither a Battleaxe nor a Beehive, but a woman with the common touch. She is still a genuine human being.

She can be serious, yet she laughs like a wharfie. I have thoroughly enjoyed her debates with the hapless Abbott whose patrician, 1950s attitude to women she so easily tickles out of him. I love seeing Abbott feeling uncomfortable instead of making women feel uncomfortable: he hugged me once, on a stage — I was too surprised to use the knee.

I will miss Gillard's jokey little bloke-downs, if she bows (as Rudd did) to political necessity and stops this regular little double-act with the opposition. Her levity may drop under the burdens of office, though I do hope not: there were nights when I turned on *Question Time* purely to watch her laughing at the expense of the suits on the other side.

Joke on, Julia, and try to keep enjoying the Great Game. Stay who you are so that Australian women feel heard. You stand for the hopes and dreams of women, and as a symbol, that politics can be done differently by women, and better.

Goodbye Kevin, hello Julia

POLITICS

Tony Kevin

We have just experienced a Shakespearean moment. There is real excitement in the land, a sense of new beginnings, as the Elizabethan figure of Julia Gillard takes the reins as Prime Minister.

It was a swift, clean transition. We were spared many more months of leadership speculation amid the steady draining-away of Labor's electoral support. The rightwards drift in the electorate will now be stopped. Gillard will win the next election for Labor. Rudd would probably have lost it.

Labor faction leaders acted with ruthless precision. Rudd, to his credit, has accepted the inevitable with grace and dignity. As Wayne Swan said, politics is a tough game. The loyalty compact between political leaders and their parties is that leaders must succeed. Rudd was starting to fail.

Gillard said rightly that a good Labor Government, despite its great achievement in saving Australian jobs from the GFC, had lost its way. As deputy PM, and a minister loyal to both her party and leader, she had no alternative but to accept the call of factional leaders for her to take the leadership.

To suggest that this is a case of personal ambition and disloyalty is tomisunderstand the special nature of politics. Politics is about gaining and retaining power in order to implement a policy program. For her to say no was not an option.

Gillard's first statements on climate change and the resources super profits tax were well judged. These two issues go to the heart of why Rudd had to go.

On climate change, Rudd first went wrong in July-December 2008 when he set out to broker down Professor Ross Garnaut's science-based recommendation for a 25 per cent cut in Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. He shrugged off Garnaut's expertise, bowing instead to pressure from the coal energy lobby to adopt an ineffectual 5 per cent 2020 emissions reduction target, to be achieved by shonky international emissions trading.

The resulting Emissions Trading Scheme destroyed Rudd's standing with voters serious about the climate crisis. His refusal to test his ETS bills in a double-dissolution election in 2009 drained away yet more support.

Gillard did not promise to return to an ETS. She said simply that she will advance use of wind and solar technologies, that she believes in climate change and that humans contribute to

climate change, and that it is a disappointment to her as it is to millions of Australians that we do not have a price on carbon. In the future, she said, we will need one, but first we will have to establish a community consensus for action. If elected as Prime Minister, she concluded, 'We will re-prosecute the case for a carbon price at home and abroad.'

These words leave policy flexibility for Gillard to adopt Garnaut's recommendations for a domestic carbon tax. International emissions trading won't be going anywhere soon, and meanwhile something must be done to cut Australia's emissions.

On the RSPT, Rudd reached for this risky policy initiative when he saw how much credibility he had lost on the ETS. He was trying to inspire voters by invoking the Australian theme of a fair go for ordinary people against rapacious big miners. But he could not seize the day. An effective miners' campaign in a society now tied to the mining industry's fortunes through mass superannuation was draining away support from Labor.

Gillard, wisely, has turned the page on the RSPT. She has unilaterally cancelled the government's advertising campaign against the miners, and called on them to respond in kind. She has promised real negotiations, to be conducted by Swan as Deputy PM and Treasurer, and Martin Ferguson as Resources and Energy Minister. She has thus lanced the RSPT boil in a way that Rudd could no longer do.

Both Rudd and Gillard were the right choices for the times. In 2007, Rudd made us believe in him. He was the only Labor leader who could have toppled Howard. The electorate had become conditioned to accept as normal Howard's grey, bean-counting, Uncle Sam's coat-tails style of leadership. Rudd was sufficiently familiar to be unthreatening. Then, Gillard would have frightened voters off. Not now.

Gillard will successfully defuse the RSPT issue. But these are still early days for her policy leadership on the testing issue of climate change.

Gillard will be subject to the same powerful coal-energy vested interest voices. They will urge more phoney solutions in defence of the coal-based Australian energy status quo. She has a brief window of time to put her stamp on climate change policy leadership, to affirm that Labor will make a real start after the election on Australia's necessary path to decarbonisation. This will take courage, a quality she no doubt does not lack.

Finally, a personal view on Rudd's character. Was David Marr right — was he a leader fatally flawed by anger from a traumatic childhood? I don't buy it. Politicians of worth — as Rudd is — transcend tough childhoods.

I have known Rudd some 20 years. We were colleagues in Foreign Affairs in the late 1980s, where we worked closely together in the Policy Planning Branch. Later I assisted for a brief period in 2002 in his Shadow Foreign Minister's office at Parliament House.

Politics is a high-stress game and all leaders can be forgiven occasional bouts of bad temper.

Reported incidents were no big deal, and are not keys to the man. Rudd is a decent, highly intelligent, energetic and well-motivated man, who has made great contributions to Australia. I wish him a continued, useful and satisfying role in public life. He would make an excellent Foreign Minister, if Stephen Smith were to move on to another portfolio.

Farewell PM Kevin, welcome PM Julia.

Gillard's win a loss for feminists

POLITICS

Catherine Marshall

Feminists the length and breadth of Australia are celebrating the ascension of Julia Gillard to the country's highest state of office. The extraordinary recent events in the nation's capital have produced a result that constitutes 'the realisation of a feminist dream', says Caroline Overington, a columnist at *The Australian*.

