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Can Australia Survive the 21st Century?

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The Wilfred Brookes Memorial Lecture

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Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Distinguished guests etc,

It is a privilege to have been asked to give the first Brookes Oration.

Wilfred Brookes was born in 1906. He was the eldest child of Herbert Brookes and Ivy Deakin, the eldest daughter of Alfred Deakin. Alfred Deakin was, of course, one of the three of four key political leaders of the campaign which led to the drafting of the constitution; the successful referenda at which the constitution was endorsed by each of the six Australian colonies; and the acceptance, with minor amendments, by the Imperial Parliament at Westminster of that constitution. When I say the Imperial Parliament, it was of course the Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, whose consent was necessary.

After federation Deakin became prime minister on three occasions, but whether or not he was in office his influence was dominant, and Paul Kelly has described the policies which Deakin espoused as the Deakin settlement; a settlement which held sway in Australian political life until the 1960s.

Deakin still remains a highly controversial political figure. The political tradition in which he was nurtured, and to which he contributed in such an extraordinary way, was a radical tradition, and it was regarded by his contemporaries from the other colonies as being unique to Victoria.

Wilfred's father, Herbert Brookes, was a very close confidant of Deakin's. Herbert Brookes bought the adjoining house to the Deakin home in Walsh Street, Sth. Yarra, and Wilfred and his brother Alfred were deeply immersed in the political world which Deakin bequeathed to Victoria in particular, and to Australia generally.

Wilfred's grandfather, William Brookes, arrived in Victoria in 1852 at the age of 18, and went to Bendigo where, after many adventures, he invested everything he had in a venture called the Golden Fleece prospect. His partners pulled out as expenditures mounted, but William Brookes persevered, and after extensive drilling he struck a rich lode of gold which netted him 30,000 pounds, a huge sum in those days.

The Brookes family connection with mining continued for the next two generations. Wilfred became a director of many of the boards which were responsible for the companies which rented office space in Collins House, the nerve centre of Australian mining. It was on a number of these boards that I met Wilfred. He was more than 30 years older than me, but he treated me with more respect than I deserved. One thing in my favour was that my father and Wilfred were four years apart and closely involved in Western Mining, and our families were connected through the social life of the region around Millicent Ave and St Georges Rd Toorak.

Collins House had a distinctive culture. It was very Australian, perhaps even aggressively Australian in its outlook. Although London was very important to the Australian mining industry as a source of capital, and many of the Collins House companies had London offices, the Australians did not take English condescension at all well.

Wilfred was very representative of that Collins House culture, and much of his business life was taken up with the development of projects which sought to build on Australian technology and Australian resources in order to enhance the reputation of Australian industry throughout the world.

Wilfred had a very distinguished war record. He had learnt to fly at Point Cook in the twenties and when war broke out he enlisted in the RAAF, serving in Singapore and New Guinea as well as in Australia. He distinguished himself in his command of the 22nd and 24th Squadrons and was awarded the DSO for leadership in 1945.

Given Wilfred Brookes' contribution to Australia, and his lifelong concern for its future, it seemed to me most appropriate to use this inaugural lecture to raise the question of Australia's survival during the next century.

In asking this question I'm using the word "Australia" to describe a political community which enjoys the sovereignty which is the essence of the nation-state. In our case that sovereignty is characterised in our internal affairs by the rule of law, democratic political institutions, freedom of speech, security of property rights, and traditions of behaviour in both public and private life which support these things. In our external affairs our sovereignty has been characterised by a willingness to defend not only our security but the values upon which Australian civilisation is based. We hope that the Australia of 2106 will be very similar in these qualities to the Australia we know and cherish today. These qualities were very well established in the Australia of 1906, the year Wilfred Brookes was born.

From the 1850s onwards Australians developed a political consciousness as a community that was distinguished from Britain, where most Australians of that time had been born, and the issue of Australia's long term security was central to that growing sense of distinction. Henry Parkes' speech at Tenterfield, NSW, in Oct 1889, which initiated the long process of negotiating the form of the federal constitution, was a speech which was focussed on defence issues. Each separate colony had its own relationship with the Colonial Office and with the Admiralty and the letter from Lord Carnarvon to Victorian Treasurer George Verdon of Nov 15, 1866, concerning HMVS Cerberus, contains the following prescient paragraph.

