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'Tough Enough?': Constructions of Femininity in News Reporting of Jennie George, ACTU President 1995-2000.

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Abstract

'Tough Enough?': Constructions of Femininity in News Reporting of Jennie George, ACTU President 1995-2000.

The thesis examines how Australian print news media represent the emerging category of 'women as political actors' with reference to Jennie George (president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions 1995 to 2000) as a case study. It contributes to debates around the ways in which gender difference is constructed and circulated through media representations, paying particular attention to the often contradictory ways that feminists and feminism are reported in the news. It considers how representations of gender and racial difference are invoked in the construction of accounts of political crisis and how they might be read differently by diverse audiences—of men, women, ethnic, working and middle-class Australians. Given that news media adopt particular/preferred reading positions, the thesis asks how readers are positioned through these reports. In this way the thesis opens up an evaluation of the way particular accounts of political crisis are given authority whilst others are marginalised, discredited, suppressed or omitted. It analyses how techniques of representing gender, class, ethnicity and indigineity contribute to practices of inclusion and exclusion, by conferring or discrediting authority to particular participants within reports of political crises. It also investigates how news reporting constructs categories of self-other for reader identification as well as maintaining boundaries of inclusion-exclusion for parties represented, through use of editorial techniques (such as text and image placement) and symbolic practices (discursive strategies). Finally, the thesis considers how varied representations of femininity within reports of women as political actors may impact upon women's credibility as leaders and potential leaders of political parties and organisations.

Declaration of Originality

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by any other person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

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Introduction

Prologue

Date: 27 September 1995.
Venue: Wilson Hall, University of Melbourne.
Event: Australian Council of Trade Unions Biennial Congress Meeting.

An air of great anticipation filled the hall where a normally drab crowd of union delegates was unusually colourful with bright purple and green clothing and decorations predominating. Behind the official table on the stage sat a line of women familiar from other public contexts although incongruous at a trade union event. As Bill Kelty, ACTU secretary, pronounced the unopposed election of Jennie George as the ACTU's first woman president (elect) a large group of women leapt from their seats on the floor of the hall and made their way to the stage armed with purple, green and white balloons and streamers. As Jennie George made her acceptance speech the hall resounded with the cheers, clapping and foot-stomping of delegates. Jennie, flanked by her mother, Natasha Feodosiu, and Bill Kelty participated in a rendition of a song widely associated with the struggles of 1970s feminism, Helen Reddy's 'I am Woman'.

The women in the hall, nearly all now crowded onto the stage, were (visibly and audibly) ecstatic at this hugely symbolic election. Many of them had been activists not only for workers' but for women's rights within the union movement for decades. Witnessing the election of a woman president, and moreover a woman who had been a staunch supporter of strategies to improve union representation of women, was an historic event.[1] Later, as the television crews swarmed around George, many of the women delegates went off to a celebratory lunch unable to wait until the official dinner in the evening.

The television footage of the event that screened on the three Australian commercial news bulletins and on the public Australian Broadcasting Corporation that evening clearly showed the stage *full* of women and conveyed the impression of a collective celebration. It was highly unusual footage of women dominating the proceedings of a

[1] The author was amongst those present in the hall who joined the official guests on stage.

major institution, the ACTU, an organisation traditionally associated with masculine interests and culture. It was also a rare positive representation of feminism in the mainstream news media. The newspaper coverage the following morning, however, reported the events differently. When a paper did devote a separate report to George's election (as not all did) the photos showed her either alone, with her mother and Bill Kelty, or with the Australian Prime Minister, Paul Keating, who addressed Congress later that day. There are many possible explanations for this different reporting of the event. What was immediately apparent however, was how the visual symbolism changed from a collective feminist triumph to the more familiar individual one.

This was one of the events that stimulated the writing of this thesis.

Date: 19 August 1996, 2pm.
Venue: The lawns in front of Parliament House, Canberra.
Event: The Cavalcade to Canberra—ACTU and community rally of some 30, 000 people protesting against proposed changes to Industrial Relations legislation by the Liberal-National Party Coalition Government.

In August 1996, less than one year after her election, Jennie George's leadership was under intense pressure due to the actions of a small breakaway group of protesters at a large demonstration in the nation's capital against proposed changes to industrial relations legislation. The demonstration was planned as a large peaceful event to demonstrate a unified stance by community groups, churches, trade union and Aboriginal groups against the proposed changes and also cuts in the next day's budget directed at education, social welfare, and Aboriginal groups. About 30, 000 people, most from other states, assembled on the lawns in front of Parliament House in Canberra. A peaceful crowd listened to several hours of speeches and entertainment. At the same time, however, a small group of a few hundred unionists, students and Aborigines who, by some misdirection, had been prevented from joining their comrades on the lawns, ran towards Parliament House and pushed past the few police present in an attempt to force their way into the building itself to make their points. Some significant property damage and personal injuries, to both demonstrators and police, ensued. The event was reported as a 'national outrage' and a 'riot' and over the ensuing weeks Jennie George was held accountable by certain political opponents and media commentators. The promise of her

presidency was in tatters. The primary question asked by the media was would she be forced to resign, or would she survive but be seriously damaged by the attacks on her leadership style and authority?

George did survive and remained president until 8 March 2000, departing the position on International Women's Day. She is now an Australian Labor Party member of the Federal Parliament. Throughout her presidency there were many times in which she was the focus of media reports. She was never free from media scrutiny. Indeed, the coincidence of her gender and the timing of her election as the *first* woman ACTU president marked her as doubly exceptional. The fact that she was also the first president of non-English speaking background was less often remarked upon but remains another point of difference.

Jennie George is one of a growing, but still small, group of Australian women political actors. As such the study of the reporting of her presidency can offer many useful insights into the media representations of this new discursive subject—or a new subject position—'woman as political actor'. It can illuminate and open up for discussion the characteristics that are becoming associated with this new 'type' of public figure.

Another Story

In June 2002 Natasha Stott Despoja, the leader of the Australian Democrats, was attacked by critics within and outside the party for being too concerned with her own image, for being dictatorial in management style, and for being without 'substance'. She was the youngest-ever leader of an Australian political party and only the fifth woman to lead a political party in Federal parliament.[2] Natasha Stott Despoja resigned in mid-2002. The period of her leadership, from 6 April 2001 to 21 August 2002 and, indeed, the period prior to her challenge to previous leader Meg Lees, was marked by intense media scrutiny of her image, her attire, her appearance, her participation in media programs and magazine features (Muir 2001). Almost from the time Meg Lees was elected Party leader and Stott Despoja her deputy, the media coverage played on the

[2] The other women were Senators Janine Haines, Janet Powell, Cheryl Kernot and Meg Lees, all leaders of the Australian Democrats. Some might also include Pauline Hanson, who was elected as an independent member of the House of Representatives but founded, and became leader of the One Nation Party during her term. Hanson was the sole representative of One Nation in Federal Parliament until she lost her seat although the Party won seats in subsequent state elections.

competing types of femininity which they assigned to the two women: Lees as a 'frumpy' but practical politician, an image akin to the domestic femininity of the capable housewife; Stott Despoja as a narcissistic Generation X-er, an image of youth that suggested a concern with style over substance. This trend intensified during periods of conflict between the two women, such as over the Democrat's response to the Coalition Government's proposed introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in June 1999 and the eventual leadership challenge.[3] As Shelley Gare observed at the time, in the *Australian* newspaper:

> The differences led to a slew of headlines of the ilk of Suicide Blonde. It was like watching formula soap opera, and the dispute was now irrevocably seen as one between two *women*. Not two politicians.
> In 1999, women are still — mutely, obligingly, thoughtlessly or protestingly — [sic] being drafted into characterisations and plotlines that have been written for them since the bible was put together.
>
> (Gare, 1999, italics added)

Throughout her political career Stott Despoja has been criticised by opponents and media commentators for paying too much attention to her media image and for courting media attention. Peter Ellingsen's (2001) comments are a typical example. Writing in the *Age* newspaper, soon after her election as Democrat leader, he observes "[s]he tends her public image carefully, and will go on the attack when she senses what she regards as unfair criticism". Attentiveness to media image is a characteristic of all successful modern political leaders and a key requirement for victory. However, whilst men are rarely described as vain or controlling for managing their image, women political actors, such as Stott Despoja and Jennie George, are portrayed as vain or hyper-sensitive when they ring journalists to try to set the record straight or to object to particular representations. The media frames governing the reporting of women politicians and particularly the "tyranny of telegeneity" (Ross & Sreberny 2000: 88) often operate differently for men than for women. This occurs, in part, because the conventions of gendered oppositions associate particular emotional characteristics with women and rational characteristics with men. Stott Despoja's popularity and political success is, to a significant extent, due to her willingness to engage with popular media genres in an effort to address young people (the most cynical and disaffected group of voters) and

[3] See for example Catriona Matthewson's report 'Democrat tussle turns ugly', sub-headed 'Youth and beauty split vote', in the *Courier Mail* which was accompanied by a digitally manipulated photo of the two women with part of Lees' face altered to simulate a face-lift and image change (Matthewson 2001). Other reports to play on this opposition include 'Democrats face battle of the ages' Coorey (2001, *Mercury*); 'Pop star of politics versus leader of substance' (Clennell, 2001, *Sydney Morning Herald*).

women, who rely less on conventional forms of media for news.[4] However, her engagement with these genres and her attention to her media image is criticised, by reporters and opponents alike, in ways that deploy narcissism and vanity as (feminine) political weaknesses. In attacks mounted on Stott Despoja over the period immediately prior to her leadership challenge in April 2001, and again in the period leading up to her resignation as leader in July 2002, the focus is largely on the kind of *woman* she is (or appears to be): ambitious, vain, superficial, spoilt, trendy, petulant, and immature. Even the criticisms which purport to be about her leadership style are often organised around descriptors of femininity.[5]

The reporting of Natasha Stott Despoja's political career is clearly related to, although outside the parameters of, this thesis. Likewise, one might note the parallels between the reporting of Jennie George and other Australian women politicians such as Joan Kirner, Carmen Lawrence and Cheryl Kernot. For the purposes of this thesis however, it is important to note the variations and patterns in the conventions and framing of the reporting of George, especially when she was under attack from political opponents and media critics, and their similarities with the reporting of Stott Despoja. References to these other instances demonstrate clearly that the gendered reporting of Jennie George is not an unusual or isolated occurrence. It is a familiar pattern. Attacks on women politicians and political actors made by, through, and reported in the media, employ gendered representations, and particular (although often contradictory) figures of femininity as part of their arsenal. Gender becomes a weapon in political conflicts. Categories of femininity are always available to be mobilised in ways that characterise the woman politician as other, as deviant to the masculine norm (Ross & Sreberny 2000). The media is simultaneously: the site of many of these conflicts; a participant in them; the means by which these conflicts are publicised to the voting public; and the venue through which political actors are constructed and audience members are recruited as supporters for various ideological positions, or as combatants in political struggles.

