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Professor John Carroll
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Dear John

If I have missed a submission date, please accept my apologies. You might wish to read the enclosed paper in any case. The paper was delivered to the National Conference of the Museums Association of Australia in Melbourne in November 1992. I was then Deputy Chair of the National Museum of Australia Council, and I had been Chair of the WA State Government's Taskforce on the Future of Museums in Western Australia in 1991-92. The paper sought to get the museum community to work together and to think carefully about their presentations of Australia. It also anticipated what did not in fact occur, namely the demise of the Labor Government in Canberra in 1993. At the time I was concerned by Labor's decision to delay construction of the National Museum, and by the Liberals apparent agenda and its link to "Thatcherite" Britain. As it happened, Keating won the 1993 election, failed to support the National Museum, and then in 1996 John Howard was elected to form a Government. It was really pleasing to see the new Government's determination to build the National Museum. My 1992 fears were momentarily set to one side as a pluralist National Museum was strongly developed. The opening of the Museum in 2001 was truly exciting. By then, however, some of my 1992 fears were being realized in terms of Council membership, pressure on the Director, and non-pluralist directions for museum presentations.

The National Museum has done very well, given long-time Government neglect until recent years, given State Governments' hostility early and fitful cooperation thereafter, and given constrained funding through to the present day. Attendances are very good, the educational programmes (a particular interest of mine) are outstanding, the work of the Director quite outstanding also, and so on.

Of course all cultural institutions require review. I think that it would have been helpful to reappoint Dawn Casey as Director for the further three year term. (I am unpersuaded by some public comments about Dawn not being a 'curator' etc.) Then the review would have been less publicly controversial than it has since become, and perceived as more open in its attitudes and work than it is. I expect you to maintain an independent stance and to safeguard the pluralist nature of the National Museum in



any “new” directions marked out for the Museum. I do not want the National Museum of Australia to look like a Thatcherite heritage centre reprivileging “British values” etc. I do want us to present ourselves out of our history in all its complexity. I do not want Prime Minister Howard’s old history teacher, Frank Driscoll, to return to centre-stage in the nation’s presentations, while at the same time it is important to ensure that such views are visible in the nation’s presentations.

With every good wish.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom', with a large, sweeping initial 'T'.

Professor Tom Stannage
EXECUTIVE DEAN

PS I notice that in my 1992 paper you were mentioned on page 12!

Enclosed



TOWARD A COMMON AGENDA

Modern British historical writing, to which we are heirs, was brought into being to help define Englishness and to validate and serve the British Empire. In the last third of the nineteenth century Stubbs, Maitland, Mandell-Creighton, Froude and others founded the Royal Historical Society, launched *English Historical Review* (1886), assisted Taunton to get English history into the schools, and generally Anglicised Von Ranke's research and teaching methods at university level. The young G.M. Trevelyan reflected, as early as 1903, "And who is the Mother Country to Anglo-Saxon historians?" Some reply, 'Germany'. But others of us prefer to answer, 'England'." For these historians, constitutionalism and the freedoms of people were found in English mediaeval and early modern history. History would be literary and scientific. It would be undergirded by Anglican Christianity, by English language and literature, and it would serve a moral purpose. It would be the bearer of the idea of progress. The English gifts, so defined, should be carried to the world, especially to the world of Empire. But medieval and early modern English history would not be enough.

What was needed was that there should be clearer link to the modern world, to even contemporary historical experience. "We shall draw no distinction between ancient and modern history", wrote Mandell-Creighton from Cambridge. It was his Cambridge colleague, JR Seeling who provided the bridge. In his 1870 *English lessons for English people*, he argued that a man could be called civilised if connected with the past through the State and showed sympathy with the great men in it. "History", he said boldly in his inaugural lecture, "is the school of statesmanship". By 1883 and 1884, with the publication of *The Expansion of England* and the formation of the Imperial Federation League, Seeley was in full cry. "We think of Great Britain too much and of Greater Britain too little", he wrote. His book did not go out of print until after the Second World War. (It returned to favour in Thatcher's decade).

Across in Oxford, James Froude wrote contemporaneously that "the British Nation (was) one of the most powerful in the development of the whole human race. By its intellect, by its character, by its laws and literature, by its sword and cannon, it has

impressed its stamp upon mankind with a print marked as the Romans.” In short, at the turn of the century, the practice of history (and museology) had become a branch of Empire statesmanship. To what lengths would the ideology go? Let me quote from Professor Cramb, professor of history at the University of London in 1900. He had the audacity to publish his lectures. He called them ‘Reflections on the Origins and Destiny of Imperial Britain’ “Britain”, he wrote, “was a race dowered with the genius of Empire.” “The British Empire”, he said in lecture seven, “was divined”. The “law of greater progress”, of which “the scientific hypothesis of evolution” was “but the pragmatic expression of this mystery”. The mystery itself was this, in his own words: “God for Britain, justice and freedom of the world”.