> It is clearly understood that this ship is maintained for the protection of the important British as well as Colonial interests that require naval defence in the waters of the colony. She will, therefore, in time of war, be under the command of the Senior Naval Officer on the station, who, in the event of any serious emergency, will not be precluded from withdrawing her for a time from the immediate waters of the colony, in case the general safety should, in his judgement, make such a temporary withdrawal absolutely necessary. It is of course understood that such an emergency should be a serious one, and that due regard should be had to the wishes of the Colony.

So Australians were then well aware that they were located half way around the globe from the mother country, and that they were wholly reliant on the Royal Navy for their defence. Each colony contributed to the cost of the Royal Navy and when federation came in 1901 those

contributions were amalgamated into one payment from the new Federal Government.

Kim Beazley summarised this strategic situation extremely well in his 2005 Anzac Day speech to the Lowy Institute. Australians as a people thought carefully about their security in the decades before 1914. As the strategic challenge from Germany grew from the 1880s, they recognised that Britain would be less and less able to continue to guarantee Australia's security.

> "And they realised that as Britain started looking for allies in Europe and Asia, its interests would sometimes diverge from Australia's. We started to see ourselves, not as a mere strategic appendage of empire, but as an active partner in imperial security. As such we had our own unique interests and perspectives, and our own responsibilities.
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> "We cannot understand the decisions of 1914, and we cannot understand Gallipoli, if we do not understand that Australia had compelling, direct and distinctively Australian strategic reasons to play its part in helping to ensure that British power was not eclipsed. We needed British power to help defend us from what we saw - rather presciently as it turned out - as direct threats closer to home."

That comment on Australia's strategic position at the time of federation can be repeated almost word for word today, with the obvious substitution of the United States for Britain.

But returning to the early years of federation, in May 1905, a naval battle took place in the North West Pacific which had a huge impact on Australian thinking about its strategic position. Russia and Japan had been at war since Feb 1904 over the future of Manchuria. The Russians sent their Baltic Fleet all the way to Vladivostok to reinforce their position but Admiral Togo intercepted the fleet on May 26, 1905 and the next day his fleet crossed in front of the Russian fleet and the Battle of Tsushima had begun. The battle was a massacre for the Russians. After the loss of the flagship the Russian fleet seemed to fall to pieces. Of the 45 ships in the Russian fleet, only two destroyers and the light cruiser Almaz reached the Russian port of Vladivostok. Six other smaller ships reached neutral ports where they were interned. The rest of the fleet was either sunk, beached, or surrendered to the Japanese. The Japanese only lost three torpedo boats. Japanese casualties were approximately 600 compared to the approximate 6000 Russians killed.

The victor of Tsushima victoriously, and deliberately, returned to Tokyo on the anniversary of the British victory at Trafalgar. Admiral Togo's Nelsonian signal at the outset of the battle was remembered, and flown again from the flagship Akagi on 7 December 1941: "The rise and fall of the Empire depends upon this battle. Every man is expected to do his utmost".

In 1905 Alfred Deakin became Prime Minister again and he began the difficult process of persuading his own colleagues, but more significantly the Admiralty in London, of the need to establish the Royal Australian Navy. There is no doubt that the consequences of the Battle of Tsushima played an important role in helping Deakin to achieve the result he wanted, although the legislation was not passed till after he fell from office in 1908.

Looking out at the world today from our vantage point here in Australia there are many similarities between our situation and Alfred Deakin's situation. Australian then relied upon the Royal Navy for its security. Although today we are spending $17.5 billions or 1.9% of GDP per annum on our defence forces, we rely upon the United States for our strategic security. Without that US role and that US expenditure all we can say is that the world would be a very different and much less secure

place.

Australia is a small nation occupying a continent, much of which is, admittedly, desert or semi-desert, but which is capable of sustaining a population many times greater than the 20 millions who now live here. That is a fact that is well known around the world, and I will not take up time tonight in demonstrating the point. At the same time we are within a few hours' flight time of the most populous nations in the world, which is another very well known fact.

