

The Insolence of Office and Australia's Indigenous Northlands

PETER JULL

In 2001 and 2002 the Australian northern territories and indigenous peoples have gone all but unheard amid wider political debates impacting on them. In one happy event, however, the anti-Aboriginal government of the Northern Territory (NT) lost office at the August 18, 2001, election after 27 years of unbroken rule since the NT won self-government. Labor with a pragmatic moderate face, and an able new leader, former broadcaster Ms Clare Martin, defeated the tired, fumbling, and arrogant CLP (Country Liberal Party), placing a prominent Aboriginal leader, John Ah Kit, in cabinet. There is no question that the CLP's flirtation with Pauline Hanson's One Nation party of xenophobes and Right radicals in the final days of the campaign helped Labor over the line. At last the CLP's habitual election strategy of racial scare-mongering had failed. (For NT background, see Jull in *The Northern Review* No. 21 and earlier issues.)

The biggest moment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs—other than re-election of the Howard federal government in November 2001, see below—came in mid-June 2001. *The Age*, Melbourne's world-respected broadsheet newspaper, published allegations by four unconnected women of rape 20 years ago involving the elected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) chair, Geoff Clark. (A year later—28-6-2002—the press reported that police investigations would not result in charges being laid unless further information came to light.)

Clark has stayed in office through all this despite some calls for his resignation, and although badly damaged in the view of many whites and blacks. This is a Catch-22 situation: Clark is articulate, politically savvy, an effective operator in public and private, and particularly able on the big subjects of the Aboriginal political portfolio (e.g., international, treaty, constitutional, and rights demands), if politically maimed, but his deputy, Ray Robinson, also a survivor of unproven rape charges, is widely seen as so politically compromised by his Outback Tammany style as to be unsuitable as a replacement. At the time of writing in July 2002 both men are re-contesting their ATSIC Commission seats and national leadership, so interesting times may lie ahead.

(From late July 2002, Robinson has been subject of a series of in-depth profiles in *Brisbane Courier-Mail*, about which he is apparently suing. He is a tough larger-than-life Outback character who has brought lots of jobs and benefits to the blacks and spinoffs to local whites by wheeling and dealing in his hot corner of south-west Queensland, the sort of person who might well get an Order of Australia, a public edifice named after him, and talk of his 'true Ozzie larrikin spirit' in orations by visiting politicians, if he were white.)

The accusations against Clark created an instant national furore. The high-profile Sydney-based Aboriginal magistrate, Ms Pat O'Shane, spoke out, implicitly defending Clark and saying that women often made up rape stories. This inflamed the uproar, raising questions about the propriety of judges speaking of untried cases and of a judge demeaning women victims. When other black women leaders spoke out about their own peoples' complacency on domestic and sexual abuse, O'Shane changed course and attacked some of these for allegedly not having opposed violence as strongly as she in times past. One of these women, the most dignified visible older female indigenous leader in the country, then revealed that her children had been abused by a family friend who, it was alleged under Parliamentary privilege, was O'Shane's high-profile indigenous politician brother!

The Aboriginal political scene had been dominated by talk of a national treaty, national black-white Reconciliation, the veracity of history *vis-à-vis* past massacres and indigenous suffering, the Stolen Generations of black children, and the relevance of the word 'genocide' in Australian context. But all this was now blown away. To discuss these 'empty' and 'symbolic' issues, we are told, is irresponsible in light of pressing 'real needs'. There has been almost no further public discussion other than on Aboriginal personal and community violence—and on the alleged tolerance level among indigenous leaders, families, communities, and organisations for such violence. The discussion has been feverish, with countless newspaper editorials and graphic features on indigenous violence, poverty, and despair. The white Establishment has pretended to be surprised by all this misery, and has accused the black community and its white sympathisers of having 'hidden' the tragic truth. However, judging by the white response now—to wash its hands of involvement or culpability, and to wring hands and tut-tut about black fecklessness—publicity is pointless. Indeed, it merely feeds the Howard government's underlying Aboriginal policy of encouraging white prejudice, demonising blacks, and discrediting the spending of tax dollars or official attention on them. Prime Minister John Howard must be especially delighted to see Aboriginal leaders so compromised as Clark and Robinson highlighting the issue by remaining in office and subject to ongoing media reportage. Since mid-June 2001 there have no other indigenous issues discussed, except briefly during the well-reported *Indigenous Governance Conference*, April 3-5, 2002, in

Canberra. (The indigenous Canadian, American, New Zealand, and other papers are available online at the Reconciliation Australia site, /www.reconciliationaustralia.org/). Nunavut premier Paul Okalik also gave a speech to another important conference, *Treaty: Advancing Reconciliation*, at Murdoch University, Perth, on June 26, 2002, outlining the difficult history of negotiation in the creation of Nunavut.