By the time of the Great War, Sir Charles Lucas and Lord Bryce had published books comparing the Roman and British Empires, to the latter’s favour. Professional historical writing in Australia was the child of this parent.

Nor did the Great War and its aftermath still the pro-Imperialist historical roar. Lions rather than mooses, Robert (Sullivan – a reference to an earlier paper at the CAMA Conference). In 1929, that “product of evolution on family lines”, *The Cambridge History of the British Empire* was published, and Australia was included.

The great historian of Australia, Sir Keith Hancock, in his 1930s *Survey of the British Commonwealth*, breathes that professionalism and service to Empire that Seeley sought. His most brilliant evocation of this link was a Penguin special published at the height of World War Two, called *Argument of Empire* (1942). That book could have been read with pleasure by Seeley and by Froude and those who established historical writing as a professional practice. It was a professional practice to have profound effects on Australian historical writing. It embedded within it views about Aboriginal people as peoples of the Empire. The views were taken up by our local historians. “The survival of the fittest means that might widely used is right. And thus we invoke and remorselessly fulfil the inexorable law of natural selection when exterminating the inferior Australian and Maori races... The world would be better for it.” Thus wrote Rusden in *Melbourne Review* in 1876. And a former Premier of this State, (Victoria) Giles Turner (also a historian) wrote that “the unemployed should be let alone to reform or starve. Under the rule of nature, the survival of the

fittest, this class will be ruthlessly exterminated". He was a banker, and his paper was published in *The Bankers Magazine*, 1893.

Even Charles Darwin, who did not write much about humans, in *The Descent of Man*, (1870) described what he called "the daring and persistent energy which explains the remarkable success of the British as colonists".

For my State, Western Australia, the great historian James Sykes Battye, after whom the Battye Library is named, published volumes with sub-titles like 'An epitome of progress'. The idea of progress ran through historical writing until the 1960s. The 1960s. At least Tarik Ali has not repented what he did in the 1960s. Many have. I do not either. What happened was that in the 1960s there emerged a different voice. It was the mingled voice of anger and love.

This was the voice of anger and love not of social justice and freedom through service to Empire but of social justice through self-determination and the rights of minorities and marginalised groups. It was a youthful rebellion. It was a rejection of Englishness, England Empireness, decay, disaster. It shouted a new role for history. It was against what was perceived to be within the Empire criteria, the ongoing oppression of women, of Aboriginal peoples, a refusal to fight the wars of Empire. The rejection had its most profound expression within Aboriginal people themselves. In a film called 'Black Magic', produced by the Southern Aboriginal Corporation in Western Australia, Mr Kickett, an Aboriginal, reflected on the nature of the Empire for him at Narrogin in Western Australia. His rejection was total and tearful. Here was a man whose children were taken from him from a fringe town at Narrogin. He, himself, had been put in gaol for striking a policeman. On his return to his home on the fringe of town he found not his children, who had been taken away, but their footprints in the sand. This too was the print of Empire. Ultimately it would lead to a great revolution of consciousness in this country through Aboriginal rights. Race politics was at the heart of Empire history. Froude and Seeley were in no doubt about this. Seeley himself had written, "the native Australian race is so low in the ethnological scale that it can never give the least trouble". And Froude, as many of you will know, came to Australia to observe for himself. He had written of the Corranderk Aborigines that they were hopeless, a dying race, "clothed, but not in their

right minds, if minds they had ever possessed. The faces of the children were hardly superior to those of apes and showed less life and vigour". That is from *Oceana*. Why was *Oceana* reprinted in 1984-85 in this country, and who edited that edition?

So the 1960s and 1970s saw people seeking to understand the past not just to tinker with it, not just to build on its successes, not just to go back to Cambridge and Oxford and carry the old messages back to Australia. As McQueen put it in 1970, "we must understand the past in order to destroy it". In a sense, that is what has been happening in Australian historical writing these last twenty years. In a twenty year or so battle, is it ending in victory, or is it ending without victors and the trade of history weakened, uncertain of its mission, unable to go back, a servant of what, and does anyone care?