Australia is a very prosperous nation. Australians enjoy a standard of living which is comparable to that of the United States and most Australians understand that fact and appreciate it.

But these observations do not provide any guidance on what we should do today, as a political community, to improve the prospects of our national survival over the next century. The only method we have of trying to discover such principles is to look at the history of those nation-states over the last few centuries which have survived, and contrast them with those nation-states which have vanished or now seem under serious threat.

There has in recent decades been an outpouring of research into questions which bear upon this matter. Why, for example, did the Industrial Revolution take place in the British Isles? Why did the city states of Northern Italy become the seed-beds of modern capitalism? Why did technology advance throughout Europe from the tenth century on, but nowhere else? Why is the United States today the world's preeminent economic and technological power?

There is now a very large literature devoted to these questions and a recent book which summarises that literature and which argues that it was Christianity which provided the intellectual framework which enabled these developments, helps us advance a theory of national survival. The book is "The Triumph of Reason" by Rodney Stark. Stark is a religious historian who has used the results of a great deal of economic historical research to defend his general position on the growth of Western Civilisation. From our particular point of view here in Australia, his observations on the rise and fall of the states and empires of the last millennium are of great interest.

Stark emphasises the central importance of the four great city-states of Northern Italy which brought capitalism to Europe. They were Venice, Florence, Genoa, and Milan. Stark says that "the proximate cause of Italian capitalism was freedom from the rapacious rulers who repressed and consumed economic progress in most of the world, including most of Europe." How these four cities acquired that freedom is too long a story for this lecture but the story of Venice which began as an offshore village of seafarers situated on a marshy maze of dozens of islands, is relatively well known.

Venice became a republic of refugees, including men of wealth who moved their residence to the lagoons taking with them their dependents and as much as they could of their property. There, shielded by remarkable natural barriers and with unimpeded access to the sea, the growing city was able to forestall all Lombard attempts to subordinate it.

Venice became immensely rich through trade and manufactures and maintained its independence until 1797 when Napoleon conquered the city.

These city states became wealthy because they maintained their independence, respected private property, sustained the trade and commerce on which their prosperity depended, and developed the

institutions of capitalism, notably the banks, which enabled trade to take place throughout Europe. The Medicis, for example, were a banking family whose wealth was derived entirely from commercial activity.

The lesson which we can learn from these city-states is that great wealth enabled them to successfully resist the attempts by the predatory principalities which surrounded those cities to conquer them. The political institutions which they developed were based on the wealth creating industries of their cities. They were small, self-governing, city-states, with a very clear understanding of the principles of prosperity: security of private property and freedom in trade and commerce. Politics and trade and commerce were intertwined so closely that conflict between them was almost unthinkable.

The lesson we can learn from the history of these city-states is the importance of being rich. Den Xiao Peng told the Chinese "To be rich is glorious". In our strategic situation we should paraphrase that injunction "To be rich is essential". Poor nations are always dependent upon others for their security.

The word "rich" has negative connotations for some people. Euphemisms such as"prosperous", are often preferred. Recently, political discourse has discovered the word "aspirational". Overall the word "rich" has had a bad press.

I would like to see the word "rich" recover its respectability. Margaret Thatcher once gave a sermon on the parable of the Good Samaritan in which she emphasised that the hero of the story was a businessman who was rich enough to pay for the hotel costs of the traveller (rescued by the Good Samaritan) who had been beaten and left for dead. Further, the Good Samaritan's credit rating was well established in that

> "on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, "Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee".

So the good Samaritan was, at the same time, the rich Samaritan.
"To be rich is glorious" quoting Den Xiao Peng again; and the Chinese people have taken his advice to heart, with dramatic consequences not only for China but for the world.

It would be a very positive step for Australia's future if our political leaders could use the word "rich" in a similar way.

It is important to realise that the riches, or the wealth, that we speak of, is private wealth. Not wealth embodied in tax revenues and government expenditures on monuments of one kind or another, but wealth in private hands. It is this wealth which sustains what we call civil society; and which in the US is manifest, for example, in hundreds of private universities and in a tradition of philanthropic activity which is central to American life. It is private wealth which sustains economic enterprise, fosters innovation, promotes diversity in science and the arts, keeps our churches going, and enables unfashionable opinions to survive against the scorn and derision of our nearly monocultural media.