[4] These include participation in fashion shoots for the women's magazines *Cleo* in 1998 and in television programs such as 'The Panel', 'Good News Week' and *Marie Claire's* television forum on Channel 10, 'What do women want'?

[5] See Atkins, 'If ratings were votes' (2002, *Courier Mail*); Ellingsen, 'Democrat Diva: Stott Despoja's designs on power' (2001, *Age*); Farr, 'Party's over for adored Natasha' (2002, *Daily Telegraph*); amongst others.

Women and/in the News

Once it was rare to see any media coverage of women other than in traditionally feminine roles. Now there is substantially greater coverage of women who, through their professional roles, make news and are newsworthy. In many instances they are (still) newsworthy *because* they are women—the first to make it into a particular field, to reach a particular level of power and authority, or because they are seen to perform in a unique way due to their gender.

With the increasing presence of women in public life in powerful and senior positions the presence of women in so-called 'hard' news stories is increasing. However, this coverage does not necessarily signal greater understanding of, or interest in, the range, complexity and specificities of experiences of actual women. Instead, it could signal that women in certain positions have news value that assists news organisations to reach certain key audience segments, and therefore increase their products' commercial worth. Stories about women or women's issues may be included in television news or newspapers at certain times to add 'balance' to the overall bulletin, or to add 'colour', humour or sex appeal. They are also intended to make the news more appealing to particular audience segments.[6]

The increasing adoption of tabloid reporting and presentational techniques, in part due to the search for new audiences, has also increased the focus on the private lives of public and political figures. In this context women politicians (and other prominent women leaders) make 'good copy'. They are still relatively unusual in Australia, and reporting on their experiences can invite the attention of women readers, a key market segment. This is especially the case in the highly competitive present climate when newspaper publishers are trying to attract new audiences, especially young people and women, to stem the decline in their circulation figures and the shift towards television and radio as the preferred sources of news (Pearson & Brand 2001; Schaffer 1998). However, although stories about women in public life might now have increasing news

[6] For example, stories about celebrities, diets or fashion are regularly included in commercial television news and current affairs shows, and newspapers for these reasons. The *Australian* newspaper's promotion of fashion stories to page three or five and its lavish quarterly fashion supplements is a strategy that is designed to appeal to female audiences and one that is made possible because it attracts particular advertisers in an effort to reach these audiences (The *Australian's* Fashion Editor Edwina McCann made this point in a forum on fashion journalism during the 'Making an Appearance' conference in Brisbane on 11 July 2003). In an example that illustrates this point well, Mary Vavrus discusses the construction of the 'soccer-mom' as both consumer and voter in the US media (Vavrus 2002).

value, editorial judgements are constantly made about which of the many possible subjects and stories are interesting, what angles of these possible stories will be most appealing to the audience, and how they should be framed. Inevitably, at the same time, decisions are made with regard to which aspects of stories are *not* interesting or saleable to a target audience. These decisions can exclude events, issues, perspectives or strategies that are of particular interest to certain groups of women.

These diverse representations lead to conflicting notions of the range and capacities of women political actors. At the same time, certain gendered frames are regularly applied to interpret women's experiences within existing conventions of news reporting. Certain familiar figures and myths of femininity recur in the representation of their actions and experiences. Across the various stories and reports within newspapers there are multiple and contested representations of acceptable femininity, and multiple modes of addressing the capacities and characteristics of women politicians as 'real' women in the material world. These reports of powerful, professional women exist in news media side by side with a diverse array of figures of femininity including a vast array of powerful fictional female characters within popular media (films, television dramas and soaps etc.) and celebrity gossip about female models, actors and pop stars. Representations of women as sex-symbols, accessories to men, pop princesses, victims, mothers, 'riot-girrls', 'femi-nazis' and man-haters work intertextually to inflect each other and impact upon the ways audiences make sense of the performance and experience of women political actors.

Focussing on Jennie George, this thesis studies the range of, and patterns within, news media representations of women who are political actors. It examines what news representations suggest about the capacities, skills and experiences of women and what effects they may have on audience beliefs. It focuses particularly on the ways in which femininity is signified in the print media reports. It considers the contexts in which traditional representations, or old myths, about women appear and the ways in which they are deployed to establish preferred meanings of complex events, or to privilege one side in a struggle for meaning. It investigates the circumstances in which, and *how*, women's achievements in the public sphere are celebrated. It also considers how the presence of conflicting myths and figures of femininity impact upon the available meanings of the actions, experiences, and performance of women political actors.

A second issue to be explored is how women political actors attempt to negotiate their need for media profile to get their message across as public figures (political actors) whilst at the same time balancing their gender identity and professionalism. Many women in these roles are well aware of the capacity of the media to develop a 'sexy' angle to a story, or to reduce women to simple stereotypes. Therefore, some women try to avoid media interviews and photo opportunities that set them up in too obviously stereotypic ways. However, quite 'straight' media interviews can still be framed in gender stereotypic ways through editorial devices such as the use of photos or illustrations, page layout, headlining and captioning, aspects of media practice over which an interviewee usually has no control. This thesis investigates how certain interviews are framed through such editorial devices and how these limit potential meanings of the report. The question of what specific strategies particular women apply in their engagements with the media remains one for future research.

Why Jennie George?

Jennie George was a left-wing former secretary and president of the New South Wales Teacher's Federation who was elected to the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) executive in 1983 as its first woman member, and then as vice-president of the ACTU in 1987. Throughout her presidency she identified herself as a feminist. In September 1995 she was elected president of the ACTU, the peak body of Australian Trade Unions and representative of over thirty-three percent of working Australians and their families (ACIRRT 1999). This was one of the most senior and influential positions occupied by a woman in Australia. It was of particular interest as the trade union movement had long been regarded as a bastion of male chauvinism with a deeply entrenched masculine culture and a high resistance to change. Women activists within the trade union movement, and feminist activists in particular, had been attempting since the late 1970s to increase awareness of the need for greater gender equity in union policies, practices and representation, and to support such change through a variety of measures, including training programs and policy changes. Jennie George, herself, had been one of these activists.

The reporting of Jennie George's term as ACTU president provides a rich case study for feminist media analysis for a variety of reasons. George is a publicly avowed feminist and identifies with the 'left-wing' of the (social-democrat) Australian Labor

Party (ALP), the 'Left' of the union movement and the 'broad left'.[7] Whilst it is unusual for an avowed feminist to be elected to a position of leadership within a masculine organisation in contemporary Australian society, it is equally unusual for someone who identifies with the Left to win such a position. Furthermore, her non-English-speaking background is another significant point of difference from the conventional Anglo-Saxon/Celtic mould of Australian trade union leaders. George arrived in Australia at three years old, the daughter of Russian refugees who had spent several years in a displaced persons camp in Italy. This background means that the presence, or absence, of ethnic signifiers are also important to consider in the analysis of the reporting of her presidency. As both feminism and the Left (in their various manifestations) are usually portrayed as extremist positions, any analysis of representations of George's performance seems likely to involve intersecting and multiple discourses of (at least) gender and class within the news, making a rewarding subject for analysis.

Jennie George's election held great significance for me as a feminist active in trade unions, who worked for a State-based Labor Council for a number of years. In particular, the possibilities for change offered through her election were promising. Making her presidency the focus of the thesis was, in part, a decision fuelled by an optimistic hope that such an analysis might demonstrate improvements in the range of representational practices that were applied in news reports of women political actors. This supposition, however, was made in the realisation that although representational categories were changing and becoming more complex (with new subject positions —subjectivities—being made available to women) there were strong conservative representational conventions at work that would also operate in the reporting of her performance during her presidency. As someone who also had an existing interest in researching representational practices, George's election provided a unique opportunity for me to analyse the media coverage of her term as case studies for my thesis.

[7]There is no simple definition of who or what constitutes the Left and it should be regarded as a composite and contested grouping rather than a singular or coherent category. There are numerous, contested, and shifting, groupings of 'the Left' within Australian politics and within Australian social movements. They define their positions variously around ideological, philosophical and policy issues, around factional groupings and personalities. It is relatively common for individuals, or whole unions, who align themselves as left within the trade union movement to belong to a centre or even right faction within the ALP. Several political groups of 'far left' belief, and some social movements such as green groups, argue that membership of the ALP, in itself, precludes someone from being of the left, seeing the ALP as increasingly a party of the centre.

Whilst the mainstream media has generally been critical of the union movement[8] by the late 1980s some media commentators and conservative politicians, for their own purposes, were beginning to appropriate feminist critiques that unions did not represent their women members adequately. These arguments were circulating in media and political debates at the time of Jennie George's election which seemed to hold possibilities for change in union practices in relation to the representation of women workers as well as the possibility that news reporting would change to encompass a shift in the nature of these debates.

Jennie George was elected in 1995, the twelfth year of a historic thirteen-year period of Federal Labor Government in Australia. This period was characterised by unprecedented industrial harmony largely achieved through the Government–ACTU Prices and Incomes Accord. Although it seemed highly likely that Labor would lose the next federal election, scheduled for the following year, and this scenario promised conflict on industrial matters, in other areas the climate was positive. These years of ALP Government, and particularly the term of Paul Keating's Prime-Ministership, were characterised by significant policy and symbolic developments towards acceptance of cultural diversity as a positive and essential aspect of Australian society. Policies of multiculturalism were implemented, and appeared to be accepted, within the wider community. Paul Keating's famous 1992 'Redfern' speech'[9] appeared to signify a major (and permanent) shift towards reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. In this climate, change that enabled women to achieve a greater share of power within major public institutions seemed to be well underway. It also seemed inevitable that women's influence in public life would continue to grow.