By the early 1980s I was beginning to tire of the sound of hate and conflict. I began to search across time to hear the voice of joy in Australian history, however doused it seemed by the voice of sorrow. I puzzled over evidences of happiness in the lives of people in the past. I realised that my generation of historians had been rather better with sorrow than with joy, with hopelessness than with hope, better with human unhappiness than happiness. In writing of Aboriginal history, women's history, the history of childhood, the oppressive nature of class relations, the ills of capitalism, the wretchedness of pastoralism, the effects of farming on the environment, the dangers of Anglo-Celtism, we have dwelt indeed in a dark land historiographically. Let me recapitulate this part of the talk. In the beginning there was Empire history and Empire historians. Darkness and void. Then came Australian social justice history, and there was light and fullness of understanding. Sight was given to the blind. The sick were healed; and people were raised up from the dead. If I can quote from Tennyson:

"having sown some generous seed,
Fruitful of further thought and deed."
"I know that age to age succeeds,
Blowing a noise of tongues and deeds,
a dust of systems and of creeds."

But had the Australian social justice historians of the seventies and eighties really “Dissolved the riddle of the Earth?” Perhaps too many of us, like the Empire historians before us, could not keep from righteous self applause even seeing ourselves, as they did, (recall Professor Cramb) “as a stricken rock with streaming side”, when really we were still crumb gatherers under the table of truth, leaving things undone which ought to have been done. Some of us, like me, might have retreated entirely into a different sort of history built around the study of human emotions. Was there not a conference on anger in Sydney in

But in the mid 1980s one realised that indeed the war would have to go on. There were momentous battles still raging. One could not opt out. One’s emotions were still too deeply engaged. There was the new right beginning to stalk Australia, as it stalked America and Britain. There was slowing of social justice programs, the attack on multiculturalism, the attack on the Human Rights Commission with its strong interests in women’s rights. In 1987 I read a paper to the National Conference of History Teachers called ‘Sins of Omission’. The greatest sin I thought at that time would be not to fight for Australian studies.

So now, in the next part – the past in the present – I want to take you deep into the ideology that I think is about to hit us very dramatically. There are signs of it, that it is about to hit us. 6500 sacked people from the Ministry of Education in Victoria is a sort of start.

I want to take you into the origins, the heart, the exemplar of what is coming ideologically to this country, and what will affect museums profoundly. I want to take you into the heart of Thatcherism. Recall the 1970s in Britain. Recall it as a decade of irresolution and indecisiveness, a decade with titles with the word ‘decline; in many of them, the decline of Britain. The Blakean solution offered by the youthful radicals of the sixties had been found wanting and rejected. What would come forward?

For Margaret Thatcher, John M. Keynes and John Lennon were the twin evils. “We are reaping”, she said in 1982, “what was sown in the sixties”, the “permissive claptrap of the sixties”. There was also the abuse of power by the Trade Unions

which must be combated, the influence of the left within the Labor Party, the critique by the angries and the sixties generation. Now the critique of that critique had begun in the 1960s itself. It had begun with Enoch Powell. You recall he came to Australia as Professor of Classics, but really saw the light in India. He thought a lot about the Empire, and he wrote, "Often, when I am kneeling down in church, I think to myself how much we should thank God, the Holy Ghost, for the gift of capitalism". Or, "The free world has too long denied itself the right to proclaim that the market economy is the most effective enemy of discrimination between individuals, classes and races."

In 1963, with the youthful rebellion hardly under way, *Encounter* in England had an issue devoted to the title 'Suicide of a Nation'. And in 1964 the Institute of Economic Affairs in Britain published a book, *Rebirth of Britain*, with chapters also on the ruin of the nation, written by people like Powell, describing themselves then as radical reactionaries. The book itself began with a quote from Adam Smith. This critique gathered pace during the 1970s, with the formation of the Adam Smith Institute in London, with Madsen Pirie as a key figure. He came to Australia in the mid 1980s to advise on what should be done here. The creation of the journal *Salisbury Review* with Roger Scruton, the philosopher, the key figure. Why Salisbury? Because in the view of these people he was the last decent British Prime Minister, from the 1880s. Everyone else had been downhill since Salisbury.

There were the historians, Maurice Cowling, Robert Skidelsky, Robert Blake, and Hugh Thomas. Robert Blake and Hugh Thomas were to be created by Lord by Margaret Thatcher for their work in history. C.R. Elton, John Vincent and John Casey are others. And from America, the readings generated in particular, I suppose, by the American Heritage Foundation.