All Australian governments are, in a general way, committed to economic growth, and when it happens, they are happy to talk about it. But as the current debate on tax reform demonstrates so clearly, other ambitions often get in the way. No one says, in this debate, that we want a tax regime which will enable Australians to become rich and which will encourage energetic and ambitious people to come to Australia to seek their opportunity. We are not in the position where being half

way up or down the OECD ladder is OK. We need a tax regime which is famous throughout the world for its support of wealth creating activity. We should not forget that it was the gold rushes of the 1850s which peopled this continent, and the people who came here came because they had the opportunity to become rich. And having come here, they stayed to create a nation. The Brookes family is an outstanding example of this history.

I have used the current tax debate to make the point that the connections between so many political and policy decisions, and our capacity to grow in population and wealth during the next century, are never made.

One of the important factors in the growth or decline of the nations of Western Europe following the spread of capitalism in Northern Italy, then in the wool towns of Flanders and Holland, and then to England, was the speed with which skilled workers in these cities could relocate to more favourable environments if circumstances turned against them. The English were always looking for opportunities to entice skilled artisans to England and in the 17th century Venice lost many of its master craftsmen in the glass industry who went to England where they helped to make England the dominant force in the European glass industry. England gained greatly from Huguenot refugees from France and from Flemish and Dutch refugees who fled from the horrors of the Spanish attempts to re-impose Catholicism on the increasingly protestant Low countries.

Australian civilisation is an off-shoot of the confident and outward looking civilisation of 19th century Britain. We share with the other countries of the Anglosphere the inheritance of the common-law, democratic political institutions, and the freedoms which were prescribed in the Magna Carta. It is this inheritance which makes Australia a nation which is envied by so many people in other parts of the world. And our immigration policy must be coherent with sustaining our civilisation and our culture.
Any discussion about immigration must canvas those issues which arise from Australian citizenship, and the value which we should attach to Australian citizenship. I am convinced that as a nation we do not value Australian citizenship as highly as we ought. One of the reasons for this serious undervaluation is that our intellectual elites, or most of them, are competing with one another to write down Australia as morally deficient, to the point where our legitimacy as a nation is under constant attack.

Paul Johnson will be familiar to all of you as an historian of extraordinary erudition, with more than 40 major books to his credit. His comment about Australia, written at the time of the Bicentennial, is a good antidote to this post-modernist humbug.:

> "The development of Australia rates as one of mankind's greatest achievements. Australians have created one of the most advanced and prosperous societies on earth. It is an achievement with few parallels in the history of human adventure."

A successful political community is made up of people who share a common history; who share key values; and who see themselves as differentiated from the rest of the world by their membership of that community. But political identity and personal identity are not two separate and distinct things. When we think of ourselves we identify ourselves as members of a family. We often have old photos of our parents and grandparents hanging on our walls. If members of the family have served in the defence forces, and particularly if they were killed on active service, their photos will be on display. So family identity and national identity are often integrated in this way. The resurgence of Anzac Day in recent years is a manifestation of this. So citizenship is very important to one's sense

of a secure identity.

Australian citizenship is one of the most valuable things any person in the world can have; yet we treat it as something of little consequence. Dual citizenship, for example, is regarded as a matter of no consequence. But because citizenship is one of the most important elements in personal identity, a person who is a citizen of two countries has at the least the beginning of a bipolar disorder. And if the other country is, in cultural terms, many miles away from Australia, then the bipolarity will become increasingly acute.

I am convinced that if we took Australian citizenship seriously, we would not tolerate this bipolarity. If you are an Australian, then that should be the end of the matter. If your loyalties are to another country, and Australian citizenship is merely a convenience, then you should hand in your Australian passport and feel content that your loyalties and your passport are in accord, one with the other.

I was astonished that during the recent Italian elections, approximately 1/4 million Australians voted for Australian based candidates, one of whom will now sit in the Italian House of Deputies. This is truly bizarre. If this arrangement were to apply to elections around the world how many national parliaments could Australians vote for. Once again, the rule should be Australian citizens vote in Australian elections, and not in other country's elections.

