



... Continued from page 11

To be forced to identify with those lecherous yobbos and declare some similarity with them is to be forced to recognise and state - in public - some of the really ugly things about being an Australian male.

White Australians, Langton says, relate not to real Aboriginal people, but to 'stories told by former colonists'. Most whites 'know' about Aboriginal people from film, radio and television; white-created Aboriginal 'icons' like Goolagong, Bonner, Doug Nicholls, even Charles Perkins are 'figures of the imagination generated by Australian image producers....safe, distant distortions of an actual world of people who will not bring down the neighbourhood real estate values'.

Langton points out that all representations are derived from, and act against, historical representations and historical symbols of 'Aboriginality'. But for an Aboriginal person, it is European culture which is *different*. Moreover, Aboriginal people have 'no pyramid hierarchy of social and technological evolution, no 'Stone Age', 'Iron Age' etc.'

Many readers will find the section on the making and use of videos among remote communities instructive - for example, the ways in which, after bad experiences in the past, people now exercise control over the making of films about them or on their land; and Langton's case study of the Ned Lander/Rachel Perkins production *Jardiwarnpa*, about the Warlpiri fire ceremonies. Langton is generous in acknowledging the contribution of the late Eric Michaels, a pioneer in working with and writing about media technologies and remote communities.

Langton's fresh, iconoclastic approach and her unique qualifications make this essay an equally significant contribution to the literature. □

Marcia Langton

Well, I heard it on the radio and saw it on the television ...

**Australian Film Commission
93pp, \$17.95 (incl. postage)**

Odd Appointment

It has come to CU's attention that a recent addition to the membership of the Australian Press Council, the print media's self-regulatory body, is Sir John Mason, a retired British High Commissioner to Australia.

While it is gratifying that Sir John liked Australia enough to retire here, readers with a memory for recent past events may recall that it was the same Sir John, when High Commissioner, who clashed with Australia's Royal Commission into British Atomic Tests (commonly known 'Maralinga Inquiry'). The point at issue was whether the British Government should be represented at the inquiry, which proved a major watershed in British-Australian relations.

Sir John advised against such representation, even though Britain's role in using Australia as a test ground for its lethal weapons was central to the inquiry. Luckily, his successor was more perceptive, and as a result the UK Government was represented.

This background makes Sir John a curious choice, to say the least, to represent the viewpoint of the Australian public on the Press Council. He was appointed late last year as a public member 'alternate' which means that he fills in when other members are unable to attend, normally attending three or four meetings a year.

The Press Council, which comprises representatives of the public, journalists (though not the journalists' union) and the publishers is an institution that *CU* has found necessary to criticise on occasion (most recently in issue 83, November 1992).

One fundamental problem is the perception - at least among those of the public who are aware of the Council's existence - that its membership favours older, middle class, professional people, with possible overtones of inherent conservatism.

The Council advertises for applications from members of the public to join its ranks. Sometimes it advertises nationally, sometimes in a specific area

- for example, in North Queensland - when it wants to achieve a regional balance. This last round of ads attracted a total of 64 replies, from people whom Executive Secretary Jennifer Treleaven described as coming from very diverse backgrounds, including university students and retired judges, and ranging in age from 22 to 70.

These applications are referred to a sub-committee, which draws up a short list and makes recommendations. The final say on appointment or reappointment (or non-appointment, as the case may be) lies with the Chairman, currently Professor David Flint. On this occasion, Professor Flint effectively exercised a veto by appointing Mason. *CU* understands that there was some disquiet among other members as a result. Appointed at the same time as Sir John as a public alternate was Natascha McNamara, who has a background in Aboriginal training and cultural development.

The constitution of the Press Council allows the chairman considerable power in this and other areas, and Professor Flint sometimes seems to see this as a licence to act unilaterally on behalf of the Council. For instance, last year he made an Australian Press Council submission to Britain's Calcutt inquiry. This came as something of a surprise to other members of the Council, some of whom saw the submission for the first time when it was printed in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.

On a more positive note, the Australian Press Council News Vol.5#2, May 1993, reprinted in full, as its lead story under the heading 'Accommodating Differences', the address given by Tiga Bayles, chairman of NIMAA, at the Brisbane conference on the media and indigenous Australians, reported elsewhere in this issue. □