'Plenty of women, married and single, with and without children, working or at home, sat in front of TV sets [on Thursday] morning, and watched this unfold with our daughters on our laps. We texted each other, saying: "Woo-Hoo!" and "Yee-ha!"' she writes.

The online feminist forum *The Dawn Chorus* said that, while it would be nice for Australia's first female PM to have been voted in by the public rather than a secretive party ballot, it is nonetheless 'thrilled and moved that our first female PM will be sworn in by our first female Governor General, no matter how it happened'.

And the new prime minister's biographer, Christine Wallace, said on Radio National that Gillard's willingness to unsheathe the sword and wrench the job into her own hands is a really positive development.

Indeed, there is an undeniably pleasant frisson that runs through the blood when one considers that Australia has finally caught up with countries like Pakistan, India, Chile, Liberia, New Zealand, Ireland and, of course, Britain, where Margaret Thatcher was elected to the top job more than 30 years ago.

But does Gillard's succession represent a win for all Australian women, or are feminists hijacking a tired and outdated bandwagon in an era when women are already well-represented in politics? Would feminists be as congratulatory if Kevin Rudd's public humiliation was caused by another man? If he was throttled at the polls by Tony Abbott?

In claiming the ousting of Kevin Rudd as a win for their cause, feminists have evinced an unfortunate kneejerk reaction, nailing their colours to a mast which smacks not of liberation and transparency — values beloved of feminists — but rather of intense faction fighting, union-led pressure and a whole lot of secrecy.

For those who had gone to bed early on Wednesday night, the news early on Thursday morning of Gillard's prime ministerial challenge would have come as a shock, not least when they reflected on her apparent loyalty and sincere assertion in the preceding months that she would not be seeking the top job in the near future.

The flippantly joyous response implies that all feminists — indeed, all women — should blindly support the incumbent, not because they agree with her political ideologies or believe she brings valuable skills to the job, but because she is a woman.

It's an attitude that is as mired in the past as the very notion that women can't lead their countries. It singles women out as a group deserving of special rather than equal treatment; to whom the rules don't apply because they haven't yet been given the chance to play the game.

And, perhaps most damningly, it fails to acknowledge the gains that Rudd's government brought about for women everywhere: the introduction of a paid parental leave scheme, the implementation of National Employment Standards which provide for flexible working arrangements for the parents of young children, the appointment of strong women to key positions.

Those same daughters who sat in their mothers' laps on Thursday morning as they texted 'whoo-hoo' and 'yee-haa' to their friends will in all likelihood still be the beneficiaries of Rudd's policies and actions way down the track, not least his swift arrest of the effect on Australia of the global economic meltdown. The daughters of Indigenous people will grow up with the word 'sorry' ringing in their ears, and little girls from war-torn countries will be grateful for the relatively compassionate treatment they received under Rudd's asylum policies.

If feminism is the incidental beneficiary of Kevin Rudd's downfall, then it is a hollow one indeed, besmirched by the ugly cut-and-thrust of politics and made all the more disheartening by the gaps that still remain. 'It would be wonderful if we didn't need to draw attention to the fact that Julia Gillard is a woman', said Dr Lauren Rosewarne, an expert in feminist politics at the University of Melbourne. 'The fact that we have to talk about her being the first female PM reminds us how far we have left to come.'

Rather than adding gloss to the cause of women, the sorry saga of Kevin Rudd's eviction should strike fear into the hearts of feminists everywhere. For this is how the Labor Government operates, unsheathing the swords, wrenching power, cutting down a leader before he has had time to really prove himself. Imagine what it will do when that leader is a woman.

Moving forward with Gillard

POLITICS

Tony Smith

Putting the 'how' and 'why' questions aside, Julia Gillard has made history. After 26 male incumbents, Australia now has one female prime minister. It is heartening to know that women have now broken down almost every barrier to full participation in national life.

Gillard will recognise her debt to the many women who achieved steps along the way to the top political job: those who persevered to win party endorsements as candidates, to survive as backbenchers as small minorities and to perform admirably in ministerial roles, have made the tasks of those coming after them a little easier. All Australian women have cause to celebrate this victory.

But the celebrations over Gillard's achievement cannot go on forever. She will be the first to recognise that she now has to get on with the job of restoring public confidence in the Government. While she will be remembered forever as the first woman to become Australian prime minister, Gillard will also seek to be remembered as one of the finest.

If electing a woman to the top job is to remain important, then Gillard needs to imbue her performance with some unique qualities. She has the opportunity to demonstrate something special in both political style and policy substance.

A good deal has been written about Rudd's abrasive style. Critics found him verbose and consequently remote from ordinary people. They also remarked on his tendency to claim the moral high ground in a manner that appeared rather puritanical. His statements on the fates of the Bali bombers and photographs of young girls seemed to be unnecessarily severe.

In this regard he resembled his Liberal predecessor closely, and his victory speech after the 2007 election was ominously reminiscent of John Howard's in 1996. It is difficult to attribute the Government's apparent loss of popularity wholly to Rudd's leadership, but claims that an inner circle of a few senior ministers and youthful advisers dominated policy suggest that he was seen as dictatorial.

Clearly, Gillard and her deputy Wayne Swan will ignore these criticisms at their peril. They were part of the small team Rudd headed so it is difficult for outsiders to appreciate how they can distance themselves from Rudd's legacy. There needs to be more consensus style, but at the same time, they need to make some firm decisions and end impressions that the Government is afraid to move against the wishes of the middle ground.

On his last night as prime minister, Rudd claimed he rejected the advice of some who wanted to move the party 'to the right' on asylum seekers. It is not clear whether he was

suggesting that Gillard's supporters wanted such a hardening of policy. What is clear is that the Government's approach to this issue has been very disappointing. Rudd did too little, too late to stop the rightward drift. It is a pity that the man who officiated at the Apology to Stolen Generations did not maintain the high standard he set for himself before parliament resumed in 2008.