The issue of citizenship has a direct bearing on our future survival. If a large number of Australian citizens have dual citizenship then their commitment to our future sovereignty and independence will always be qualified. And that is something that we in our strategic position cannot afford.

When thinking about national survival most people will agree, I think, that wealth matters, that population matters, that social and political coherence matters, and that the symbols of nationhood and citizenship matter.

But the thing which generates the wealth, the population, the political coherence, is the culture. Indeed, if we look at the historical record of successful nations we find that culture matters most.

Universities are key institutions in the maintenance, transmission, and development of the culture on which these other things depend. Tonight's lecture is a university occasion and a recent comment by the Prime Minister has encouraged me to enter into what the Americans call the "culture wars".

Last Thursday (20.04.06) Mr Howard criticized the teaching of English in secondary schools. He was quoted in The Australian:(21.04.06)

> "I share the views of many people about the so-called postmodernism ... I just wish that independent education authorities didn't succumb on occasions to the political correctness it appears to succumb to."

The Australian followed his comment with an excellent article by Giles Auty, a former art critic. Auty summarised the post-modernist project in these words

> "Our children may not be able to read, spell, punctuate, add or subtract or show even the slightest grasp of the pleasures and purposes of significant literature but what they have been forced to recognise are the power structures concealed in educated discourse. Access to the mysteries of such recognition will make them the true world citizens of the future.".

Over two years ago, in January 2004, the Prime Minister generated a huge fuss, when he made the comment that the steady drift in enrollments from government schools to nongovernment schools was because parents were concerned that state schools were too politically correct. He developed his argument by suggesting that government schools had a values problem, and parents were moving their children to non-government schools where they believed the values which were important to them were supported.

That casual remark generated a huge row and gave us some very useful insights into the state of mind of the people who wield great authority in our schools. For example, Chris Bonnor, Head of the NSW Secondary Principals' Council, (not an insignificant post) told us to ignore Howard, who was ``really very offensive''.`No parent has expressed concerns about political correctness to me in my 30 years of teaching,'' he added, before slinging off at the ``Prime Minister's own conservative world view''. Mr Bonnor is also on the record in attacking ``heavily masculinised contact sports'' because they ``serve to define dominant masculinity, connecting manhood with violence and competitiveness and often marginalising girls and women''?

Another example of such thinking came from Pat Byrne, President of the Australian Education Union, who told her 160,000 members in June 2004: ``We have to start with being on the progressive side of politics.'' She urged them to fight the creeping conservatism of the Howard Government.
"We are still so affronted, so assaulted by the conservatives that we are only thinking about immediate defence,'' she complained.
And she said Right-wingers ``rail against us with such vitriol because we have succeeded in influencing curriculum development in schools, education departments and universities''.

The Prime Minister, in his comment a few days ago, was focussed on the school curriculum and English in particular. But as every observer of the culture wars understands, the struggle for control of the school curriculum has been going on for decades in the universities.

Like the Prime Minister I have found it difficult to understand just what post-modernism actually is. As far as I can determine it seems to mean that your truth is as good as my truth or anyone else's truth. I have found some very funny examples trying to explain this. For example, Francis Wheen, in his book "How Mumbo-Jumbo Conquered the World" tells us:

> Although much post-modernism may be nonsense, it is nonsense with a purpose: by using quasi-scientific terminology the po-mo theologians intended to explode the 'objectivity' of science itself. The fact they knew nothing about mathematics, physics or chemistry was no obstacle. Luce Irigaray, a high priestess of the movement, denounced Einstein's E=mc2 as a 'sexed equation' since it privileges the speed of light over other [less masculine] speeds that are vitally necessary to us. In similar vein she protested at the privileging of solid over fluid mechanics, and indeed the inability of science to deal with turbulent flow at all' attributing this bias to the association of fluidity with femininity.