Writing this in 2003, eight years later, I am amazed at how much of this apparent change proved to be superficial, fragile and easily undone. Considering political, social and media responses to recent domestic and international events, it is arguable that

[8] As argued by Beharrell & Philo (1977); Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG 1976, 1980); Hartley (1989); (Morley 1976); Philo et al. (1982); Ward (1995); Windschuttle (1981).

[9] Redfern is a poor inner-city Sydney suburb with a very high proportion of Aboriginal residents and high number of social problems. The speech was made, to a largely Aboriginal audience, to launch the Year of the World's Indigenous People.

Australia is more insular, less tolerant, less trusting of difference and less committed to equality than it was in these earlier years.[10]

Returning to the question: Why Jennie George? It needs to be acknowledged that in 1995 Jennie George was elected to a crucial public position of leadership of a major organisation that represented the interests of working Australians and their families at a significant time in both the ACTU's and the nation's history. She was elected in her own right, unlike the two women ALP State Premiers who had been elected to lead their parties and their states in Western Australia and Victoria in 1990. Both Carmen Lawrence and Joan Kirner assumed leadership of their Parties and their States mid-term when the incumbents were deemed to be unviable leaders. The media reporting of their Premierships had already demonstrated some of the characteristics of gendered reporting that I reflect upon in this thesis.[11]

Jennie George is also an appropriate subject for a case study as she was held in high regard by other union women, both officials and rank-and-file members, and by the general public. Through researching news media representations of her presidency, I hope to add to the growing research literature on women in the media and also render some useful insights into the practices of news media reporting that may be of benefit to other women contemplating running for office in political parties, the trade union movement or other social movements.

Thesis Structure

The thesis is presented in four parts, comprising thirteen chapters including this introduction and the conclusion.

Part I, Historical Involvements and Modes of Analysis, consists of three chapters. Chapter One establishes the political and industrial context of the thesis providing

[10] Events such as the Maritime Dispute of 1998; the media coverage of the careers of female politicians especially Cheryl Kernot, Pauline Hanson and Natasha Stott Despoja, alluded to previously; the lack of progress towards Aboriginal reconciliation; political and media debates over the 'Tampa' incident in the lead-up to the 2001 Federal election in particular and Australia's treatment of refugees and asylum seekers in general, are examples of internal events that lead to this gloomy assessment.

[11] Others writing about such reporting Kirner & Rayner (1999); van Acker (1999); and journalist Christine Wallace (1994, 1995).

background to the election of the Liberal-National Party Coalition Government in 1996 after thirteen years of Labor Government. It summarises the contemporary challenges facing the trade union movement at the time of George's election and surveys relevant labour studies literature for an understanding of the traditional masculinity of unionism and for feminist critiques of this culture and its practices.

It then turns to examine newspaper reporting in Australia, providing details of ownership of the newspapers discussed in the media analysis. It concludes with a discussion of the impact of news consumption on media audiences.

Chapter Two surveys early Marxist and cultural studies approaches, in particular, the contributions and limitations of Marxist media analysis to my project. It then turns to postmodern cultural studies perspectives paying particular attention to feminist media studies, for methodological approaches relevant to the thesis. It details the significance of news as a site for feminist analysis and considers the gendered effects of tabloidisation, particularly in relation to the reporting of women politicians. It argues that news discourse constructs certain meanings of events and political leaders' performances for public consumption; that the signification of femininity is crucial to this process of meaning construction; and, furthermore, that these constructions have political effects. Due to the increasingly mediatized nature of politics, these processes are highly significant in contemporary (Western) democracies. These discussions situate the case study research to come in an interdisciplinary context.

Chapter Three outlines the methods used to analyse the reporting of Jennie George. It explains the selection of certain pivotal moments of her presidency for analysis—both for their political significance and the degree of media interest in them— the selection of specific reports and the approach taken to analyse the reporting of them in ways that make the issues and their potential effects available for wider debate. It also defines key questions for the study. It then elucidates the specific techniques used to analyse the visual and textual elements of the reports, acknowledging the ways in which they have been informed by techniques drawn from semiotics, feminist media analysis, discourse analysis and linguistics. The chapter also charts the nature of the media's deployment of signs of femininity, canvassing some of the most common significations.

Part II, Election of the First Woman ACTU President, consists of two chapters. Chapters Four and Five examine the reporting of Jennie George's election to the presidency of the ACTU in 1995 and in particular how this reporting conforms to or deviates from conventions of reporting 'first women', as discussed in Pippa Norris's work on women politicians (Norris 1997a, 1997b). Chapter Four provides an overview of the reports from twelve Australian daily newspapers on George's election. It reports on the results of a content analysis performed on the reports that reveals the presence of 'first women' reporting frames and myths, or figures of gender and/or race in these reports. Furthermore, it focuses on the challenges predicted for both George as leader, and the ACTU, should the Liberal and National Parties be elected to form Australia's next Federal Government. These challenges include the problems of declining union membership and potential industrial conflict. Together with the following chapter, the analysis identifies the issue of leadership 'toughness' as a central point of concern within many reports and it examines the gender implications of this apparently essential leadership quality.

Chapter Five extends the discussion of the themes identified in Chapter Four. It undertakes an in-depth semiotic analysis of four reports of George's election to demonstrate the varied ways constructions of femininity were deployed to make sense of the event. Together with Chapter Four, it investigates the ways the reports work to establish expectations about her performance and predictions of her likely success or failure in relation to the perceived climate of 'crisis' for the trade union movement. These expectations and predictions are significant for they can, and often are, later used as criteria to evaluate whether or not her performance has been successful.

Part III, Cavalcade to Canberra, consists of three chapters. It turns to the reporting of a major political rally organised by the ACTU in protest against changes to industrial relations legislation proposed by the incoming Coalition Government. The rally was known as the 'Cavalcade to Canberra'. During the rally of some 30, 000 people, a breakaway section of the crowd tried to forcibly enter Parliament House. Their actions caused property damage and the conflict with police resulted in some injuries to both demonstrators and police. This event is reported nationwide as a national outrage and totally eclipsed any consideration of the issues at the heart of the demonstration or the existence of the large peaceful crowd. Chapter Six analyses how the press constructs the story of the forced entry as a 'riot' and a 'national outrage' to the exclusion of any other

views or aspects of the day's events. In particular, it analyses the role of front-page imagery and layout in constructing the theme of riot.

Chapter Seven examines the narrative strategies adopted within the eighty-seven reports collected from the day following the rally and analyses them for patterns in framing, news values, narrative themes and omissions from the accounts published. It looks in particular at the overwhelming focus on violence within the reports and the ways in which certain types of unionists came to stand in, at times, for all unionists. The chapter pays particular attention to the ways in which representations of gender and race are used to construct the preferred account of events.

Chapter Eight analyses the reporting over the weeks subsequent to the rally and how questions of blame are dealt with in the media. In particular, it examines how attacks on ACTU president Jennie George by political opponents are reported. This collection of seventy-nine reports from the period 21 August to 8 September 1996 are discussed in association with the reports analysed in Chapters Six and Seven. The chapter is particularly concerned with the practice of 'hunting for a scalp' evident in this period as some media commentators and several politicians attempted to precipitate the resignation of Jennie George as a penalty for the outbreak of violence at the ACTU-organised rally. The chapter examines how representations of George's femininity are employed in reports in ways that discredit her leadership. It also pays attention to the ways in which political strategies and media practices intersect, magnifying the speculation over the viability of her leadership. The chapter also refers back to the predictions and expectations of George's presidency established in the reports of her election and examines the relay between reporting in the two periods of her presidency. It considers the ways in which these early reports were embedded within and may have impacted upon later judgements of her performance in relation to the Cavalcade to Canberra rally.

Part IV, Vale Jennie George, consists of three chapters that discuss the reporting of George's final year in office and ultimate resignation of 8 March 2000. Chapters Nine, Ten and Eleven examine whether, and how, representations of femininity feature in these reports and in assessments of her performance as the ACTU's first woman president. They discuss media attacks on George's leadership with particular attention to the repeated attacks mounted by Brad Norington (George's biographer) through the

Sydney Morning Herald. They analyse the ways particular figures of femininity are employed within these attacks that lead ultimately to George's presidency being dismissed, and George herself, as being notable only for her gender and her status as the first woman to hold the position. Chapter Nine relates to the period leading up to George's resignation and some of the events that precipitated it, focusing specifically on the notable reporting by Brad Norington in the *Sydney Morning Herald.* This involves the beginning of a spiteful campaign including charges, amongst other things, that impute her leadership because of her previous membership of the Communist Party of Australia. Norington accused George of lying to him and the public, painting a picture of her as a devious woman and making clear his transformation from a trusted professional colleague into George's chief accuser. Although these reports were not taken up in other newspapers they signal the beginning of 'the end'.

Chapter Ten examines the reporting of George's announcement in December 1999 that she would retire from the ACTU early, on 8 March 2000, and would go on accumulated leave immediately. The chapter examines variations between newspapers in ways they report this event with the *Sydney Morning Herald*, through Brad Norington, once again leading the attack on George. The chapter compares four key reports from December 1999 and January 2000 for the assessments they make of the George's presidency and predictions for her future, with particular attention being paid to the way various significations of femininity are deployed within them to make sense of the events.

Chapter Eleven analyses the reporting of George's retirement on International Women's Day 2000 and considers whether her strategy of selecting IWD as her departure date worked to draw press attention to the particular issues still confronting women workers. It examines the one feature-length report published at the time in depth, and summarises the other reports of her departure.

The conclusion returns to the leading questions for the thesis presented in Chapter Three. It contends that the reportage of George's presidency raises important questions about the effects of media reporting of the emerging group of 'women political actors' and the ways in which particular repertoires of reporting on this category are being established. The thesis examines the fluid nature of the conventions and how they become fixed through news frames and offers insights that may be taken up in future research by others interested in feminist and/or news media research. It concludes that

whilst femininity is deployed in various and conflicting ways in the reporting of women political actors it remains a crucial feature in the way their performances are made sense of by news media and are consumed by audiences. Finally, and of sobering concern, is the finding that certain representations of femininity appear regularly in attacks on (and criticisms of) the performance of not only Jennie George but also women politicians generally in Australia, particularly in relation to their management of political crises.

Part I: Historical Involvements and Modes of Analysis

Chapter 1
Troubled Times: the Political, Industrial and Cultural Context to Jennie George's Election as ACTU President.