However, a greater ethno-political furore, with Howard as its ringmaster, was to become the central political event of recent times—and just in time for the national election. In mid-August 2001, Australian marine authorities called on the Norwegian container ship *Tampa* sailing in the Indian Ocean to rescue c. 430 asylum seekers about to drown in their overloaded and leaking Indonesian boat while attempting to reach Australia. These persons were fleeing repression in Iraq and Afghanistan. Already stressed and distressed from their ordeals, they made clear to the Norwegian captain that they would not go back to Indonesia, only to Australia, or would harm themselves and perhaps his small crew. The sea captain recognised their condition and determination and headed his ship to Christmas Island, a semi-self-governing Australian territory in the Indian Ocean north-west of Australia (not to be confused with the Pacific atoll where Britain tested hydrogen bombs). He made do as best he could by setting up shelter from the Tropical sun for his new passengers on the deck of the crowded but well-maintained ship. Howard took personal control of the situation at the Australia end, meanwhile, leaving the national press corps wide-eyed after his remarkable off-camera outburst promising that none of the unfortunates would ever set foot on Australian soil. Of course, Howard is always at his most ferocious and brave when grinding the faces of the poor, non-white, foreign, troubled, drug-addled, et al. He now pretended that this new purposefulness was the ‘strong leadership’ which polling and social research experts told us we craved. Of course, any leadership sought was moral leadership, intellectual leadership, a sense of direction—not the tantrums and showing-off of a bad little boy. (At one point his campaign advertisements showed him in black and white to liken him subliminally, we are told, to Churchill and Roosevelt. Fat chance!)

The Norwegian sea captain, Arne Rinnan—who has since become a folk hero world-wide, as well as to many of us in Australia—tried repeatedly to get medical aid and other help from the Australians while anchoring offshore. Failing, he decided to head into port. In response, Howard sent Australia’s highly touted balaclava-masked élite special forces commandos, the SAS (Special Air Service), to storm and ‘secure’ the ship and the unarmed people aboard. For the sake of appearances an Australian doctor did a one-hour scan of the hundreds of unwanted visitors on deck—fainting and heat-stressed women and children, et al.—to pronounce them as having no major needs. (Apparently that medical once-over aroused the ship’s crew’s particular deri-

sion and disgust.) Captain Rinnan would not be moved to sail his guests back to another country, citing their fragile condition and the situation in international law. The stand-off continued for days. Within Australia refugee rights groups attempted to free the asylum seekers through the courts and succeeded in delivering a bloody nose or two to the Howard government but failed at the ultimate question. Howard meanwhile had Australian armed forces remove the asylum seekers and take them to islands of Australia's poorest Tropical neighbour countries in the south-west Pacific, neighbours bought and bullied into cooperation. This he has called 'the Pacific solution'.

Polling showed that 77% of Australians supported Howard's approach (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 4-9-2001). Meanwhile the media and mainstream politicians of the world were incredulous at the flouting of the spirit and content of international law, such behaviour by a 'first world' government, such 'first world' use of armed forces, and perhaps most of all the sheer deceit and bombast with which Howard in particular and a sad little clutch of his colleagues carried on this whole phoney war. However, Howard was using the whole thing as an election winner, i.e., to divide Labor voters, many of whom deserted their party for its waffling on the issue of how tough to be with refugees, and to present the government as strong in defence of Australian interests against foreigners in order to win Pauline Hanson's party supporters. The *Tampa* was a planned and staged electoral stunt. Much more will be written about it but excellent preliminary pieces are Ian Ward's 'The *Tampa*, wedge politics and political journalism', *Australian Journalism Review* 24[1], July 2002, and Peter Charlton's 'Tampa' in *Howard's Race*, ed. Solomon, Sydney, 2002, pp. 79-107.