What has all this got to do with Australia's prospects of survival over the next century? The answer is that if the next generation is taught to believe truth is nothing more than the outward manifestation of a power relationship, then a very important link between the generations will be

broken. The life of a nation is lived within the minds of its citizens and if the continuity of the history and the culture of the society is torn, then that society is weakened. Giles Auty, writing of post-modernists in February last, commented:

> "My belief is that, like habitual liars, deliberate educational brain-washers are quick to see their own habits mirrored in the actions of others. According to such people and their international mentors no one ever acted innocently or dispassionately even when making every effort to do so. By the same token, no one conducting historical or other research ever performed this in a spirit of objectivity. Indeed this precise argument is used regularly nowadays as a justification for the deliberate fabrication of history."
> (The Australian 03.02.06)

What is extraordinary to the outsider is the speed with which post-modernism swept through the universities of the English-speaking world. Francis Wheen writes of the career of Colin MacCabe, who was denied a lectureship at Cambridge University in January 1981 precisely because he had become "the carrier of a dangerous foreign germ [post-modernism] which would infect the whole corpus of English teaching unless he were swiftly quarantined." (p 80) Immediately after this career setback a full blown professorship was created for him at Strathclyde University; three years later he was appointed head of production at the British Film Institute; and, for good measure, professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh.

By the end of the 1980s the post-modernists had achieved immense power. One sympathiser (cited by Francis Wheen) admitting that 'deconstruction, which began as a heresy, soon turned into a dogma, and hardened into a theology, sustained by a network of evangelists and high priests and inquisitors.'

Paddy McGuinness was appointed by Minister Brendan Nelson to the Quality and Scrutiny Committee of the Australian Research Council. He summarised his experience on that body in his editorial in Quadrant of March 2006 and his conclusions are as follows

> **The reality is that the humanities are being, and largely have been, destroyed in the name of the meaningless subject of "cultural studies" and corrupted by "postmodernism", which has become a substitute for thought and scholarship.** Little of value is produced by the adherents or fellow travellers of this school, who are more concerned with political fashion amongst the lumpen intelligentsia than any analysis. Much of what they produce is propaganda or worse. **Absurd subjects like "gender studies" or, even worse, "queer studies" are solemnly treated as worthy of respect, and projects of research are proposed which add precisely nothing to the sum of human knowledge.**
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> **The ARC, advised by experts who are drawn from such fields (or from the modern school of history-as-propaganda) allocates money to ridiculous projects on the advice of people who are products of the same belief system or** secretly nurse their residual loyalty to Stalinism or Maoism, many of them to be found in the phony areas of the social sciences, like most sociology, much anthropology, and the tendentious mish-mash called political economy. The scientists are incapable of understanding just what rubbish is proposed for funding (with few exceptions, as in America with Alan Sokal and his famous hoax). The collegiality to which they still give lip service prevents their pointing to the emperor's nakedness.
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> Managerialism has had the ill-effect of producing a purely utilitarian and fund-raising

orientation of much university research. It has, together with the incessant demands made by the Muscovites on the Molonglo, led to the proliferation of university bureaucrats whose salaries and often luxurious requirements of travel and other perks are paid for out of funds intended for teaching and research. It has also led to inferior intellects of the administrators insisting on more and more conformism and obedience on the part of academics, and direct attempts (often successful) to muzzle knowledgeable internal critics of their management and policies. . . .

But the administrators are not the sole villains of the piece. They are able to get away with so much because the academics who babble most about free enquiry are themselves allowing, or participating in, the debasement of intellectual and academic standards—and such a climate of intolerance and retribution for unorthodoxy has been created that independent thinkers are often too timid to speak out, not just in the mass media but at all. The ARC structure only underpins all this. **Probably there would be little loss to society and to genuine intellectual enquiry if the funding of the non-sciences through the ARC (or through any similar body) were simply abolished.**

This story of post-modernism has only reached the attention of the wider community because the Prime Minister felt strongly enough to comment publicly about it. He deserves our thanks for doing so. An inquiry into post-modernism and its influence on the integrity of the universities and the schools which are influenced by them is long overdue.