Chapter 2
Theoretical Perspectives on News of Unions and Women Political Leaders

Chapter 3
Methods of Analysis

1 Troubled Times: The Political, Industrial and Cultural Contexts to Jennie George's Election as ACTU President.

Introduction

Jennie George's election as first woman president of the ACTU was hailed as a victory for women in unions and, more widely, for women in public office in Australia. Throughout her presidency, as her fortunes rose and fell, her performance was always under media scrutiny. Assessments of the events of George's presidency and union strategies of the period are largely undertaken from materialist sociological perspectives. There has been little cultural studies analysis of George's presidency. This type of analysis is crucial for unions if they are to extend their understanding of, and intervene in, media constructions and their possible effects—especially in the light of the fact that during the time of Jennie George's presidency the union movement was engaged in the struggle to win the hearts and minds of the Australian public during the industrial turmoil of the late 1990s.

This thesis concerns media representations of a significant political figure and some damaging industrial events that took place over the period 1995 to 2000. In particular, it examines the way the press reported on George, one of the most prominent women in Australian public life and, specifically, her performance as ACTU president. To analyse these media representations successfully, certain political, industrial and media related contextual information is necessary. Politically, this background includes the change from Labor to Liberal-National Coalition Government (the Coalition) in 1996; industrially, it includes the challenges for unions in the contexts of changing work organisation and the hostile government, and the challenges mounted to the masculine culture of unionism from feminist critique and women members. Also needed, is some explanation of the traditional masculine culture of trade unionism in Australia and feminist critiques of this culture and its on-going legacies. In relation to the media context, the chapter provides background information regarding ownership of the Australian newspapers included in the analysis and their audiences.

The Australian Political and Industrial Landscape of the mid-1990s

The Hawke-Keating ALP Government and the Accord

In 1983 the Australian Labour Party, led by former ACTU president Bob Hawke, defeated the (conservative) Coalition Government of Malcolm Fraser. The ALP retained power for thirteen years, an unprecedented period of Labor Government in Australia's history. In that time several significant social, economic, political and industrial changes occurred. These included the floating of the Australian dollar in 1983 and the establishment of a Prices and Incomes Accord with the trade union movement. On the social front, official acceptance of Australia as a multicultural country was significant despite some opposition from some Liberal politicians as to the composition of immigration. There were also some criticisms from migrant advocacy groups and supporters as to the extent to which the concept of 'multiculturalism' relied on migrant communities identifying with Australian national culture, whilst other commentators were concerned that migrants were not being required to take out citizenship or more strongly identify with Australia.[1] Some significant progress was also made towards reconciliation with Australia's indigenous peoples. A Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was established in 1987 (reporting in 1991) and later an eighteen-month Inquiry into the Stolen Generations (those Aboriginal children forcibly removed from their parents and sent to institutions) which reported in 1997. In 1992 the High Court overturned the doctrine of Terra Nullius in the Mabo (Native Title) Judgement. In December 1992, to mark the International Year of Indigenous Peoples, Paul Keating, then Prime Minister made his famous Redfern speech that was widely regarded as a watershed in Australia's relationship with indigenous communities. However, the apparent social and economic 'progress' masked significant concerns amongst ordinary people about the rate of change and rising levels of insecurity in relation to their jobs, their incomes and their future. These concerns were pivotal in the 1996 federal election.

[1] See Paul Kelly's (1992) *The End of Certainty* for a discussion of the Liberal Party's position in relation to the review of Australian immigration policy.

One of the key achievements of the Labor Government during Bob Hawke's term as Prime Minister (1983–1991) was his implementation of a 'Prices and Incomes Accord' (the Accord) with the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU).[2] This Accord continued when Paul Keating replaced Hawke as Prime Minister in 1991. The Accord committed the trade unions to wage restraint and 'strategic unionism' in return for improvements to the social wage and modernising the economy through workforce development and new jobs. One of the consequences of the Accord was the lowest rate of industrial disputation, and employment days lost through industrial action, in Australia's history. Another consequence was some discontent amongst unions, and union members, with greater industrial bargaining power. They were concerned that their living standards were falling in real terms through this policy of restraint. The Liberal and National Parties argued that this 'cosy' relationship between the ALP and the unions was costing Australian business and not delivering the productivity bonuses which were needed to make Australia internationally competitive in a global marketplace. In order to make Australia competitive they argued that a sweeping overhaul of Australian industrial legislation and work practices was required. The Liberal and National Parties supported the argument, put by employer groups, that Australia was 'over-regulated'. They promised, if elected, to implement a legislative program that would de-regulate the labour market, reduce trade union power and the range of issues in which they could intervene. This agenda was widely supported in newspaper editorials and by conservative political commentators in the lead-up to the 1996 federal election.

In this environment Jennie George was endorsed as the next president of the ACTU, the peak trade union body in Australia. On 29 September 1995 she was elected as

[2] Bob Hawke had previously been the president of the ACTU (1970-80) and this background, together with his continuing closeness to key union officials (such as ACTU secretary Bill Kelty) was vital to the development and success of the Accord. Union supporters of the Accord argued it delivered important influence over government policies and a 'defacto' seat at the Cabinet table. Union critics of the Accord argued it failed to deliver improvements in real living standards especially for workers with strong bargaining power. Opponents also argued it diminished the union role in the setting of wages and limited union activities at the workplace level. They argued this alienated workers from their unions and made unions appear to be too close to government. Accord supporters argued that the Accord was necessary to prevent an explosion in wage claims which would cause inflation to spiral and increase unemployment. These factors had led to previous Labor governments in Australia, and internationally, being accused of irresponsible economic management and had contributed to their downfall. The Accord was one key factor in attempting to change this image of Labor governments and to enable Labor to retain power for several terms. For further discussion of the Accord and union responses to it see Briggs (2002); Peetz (1998).

the *first woman* president and became one of the most prominent women in Australian public life. There had been two women State Premiers prior to George's election. Carmen Lawrence in WA and Joan Kirner in Victoria, both of whom became Premiers in 1990. Rather than being elected in their own right, however, both these women took over when the male incumbents resigned. George was the first woman to be elected to such high office in her own right. It was a crucial time for the labour movement in Australia and for trade unions in particular. It appeared certain that the conservative parties would be elected to govern the country within months and that the Accord that the unions had established with the Labor Government, and likewise their influence, would be demolished. Reports at the time of her election predicted "storm clouds on the horizon" and that there would be significant conflict with the Coalition Government (Southorn 1996a). The expectations of her were high and she was placed in a situation where her performance would be closely watched by reporters, her own members and political opponents. Her performance was important for its symbolic status as much as for what she could achieve (or save) for her members. As a woman in a masculine context the challenges were more complex than they would have been for a man elected in the same political and industrial circumstances. All of these factors are significant in the analysis of the reporting of her presidency.

The Changed Political Landscape – the Election of a Coalition (Conservative) Government after Thirteen Years of Labor.

In March 1996 Prime Minister, Paul Keating, and the Australian Labor Party (ALP) were defeated in a federal election. The Liberal and National Parties were elected and formed a conservative Coalition Government. John Howard—a former shadow industrial relations spokesperson with a commitment to deregulation, dry economic policies and an ideological opposition to trade unionism—became Prime Minister. Peter Reith became the Minister for Workplace Relations. Reith enthusiastically promoted his intentions to abolish what he called the 'excesses' of trade union power. He promised to achieve this through the development of legislation that would radically transform the organisation, regulation, practice and monitoring of industrial relations in Australia. Reith's legislation proposed the biggest shake-up of industrial relations in the nation's history. It encompassed sweeping changes to the

federal Australian Industrial Relations system and severe curtailing of union rights and fields of operation. It was known as the 'The Workplace Relations and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 1996' commonly referred to as 'the Bill'. The ACTU labelled it an "'unAustralian' act" as it denied workers a 'fair go' and the fair go is enshrined in Australian mythology as one of the defining characteristics of the nation (ACTU 1996a).

The Workplace Relations and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 1996

As the 'The Workplace Relations and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 1996' (the Bill) was such a highly contentious piece of legislation and so vehemently opposed by trade unions it is worth taking a moment to explain the nature of their objections. The majority of the provisions of the Bill were also opposed by the Australian Labor Party (ALP). However, the ALP was prepared accept limited changes if such a compromise could facilitate agreement with the minor parties and independents (who held the balance of power) in the Senate to amend other, more controversial, provisions.[3] Some of the ACTU's primary objections to the legislation included: concern that the Bill's restriction of the content of industrial awards to 'twenty allowable matters' would limit the role of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) and seriously erode working conditions and employee protection; that the replacement of 'paid rates' with 'minimum rates' would unfairly penalise some groups of workers over others; and concern at the proposal to abolish union right of entry to workplaces. The ALP and unions also strongly opposed the proposals which emphasised individual bargaining and a new form of individual agreement, Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs), over collective and enterprise agreements, believing that such changes disadvantaged the weakest members of the workforce and made unions irrelevant. They opposed the secrecy of AWAs; and the establishment of an Office of the Employment Advocate whose role

[3] The composition of the Senate at this time was 37 Government Senators, 29 ALP Senators, 7 Australian Democrats, 1 West Australian Green, 1 Australian Green, 1 Tasmanian Independent. It required 38 votes to block legislation and 39 votes to pass amendments to the Bill. It therefore required all the non-Government Senators to unite to amend the Bill. The Green and Independent Senators were known to oppose many of the changes. The crucial issue was whether the ACTU and other opponents of the legislation could convince the Democrats to oppose or amend key components of the legislation. In the same week as the Cavalcade to Canberra rally was held one Queensland ALP senator, Mal Colston, left the ALP and became an independent. His defection did not substantially affect the numbers on this particular Bill as he was opposed to most of the changes, the Democrats remained the central figures to convince with regard to possible amendments.

it would be to oversee the introduction of AWAs. They regarded this proposed Office as being both too close to Government to protect workers and a strategy which could undermine the role and authority of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) and the role of unions. The ALP and ACTU also strongly opposed various provisions of the Bill which sought to restrict the role and capacity of unions to act on behalf of their membership.[4]

The ACTU and its affiliated unions expressed their opposition to the Bill in a number of ways, including submissions to the Senate Economic References Committee hearings into the Bill.[5] In addition to the less visible strategies of lobbying and behind-the-scenes negotiations with political parties, ACTU president Jennie George proposed that the ACTU and its affiliates hold a huge, *peaceful*, public rally in Canberra on 19 August and that other community groups be invited to join with unions to express their concerns at the erosion of workers' rights.[6] This rally would be complemented by a series of rallies in Hobart, Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth for those workers and officials who could not travel to Canberra. The occasion was to be known as the 'Cavalcade to Canberra' and was to be the central public event in the unions' campaign against the Bill.