But the *Tampa* was not the end of the story. There were more leaky vessels with asylum seekers, hundreds of whom drowned. There has been ongoing digging by journalists and some parliamentarians into some of these cases because of a fear that Howard interfered with military conduct to the point of facilitating these drowning deaths. When critics mention this Howard fires back that he is 'appalled' that anyone is criticising the navy. They are not; they are criticising the prime minister whose micro-management of Tropical seas military 'border protection', as it is called, has breached norms and demoralised military personnel. One thinks of Churchill's jibe about how the German military command must have felt following the whims of Corporal Hitler.

In one celebrated case, now known as the 'children overboard affair', Howard and other key ministers paraded their 'shock' at rumoured (and untrue) allegations that some refugees were threatening to throw their children overboard from leaky vessels to blackmail the navy into rescuing the families and taking them to Australia. One might think of the Jewish families who saved their children by shoving them out under the Nazi fences around

ghettoes, but that is not what Howard wanted us to think. No, these were awful people, not the sort we would want to have in our wonderful Australia! 'Any civilised person would never dream of treating their own children in that way', said foreign minister Downer; it was 'emotional blackmail' and 'I certainly don't want people of that type in Australia' Prime Minister Howard told the country; while immigration minister Ruddock moralised that 'Some of the worst manipulation we saw yesterday with groups of people who are intent on reaching Australia using their children in the most deplorable way to try to put pressure on us' (quotes respectively from *The Age* editorial, 12-10-2001; *Melbourne Herald-Sun*, 25-11-2001; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8-10-2001). One would have thought that Australians would have been disgusted by this self-righteous prattle, but apparently not. One would have expected the media of any 'first world' country to refuse to accept at face value any such nonsense, especially during an election campaign, but not so. Indeed, no other 'first world' country's mainstream party leaders would have had the nerve to attempt such a ruse, knowing that voters would see it simply as a fraud. But not here in Australia.

The use of race and 'dog-whistling' and 'wedge politics' in elections is treated by the media largely as a technical rather than moral issue. (*Dog-whistling* is the use of a form of words which may seem neutral to many voters but provokes desired negative reactions among a target group, e.g., the anti-Aboriginal, anti-Asian, anti-foreign public in Australia.) Only the political cartoonists are reliable moral arbiters. Indeed, one newspaper, *The Australian*, and to a lesser extent some other Murdoch papers, have become determined to clothe the emperor, 'bare naked' as North American children used to say, in the most gorgeous robes and with the most amazing new fashions. Howard must wake each morning eager to read their latest editorial to find out what new greatness they have thrust upon him.

The September 11 events prompted Howard and his ministers to conflate the *Tampa* and other victims fleeing Iraqi and Afghan persecution with their persecutors and 'terrorists'. Their real fault was not being bad or good people but being Asian people, Moslem people, etc., it seems. Ministers have now further confused the situation by saying they are not really refugees at all; that is, since the US military has overthrown the Afghan government, their status has changed, but this change is applied retrospectively for propaganda purposes. (An Australian international affairs professor I know told an advanced university class at the start of her remarks on these issues that they must understand that it was not habitual, not *de rigueur*, for all governments to lie like this to their citizens.)

If war is hell, or war is swell, Howard's wars are relative, as *The Australian's* foreign policy editor points out in opening an October 11 commentary.

There is a little remarked but profoundly revealing contrast that needs to be drawn. The Howard Government committed a substantially bigger military force to persecuting innocent Afghan refugees in the Indian Ocean than it has committed—or, rather, made available for future commitment—to the war against terror.

To meet the shocking military threat of unarmed civilian refugees, many of them women and children, the Howard Government sent a guided missile destroyer, two Anzac frigates, a supply ship, a transport ship, an unknown number of patrol boats, four PC-3 Orion maritime surveillance aircraft and a detachment of Special Air Service soldiers.

To the war against terrorism we have promised, should the Americans want them, two Orion aircraft, 150 SAS troopers, an Anzac frigate, possibly a naval command ship and two Boeing 707 air-to-air refuelling aircraft.