The policy that seems to have broken Rudd's hold on power is the mining super profits tax. It is probably a sign of how timid Labor Governments have become that they have to justify taxation policies to special interests. It is an argument of last resort to claim that a specific tax will be used to fund hospitals and schools.

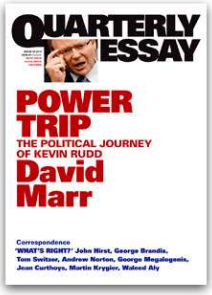
Surely if there is any vestige of democratic socialism left within the Labor spirit, then the Gillard Government needs to raise taxes without apology, knowing that its social welfare policies are both just and necessary. It also needs to remain committed to redistributing national wealth in such a way that huge discrepancies in living standards and opportunities are eliminated.

It seems likely that Gillard will lead Labor to victory in the coming election. If she does then she will set another record. But she is not likely to be content with symbolic achievements. The broader Australian community will be grateful to her if she uses her position to build on Rudd's achievements while distancing herself more firmly from Coalition policies such as mandatory of detention of asylum seekers, the military commitment in Afghanistan, inaction on climate change and income quarantining for Indigenous people.

Remembering Rudd

BOOKS

Emily Millane



In Milan Kundera's *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, the Czech comrade Clementis places his cap on Klement Gottwald's head on the day of Communist annunciation in 1948. After Clementis is hanged four years later, his head is subsequently airbrushed out of all propaganda photographs. Hence, 'All that remains of Clementis is the cap on Gottwald's head', quips Kundera.

Memory. It is everything we are. Identity is meaningless without it. Personal. Collective. Shared. Understood. What else is our history but a process of remembering? This applies on both the individual and the societal scale. 'Lest We Forget' is not only an epithet, it's literally a call for a nation to remember together.

Equally, our histories are about selective memory and the process of forgetting. Henry Reynolds asked (in a book of the same title) about the Stolen Generations, 'Why Weren't we Told?'. The teller of the story, and the omissions they make, are constitutive of the tapestry we weave.

There are many memories of Kevin Rudd that come through in David Marr's excellent *Quarterly Essay* 'Power Trip — The Political Journey of Kevin Rudd'. Most poignant among these is Rudd the young boy. Forced off his parents' farm after his father's death, forced to sleep with his mother Margaret in a VW on the side of country road in Queensland, the young Rudd developed a strong sense of injustice.

It was during this period that Rudd discovered what politics ought to be. As Marr puts it, this was the politics of decency. Through his experiences of being shifted from one school to another, with welfare and the public health system, Rudd became alive to what he termed 'the responsibilities of the state'. His personal remembering of the inadequacies of the services provided by the state was a catalyst for his political foundations.

Marr returns to this point several times, and it leaves the most enduring picture of Rudd the man: at once steely in his determination, polished in his performance, and yet vulnerable — alone.

The politics of decency was the centerpiece of Rudd's maiden speech to Parliament, and again in his first speech as Prime Minister. 'Compassion is not a dirty word,' he said. 'Compassion is not a sign of weakness. In my view, compassion in politics and in public policy is in fact a hallmark of great strength. It is a hallmark of a society which has about it a decency which speaks for itself.'

What do we remember about Rudd? Early memories recall when 'Kevin Rudd' the brand became currency on a national scale: the academic; the diplomat; the essay on Bonhoeffer in *The Monthly*; the promise of a new way of governing, with a return to the values of decency and equality; the Apology; the ideas summit.

And then? And then it all goes a bit foggy. Copenhagen. The greatest ethical issue of our time, and no emissions trading scheme to show for it. Angry miners. Rudd became the political equivalent of a piece of roofing insulation: clumpy, lacking in transparency, and better left up in the attic. The lofty themes of his early days in government became few and far between.

When did the remembering change? How long will the nation's memory last?

Rather than a breakdown over themes, it appears that the nation's love affair soured the more we got to know Rudd the technocrat.

And love him we did, once. Recall 89 per cent of us thought him a 'man of vision' when Newspoll asked us in the first few months of 2008. The more time Rudd spent in office, the more we heard about his pedantry over small matters, the ungodly hours expected of public servants, his inability to delegate. Here, it seemed, was a small-minded man who worked meticulously all week to cross the Ts and then went to church every Sunday like the good Catholic schoolboy from Nambour.

God might have been giving him some redemption, but the polls weren't.

Marr uses a fitting example from Australia Day this year. For his address to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, Rudd was allocated 10 minutes, but took 45. This would have been fine, had he delivered a speech that approximated the eloquence or spirit of his Apology speech. Instead, he talked about the Government's record during the global financial crisis. He talked about transport and infrastructure in New South Wales. He talked about the National Broadband Network. And he rattled off a series of investment figures to boot.

Rudd seemed to be giving voice to the proverbial elephant when he finished, 'I don't know about you, but I'm pining for a drink'.

Of more import is not what people will remember of Rudd but whether the memory of Howard is distant enough. The electorate might be dissatisfied that the Government has delivered on little of its real social justice agenda. But people aren't ready to think about Tony Abbott in prime ministerial terms, and not just because he's Tony Abbott. It's still a choice between the Government we have versus what we had. It would be too much of a stretch to collectively consider what a new conservative government would feel like.

The thing that really matters is how the public casts its votes. Inextricably, the process of casting one's vote is a process of casting one's mind back, as much as it is about voting for a future government, be it a Gillard Government or an Abbott one. Either way, the

remembering of Rudd has only begun, and only time will tell whether that remembering contains sufficient memories of decency politics on which to hang Rudd's hat.

If *your* income was quarantined

APPLICATION

Andrew Hamilton

If we look at income quarantining as an ethical and not as a political question, it raises many questions. To answer them we would need to look beyond its effectiveness in preventing excessive expenditure on socially undesirable goods like alcohol and pornography. We would need to consider its effect on the dignity of the human beings involved. This means looking at many areas of their lives, not simply at the way in which they spend their money.