Margaret Thatcher herself wrote a book in 1977 called 'Let The Children Grow Tall'. It was published by the Centre for Policy Studies, which the historian Hugh Thomas directed. By the late 1980s the Thatcher miracle had occurred. The new dreaming in a sense, had triumphed. It was non-Keynsian, non-Laborist, non-sixties. Privatisation, smashing unions, weakening health schemes, local government troubles, redistributing wealth, increasing home ownership, shareholding, making Britain competitive nationally and internationally, and a war won as well. Powell, in 1989,

thought that his protégé had done “rather well”. A year later she went. She had survived all those chauvinist jokes, ‘night of the long hat pins’, ‘listening to his mistress’ voice’, ‘the ... court of Queen Margaret’. All those things she survived. But in the end, overwhelmed by her party’s needs to recover electorally from the poll tax and to enter the European Community more full heartedly, she went. But the values for which she was the most effective proponent survive in Britain and in this country.

I have already shown how professionalised history came into being in the last third of the nineteenth century as a servant to the twin and related ideas of progress and Empire. Not until the 1960s with the loss of Empire and the decline – disease of Britain did this history stumble; and the values of 1968 were taken up to renew the power of history, but in the service of social justice.

Coinciding with the expansion of the universities, this new urban history, the new social history, took hold in Britain and in Australian and in the United States. But as the sixties’ waters swamped the old historical world some members of that world scrambled on to the ark and survived. As the waters receded during the seventies, historians like Robert Blake and Hugh Thomas re-emerged Noah-like to lead the trade back to England’s green and pleasant land. A country now, as Powell put it crudely, coloured by the haunting tragedy of the United States. The British Nationality Act 1981 was one of the first signs of what was going to happen.

Central to the mission, Mrs Thatcher’s mission, was a belief that while the Empire had gone, the values which created the Empire were still latent in the body politic and were built out of the materials of the nation state which itself had generated the Empire. And the nature of the nation state, she perceived as early as 1977, would be defined through history. John Casey wrote in *Salisbury Review* in 1982, “the moral life finds its fulfilment only in an actual historic human community and above all in a nation state.” In the same year Mrs Thatcher spoke of “the sterling qualities which shine through our history (and) built an Empire”. And in February 1983, as many of you know, she asserted the primacy of Victorian values, acceptance of personal responsibility, freedom of choice and a British Empire that took both freedoms and

the rule of law to countries which would not have known it otherwise. In 1983, too, Lord Hugh Thomas called for British national history to be taught in schools.

At the same time Sir Keith Joseph, the Education (and Science) Secretary, redrafted his Department's report on history teaching to drop the emphasis on multiculturalism and restore its Britishness. In the same year, 1983, John Vincent, the historian, wrote in the *Sun* attacking the film *Gandhi*: "we must not feel guilty over Gandhi", he said. Vincent also wrote that Oswald Mosley had been more sinned against than sinning. This was in a review of Robert Skidelsky's life of Mosley. Mosley himself re-emerged for a final burst in 1983. Mrs Thatcher met with these right wing educators in Downing Street to formulate a program. It is hard to imagine another British Prime Minister, perhaps Baldwin and Churchill, who took such a keen interest in history. Powell wrote in 1983 "every society, every nation is unique. It has its own past, its own story, its own memories, its own ways, its own language or way of speaking, its own – dare I use the word – culture." Clearly this did not bode well for blacks, for Indians, for Pakistanis, in Britain.

Directly connected to the nationalism of the authoritarian new right and their concern to preserve what they consider to be the British way of life was a renewed racism.

Way back in 1978, Margaret Thatcher had said: "we are a British nation with British characteristics". We do not want to be "swamped by people with a different culture". In 1983, that key year for Britain in terms of values, Roy Honeyford, a Bradford school teacher, attacked multicultural education within Bradford. In *Salisbury Review* he published a paper on it. In 1985 the Bradford Board asked him to resign from the school, and Roy Honeyford became a martyr for the new right. "It was", said the new right, "the multiculturalists who were racist". That is what Roger Scruton wrote. It was lie, an extraordinary caricature of British history, that by the end of the nineteenth century, racism as an ideology had become institutionalised in British society. "Those who taught that were liars", wrote Scruton. Geoffrey Partington, in *Salisbury Review*, 1982 also attacked the sixties-style history. He attacked the notion of what he called freedom loving Africans opposed by cruel white slavers. "Rather", he said, "British history should stress British achievements within the Empire". For Elton it was

simply a case of requiring more kings and queens and less, as he put it, “non-existent history of ethnic entities and women”.

In 1990 the Education Minister, Baker, recognising the disasters from his point of view, of what had occurred within historical writing, moved to ban in the schools any history more recent than the last twenty years. History had to be more than twenty years old to be taught. Out went oral history with all its subversive characteristics. This group focused on the schools. The Education Act would have to be reformed. And that is what it was called, The Education Reform Act. It arose out of a group of these people called the Hillgate Group, who in 1987 wrote a book called *Whose Schools*. This was to do with the national curriculum, the necessity for a national curriculum. The Act would insist that history be a core subject and that it have a particular style and content. The final report of the National Curriculum Committee in 1990 made British history central. History was one of the fundamental ways to society transmits its cultural heritage to new generations.