The extent of the changes proposed in the Bill, the limitations they would impose on trade union activity and influence, and the high level of polarised political and media debate about the proposed changes meant that the ACTU's strategies were both critical to the success of their campaign and the future of unions in Australia.

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[4] The ACTU's objections to the Bill and its likely effects on workers' rights are outlined in a briefing paper for unions prepared by ACTU assistant secretary Tim Pallas (Pallas 1996).

[5] The Bill was introduced to the House of Representatives on 23 May 1996. At this time the Opposition (Australian Labor Party) moved that the Bill be referred to the Senate Economic References Committee. The Bill was passed by the House of Representatives on 26 June 1996 and then introduced into the Senate on 27 June 1996. The Senate Committee received 1,431 submissions. It conducted eighteen public hearings and took 2,225 pages of evidence. The Committee tabled its report in the Senate on 22 August 1996. It was said to be "the most concentrated public inquiry phase ever undertaken by a Senate Committee" (Pallas 1996).

[6] They were also invited to express concerns at the foreshadowed cuts to welfare and community services in the federal budget that was to be announced the next day. This broadening of the agenda was problematic for some unions who argued that it took the attention away from the central reason for the ACTU's protest, the changes to industrial relations and workers' rights.

The Cavalcade to Canberra was widely promoted as an unprecedented event, perhaps the largest rally ever held in the national capital, a unique alliance of unions and community organisations (ACTU 1996b) and as the key strategy in the trade union campaign to defeat this excessive 'unAustralian' attack on workers' rights. The stakes were high and both sides sought to win media support for their case throughout the campaign and to have their characterisation of the issue become the dominant, ideological construction of it in the public arena. In the context of a change of government to one with radical agenda for economic and social transformation, the reporting of its policies and the responses of social movements and institutions affected by those policies, are crucial to the development of meaning about such changes and the capacity of dissenting groups to circulate alternate meanings. Press reports of the key events occurring during Jennie George's presidency of the ACTU, in the first years of the Howard Coalition Government, have great relevance for feminist, labour and political scholars interested in how such changes were proposed, contested and naturalised. It is particularly interesting to consider to what degree the mainstream news media offer a space for the democratic contestation of such policies by the left and by feminists.

The stakes were particularly high for Jennie George. She was strongly identified with the rally plan, and particularly, the invitation to other community groups and social movement organisations to join in the alliance against the Coalition government. George saw this as a means of demonstrating broad community support for the unions opposition to the erosion of workers' rights. She believed that such an alliance was critical to convincing the Australian Democrats to vote against the Bill. However, not all unions agreed with her. Some disagreed with opening a union event up to participation by assorted other groups, fearing they might lose control of the event and/or that the unions' message might be diluted (Marris 1996b). Some other (more left-wing and militant) unions wanted a national strike and rolling stoppages instead of rallies. Such a response was not supported by moderate or right-wing unions, but some on the left saw the proposed rally as a weaker response than their members wanted (Marris 1996b; Taylor L. 1996).

George and other supporters of the strategy argued that a large national rally in alliance with other community groups would achieve a number of positive results. Firstly, it would increase the union movement's profile in the community sector and develop alliances with groups with common interests. Such alliance-building was considered critical to replace some of the influence unions had lost with the cessation of the Accord.[7] Secondly, it would transform the public image of unions as obstructionist and instead present them as a group able to work cooperatively with others and represent a broad set of interests. This was particularly important in the unions' campaign to win the Democrats support for the defeat of the Bill or major changes to it. It was hoped that presenting unions in this light and through a huge, peaceful assembly in Canberra could also increase the appeal of unions to women and young voters who were the targets of union recruiting efforts. Thirdly, positive news coverage of the rally would increase the appeal of the alliance-building process, strengthen unions' claim to be the protectors of the weakest in society and most importantly build credibility for the specific campaign to defeat the Workplace Relations Bill.

In the face of sustained attacks by the Liberal and National Parties, employer groups and conservative commentators in the lead-up to, and aftermath of the March 1996 federal election, the union movement badly needed a public relations win. They saw the Cavalcade to Canberra as their best chance to present their case in a favourable light to the general public and to opinion-leaders.

Contemporary Challenges for Trade Unions

The decades of the 1980s to 1990s saw significant changes in the organisation of work in Australia. Many of these changes were the result of international processes of globalisation and the move away from fordist production methods. Australia's traditional reliance on manufacturing industries meant that the changes were experienced dramatically in our economy, as full-time manufacturing jobs declined rapidly and part-time and casual jobs in the service sector burgeoned. These changes

[7] Jennie George had foreshadowed this strategy of alliances with community groups and churches in her election speech and had symbolically demonstrated it by including invited guests from the women's movement and community sector on the ACTU stage at her election (George 1995).

in employment concentrations had gender implications as the manufacturing jobs had traditionally been the preserve of men, whereas the new jobs were predominantly filled by women and also young people. These changes also had a significant impact on unions, since large manufacturing plants had been the core of union membership. Union density fell and the profile of union membership changed. In 1986 union density was over forty-five per cent in Australia whereas by 1995, the year of Jennie George's election to the ACTU presidency, it had fallen to just thirty-three percent of the workforce (ACIRRT 1999). This decline in union membership was the most significant challenge facing Australia unions. It had several associated challenges, however, such as how to communicate the benefits of unionism to a workforce that was significantly different in gender, age and ethnicity than it had been in previous generations. The contemporary workforce was also likely to be employed on a different basis, as part-time and casual jobs have increasingly taken the place of full-time permanent jobs. Furthermore, workers were deployed differently. Large manufacturing plants with common lunch breaks in large canteens were replaced by smaller firms whose workers took staggered and often shorter meal breaks off-site. Communicating with potential members was logistically, as well as culturally, challenging.

Other changes to the organisation of work were associated with deregulation, privatisation and the on-going shift towards just-in-time production methods. Increasingly, the emphasis in wage negotiations was on productivity. Workers were expected to work harder and longer hours. However, despite this increasing intensity of work, and the ALP-ACTU Accord, the average worker's real wages declined approximately $67 during the period 1982-1994, whereas high-income earners received a significant increase in real wages (ACIRRT 1999). This increasing inequality was termed by some the 'disappearing middle'. It led to dissatisfaction with unions amongst some workers who could not see the benefits of union membership. This disillusionment was another of the challenges Jennie George faced: how to reinvigorate the trade union movement and make it appealing to new members in the context of falling real wages and a hostile government?

The emphasis on productivity in wages bargaining during the 1980s and 1990s disadvantaged women workers in the service sector. Productivity in the service sector is less easily measured than in traditional manufacturing industries. Furthermore, the skills of women workers are often not recognized, or are compared against a benchmark of traditional masculine skills.[8] The decentralised, enterprise-based system regards principles such as comparative wage justice as irrelevant. The incoming Howard Government's introduction of individual and non-union Australian Workplace Agreements exacerbated this tendency. The increasing inequalities in pay and conditions amongst Australian workers, and in particular the gendered dimensions of these inequalities, were amongst the significant challenges faced by the union movement in the mid-1990s. Unions had to attract women and young workers as members to have any chance of turning around the decline in membership and therefore the gendered inequalities in pay and conditions were key areas for attention. The challenge for unions was to prove their competence at protecting these part-time and casualised workers and improving their situations. Structural, organisational, cultural and symbolic changes were required. The task of convincing some traditional trade unions and their officials of the need for such far-reaching changes was a significant challenge in itself.

Jennie George as Agent and Symbol of Change

In recognising the need to increase women members and to recruit in non-traditional sectors, unions and the ACTU, sought to review their structures, rules and practices in an effort to make unions more appealing to, and representative of the diverse experiences of their women members. Since at least the early 1980s, feminists active in trade unions internationally, had been mounting a vigorous critique of trade union structures, practices and internal cultures for the ways in which they discriminated against women, discouraged their participation and devalued their experiences. (These critiques are canvassed below.) Jennie George's nomination to the presidency of the ACTU and her subsequent election was very significant in this context. Both within the trade union movement and externally, it was seen as being symbolic of a seismic shift in trade union culture and organisation. George was not only a woman, but also an avowed feminist who had been an active campaigner for

[8] See, for example, Cox & Leonard (1991).

changes to union culture and rules. As a former teacher she hailed from a white-collar, feminised profession and was also, therefore, symbolic of the new kind of worker that unions needed to recruit.[9]

Another important factor is that Jennie George was an Australian of non-English-speaking background. Her election was, therefore, also important for the way it symbolised a break with the Anglo-Saxon/Celtic tradition of union leadership. Furthermore, Jennie George identified politically with the left. In her youth she had been a member of various organisations affiliated with the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), she had married a communist activist and she had been active in various causes such as the Vietnam Moratorium protests (Norington 1998). At the time of her election she was a member of a left-wing union affiliated with the left faction of the ALP and, personally, a member of the ALP left. Although her affiliation with the Left is not specifically significant in terms of recruiting young people and women, it does indicate the extent to which Jennie George broke the traditional mould of trade union leaders.

George recognised the contemporary challenges facing unions, the diversity and changing nature of their actual and potential membership. She committed her presidency to finding ways to make unions more appealing and relevant to diverse groups of workers and to make unionism relevant and responsive to those employed in new industries and in non-traditional employment arrangements (George 1995). George and other key ACTU officials believed that such a transformation required many changes including: a review of traditional organising and recruitment strategies; the development of new kinds of union campaigns both on new issues and in new forms; the formation of alliances with other community and non-government sector partners on particular issues of social justice; the rejuvenation of trade union leadership so that it more closely resembled the diversity of Australian workers the movement was seeking to represent; and a 'rebadging' of unionism itself. George was a new model of union leader attuned to the needs of the times and

[9] It is perhaps worth noting that in Australia the teachers' unions have a long tradition of unionisation and industrial militancy including periods of communist leadership in some states.

one who presented a different public face of unionism. Therefore it is perhaps not surprising that she faced the most concerted attack on unions and workers' rights than any previously mounted in Australian history, including even that undertaken during the Menzies' Government of the Cold War era. The challenges were enormous, more so than anyone realised at the time of her election, despite the predictions of 'storm clouds on the horizon' (Southorn 1996a, *Courier Mail*). The chapters that follow discuss how the media reportage of her presidency takes account of these challenges in assessments of her performance.