We can see what is involved if we imagine for a moment that we receive a letter in the post saying that we, as the citizens of our age cohort in our particular suburb, will have our taxation rebates or pensions quarantined. Our likely responses to this news suggest questions we ought to ask about the current legislation.

I imagine few of us would be overjoyed to be told that our quarantining will ensure that some pensioners will be unable to drink their pensions away, and that some other taxpayers will be unable to wallow in a sty of porn movies.

Most of us would be annoyed that the government had selectively restricted our freedom to spend our money as we please, to shop where we please, and to name the priorities of our own lives for a supposed higher good. We would believe our responsibility for shaping our lives was being infringed, and with it our human dignity.

We might also be annoyed because this selective income quarantining identified us as members of a group of people which was considered socially unreliable. We would feel ashamed to present our specially embargoed card at the supermarket check-out. We would feel the appraising gaze of friends from other suburbs as they learned where we came from.

And when we read the tabloid stories of the inevitable monsters from our group who drowned in drink and pullulated in porn, our respect for ourselves, a basic element of human dignity, would be under siege. We would be more likely to take to drink.

Some of us might also resent the good fortune of others who escaped quarantining and might suspect the government had an animus against our group. Our trust in the things that connected us to society would be eroded, and we would feel increasingly alienated. Connection, an important part of human dignity, would be threatened both by others who looked on us with suspicion and contempt, and also by ourselves as we became increasingly isolated.

If that were our reaction to imposed income quarantining, why should we expect the long

term unemployed and youth to be differently affected? Particularly if their belief in their own dignity, their capacity to live fully and to connect with others may already be tenuous because of their life experience.

So at first reading the state will inflict significant damage to the human dignity of many of its citizens simply because they belong to groups some of whose members are believed to spend wastefully. And because this legislation will affect their self respect, it will exacerbate the problem it is designed to address.

These are telling arguments.But they are not conclusive. Faced with a virulent and lethal disease, a government might rightfully demand that the members of particular groups genetically at risk be inoculated, despite the infringement on freedom and the prejudice against them this might entail. But in judging whether the legislation were justified, we would want to know that the necessity was great, that the group at risk was targeted as narrowly as possible, that the inoculation would be effective and that the good social consequences would outweigh the bad.

In the case of income quarantining, this case has not been made well. We do not know how many long term unemployed and youth spend their money irresponsibly. We have been given only skimpy evidence of the effects of income quarantining in the Northern Territory. It is based on the opinions of program managers about the response of the communities. This is useful knowledge. But should we give it more weight than we would give to the judgment of a hospital administrator about the attitudes of patients to the care they receive? And reflection suggests that the legislation will diminish, not encourage responsibility.

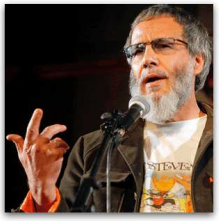
Given the inherent damage done to the human dignity of those included in this scheme and the slightness of the justification for it, it cannot be said to be ethically justifiable. It is politically expedient because it is applied to groups whom we do not regard as people like us. But because it panders to that perception, it is hard to see how it can be effective.

Cat Stevens' call to prayer

MUSIC

Anne Doyle

All kinds of lanterns/ Light up the dark/ But there's only One God .../ Has a place in my heart. (Yusuf Islam, 'All Kinds of Roses')



Returning to Australia after 36 years, Yusuf Islam, formerly the 1960s rock guru Cat Stevens, certainly shares his heart. He also shares his faith, but not too extravagantly. It is there in abundance but is not grasping. It is sung like a muezzin's call to prayer, but with no commands. As gentle as the man himself.

All kinds of people

make up my life ...

All kinds of faces

show me their love.

A solitary figure, he appears in a long coat and hat and begins an older man's rendition of a younger man's songs. Melbourne's Rod Laver Arena bursts into brilliant light as he shares the Cat Stevens classic 'Wild World'. All kinds of people are captured in its glow; all kinds of faces showing their love for this humble visionary.

At times he is the folk singer, seated with his guitar. At other times the stage bursts with sound and light, the tempo racing. Yusuf's voice carries intricacies of melody, tone, story and poetic nuance, a sumptuous visit to the textures and moods of his questing generation. The sandpaper of lower notes and the soft sacred sounds of the lovely 'Morning Has Broken' are all present.

Yusuf is a man in love with the world and its people, and his faith embodies an activist spirit. Since finding his spiritual home in Islam over three decades ago his humanitarian work has placed him in another spotlight. His organisation, Muslim Aid, supported famine victims in Africa in the 1980s. His charity, Small Kindness, supports orphans and needy families.

We sense this humanity at play on stage.

As Cat Stevens, he always sought life's purpose. Recognising his deep spiritual roots he knew his path had to change. 'I listen to the wind, to the wind of my soul' he sings in 'The Wind', and we admire his courage.

He sensed a need to reconnect after his years of stardom and social alienation. Listening to 'Sitting' we can sense the passion of his journey:

Oh I'm on my way, I know I am,

Somewhere not so far from here.

All I know is what I feel right now,

I feel the power growing in my hair.

While in Marrakech, Morocco in the early 1970s, Stevens had his first encounter with Islam. He heard singing and, when he was told 'It is a song for God', he was greatly moved. 'This music was seeking no reward except from God,' he says on his website . 'What a wonderful statement.'

Stevens' near-death by drowning in 1975 directed him to call out to God. The turning of the tide caused a turning in his life, aided by a copy of the Qur'an, a gift from his brother David. Here he found the answer to the questions of his life. He embraced Islam in 1977. 'The moment I became a Muslim I found peace.'

Yusuf sees music as a healer with the power to bring people together.'The language of song is simply the best way to communicate the powerful winds of change which brought me to where I am today, and the love for peace still passing through my heart ... You can argue with a philosopher, but you can't argue with a good song. And I think I've got a few good songs.'