To return to Margaret Thatcher. “When I was young”, she said, “you were taught tremendous pride in your country”. Maurice Cowling had written “the only permanent claims are those which arise from the national interest, defined in terms of sovereignty, historical continuity, and national identity”. Margaret Thatcher again: “we have been witnessing a deliberate attack on our values, on our heritage, on our great past” (1977).

I have mentioned the world ‘heritage’. But before introducing or discussing it what are the links between what I have been describing in Britain and what is happening in this country?

I guess the essence of what I want to say in terms of the link is found in an address by Margaret Thatcher from 1980. “The task in which the Government is engaged is to change the national frame of mind. If our people feel that they are part of a great nation and they are prepared to will the means to keep it great, then a great nation we shall be.”

To change the national frame of mind.

- How? Firstly, to capture the memory of might deeds.
- How? To be concerned with unities and with great lives in the history.
- How? Claim the nation's past.
- How? Reject diversity within the nation.
- How? Stay within the confines of a single explanation.
- How? Eliminate the pink establishment, the pink left, the pink male feminist fellow travellers, women, the lot.

Now all this might not matter for Australia if this had been the old Tory party, the old Tory party of monarchy, landed aristocracy, Empire and all that. But Thatcher's party is not like that. Mrs Thatcher's party did not have monarchy as its centrepiece. Mrs Thatcher's Britain looked more like Australia and some of its value systems. Mrs Thatcher's values could be appealing in this country, especially to the Liberal Party. And hadn't Whitlam and even Fraser shown the presence of an Australian 'disease' to match the British one?

Could it be that Australia too had had an Australian disease in the 1970s? After all, the Director of post war reconstruction, Nugget Coombs, had written in his autobiography that one of the great moments in his life was when he took in his hand Keynes' *General Theory of Unemployment and Money*, in 1936. Post war reconstruction in this country was built on Keynes, who had now to be rejected. It was also built on Beveridge who created the welfare state which Thatcher had rejected. Beveridge, too, had visited Australia to make sure that the Australians were doing the right thing.

Where did this disease first appear in Australia, if indeed we had it? The new right was in no doubt. It had begun with Higgins' harvester Judgement of 1907, with the role of the new arbitration court. This was when Australia began to run off the rails. Perhaps now we should defend that judgement. The feminists tear Higgins to shreds for what he did to women in that judgement. The Aborigines say Higgins had nothing to do with them, it let them out. He has no support from the women historians or from the Aborigines. He still has some from the residual Laborists around the place. But perhaps for the first time in Australian history he actually gave dignity to ordinary

men and women in this country in 1907. And maybe that gain is worth defending today.

So where does one turn to see the links at work? To *IPA Review*, why not? The Institute of Public Affairs Review. Perhaps even to David Kemp, now in Parliament. David Kemp wrote in 1989: “most of those who are identified in some way or another with the new right published in *IPA Review*”. Would IPA take up the task of changing the national frame of mind? *Quadrant* would do it. *The Bulletin* would do it. The *Australian* would do it. But IPA would do it quintessentially. If 1983 was the big year for Britain, in terms of changing the nation’s frame of mind, 1985 was pretty big year for this country. *Mandate to Govern* was published by the new right in ... that year. It offered some clues to what might occur, perhaps even as early as next year. But in that year *IPA Review* adopted a new format and went to reach a wider public. In 1985 one of the contributors to *IPA Review* was Paul Keating, the Treasurer of the Commonwealth, who contributed an article on the value of small government. Maybe that does not bode too well for museums.

In that year Madsden Pirie from the Adam Smith Institute in London published in *IPA Review* a paper on the benefits of privatisation. Geoffrey Blainey published an article on Hawk’s other Bicentennial scandal. “Australian history”, wrote Geoffrey “has been a fortunate history”. This was the year, (also 1984) of the battles over Land Rights, with Morgan and Blainey as key players. Roger Scruton visited Australia and wrote on sovereignty, and against Aboriginal Land Rights. Professor Wilson was brought out from Britain. Wilson had been the historian of Uniliver, a two volume history of Uniliver, that great company of Empire. Wilson was brought out to reassess Aboriginal history from the point of view of the right. He was in no doubt the Aborigines had caused their own population decline and the white should not feel guilty in any way. And just to make sure we got his message clear, he wrote a history of Australia as well.