Those appalled by Howard's war on Asians afloat note that when Liberal prime minister Malcolm Fraser provided strong moral leadership in the late 1970s the country had no trouble accepting tens of thousands of Indochinese boat people compared with whose numbers the recent 'threat' has been a mere trickle. Now, however, the Labor opposition in federal Parliament has been seen to be waffling and ineffectual, avoiding many issues before the November 10, 2001, election in the belief the government would defeat itself. Many federal Labor voters defected to minor parties—the Greens and Democrats—which had clear anti-Howard refugee policies. Since then Labor has been unable to bridge its own divisions, many traditional Labor voters favouring draconian anti-foreigner measures to protect Australian jobs. (All six state governments and the two territories, the NT and Australian Capital Territory, are now in Labor hands, a statement that social compassion, relatively speaking, and opposition to Howardism have not entirely deserted the continent.) Meanwhile a mainstream national political system and opposition with no clear criticism to make of recent moral and political outrages, and a head of government lost in wonder of himself and inventing his own realities, leave Australia adrift and disoriented. Even otherwise astute and principled political observers are more likely to criticise those who use the term 'racism' as being tactically counterproductive than to consider the more important question of what arguably racist policy-making is doing to society. East Timor with its recent experience of genocide and its present rebuilding provides a much-needed outlet for Australian moral and intellectual energy, social imagination, and compassion of the type one might hope and expect to be applied in much of Australia itself.

I believe that only a 'Hudson Bay solution' will end stunts like the 'Pacific solution'. The morally and intellectually competent among Howard's cabinet and caucus—and I am told there are a few—must bundle him and his immigration, foreign affairs, and employment ministers into a boat and set them

adrift in Hudson Bay at the onset of winter—or by the Antarctic coast—and regain control of the ship of state. As with Hudson in 1610, the body of water could even be named for him! Meanwhile, one wonders about all the silent Liberal supporters and imagines that like post-1945 Germans their children and grandchildren will pointedly ask ‘Where were *you*, what were *you* doing, during the Howard interregnum?’

A central figure in all this has been Philip Ruddock, the immigration minister, who also took on Aboriginal Reconciliation in 1998 and the full Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs role, a year or so later. Allegedly once a liberal Liberal, an all-but-vanished breed among the doctrinaire neo-liberal Howard hardliners in power, he has become the enthusiastic martinet, a meticulous Himmler making love to his employment in the razor-wire era. (Razor-wire caging of dark-skinned people has become the principal icon and representation of later Howardism, just as marginalised Outback Aborigines were of his first years in power.) Having apparently convinced himself that the overall premise of the ‘get tough with asylum seekers’ policy is right, he endlessly elaborates little quibbles by press release or by monotonous murmur on camera, treating critics with disdain as illogical or foolish to distract us from principles. For a long period he looked and sounded ill, and cartoonists depict him habitually with gravedigger solemnity and grey or mauve or green or sickly yellow pallor. But he got warm applause in the 2001 election campaign, poor fellow, and became a sort of hero to many. If, as some say, he has hidden decency, i.e., qualities other than nitpicking and loyalty to the boss, he will not have an easy time out of office—one assumes that he will look in the mirror one day and go out and decently hang himself. Meanwhile, he is an ideal foil for Howard by making the latter look almost a ‘big picture person’ by comparison. At the time of writing Ruddock and other ministers are sneering at and misrepresenting in print and broadcasts the criticism of a former chief justice of India sent by the United Nations to look at razor-wire camps (Immigration minister joint media release, 31-7-2002). Ruddock rails against foreign critics from countries with rights recognition or refugee treatment worse than Australia’s, but fortunately the world does not rebuff the many Australians working in helpful and progressive causes around the world from delivering foreign aid to social and political scholarship just because Howard and his government are the marginal and mean face of old-time white imperialism. Also, many great advances in many fields have come from people in flight or exiled from badly governed places.

However, much of the nitpicking is presumably aimed at the Liberal heartland to confuse delicate consciences still lurking in the ‘leafy suburbs’. In the main, Howard paints with broad brush. He and his ministers simply ignore the educated and informed and conduct their affairs rather like peanut butter or shampoo commercials on TV, with a few careful images and one-

liners. The motto seems to be, 'Say anything you can get away with!' Letters to the editor or opinion page commentary correcting mis- and disinformation are apparently of no concern. Well, almost. Howard and Co. were remarkably sensitive to charges that they had stolen the election with contrived racist fantasies, i.e., the *Tampa* and 'children overboard'. But the Howard government is disconnected from the intelligentsia by choice. There is a visceral element; it is by no means merely tactical. Only the psycho-biography of the Prime Minister is likely to reveal why. Sorting through the tea leaves and daily rubbish of his government reveals nothing but a negative and reactionary populism. Howard is an outstanding opposition politician but even his grandest statements for solemn or significant national occasions are never free of a whining subtext. Whining about the bad people in the world—i.e., those who want more than beer and soccer, scotch and cricket; who think that society can be improved; who think that history is worth studying for its lessons, not just as a triumphalist pageant.¹ As Gerard Henderson warned in his book before Howard's first election win, *A Howard Government?* (1995), the Prime Minister can neither understand nor accept social or cultural diversity. Howard recently told European audiences that his Australia is founded on 'decency and hard work'. His *decency* actually means the style (and limitations) of middle and lower-middle class Anglophone respectability of his 1940s childhood. *Hard work* will certainly be needed by 'the many' as he makes services and opportunities, e.g., hospital care and higher education, less and less affordable.