Australia: The (Male) Worker's Paradise

Early white settler accounts of Australia envisaged the country as a working *man's* paradise. Australia was the first country in the world where workers achieved the eight-hour day (Reeves 1988).[10] The labour movement exercised influence across many aspects of social, community, industrial, and welfare development in the colonies and in the federation of the nation. The Australian Labor Party was formed in Barcaldine, Queensland, in 1891 during the prolonged and bitter shearers' strikes, by unionists disgusted by a series of decisions against workers made by courts and parliaments. Their belief was, that only by establishing a political party to represent the interests of workers, could they achieve change and protect the interests of their members.

Many feminist scholars have revealed the particularly masculinist nature of Australian history, culture and national mythology, throughout the country's formative years.[11] A few have focused specifically on the Australian labour movement and the historical struggle of women workers for industrial justice.[12] However, from the 1980s onwards, feminist labour scholars trained a significant amount of attention on the experiences of women workers within workplaces and

[10] The Stonemasons in Melbourne won the eight hour day in 1856. The Eight Hour Day public holiday was established to mark this achievement in most states although in several it has subsequently become subsumed into Labour Day.

[11] See, for example, Damousi (1994a); Lake (1999); Sawer & Simms (1993); Schaffer (1988); Summers (1975);

[12] See, for example, Ellem (1989); Frances & Scates eds. (1991); Ryan & Conlon (1975).

unions internationally, and on the limitations of union representation on the experiences of their women members.[13]

Feminist Critiques of the Masculine Culture of Trade Unions and their Implications for Women Workers and Union Members

By the 1980s in Australia feminists active within, or working for unions were strenuously pressing for changes to trade union cultures, rules and organizing practices to make them more representative of women workers. Their efforts mirrored similar work in Britain, Canada, New Zealand, the United States of America (USA) and Europe. They were bolstered by the work of feminist labour studies scholars in Australia and overseas who developed a trenchant critique of the traditions, cultures and practices of unions that presumed workers to be white men and worked to consolidate and protect masculine identities and male privilege.[14] These writers demonstrate a multiplicity of ways in which women workers are positioned as the 'other' of male workers. In particular, observations regarding the normalisation of the unionist as masculine, through internal cultures and practices of unionism, demonstrate the internal processes through which the culture of masculinity is supported through male bonding, "[m]en bonded together *against women*" (Cunnison & Stageman 1995: 54, italics added). Traditional unionism also assumed specific men were bonded together *against men from other cultural backgrounds*.[15] Jude Elton questions conventional assumptions and beliefs about the class origins and loyalties of 'real workers' assumed to be men.[16] Elton also argues that these assumptions are used in "certain circumstances [as] … a weapon to maintain sexism and the exclusion of women" (Elton 1997: 124). If the normative rank and file workers were largely assumed to be men, then the models of trade union leadership promoted and valourised within the movement and labour history are, almost without exception, built around traditional, hegemonic masculinity.

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[13] See Cockburn (1983, 1991); Milkman (1985).

[14] See, for example, Cobble (1993); Cunnison & Stageman (1995); Eaton (1992); Eveline (1994); Franzway (1994, 1997); Lake (1996); Pocock (1992; 1994; 1997a); White (1993).

[15] Atkin (1991); Elton (1997); Lake (1994).

[16] See also Franzway (1994, 1997) on 'real unionists' being male.

This project has turned to feminist researchers into unions for insights into the difficulties that women union leaders face in attaining leadership positions and also in performing leadership 'successfully' within such a masculine environment.[17] These questions are relevant to the challenges that confronted Jennie George when she was elected as the first female head of the ACTU and to the analysis of the press reporting of her performance within that position. When all the criteria for success have been developed to assess a particular kind of male incumbent, women leaders face significant difficulties in fitting the frame. Elton argues that the established images of the 'good' union official, traditional practices of leadership, and internal union cultural beliefs about loyalty and solidarity, are barriers to women's achievement of leadership positions within unions.

Barbara Pocock argues that the "dominant discourses of union leadership generally position women in a negative way, and work to undermine their interest in leadership and assessment of their capacities for it" (Pocock 1997a: 22). The dilemma is one that has also been explored by feminist academics researching the experiences of women political leaders.[18] There are several useful points of overlap between these two fields of study. Whilst trade unionism developed to protect white working class men, as *men,* in their struggles with employers and in the dangers and difficulties they face at work, Pocock says that "for many men their masculinity is constituted by their position of union leadership" (1997a: 21). Hence many women officials and candidates for leadership positions face hostility as they speak out for change or nominate for office. Such women are perceived as threatening to this masculine advantage. Cynthia Cockburn (1991) notes men's resistance to women's progress within organizations, through mechanisms such as solidarity between men and men's sexualisation and marginalisation of women. Anne Henderson's interviews with Australian women politicians reveal some female politicians have experienced similar hostility from colleagues, rivals and/or political opponents in

[17] Amanda Sinclair's work on the gendered models and assumptions of leadership practice in private sector management is also revealing (Sinclair 1998).

[18] For example Norris (1997a); Ross & Sreberny (2000).

their quest to achieve pre-selection or positions of responsibility within their party (Henderson 1999).[19]

The analysis of the media representation of Jennie George's election to the ACTU presidency and her performance as leader draws upon this research to understand the internal culture of unionism and the barriers and difficulties women face both in attaining leadership positions and in performing leadership roles successfully. The contributions of these feminist labour scholars also raises the issue of the gendered nature of standards of performance.[20] The model of successful leadership is masculine, a woman leader is presumed to be outside of that category by virtue of biological difference alone. Consequently, she has to either sublimate her femininity to gain acceptance as an "honorary man", or struggle from the beginning to redefine the criteria for success (Hermes 1997: 74; Muir 1997a: 16). This gendered concept of leadership based on "heroic masculinity" is common to unions, business, the public sector, the media and politics (Sinclair 1998).

As Suzanne Franzway argues:

> organisational seniority does not grant women normative status. Women in leadership positions do not necessarily become 'real unionists'. They may occupy the same structural positions as the men, but they are expected to behave differently.
> (Franzway 1997: 139)

Even if union members, and workers more generally, can disentangle themselves from gendered definitions of leadership, there will be only a minority in a position to assess a woman leader's performance from first-hand observation. Others have to construct meanings and assessments based mainly on media reports of the woman leader's activities, interviews with her, and general articles on the state of unionism/politics. Reportage and assessments of union and political leadership is undertaken within both these gendered conventions and the specific conventions of news reporting. Journalists not only have established (gendered) ideas and criteria as

[19] Others to have documented resistance from men to women's attempt to achieve political office and/or leadership include Haines (1992); Kahn (1996); Rivers (1996); Sawer & Simms (1993); van Acker (1999); Vavrus (2002); Witt et al. (1994).

[20] Such as Cockburn (1983, 1991); Cunnison & Stageman (1995); Elton (1997); Pocock (1994, 1997a, 1997b).

to what constitutes successful leadership in the public sphere, but also operate within very strong traditions and codes of news reporting which work to define and delimit political and industrial reporting. Being alert to the gendered perceptions and practices of unionism (and political leadership more generally) is central to analysing how the media report the performance of particular female political actors. These insights into the ways in which the expectations, models, culture and standards of leadership are gendered are significant in the analysis of the media reporting of George's five year tenure as ACTU leader, in particular as its *first woman* leader.

Feminist research in the field of labour studies has been very valuable in developing this critique of the gendered organisational culture and practices of unionism and the traditional structures of male advantage. These are questions that go to the heart of power/knowledge relations within trade union practice. The relevance of several of these studies is limited, however, by their assumption that equality can be achieved solely through material gains and structural changes. Another limitation is the lack of consideration of the operations of signifying practices in constructing relations of power and dominance and how those signifying practices can constrain and promote women involved as political actors within and beyond the union movement. These issues are taken up in Chapter Two which introduces some relevant semiotic tools of cultural studies to investigate the roles of symbolic language and imagery in constructing meanings about women and power within news reporting.

Media Ownership in Australia

Some background on media ownership in Australia contextualises reportage within the media-as-institution as it concerns the analysis that follows. Australia has the most concentrated media ownership in the world. There are two dominant media corporations. They are firstly, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, which owns sixty-seven percent of the circulation of Australian capital city and national daily papers together with a significant number of magazines, twenty-five percent of Foxtel cable television service and almost half of the Australian Associated Press

wire service; and secondly, Kerry Packer's Publishing and Broadcasting Limited, which owns the highest rating national television network, Channel 9, numerous radio stations, and a very large number of Australian magazines (including current affairs magazine the *Bulletin*, women's and men's interest, fashion, lifestyle, sport and automobile magazines).

Some of the rationale for the division of coverage between the Murdoch and Packer conglomerates relates to Australian cross-media ownership rules introduced in 1986, by the Hawke Labor Government. They currently prevent a company owning both television and print media within the one city. However, there is strong pressure from media corporations on government to change that legislation. The current Coalition Government has been attempting—so far without success—to draft legislation that modifies the rules in a way that satisfies the industry and also gains the support of the independent Senators and/or minor parties in the Australian Senate.

Rupert Murdoch was born in Adelaide where News Limited, the family business, originated with the Adelaide *News*. In 1986 News Limited took over Herald and Weekly Times group of newspapers including the Adelaide *Advertiser*. It soon decided the market was too small for both an afternoon and a morning paper, ceasing publication of its namesake, the *News*. News Limited grew into the multinational News Corporation and is now the fifth largest media company in the world.[21] It owns the majority of Australian newspapers. In four Australian capital cities there is no alternative daily paper available as News owns both the local daily and the major national daily paper, the *Australian*. News Limited owns the Sydney tabloid the *Daily Telegraph*, the Melbourne tabloid the *Herald Sun*, the Hobart tabloid the *Mercury*, the Adelaide daily the *Advertiser* (which was a broadsheet paper until late 1997 when it became a tabloid) and the Brisbane *Courier Mail* which is published in broadsheet format. It also publishes the national daily broadsheet newspaper the *Australian* which is available in all capital cities, regional cities and most large rural towns. Rupert Murdoch took out US citizenship in 1985

[21] In the discussion to follow the term News Limited is used to refer to the publisher of Australian newspapers. News Limited is a subsidiary of the global conglomerate News Corporation.

so that News Corporation could expand into the American market through purchases of television, film and book publishing companies.