Between 1985 and the present, *IPA Review* has been in full cry with a full Thatcherite values program. Leone Kramer, 1988, ‘Regaining our Heritage for the Children’. This article was a plea for English inheritance, “an English inheritance”, as she puts it, “advocated by Sir Charles Court”. “English”, she said, “is the great language”>

John Carroll wrote an article in 1988 on the denigration of Australian British history that had been occurring in the pink establishment. No need for guilt.

David Kemp wrote on education and values, quoting from Hayek's *Constitution of Liberty*, that "values must be definite, not relativist." Someone mentioned relativism yesterday. I just about shrank. My goodness, how brave. Values must be definite! He stressed the value of nation itself and he stressed the importance of compulsory education as the vehicle for the delivery of the definitive statement. Hugh Morgan wrote on the value of the pioneers who built Australia. They had faith and confidence in the value of their pioneering endeavours and why cannot we? And he slammed the guilt industry. He deeply regretted the setting aside of Sir Paul Hasluck's "policies of unforced assimilation".

Susan Johnston wanted great men back in focus, "the heritage of free enterprise", as she put it. "If you take the great men out", she said, "it is a little like describing a railway training without mentioning the engine". Who would be in Susan Johnston's pantheon? Well one surprising name, I have to say, is W.A. Flick – yes, pest control. Staniforth Rickardson, the financier, Sidney Myer, G.J. Coles, Essington Lewis, and Henry Holden. In 1989 Warren Clarnette wrote on 'Education Without Honour': Values Schools No Longer Teach'; and my colleague and friend from Monash, Bruce Knox, in 1990 wrote a paper called 'The Necessity for British History'. In a 1992 edition of *IPA Review*, Austin Gough from Adelaide, who retired as Professor of History there, resented the attack on those who wrote about dead white males. In 1992, in *IPA Review*, David Kemp, taking time out from shadow portfolio responsibilities, wrote a paper on Sir Leslie McConnan.

Here is the great man.
Here are the great deeds.
Here is the British connection.
Here is the great line.
Here is the engine in the train.
Here is the definite value.
Here is the nation's heritage.

How many of you have exhibitions on Sir Leslie McConnan? Or even a Businessmen's Hall of Fame? McConnan was the box of the National Bank of Australasia, saved the banks, from Chifley's nationalisation grab in the late forties, founded *IPA Review*, the hero of Australia's development as a free nation.

IPA Review is not a side show. Its lists of Councillors includes the great bankers, businessmen and some great academics of this country.

IPA Review uses the word 'heritage' a good deal. So too does the current Labor Government and many government agencies. So too do many of you, I suspect. Beware!

In Britain in the 1980s, the word became a weapon the armoury used against the pink establishment. Heritage focuses on the nostalgic and positive. The industry, which grew so strongly in the eighties, draws a screen between ourselves and the complex past. It simplifies, it offers a single explanation: Wigan Heritage Centre, Bristol's Empire Museum, all those sorts of things. So many, fifty of them in place before Mrs Thatcher went out. And her English Heritage Council remains a controversial body, in law direct to the Prime Minister, responsible for appointments, responsible for an education facility, and so on, under the National Heritage Act of 1980.

Now where did the pink establishment come from? It came from the East End of London. It came out of what was described as darkest London of the 1890s. That is where Beveridge began his work. That is where Attlee started to build the new Jerusalem from. That is, in a way, where the sixties come from. David Bailey, did he not come out of the East End of London, the great photographer? What do you do then about a place that symbolises the emergence of the New Jerusalem and the pink establishment? You obliterate it. You obliterate it through the eighties. You transform the docklands. You obliterate the East End and history through Canary Wharf and the Conran Foundation Museum of Design. Heritage in England has become bogus history, serving the interests of those who control the present. History was something contaminated by the sixties and the pink establishment. Far safer to eliminate the word 'history' and proclaim instead the word 'heritage'.

In Australia the new right does not even have to fight for the name. It is enshrined in Labor and Fraser legislation. We even have a Heritage Collections Working Group of the Cultural Ministers Council. In former Arts Minister Simmons' address to CAMA last year he used the word 'heritage' umpteen times. He spoke of the value of heritage, heritage professionals, heritage practitioners, signified heritage resources, intangible heritage, Aboriginal heritage, cultural heritage institutions, cultural heritage area, movable cultural heritage, maritime heritage. He scarcely used the word 'history'. His definition of 'heritage' embraced Aborigines and migrant groups. He spoke of 'cultural diversity' and 'pluralism' generally. But he did not mention 'business heritage'. How will a Liberal-National Government define 'heritage'? Will it take the word that Laborists and the pink establishment have built into the fabric of Australian cultural life and use it for the simple single explanation to change the national frame of reference?