Back on stage, like a grandfather seated by the fire, Yusuf calls us to listen to a story: 'Moonshadow', a fairytale of hope for a better world. With a deft touch, he weaves his music through the stories of his life, his travels, his intimate memories. No matter that I am one of thousands and he is 50 metres away under bright lights — it is a time of connection. Yusuf is a soul man, and he engages our souls, seamlessly.

Football and my father's ghost

SPORT

Adrian Phoon

As the burr of the vuvuzelas leaves the stadiums in South Africa and rings out from the TV into my living room, I feel all the excitement surrounding the World Cup, but also a sense that something is missing. There is one avid fan who isn't watching this Cup: my father.

David Phoon, my father, was a football tragic. During the 2006 World Cup in Germany, my father was up in the early hours of the morning watching any and every game he could. I, who watched soccer occasionally but was no fanatic, sat at an amused distance, mystified by his deep love of the game.

Seventy-five years old, he would catch up on sleep during the day, often sitting in the same position on the couch where he had watched the soccer just hours beforehand. You could tell he was asleep because he emitted a loud snore that rivalled the din of any vuvuzela.

The World Cup wrapped in July, with Italy crowned as champions. Later that year, one night in September, the unthinkable happened. My father, up late at night as usual watching the soccer, suddenly passed out by the kitchen sink. He briefly came to, telling my mother and brother, 'I can't breathe.' My father, we were later told by the doctors, had suffered a 10cm aortic dissection, which led to cardiac tamponade. Blood was leaking from his heart and causing organ failure.

After a couple of hours at Sutherland Hospital, my father was transferred to Prince of Wales, where there were better facilities for cardiac patients. Nine hours later, he died.

My father, who snored loudly, also laughed loudly. A doctor with a long-running family practice, he is remembered by his family and friends for his gentle humour and ecstatic guffaw, which had to be heard to be believed.

As the World Cup rolls around again, I'm thinking of my father, his laughs, and loves. He loved my mother, to whom he was married for 42 years. He loved his kids, his daughters-in-law, and his grandkids. And he loved soccer.

I've learnt to love soccer. During this World Cup, I've become nocturnal, like my father. No doubt I'm trying to commune with him, trying to efface his absence and bridge the gap between my indifference to soccer and his devotion to it. But also: soccer just makes for compulsive viewing.

Take last week's match between Switzerland and Spain. Spain was dominating Switzerland with its virtuosic passing game. Spain was heavily favoured in this match — or rather,

mismatch. Yet unexpectedly Switzerland scored with a crazy goal early in the second half. I could almost hear Baba leaping from the couch and cheering.

There are times when the dead surprise us by appearing to be still active. A few months ago, my mother got a shock when the fax in the family home sprang to life and started spitting out several pages of what looked like my father's handwriting. Where was this fax coming from?

We later learnt that my aunt (my father's sister) had recovered an old fax my father had sent her years ago, and was forwarding it to my mother. My father loved to read, in particular Chinese history and literature, but he was not a natural writer. Yet here were his rudimentary notes, the outlines of his recollections about his childhood in Hong Kong on the eve of the Japanese invasion in 1941, and his escape to the jungles of Southern China.

World War II turned his family's lives upside down, but you wouldn't always know it from my father's writing. In one special moment, he describes the day the war broke out in Hong Kong, and recalls his priorities as a cheeky young boy:

8am 8/12/1941 Had breakfast, while standing outside awaiting to get into car to go to school. Saw 3 Aeroplanes flying over Kaitak airport in Kowloon across the harbour. Soon after booming bombs followed by smokes over the area. Telephones or Radio told us war has started and we are being attacked by Japanese ... So NO school!

During this time, my father learned how to play soccer. This was a game innocent children could play while planes flew overhead and war raged around the world. It was, I now know, a respite not only from the horrors of war, but also the rigours of school.

And now I think I understand both Baba's lifelong love of the game, and the way his indomitable spirit, which got him through many challenges in life — coming to Australia, learning English, studying medicine at the University of Sydney, and becoming one of the first Asian doctors in the Sutherland Shire — allowed him always to see the bright side of things. Ah, no school!

CEOs in sleeping bags

COMMUNITY

John Falzon

The founder of the St Vincent de Paul Society, 19th century French activist academic, Frederic Ozanam, wrote: 'Charity is the Samaritan who pours oil on the wounds of the traveller who has been attacked. It is the role of justice to prevent the attack.'

We would be poorer as a nation without the outpouring of human kindness through charities. But the prevention of homelessness should be seen as a matter of justice, and for that charity is no substitute.

More than 100,000 people are homeless on any given night. Almost half are under 25. Every day, half the people who request immediate accommodation from homelessness services are turned away. Two in every three children who need support are turned away. Contrary to many of the persistent myths about homelessness in Australia, women and children are the biggest users of specialist homelessness services.

On 17 June CEOs and community leaders across the nation participated in the first St Vincent de Paul Society CEO Sleepout. They slept out in order to raise funds for, and increase awareness of, homelessness in Australia.

I participated in the Sleepout in Canberra. For me, the most moving and useful element was the presentation given by a couple of people who had been experiencing homelessness. Two points emerged. One is that homelessness is a social problem, not primarily a personal one, because we continue as a society to condone or explain away the reality of violence against women.

The other is that homelessness is a profoundly political problem. The absence of political will is the fundamental obstacle to ending homelessness. A good place to begin would be to guarantee everyone the right to adequate housing. Since the private rental market is notoriously bad at this, governments must do what markets cannot.

If this sounds like a utopian fantasy, it is far more fanciful to imagine that we are saving money by leaving things the way they are. The economic and social costs of homelessness crisis are enormous.

In 2006 journalist Malcolm Gladwell wrote in *The New Yorker* about Million Dollar Murray , a man who had experienced chronic homelessness, with all the concomitant health problems. When Murray died it was estimated that the costs to the state of maintaining Murray in his condition of homelessness came out at US$1 million. Providing him with secure housing would have provided a base from which other problems could have been addressed. Secure,

appropriate housing also happens to be good for your health!