Whilst Murdoch's News Corporation has commonly been associated with 'lowbrow' tabloid papers such as the London *Sun* and *News of the World* newspapers as well as various Australian tabloids, it also publishes the prestigious British papers the *Times* and the *Sunday Times*. News Corporation has a history of being anti-union in its reportage and in its management practices, with the Wapping dispute over the introduction of new computerised technology into the printing plant at Wapping, in London, being the best known example. News Corporation's editorial policies, especially for the London tabloid dailies, provide extensive evidence of sensationalised anti-union attitudes particularly during the 1970s and 1980s.[22] In Australia, the Murdoch press campaigned strongly against the Whitlam Labor Government in 1975 (Windshuttle 1981, 1985). Since that time News Corporation's papers have been generally regarded as anti-union, anti-Labor and both economically and socially conservative.[23] The London *Sun* was also very pro-Thatcher and vehemently opposed to the National Union of Miners during the 1984-85 Miners Strike. At the present time News Corporation's Fox News Service in the USA, available in Australia through Foxtel cable television, is regarded as the most right-wing and jingoistic of the USA news services. Given this history there was considerable unease in Britain when News Corporation bought the *Times* and fears were expressed that it would be subjected to a 'dumbing down' process. Certainly, the popular appeal to the mass market through tabloid tactics has been an important commercial strategy for News Corporation that has increased its market share. However, it also publishes some flagship papers, such as the *Times* and the *Australian* that retain a commitment to investigative journalism and a deeper consideration of political, international and social affairs than is evident in the tabloid press.

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[22] See for example Hollingsworth (1986); Philo et al. (1982).

[23] In 1981, News Limited was instrumental in financing and supporting a series of anti-union marches in Australia (Windschuttle 1985: 339-342). Tabloid papers owned by News Limited have published some of the most hysterical and extreme anti-union and anti-strike headlines such as the *Daily Telegraph's* (in)famous 'Strike kills woman' example (28 March 1980 reproduced in Windschuttle 1985: 334).

In relation to print media, the second most significant Australian company is John Fairfax Holdings (Fairfax) which has twenty-one percent of the total capital city and national circulation.[24] It publishes the two broadsheet dailies, the Melbourne *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, together with the national business-focussed *Financial Review* newspaper, which is published in a tabloid size format but does not adopt the usual tabloid layout of one story per front page with huge headlines, nor does it adopt a tabloid style of reporting. Fairfax also owns almost half of Australian Associated Press wire service together with News whilst the remaining small share is owned by West Australian Newspapers.

The third owner of print media of relevance to this analysis is Rural Press which owns a string of regional and rural newspapers together with the national capital's daily, broadsheet paper, the *Canberra Times*, and the Launceston (Tasmania) tabloid daily the *Examiner*.[25] The final Australian newspaper to be considered in this analysis, the tabloid *West Australian* is owned by an independent small company, West Australian Newspapers.

The concentration of media ownership in Australia gives rise to some particular points of interest for an analysis such as this. These include questions of whether there is a dominant political slant common to newspapers belonging to the one owner; whether there are discernible patterns in the way that tabloid papers report issues that differ to the way broadsheet papers report them; and whether there are significant numbers of syndicated stories and photos appearing in newspapers owned by the same company. These issues have important implications for an independent Australian press particularly given the increasingly competitive media climate.

[24] Previously a family-owned business, John Fairfax Holdings (Fairfax) was acquired during the late 1980s by a consortium headed by Conrad Black (a Canadian media magnate). It is currently owned by a diversified share-holding, none of which hold a controlling stake. Packer and Murdoch are both on record as desiring a majority share of Fairfax.

[25] Rural Press is owned by J. B. Fairfax a different branch of the Fairfax family. It has no connection to John Fairfax Holdings.

There is widespread cynicism in the labour movement about the mainstream news media and there is concern about the domination of the Australian media by these two major conglomerates (Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation and Kerry Packer's Publishing and Broadcasting Limited) both of which are perceived by unions to be anti-union and pro-employer. However, such cynicism and distrust is no substitute for careful attention to the ways media frame and report industrial issues, unions and individual unionists. It is important for unions to engage in critique of media/union power relations as well as media reporting practices and to consider how they can respond to stories, subvert established news reporting practices and/or initiate more favourable press coverage about their activities.[26] Few unions have come to the realisation that the process of how meanings are made, circulated, and given priority, is a crucial *political* process and involves establishing and contesting power relations.

The Influence of Australian Newspapers

Newspaper circulation in Australia dropped ten per cent over the decade 1990 to 1999 (Brand, Archbold & Rane 2001). Although newspapers have declined in importance to Australians as their *primary* source of news, in common with trends internationally, they are still a very significant source of news and current affairs information. According to a survey undertaken for the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) , over forty-nine percent of Australians read a newspaper everyday and another twenty-six percent read newspapers several times per week (Brand et al. 2001). The same survey found that eighty-eight per cent of Australians said they used free-to-air television for news and current affairs, whereas seventy-six per cent of respondents said they used newspapers instead of, or as well as, television. In common with the trend in other countries, younger audiences (in the sixteen to thirty-nine age bracket) are more attracted to new media such as the internet and pay

[26] This need is beginning to be acknowledged and addressed in the strategies adopted by certain contemporary Australian union officials in some industrial campaigns. The attention the ACTU and Maritime Union of Australia paid to media images in their protest strategy in the 1998 Australian Maritime Dispute was one of the key reasons that public opinion supported the union and rejected the Australian government's support for Patrick Stevedores' mass 'sacking' of its entire workforce (see Trinca & Davies 2000). The West Australian Trades and Labour Council's campaign against the W.A. Court Liberal (conservative) Government's 'Third Wave' Industrial Relations legislation is another example (Bailey & McAtee 1998).

television for their information. Entertainment programs that place a humourous spin on recent events and issues, such as 'Good News Week', the 'Panel', 'Frontline' and 'CNNNN' are particularly popular with this age bracket (Brand et al. 2001). However, where newspapers really exert influence is over other news professionals and opinion-makers. Amongst a group of one hundred news professionals who participated in the same ABA survey, newspapers were regarded as the single most important genre for setting the news agenda for the day (Pearson & Brand 2001).[27]

News Corporation newspapers are amongst the most influential in Australia. The Melbourne *Herald Sun* and Sydney *Daily Telegraph* are respectively the most widely and second most widely read newspapers in the country (by audiences) based on the ABA survey (Brand et al. 2001). The national *Australian* newspaper, however, is the preferred newspaper of *news professionals* and is regarded as the most significant paper in terms of setting the news agenda especially on political issues (Pearson & Brand 2001).[28] This is, in part, because of its national coverage as opposed to the strong local focus of the News Corporation tabloids. It is also, in part, because of the balance it strikes between political, social, economic, international, finance, entertainment and sports news. This balance enables an audience interested in national and international issues to gain an overview of recent events through one source. The *Australian* has also won numerous peer-assessed awards for its reporting over the years. The Murdoch tabloid *Daily Telegraph* is also regarded by news professionals as being very influential in setting the news agenda for other media and it is reported to be Prime Minister Howard's favourite newspaper. It is regarded as being particularly influential on the content of talk-back radio programs and commercial television current affairs shows. News producers interviewed for the ABA study, explained that the strong editorship of the paper, the

[27] The ABA survey 'Sources of News and Current Affairs' was undertaken by Bond University's Centre for New Media Research and Education. The findings were published as two separate reports: Part One focussed on professionals working in the industry (Pearson & Brand 2001) whereas Part Two focussed on the audience (Brand et al. 2001).

[28] The two other sources of news and current affairs that the survey found set the news agenda were ABC Radio National's 'AM' morning current affairs program and Channel 9's 'Sunday' current affairs show (Pearson & Brand 2001).

style of its writing (a direct, colloquial and opinionated address), the front-page headline and type size, were amongst the reasons for its success and influence (Pearson & Brand 2001).

Some news professionals regard the Fairfax publication the *Sydney Morning Herald* as equally influential, although more for its reach within the demographic of its readership, more highly educated, affluent professionals including politicians and business leaders. The two other Fairfax papers, the Melbourne *Age* and national *Financial Review,* share this demographic. The *Age* is also regarded as being influential in relation to political, social and economic issues. These three papers support more detailed and time-consuming investigative reporting and publish longer and more complex feature articles about social and political issues than do the tabloid press. Like the *Australian*, these three papers have won awards for their investigative journalism.

The Choice of Newspapers to Sample

The collection of reports for analysis of Jennie George's presidency of the ACTU includes coverage from two national daily newspapers, News Limited's *Australian* (broadsheet) and Fairfax's *Financial Review* (tabloid in size but not in style). It also includes an examination of all major capital city daily newspapers these are: the *Advertiser* (Adelaide, News Limited, broadsheet until 1997, tabloid later); the *Age* (Fairfax, broadsheet) and the *Herald Sun* (News Limited, tabloid) both Melbourne papers; the two Sydney dailies, the *Daily Telegraph* (News, tabloid) and the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Fairfax, broadsheet); the *Canberra Times* (Rural Press, broadsheet); the Brisbane *Courier Mail* (News Limited, broadsheet); two Tasmanian daily papers, the Hobart *Mercury* (News Limited, tabloid); the Launceston *Examiner* (Rural Press, tabloid); and the Perth *West Australian* (West Australian Newspapers, tabloid). Sunday editions of these newspapers, sister papers and separate Sunday papers such as the *Sunday Mail* (Adelaide) and the *Sun Herald* (Sydney) are also examined.[29] The sample included the Launceston *Examiner* together with the Hobart

[29] In the event of a newspaper publishing a sister edition, such as the *Age* and the *Sunday Age*, the two are discussed in the text as the *Age* and are counted as the one paper.