What will the Heritage Collections Working Group look like (it has now got an extra three years of life) under a Liberal National Party Government? If the new right agenda is followed (and there is now a cross over from think tanks into Federal Parliament), then it is the argument of my paper today that very considerable changes will be made to the nation's frame of mind historically.

Last week Mr Hewson was reported on ABC News, 11 November – the day of remembrance – announcing the Coalition's policy on citizenship. The 1948 legislation would be revised. On ABC news in Perth it came out as ten lessons in Australian History. What sort of history will go into the ten lessons? Ten what? Ten lessons? Ten commandments more likely. And what will they be like? Thou shalt have unities and great lives, great deeds and great men. Thou shalt not, I think have pluralism, diversity, ethnic minorities, Aborigines and women. Thou shalt stay within the confines of a single explanation. I won't go through the full ten...

All this will certainly affect museums. To date *IPA Review* and other rightist journals have tended to bypass museums. However, Professor Arndt has not long ago fired a rightist shot across the bows of the National Museum and its collecting policy. Perhaps you do not matter in the scheme of things, not being central to education, not being central to the entertainment industries. What industry are you? Perhaps the

new right could ignore you. All I can say is, it did not in Britain. And they may get around to you, soon.

If you do matter and you do not change to the new framework of the nation's mind and you do not display Sir Leslie McConnan regularly, then your monies will run dry. Some of you will embrace the change and prosper, like good private schools. How ironic if the vehicle for such largesse was the Heritage Collections Working Party and possible Council. How terrible if the history of the last twenty years was banned, as in Britain.

I was going to talk about National Museum in this context, but I won't. But it may emerge that the future of the National Museum becomes part of the debate, which I think we are entering into, in a very important way.

QUESTIONS

LOUISE DOUGLAS

You make me feel inspired and suicidal all at the same time. And you do not have anything to fear from us, I can assure you. I think everyone regrets that you were not able to talk about the National Museum and perhaps the easiest way to deal with that is to ask you what do you think the role of the National Museum is going to be in the context of the debate that we are beginning and is facing us?

STANNAGE

Since becoming a Councillor of the National Museum I have felt quite privileged in a way to enter into a debate about museology in this country. It has been of terrific concern that the National Museum has not been a major player in debates about the nature of museum work in this country. I guess I was a bit surprised when I became a Councillor to discover that was not the case and then to discover also that CAMD and even CAMA have grave doubts about the place of the National Museum and debates the issue. I was surprised that it was such a sickly infant, that Senator Walsh wished to kill it and not give it a good education, clothes, toys to play with. The Department of the arts took eighteen months to reply with 'What Value Heritage' and so on. I am

slightly unnerved about the National Museum within the overall scheme of things. I am a little less unnerved these last few weeks since the appointment of Margaret Coaldrake, who happily is at this conference, as are many of the staff of the National Museum, to engage in a debate about the place of museums generally.

How do I feel about it? I'll tell you how I feel about it. I feel that if the museum world tears itself apart ... you see I come from a football world. Margaret (Anderson) did not mention that (in her introduction). But that is my true home. There they take competition and they create a proper thing out of it. And while some of your museums should be called Hawks and Bulldogs in my view, rather than your current titles, the museological world, and I am asking as a lay outsider, is running a grave risk by internecine war. I firmly believe, Louise, in a common agenda. Goddamit I do not want to subscribe to an American imperialism, but a certain museologist sent me a very important paper two years ago on a common agenda and it informs my very thinking about what might happen to museums, community museums, specialists museums, regional museums, State museums, big museums within States and the National Museum while it remains on the legislative books. That is pretty oblique. I believe in common agenda. I used to believe in keystones in arches but I do not know if that would go down well here.

MARGARET ANDERSON

I was trying to think recently about the approach of 2001, where that left museums, the political bias inherent in museums and where that leaves museums, how we manage to link the creation of a national identity which I think Prime Minister is interested in now, and the notion of heritage given its conservative trappings and museums. I was intrigued by a visit to the Smithsonian Museum of National History, not very long ago, where we walked in to a scene which quite extraordinary, and you would not I think see in Australia, where the original stars and stripes banner is displayed with full pomp and ceremony. It is displayed behind a darkened screen. People wait for it. The lights come up slowly. The National Anthem plays. Swells. And the Stars and Stripes banner is revealed. And then it all goes down again and people go away. It was an extraordinary performance. But upstairs I walked through some of the most radical, challenging history exhibitions which I have ever seen. I

wonder whether there is a place for colonising history and heritage and using heritage as a smoke screen for radical history. What do you think, Tom?