One of the most disgraceful examples within Australia, of incapacity by a university to uphold proper standards of intellectual integrity and civilised conduct was the aftermath of the attack on Geoffrey Blainey by his fellow historians at the University of Melbourne. The story is well known. In 1984 Geoffrey Blainey gave an address to the Rotary Club at Warrnambool in which he discussed issues concerning immigration and assimilation of immigrants into Australian life. His remarks were picked up by the metropolitan press and soon after the Melbourne Age published a letter signed by 24 academic historians from Melbourne University condemning him. This letter is quite remarkable both for its condescension, and as an early example of blatant political correctness.*

That letter was the opening shot in a long drawn out campaign of denigration and harassment which lasted for some time. Eventually Geoffrey Blainey decided the only sensible thing for him to do was to resign his chair at the University of Melbourne.

Universities are critical institutions in the maintenance and transmission of the culture which sustains the nation..

If post-modernism still reigns unchallenged within our universities; if the history wars are conducted by outsiders versus insiders; then we all have a problem. In raising these matters with people who are both knowledgeable and concerned about them I am struck by the fact that no one seems to have any idea of what to do about it.

There seems to be unanimity of opinion about the takeover of the universities, by Canberra, under Sir Robert Menzies, and the ever increasing centralisation which followed. It is now seen as a huge mistake. The contrast between Australia and the United States is stark. There are a very large number of privately established universities and colleges. A number of states have established major universities, notably the University of California with its various campuses. When he was Governor of California, Ronald Reagan was not fazed about taking on the Council of Regents. There is great diversity and competition between these institutions for students, for endowments, for quality staff, is intense. In the US the culture wars are fought with great vigour and although the degree to which

political correctness in imposed in some American universities is astonishing, the counter attack is ferocious and unforgiving. That fact bodes well for the future of America.

But in Australia we are not well placed and given the critical role of the universities in the maintenance and refurbishment of our culture we need to think seriously about the way forward.

Having posed the question - Will Australia survive for another century? - a question which we cannot answer -we are inexorably drawn to the centrality of the culture as the determinant of survival. We have focussed on the culture wars. Given the occasion this has been appropriate. This should not detract from the validity of Paul Johnson's observation about Australia,

> "one of the most advanced and prosperous societies on earth. It is an achievement with few parallels in the history of human adventure."

The celebration of Anzac Day yesterday, the distinction with which our armed forces serve the nation, the vigour and pride with which we engage in our sporting life, the international competitiveness of our major industries, the high quality of our music and art, our scientific achievements, are manifestations of our resilience, our energy, and our capacity to compete. So the foundations on which these things have been built are still secure. But, we must always be watchful for the integrity of those foundations.

This lecture is in honour of Wilfred Brookes. His generation, and his parents' generation, had a confidence in themselves and their country which we should seek to emulate. The federation movement was a movement based on confidence and hope for the future.

When I observe my children's generation and those who are coming immediately after them I am struck by their confidence and their optimism. I have referred to some real challenges which have to be taken up, particularly within the education establishment.

Reflecting on the Brookes family, it is noteworthy that over three generations they have been involved in the public issues of the day, the establishment of great industries, and the defence of the nation. It is fitting that we should use this occasion to raise these issues. Wilfred and his family would approve.

I wish to thank Roger Brookes for enabling this annual oration to commemorate his father and family. Their contribution to Australia has been immense.
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The Age 19 May 1984.

As historians at the University of Melbourne we wish to dissociate ourselves entirely from the widely-publicised attacks with Professor Geoffrey Blainey, an eminent member of our profession, and a professor in our department, has recently made on the Government's immigration policy in regard to Asians. Professor Blainey speaks and writes on this issue as an individual and not as a representative of historians at this university.

We are particularly aware of the dangers of trying to channel debate on immigration policy into consideration of the suitability of certain ethnic and national groups as immigrants. We are also aware, from many historical precedents, that raising such an issue in racial terms (however much it is couched in the language of reason) becomes an invitation to less responsible groups to incite feelings of racial hatred. Framing debate in such racial terms can become a potent weapon to rouse public fears and prejudices and to direct hostility at certain groups in our society.

We do not wish to limit debate and discussion by Professor Blainey or anyone else on such issues of public concern. But to raise discussion of immigration in terms of race will inevitably draw in and encourage racist groups to come forward and claim legitimacy from what has been said.

Signed by Ian Robertson [renaissance historian, chairman of the department] and 23 others.