This is not to say that homelessness is simply houselessness. But the provision of adequate housing is a good place to start. As Philip Mangano, former executive director of the US Interagency Council on Homelessness, said while visiting Australia last year: 'You do not manage a social wrong. You should be ending it.'

I was recently in Cuba delivering a paper on Social Inequality at the University of Havana. This poor nation has achieved what our rich nation has not: it has eliminated homelessness. Some of its housing needs a good lick of paint, or more, but no one is subjected to the indignity of being turned away. Through a network of guarantees of housing, healthcare and education Cuba has succeeded in making homelessness a relic of the past.

I am reminded of the beautiful line by the poet Tomas Borge: 'There will be no beggars left to haunt us ...'

I am haunted by the woman who spoke at the Canberra Sleepout. She explained how, on the nights when she had nowhere to sleep but her car, she would tell her children that they were going on a camping adventure. She would tell them they were going to look for kangaroos or to watch planes take off. Anything to shield them from the fear she knew in her own heart.

I am also haunted by the man who spoke. He first experienced homelessness when he was 13 and has been in and out of institutions. When someone thanks God for public toilets because they're nice and warm to sleep in, you know we have a problem. He was made to feel it was his problem. We should admit that it is ours as well.

Some see a person experiencing homelessness and reflect that our system is not working. Others conclude, perhaps more astutely, that the system is working, and that inequality lies at its heart.

The 1975 Commission of Inquiry into Poverty prescribed a frighteningly simple antidote to the growth of poverty and inequality in Australia: 'If poverty is seen as a result of structural inequality within society, any serious attempt to eliminate poverty must seek to change those conditions which produce it.' One Poverty Inquiry later, we continue to live with the festering growth in inequality that lies at the heart of homelessness and exclusion.

As a nation, we need to take responsibility for making sure that not only is no one turned away from a homelessness service but also that no one is turned away from access to adequate housing, healthcare, education, support and employment opportunities.

We have to be realistic. But being realistic does not mean accepting a costly and unjust status quo. It means imagining a different kind of Australia. Lilla Watson and a group of Aboriginal activists in Brisbane in the '70s put it eloquently: 'If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine,

then let us work together.'

What women don't want

COMMUNITY

Moira Rayner

It is no new thing that men with power very readily assume that the ordinary rules of conduct do not apply to them. Such seems to have been the belief of the recently departed CEO of David Jones, whose career has been devoted, he said in a recent *Age* interview, to knowing what women want.

Sometimes the power is slight — like Troy Buswell's, who led the WA Liberal Party in opposition, but had to stand down in tears after sniffing a staffer's chair in his Parliament office. Sometimes, too, the lessons are not learnt. Buswell had to give up his political power a couple of years later when his affair with a Greens MP became public.

One was sexualised bullying, the other a consensual dalliance. One was a misuse of power over his employees, the other a breach of his wife's trust and of a political leader's sense of what the public will no longer wear. Still, there are similarities: in both instances, the women involved copped one hell of a belting from the media.

Let us, then, feel for the young woman who blew the whistle on Mark McInnes (pictured) to the David Jones Board.

Sexual harassment has always been hard to talk about. The first reported decision on harassment was on a young woman's complaint that the head of her department had made constant sexual advances. He denied it, and she fought a court case over it. In the end it was decided on a technicality, which brought her no joy, even if it did lead to a change in the law to distinguish between sex discrimination (which required proof of detrimental treatment based on sex) and harassment by sexual conduct (which should be accepted as detrimental *per se*).

About ten years ago I lost my firm a very big client. The CEO of a very well-known business asked me for advice on how to respond to a complaint against him by one of his staff. He told me she'd complained that he had fondled and kissed her in a hotel lift on the way to a meeting. He showed every sign of outrage about it: she was mad, how could anyone believe such a thing? She had made an immediate complaint to a third party, a female friend, and had taken sick leave.

I told him the facts could easily be disproved: we could call for the security camera film. I made the call, and learned that the security cameras did not operate — they were just for show, and there was no film. I told my client and his face lit up. Well actually, he said, he had done it, but it was just a moment of madness, and would I please draft a response denying

such an incident had ever occurred, because he could not possibly admit such behaviour to his board.

I said I could not possibly draft a statement for him that contradicted his explicit admission to me, especially since her complaint had been made to the Equal Opportunity Commission. His face darkened. What would I recommend? Consult another solicitor, I told him. He stormed out in fury. We lost all the company's business.

The law has a long history of disbelieving women who make claims of sexual behaviour against men. Over the years it has changed, so that a woman who seeks maintenance for an ex nuptial child no longer has to provide corroboration of her evidence in a material particular, or to satisfy the so-called 'Briginshaw' test. This requires a heavier evidential burden than mere vague and ambivalent facts to tip the 'balance of probabilities'.

In recent years tribunals hearing sexual harassment claims have adopted the Briginshaw test, because of the seriousness of the consequences of the allegations for those they are made against. But anti-discrimination tribunals have come to accept, perhaps because so many more women are now members of such panels, that sexual bullying at work is almost invariably conducted in private and that 'corroboration' is not easy to find.

The woman who made the complaint against McInnes and David Jones has been named by the weekend papers, and is in full retreat from the media. She is said to be most distressed. Of course. What it must have already cost her to raise the matter at all! No wonder she went to lawyers.

The most common outcome of a sexual harassment complaint is, these days, that the harasser leaves (often by consent, and paid his contractual entitlements), and that the the woman is resented as a gold-digger. Most complainants leave their jobs. Most hardly ever get what they need — support, involvement in any action taken against the harasser, and the dignity of acknowledgement.

David Jones acted promptly with its commercial interests in mind, having regard to its responsibilities under equal opportunity laws. But most women pay in blood for making sexual harassment complaints against powerful men in high places, under intense media, personal and professional pressure. There are massive disincentives to making these complaints. There is good reason for the Sex Discrimination Act to protect the women from being publicly lynched. But the media interest is such that they will always sniff them out.