STANNAGE

I do not think that truth resides within any one ideology. I think I did not really in the end get to my theme, which was the middle way. Reconciliation is at the heart of that idea. I do not believe it is beyond the ability of the radicals from the sixties and seventies to converse with those who will put the Australian flag, the federation flag behind the screen. And yet we are a country with four flags. We have the union jack, the federation flag, the Eureka flag and above all in the Australian consciousness now the great Aboriginal flag of Mr Thomas. I do not know about taking a word like 'heritage' which I think has extremely conservative overtones now and doing wonderful things behind it. I think we have done well in Australia in that way, but a little unknowingly. I do not really have a view beyond the need to conduct a dialogue about the nature of identity.

WESTON BATE

The identity scene – and it relates to the talk yesterday about the Commonwealth's role and government role – that sort of imposed identity that we are in danger of getting from what you have been saying, surely can be resisted by the museum profession in understanding that everybody is on about Australian identity or understanding Australian meanings. How does the role of Museum of Australia relate to focusing ideas about identity, not as a myth but as a reality that is generated across the whole federation and not just in one central place. It seems to be the great hole we fall into is looking to that central place.

STANNAGE

I could not agree more. I come from Western Australia. We have thought to secede on occasion. So my suspicion of great national cultural institutions in Canberra is great. Let me take the first part of the question: "the museums may be able to resist". Yes, of course. Many of you, all of you, will remain true to those things that you

believe, the values you hold. You will not engage in crass propaganda. But your values will inform what you do in terms of collection, interpretation, display, and so forth. My worry is that funding both the State and Federal levels will become extremely selective and some museums and museologists will be singled out for support and others will be singled out for suppression. Certain styles of museums will be closed or made difficult to work. So the capacity of the museum profession to keep a debate going in this country may be inhibited. Already in Fightback the proposed Budget for the National Museum is to be slashed by \$1m. I think that is about 25% of the working Budget, or something like that. That is an interesting start. In answer to your question question, if there is a National Museum, it clearly must be a responsive, interactive body. It must recognise that if Greg Wallace out at Geraldton has a bright idea about a huge display on northern Australia but he cannot resource it, then the National Museum, as well as the WA State Museum, is a body that he can turn to for advice to carry the bright idea to the nation and outside if need be. That is what common agenda is about. That wherever the creative energy lies within the museum system, in a community museum up in the alps, or wherever it might be, it may be from a curator within the National Museum, then through common agenda that idea is furthered by the museum profession to the best of its ability. Last night I saw an exhibition at the Museum Victoria on the Italians and Jews in Carlton. It was stunning. I wanted to put it under my arm and take it back to Perth to encourage like Phil. Garrick and others at the WA Museum, to give them the sort of support for the work they are doing. Those exhibitions inspire one. The National Museum will never have a monopoly, Weston, on inspiration. It will be through the entire trade and outside, because the trade of museology should be receptive to ideas from outside. And indeed it should move outside to effect it. Even our trade, Weston, of history.

KYLE WINKWORTH

I have a question I have not really formulated very well. It seems to me thinking about what happened in the 1980s that government and maybe the bureaucrats cultivated those bits of the National Museum they had nay interest in. And that they were transferred to that building, that surrogate museum on the hill in Canberra which is now the number one tourist attraction. I am speaking about new Parliament House.

Now we find that Old Parliament House is also to be cultivated as one of those other bits of what might be in a National Museum that the politicians and bureaucrats seem to support. And what is really being marginalised are bits of the National Museum that might speak to wider Australia. Do you want to comment on that?

STANNAGE

You may well be right. The funds that went into the New Parliament may well have been a factor. It is outside my knowledge, so I am just guessing, a bit like you are. Funds that might have been available were used in other ways. Often government does not work like that, however, if Tony Blunn were here he would say so, I imagine. And you must remember too that the Piggot report did talk about the need for a separate National Maritime Museum. It did talk about a constitutional museum. In other words a number of these things can be legitimised by return to that great report by Piggot. The main game of Piggot's report is what you are talking about still. That report is still with us, endorsed by Council in 1982, following the 1980 legislation, and reaffirmed largely by the present Council in relation to the strategic plan of earlier this year. It is essentially a Whitlamite program strongly emphasising the histories of Aboriginal peoples, ethnic groups, women generally, although it will do much more as well in a 1990s mode. It does carry with it all the dangers of a rejection of things associated with 1972/1975. Your worries, I think, are well merited; but I am hopeful, very hopeful, of seeing an excellent National Museum in place by 2001.