The views expressed here are so rich in fantasy or sheer effrontery that I have quoted the article in full. 'Anger' has not disappeared, but 'dialogue' has. Everyone knows that there is no point talking to Howard about indigenous or race issues. ATSIC head Geoff Clark wisely talks to him about sports matches instead. Just as British Columbia governments had a generally quiet life from Indians for a generation because any notion of engagement was futile, the real indigenous political story is out of the white public's sight. Nor is there less focus on the 'rights approach'. But again, everyone knows the Howard government is only prepared to see Aborigines as unfortunates suited for the dregs and drip feed of welfare-style programming, or 'practical reconciliation' as Howard calls it, not as peoples or communities. Here he even laments that they are often 'physically separated'—perhaps he would like to empty their ancient home territories and move them to cities?—and, tellingly, he likens them to unsuccessful immigrants, aliens in their own land! He picks the bit of Noel Pearson's speeches he chooses to hear—the criticism of the Left—but ignores Pearson's overall demand for real indigenous self-government. He cannot resist a dig on behalf of Senator Herron, his hapless and hopeless former indigenous affairs minister. As for 'inching towards a more sensible and harmonious outcome', he is mistaking the silence of most

of those who would normally be involved, and the chat of those on his own side, for dialogue and harmony. Absence of debate today is not the indigenous passivity or assimilation which Howard thinks a 'sensible', 'realistic', or 'harmonious outcome' would be. Silence is not consent.

While Howard's views here are wrong and reflect his own lack of empathy and understanding, they are nonetheless carefully crafted and self-serving. While he explicitly does not wish to be seen to be provoking, he can never quite resist the impulse, especially where indigenous peoples are concerned. But his premiership has moved into a phase where he believes he can make things so merely by saying they are so—in all areas of governance and policy from foreign relations to adolescent rebellion. He dismisses whatever does not suit him at the moment and apparently believes that reality is whatever he says it is. Mr Magoo (as one columnist called him) or Macbeth, he is truly alone with his dreams and illusions. The few ministers who huddle close to him seem merely hostages of his delusions and of their own foolishness, weakness, and pathetic ambition. The world continues to turn whether they know it or not. (For Howard and Howardism in general see Guy Rundle's brilliant small book-length essay, *The Opportunist: John Howard and the Triumph of Reaction*, Quarterly Essay, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2001; and for Tampa and refugees in race issues context, Mungo MacCallum's *Girt by Sea: Australia, the Refugees, and the Politics of Fear*, Quarterly Essay, 2002.)

A major University of New South Wales (UNSW) research project has resulted in the valuable report, *Indigenous Peoples and Governance Structures: A Comparative Analysis of Land and Resource Management Rights*, by Garth Nettheim, Gary Meyers, and Donna Craig, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2002. Including comparative research on Canada, Alaska, Greenland, Sápmi (Northern Scandinavia), New Zealand, and the USA's Lower 48, this large-format 500-page paperback may be the most important new resource available in Australia on what some of us would regard as the key indigenous political framework issues, i.e., politico-constitutional reconciliation or accommodation; indigenous governance; and management of territory and resources. Meanwhile, the *Australian Indigenous Law Reporter* published quarterly by the UNSW's Indigenous Law Centre continues to provide legal and political documentation and insight from Canada, Alaska, Sápmi, and the rest of the Circumpolar world, while its more frequently published sister magazine, *Indigenous Law Bulletin*, provides legal, policy, and political practitioners with valuable news, case summaries, reviews, and updates. *ILB's* new issue has an excellent analysis of the BC treaty referendum by UBC graduate student Helena Kajlich, for instance.