Let us not forget that all great power is misused, eventually, and that a turning organisational wheel always crushes the whistleblower. No wonder so many women just leave.

My brother slid away

POETRY

John Falzon

My brother slid away

My brother slid away. We can't imagine where he went to.

This is a story of our past,

red teacher,

mother of

she whose soul is black like her eyes and her songs are the proof of this;

and he who drinks the moon for breakfast, feasting on the calculus of longing and the mayhem of the night.

So

what do we bake with the flour of tomorrow, lover?

Lovingly, the bread of today.

The domain

Listen, you said in the underground car park just before you slipped into the shadows. Listen,

we were not forgotten.

We were never ever known. We know

ourselves though, brother. I

bring my bucketloads of tenderness and history to you

here in the underground car park, the one they kicked us out from

when the powers and principalities descended on our town. Oh

how we laughed when we heard the poor apologists explain that

we were better off and less exposed if we were made to move from here.

Listen, you said. (And by the way I know you're never gone from here. They say you are. I'll never bless them, brother!) Listen, you said to me. Does anybody think we'll go away from here just because they've sanctioned us and breached us, preached at us, acquired our country,

stolen our yesterdays, the silk and hardy timbers of them

Do they really think they've crushed our silvers and our souls by managing our sturdy little incomes? Oh I know we count for nothing.

Do they think we'll have nothing to say in the spiral that consumes and liberates us? Washed away with the tinge of forever? Yes,

I'm numbered

but not numbed. I am as canny as a bloody old dog.

Listen, you said. I

own the road. Its hardness is my throttled heart. Do you think they can catch me, they with their policies and punishments? Not likely, brother. Not likely, you said before you slipped into the shadows in the underground car park. This is my dominion, you said; I, the dominated. This is my domain.

Reviving climate hope

ENVIRONMENT

Tony Kevin

The failure of the participants in the 2009 climate change summit in Copenhagen to agree on principles for an international emissions trading or taxation system was distressing. Much international idealism and expertise had been invested in this goal, which we can see now is probably unachievable in the medium-term future. But is this the best or only policy goal for international cooperation in climate change mitigation?

A mid-term round of senior UNFCCC officials' talks took place this month in Bonn. It offered modest hopes for ways forward in global climate action, addressing the task of emissions mitigation in ways less tied to particular market mechanisms for global cooperation.

We need to understand why Copenhagen failed if we are to learn from that failure.

First, Western governments underestimated the strength of developing countries' entrenched grievances that the imperialist West had industrialised and grown wealthy at their expense, even today through its continued dominance of global trade and financial systems.

Such ideological stereotypes in the South have been the *leitmotif* of multilateral diplomacy since the 1950s, dominating every major international treaty-making process. Why should climate change be different, particularly when the science validates the idea of a massive Western debt to the South, in the form of dangerous quantities of carbon dioxide accumulated in the atmosphere during the West's 300 years of successful industrialisation?

Leading developing country governments (China, India, South Africa, Brazil — the BASIC group) are determined to hold to the Kyoto principle of differentiated responsibilities for developing and developed countries.

The most shocking thing about Copenhagen was that for the first time, the world's environmental movement found itself ranged with the West against the South. There were intense feelings of mutual betrayal between Western-based environmental NGOs whose world view is dominated by the imminent climate crisis, and Southern governments whose world view is coloured by historical resentments and suspicions.

The latter were angry at Western NGOs and media attempts to exploit the fears of low-lying island states as emotional blackmail of the South as a whole.

Add to this inflammatory mix these factors:

First, Southern suspicions that the West might want to use its wealth to subsidise keeping them in a permanent state of underdevelopment, by using aid flows to purchase developing

country wilderness areas as offsets to unimpeded coal-based economic growth at home. Second, Southern suspicion of shonky Western emissions accountancy, that could see Western governments claim dubious green offsets from better domestic forestry management against unimpeded coal-based economic growth.

Third, Obama's insistence (under pressure from Republicans in Congress) on intrusive emissions verification procedures more appropriate to Cold War arms limitation than to cooperative climate change mitigation. And fourth, efforts by resource-exporting countries (Australia, Canada, Russia, Saudi Arabia) to protect their freedom to go on expanding their export industries.

The Bonn officials' talks offer modest hope of changing such dysfunctional atmospherics over the longer term.

Expectations for forthcoming UNFCCC annual summits in Mexico and South Africa (in December 2010 and 2011) have been markedly lowered. There are still two rival negotiating texts for a post-2012 successor to the Kyoto Protocol, expressing opposing Western and BASIC viewpoints. However, officials at Bonn were at pains to avoid public acrimony, and the media had almost nothing to report.

UN officials sought to dampen unrealistic expectations. Outgoing UNFCCC Executive Secretary Yvo de Boer cautioned that a full climate agreement is at least a decade away; but over the longer term, he believed humanity would get the issue under control.

De Boer's successor is a promising choice. Christiana Figueres is a US-educated climate diplomat from Costa Rica, a small Latin American developing nation (and a democracy). She helped to negotiate the Kyoto Protocol.

Judging by Figueres' early public statements, she seems well qualified to help heal the wounds of Copenhagen. Her message at Bonn was that the G20 countries (responsible for 80 per cent of the world's current emissions, and including major Western and BASIC governments) must have more ambitious emission reduction targets if a 2 degree global warming limit is to be achieved; but that quick global agreement should not be expected.

She added that it is now necessary to be more transparent and the process more inclusive.

Climate change denialism as a political force has peaked internationally. From now on, science-based warnings of growing risks to humanity from anthropogenic global climate change will become increasingly unanswerable. If the West, learning the lessons of Copenhagen, can move to a more modest, flexible and sensitive climate diplomacy during future summits, while proceeding independently and at speed towards genuine national emissions reduction targets, we may hope for steady progress.