Saltwater People: The Waves of Memory by Nonie Sharp published simultaneously by University of Toronto Press and Australian Allen & Unwin, 2002, sketches cultural, legal, and political contexts of Torres Strait Islanders and

neighbouring Aboriginal peoples from Cape York on the Coral Sea across north Tropical coasts to the Kimberley on the Indian Ocean. Canadians and others may think of Aborigines as desert peoples but in fact they inhabited every ecosystem of Australia's continent, shores, and islands. Dr Sharp draws on Canadian Inuit, Pacific coast First Nations, and Sami experience in North Norway, and on scholars like Tromsø's Anita Maurstad and Vancouver's Evelyn Pinkerton, in making the case for recognition of indigenous sea rights and rebuilding community marine livelihoods within the modern economy. Sharp also usefully 'unpacks' the White Man's historical legal and cultural notions of the sea with their less-than-firm foundations. The need now is for a coordinated strategy among the Tropical coast peoples to negotiate an environmental protection regime, resource rights, and support for community-based sea livelihoods with senior governments. (*Saltwater People* will be reviewed in *Northern Review* 25.)

In the Torres Strait itself progress towards greater regional political autonomy is being made. The latest proposal, *A Torres Strait Territory Government*, results from extensive consultations and appears as *TSRA News*, No. 40, October 2001, online www.tsra.gov.au/4001.pdf. Registering of land title and work on the regional sea claim are now proceeding. Adjacent Cape York, meanwhile, is the scene of a concerted practical and polemical project in which the Beattie Queensland government and Aboriginal leader Noel Pearson are attempting to break the cycle of violence and disadvantage through pragmatic government-local 'partnerships'. Following the stunning and much ignored 1999 report of the Queensland-wide Aboriginal women's task force chaired by Professor Boni Robertson (www.qldwoman.qld.gov.au/publications/main.html), the distinguished white judge Tony Fitzgerald went to Cape York with a team and produced a regional Domesday Book of suffering in 2001, www.premiers.qld.gov.au/about/community/capeyorkreport.htm. Nobody should be in any doubt about the state of Queensland's indigenous peoples.

In a new book, *White Out: How politics is killing black Australia* (2002), a social affairs journalist with *The Australian*, Rosemary Neill, recapitulates recent debates as part of her mission to address desperate socio-economic ills. Her chapter 'The Stolen Generation' is especially useful to those who have missed the live debate. The book also demonstrates the vacuity or futility of current Right policy critiques. However, writing about the NT in her final chapter, she runs into the biggest problem of the 'practical reconciliation' position. That is, the basic terms of co-existence between black and non-indigenous newcomers have never been established politically, morally, or legally; until election of a new government in 2001 the northern white authorities have made no serious attempt to accept Aboriginal peoples or people as equals or to address their needs, grievances, aspirations, or cultural preferences; indeed, the CLP government spent much of its time blocking

initiatives and rejecting proposals from the indigenous community for self-help or accommodation; and a few towns of highly transient whites on the Stuart Highway are hardly morally or otherwise qualified to define or design the present or future for the patchwork quilt of regional Aboriginal peoples who make up most of the NT. Two entirely different sorts of society and tradition are juxtaposed, the one old and severely damaged by recent events, and the other raw, fresh, provisional, and far from established. Attempts made in the name of the latter, the European political tradition, to assimilate the Aboriginal, have brought only misery and failure to date. The same holds true of the rest of northern, central, and western Australia, of course. Indigenous family and community dysfunction cannot and will not be solved until prior issues of relevant and legitimate political structures have begun to be addressed.

The new Labor NT government is interested in constitutional reform issues that until now were merely a sort of formal shoe-horn of some NT whites seeking a 1901 model of statehood in which Aborigines and their lands would have no recognition or protection. While it is unlikely that Chief Minister Martin will see constitutional reform as an urgent priority, serious work needs to begin on a 'Reconciliation constitution' for the NT. It will be important for Aboriginal organisations and their advocates, politicians, and experts to frame concepts and propose serious options for discussion. It will also be a good time for indigenous organisations, governing entities, and individuals in Aboriginal Northern Australia and in Northern Canada, Alaska, Greenland, and Sápmi to develop contacts and exchanges.

About the Author

Peter Jull, Adjunct Associate Professor, School of Political Science and International Studies, University of Queensland, Brisbane 4072, Australia.

Endnote

1. The red tunic mess talk of the 'garrison mentality', as Northrop Frye called it, is actually pretty boring compared with the real social, indigenous-settler, women's and other histories which make up a country, as many of us have found in Canada in recent decades, and as many Australian historians have been trying to show, too.

Note to Contributors

The Northern Review is a multidisciplinary journal devoted to the promotion of discussion about human experience and thought about the North. For