Unfortunately, I see no sign that anyone in the Australian climate policy debate (except the Greens) has absorbed such lessons. Both major parties seem locked into outmoded

assumptions that international emissions trading is the only possible road, and that for as long as this road remains blocked, Australia has no alternative but to go on opening more coal mines, railways and ports. It is hard to imagine a more self-destructive policy.

Multiculturalism steps aside for advertising on SBS

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

SBS TV's Subtitling Unit is about to lose one third of its staff. The subtitlers were at the very heart of SBS when it was set up as a multicultural broadcaster 30 years ago. Its output is regarded by many as equal to the world's best. One staff member said recently, 'if the subtitlers were a football team, they would be regarded as a national treasure and promoted, marketed and funded accordingly. Instead, it will now be the victim of a rationalisation to save a few dollars.'

Of course excellence alone does not justify the cost of maintaining subtitling at SBS. It's perfectly valid for SBS management to jettison its subtitling unit if it determines that SBS is fundamentally no longer a multicultural broadcaster and has its charter amended accordingly. It's up to SBS management to come clean on its current purpose, and to suffer whatever consequences there may be if its stated purpose is not justifiable for a standalone public broadcaster. That could mean abolition, or perhaps being rolled into the ABC.

SBS has carried advertising for around a decade, and it appears that commercial imperatives have taken priority over its original purpose of providing content that reflects and promotes Australia's multicultural society. Most foreign language programs were moved out of prime time to make way for crowd pleasers such as *Mythbusters* and *Top Gear* (now lost to Channel 9). The German language *Inspector Rex*, now in recess, is the only foreign language program considered popular enough for scheduling in prime time.

The architect of the commercialisation of SBS is Shaun Brown who, as head of Television New Zealand, was criticised by then prime minister Helen Clark as being overly driven by ratings. But in a curious and encouraging move last month, he stated to Senate Estimates that he does indeed see an important role for SBS as a multicultural broadcaster. He declared that the reliance of ethnic Australians on overseas foreign media is emerging as a threat to Australia's social cohesion.

He gave the example of last year's violence against Indian students. Many members of the local Indian community bypassed coverage in Australian media outlets, and instead used the internet and satellite television to access the Indian media, which was widely regarded as sensationalist in its treatment of the events.

Brown was obviously doing his job in attempting to secure extra government funding for SBS. But he deserves credit for identifying an important role for SBS as a multicultural broadcaster that recognises the needs of the Australian community in 2010. It's up to him to

demonstrate that he is genuine, and that he regards fostering Australia's social cohesion as a priority over attracting advertising revenue.

However both Brown and Communications Minister Stephen Conroy need to accept that it is unlikely there will be much compatibility between such social and commercial aspirations for SBS. It is hard to make money out of being socially responsible. The consequence of this is that they will need to choose between social and commercial imperatives. If they don't know it already, they will discover that a fundamentally commercial public broadcaster is an oxymoron.

Memories of refugees

HUMAN RIGHTS

Andrew Hamilton

Refugee week is less about activism than about reminding us of what matters. It calls to mind the faces of those who seek asylum, the stories of why they left their own lands and culture, of their flight and of their wait for protection.

For many it is a walk down Memorial Drive, honouring the names of those now dead and those who still live. I remember the 250,000 Cambodians in Site Two by the Thai border, and among them Chea, the sister of a friend, who died when the camp was shelled. I remember the thousands of asylum seekers who left Vietnam by boat to enrich the nations which accepted them, and among them Meo, the sister of another friend, who never arrived, presumably killed by pirates. I remember the many who spent years in Australian detention centres, the joy of those who were able to begin life again in Australia, and the sadness of watching as the light went out of the eyes of those detained for more than six months.

It is hard to switch from these alternating stories of death, flight, welcome and genteel brutality to reflect more generally on the way in which we Australians see and treat asylum seekers today. It is like moving out of the harsh sunlight into a dense fog where the moving shapes of our fears and prejudices are taken for reality.

This year the news has been dominated by the increase of people arriving by boat, fleeing from upheaval and danger in Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. They arrived after the Government had announced changes to the treatment of asylum seekers, but before those changes could be codified in law. This hiatus has been to their detriment.

Two years ago the Government announced a new policy towards asylum seekers. Under this policy, asylum seekers would no longer be routinely detained until their cases were definitively resolved. Their continued detention would need to be justified by the Department. But those who arrived by boat would be processed on Christmas Island in a process that was not reviewable by law.

This change in policy, however, was not enshrined within legislation. When an increasing number of boats began to arrive, the Department came under increasing pressure to provide basic services. As a result few resources are available to enable asylum seekers to live within the community.

The result is that the asylum seekers are caught in no-man's land and their treatment is governed by expediency not by a principled policy. Contrary to the changes introduced by the

Howard Government, children are routinely detained on Christmas Island, and minors in Australia. The places of their detention are not called detention centres but immigration centres. Regulations make it very difficult for them to receive visitors. Detainees live under crowded and isolated conditions with few services, and little opportunity to contact lawyers or others.

The suspension of processing asylum seekers from Afghanistan and Sri Lanka means that people are detained for longer under harsher conditions. The asylum seekers' mental health deteriorates, but there are few resources to alleviate the harm done them by detention.

The delay in processing claims and in conducting security checks and the pressure on the Department to make decisions quickly and to repatriate those who are found not to be refugees inevitably creates doubt about the fairness of decisions that are not subject to statutory review. It has also generated legal action to question the process and to halt deportations. The courts risk becoming the primary instrument for ensuring justice, and not the last resort.

Because those who arrive by boat are still mandatorily detained, they are now being transferred to remote areas in Australia. This is costly and further limits their access to legal and other services.

When you look at the faces of asylum seekers, it is impossible not to ask how we came to this inefficient, costly, demeaning and ill-regulated system. It is hard to imagine a framework that is less likely to encourage the trust required to adjudicate claims, welcome refugees and remove those found not to be refugees. No-man's land is a costly place to maintain, an unsafe place to be and not a place that encourages reflection.