Mercury as these two Tasmanian cities are of similar size and both publish daily papers in contrast to most states where one capital city newspaper is either the only state-based *daily* paper, or is clearly the dominant paper. Owned by Rural Press, the *Examiner* provides some additional diversity to the sample. Certain of the papers consistently produced more relevant, interesting or controversial coverage of Jennie George's tenure as ACTU president than others. These are the *Australian*, the *Courier Mail*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Age*, the *Herald Sun* and the *Financial Review*.

As mentioned above, the *Australian* is a national daily broadsheet newspaper published by News Limited, a subsidiary of the multi-national News Corporation. It is an important source of national news in states such as South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland where there is only one local daily newspaper and where such papers are generally parochial in their news coverage. Indeed, this has been a relatively successful market segmentation strategy that has worked well for News Limited. The *Australian* concentrates on national political, economic, financial, business, industrial relations, foreign affairs and social policy matters. It also covers events in the Sydney–Melbourne–Canberra triangle in far more detail than events in other states. It addresses a more generalist audience than the other national paper, the *Financial Review* (which focuses on business, finance and economics) and presumes a slightly lower literacy and knowledge level amongst its readers than the *Financial Review* does, although higher than that assumed by the tabloids of their audience.

The *Australian* provides greater depth of commentary than is available in many of the state-based papers (with the exception of the two Fairfax owned capital city papers the Melbourne *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*). The *Australian* is pro-globalisation and deregulation and generally conservative on business and economic matters and on some social policy issues. It advocates Australian engagement in the Asian region and its reporting is frequently sensitive to the way Australia may be perceived within Asia to a greater extent than visible in other papers. It has been relatively progressive on certain social issues such as race, reconciliation and

immigration, this was most notably the case during the early to mid-1990s during the period Paul Kelly was Editor-in-Chief (1991-1996), although the paper has swung strongly towards the right on many issues in recent years and especially since Chris Mitchell became Editor-in-Chief (2002). However, the great majority of its opinion columnists and several feature writers are conservative or right wing. The *Australian* also attempts to appeal to particular niche markets through publication of weekly specialist supplements in areas such as information technology, higher education, media, arts, culture and fashion on different weekdays. It also includes a (relatively small) daily sports section. Its weekend employment section is widely used by employers seeking to reach a national audience.

The *Financial Review* is the other national daily newspaper. It is published by Fairfax, the second largest newspaper publisher in Australia. It is tabloid in format although not in style. As its name suggests the *Financial Review* primarily covers business and financial news, also economics, politics and industrial relations from a business perspective. It regularly publishes extended feature articles and supports in-depth, investigative reporting. The *Financial Review* presumes a relatively high level of finance, politics, economics, language and media literacy on the part of its audience. Its layout and visual style is distinctive as it often publishes photos that display conventions of contemporary photography rather than conventional newspaper photography. For example: images that are cropped, or framed in unusual ways (for a newspaper), that are grainy or high contrast, or that focus on a detail rather than a whole scene. During the period of analysis the paper had no specific sections aimed at a female or youth readership, furthermore its limited coverage of sport functioned as an adjunct to the main business of the paper.[30]

The *Financial Review* supports deregulation and globalisation and is generally conservative on business, economic and financial matters. However, in some instances it reports a greater variety of positions than other daily papers. In certain instances its reporting of particular political and industrial disputes or events has uncovered significant new information and could be seen as more progressively than

[30] In recent years the *Financial Review* has increased its coverage of cultural and lifestyle issues in an attempt to broaden its audience and attract new readers. It added a special weekend magazine that included coverage of lifestyle and cultural topics aimed at this audience.

conservatively aligned (for example in its investigative reporting of the 1998 Waterfront dispute for which reporter Pamela Williams won a gold Walkley award). Despite the entrenched masculine dominance of the business and finance sectors, the *Financial Review* generally reports on women in positions of authority in a more 'matter-of-fact' or 'business-as-usual' style than other newspapers. The paper relies less on sensationalism or the techniques of infotainment than most other Australian newspapers. Having a specialist product and clearly defined market means it is in less direct competition for its audience than the other daily papers. Its coverage of gender issues has included serious reporting of sexual harassment within the stock exchange and considerable discussion of paid maternity leave. It is possible to speculate that whilst it may be harder for reporters to argue for gender issues to be covered in the *Financial Review,* when they are covered, they are usually done so in a more information-oriented way than in other Australian newspapers.

The *Financial Review's* audience is presumed to be those involved in business and financial worlds and who see issues through the frame of capitalism and economic rationalism. The *Financial Review's* readers are presumed to be first and foremost concerned with economic issues above issues of social welfare, equity, education or indigenous issues. Given their business audience, the issue of workers' rights is also not likely to be a high priority for their readers. The market's approval is regarded by the *Financial Review* and its readers as being such a highly important litmus test of government policy that it takes precedence over a public disturbance reported as a national outrage by other newspapers (see discussion of Cavalcade to Canberra in Chapter Five and Six). Despite its tabloid size the *Financial Review* specialises in presenting economic, political, industrial and commercial news to the business and investment sector of the community. Its reporting style is generally the most restrained of the daily papers with an emphasis on information over entertainment to appeal to the perceived preferences of the rational business(man) reader.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* is a broadsheet, Sydney based newspaper published by the Fairfax. It co-publishes its Saturday magazine 'Good Weekend' with its Melbourne stable-mate the *Age* and occasionally they syndicate articles. Together with the *Age,* it has extensive classified sections in its Saturday edition and these are

strong revenue earners for the publishers. As mentioned above, it has strong audience reach amongst more affluent and highly educated sections of the community and is considered to be very influential due to the number of business leaders, politicians and social commentators amongst its audience. The *Sydney Morning Herald* does cover national news as well as local although it is strongly New South Wales (NSW) focussed. It covers international news possibly more extensively than national news. It also covers sport, lifestyle, arts, culture and entertainment issues including the publication of special themed sections on particular days of the week to increase market reach amongst certain audience segments on those days. This strategy has been adopted by the *Age*, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Australian* newspapers in their competition for market share.

The Melbourne *Age* newspaper has many similarities with the *Sydney Morning Herald.* One notable difference is that it has a slightly higher coverage of national news as it has a relatively high circulation in South Australia (SA) amongst people who want an alternative to the Murdoch press. The *Age* has tried various marketing strategies to increase its non-Victorian market share including simultaneous publication in SA so that distribution occurs at the same time as the two News Limited papers. At one stage it trialled the inclusion, in the SA edition, of a separate page of SA news to increase the local relevance in an attempt to woo a larger SA audience. The *Age* also has traditionally had the highest level of industrial relations coverage of any paper in the country as many unions have their national headquarters in Melbourne and the ACTU is based there. Historically, Melbourne was also the home of most business headquarters, however, that has changed in the last decade or so with increasing numbers of companies basing their head office in Sydney. Sydney has become the most 'international' Australian city and measures itself against other major world capitals, whereas Melbourne appears to still be locked in a rivalry with Sydney. This rivalry can sometimes be discerned in the reporting within the two papers. The *Age* also publishes a high level of commentary on social welfare and similar issues. Like the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Financial Review*, it continues to support investigative reporting and publishes extended feature articles about complex topics. Both the *Age* and the *Sydney*

Morning Herald have complicated front-page layouts with multiple stories, usually two or three photographs and/or a small cartoon relating to one of the reports. They use smaller headlines than the tabloids and these elements are all arranged together beneath a banner across the top of the page leading the audience to features within that day's edition or promoting those to come later in the week.

The *Canberra Times*, published by Rural Press, is a broadsheet newspaper with similar layout to the *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald.* It specialises in national political news in recognition of its location in the national capital, and the large component of its potential audience who work for either Federal Parliament itself, or the public service. It presents itself as a 'quality' newspaper, in contrast to the perceived values of tabloid newspapers and those associated with the Murdoch empire. The paper also addresses its local readership by taking a strongly Canberran focus on certain issues and the way it represented the law and order aspect of the Cavalcade to Canberra demonstration is an example of such an approach.

The *Courier Mail* is also a capital city daily newspaper published in Brisbane and distributed throughout Queensland. It is part of the News Limited stable and is broadsheet in format. The paper focuses primarily on state matters covering both Brisbane and regional areas. It prioritises business, finance, politics, law and order, sport, property, transport and some social welfare issues. Historically, the *Courier Mail* has been a very conservative paper especially in its reporting of race and industrial relations issues. It assumes a relatively low level of literacy from its readers. The *Courier Mail's* address takes account of the still significant support for the conservative National Party, and more recently for Pauline Hanson and One Nation, amongst Queenslanders, especially in regional, rural and remote areas. This readership profile is reflected in the paper's generally continuing conservative reporting on race, land rights, immigration, welfare, law and order, land clearing, development, and industrial relations issues. Like other broadsheet newspapers it features multiple reports and other elements on the front page.

The *Daily Telegraph* is a Sydney based News Limited tabloid that is widely regarded as the most influential of the Australian tabloid papers. As noted above, it

has a strong influence on the news agenda of talk-back radio and commercial television news and current affairs shows. It is characterised by sensationalist reporting of law and order issues, including some heavily criticised reporting of 'ethnic gang' violence in particular Sydney suburbs. It is conservative on economic, immigration, finance, industrial, political and most social issues although it could be categorised as liberal in relation to media freedom, anti-censorship and entertainment issues. It adopts a popular direct tone of address, and uses puns and word play widely in its effort to increase the entertainment appeal of the paper. The style of writing in the reports is characterised by the use of simple language and clear binary oppositions and they are usually short in length. It publishes the work of several well-known conservative writers, mainly male, as opinion columnists and is, together with the *Australian*, at the forefront of the media campaign against, what they term, 'political correctness' in Australian political and social life. Despite its fundamentally conservative position on many issues, the *Daily Telegraph* has taken up some industrial issues on behalf of the blue-collar workers it sees as amongst the core of its readership. It ran strong front-page stories in support of the Oakdale miners, who had their entitlements ripped-off when the company that employed them collapsed owing them millions of dollars in superannuation, long-service, holiday and workers compensation entitlements. Such coverage was seen as instrumental in achieving a shift in Government policy. However, despite its occasional support for workers when they can be popularly cast as the 'underdog' or 'battlers', the *Daily Telegraph's* industrial coverage is usually anti-union, pro-employer and constructs the public as the victims of any industrial action taken.

Other News Limited tabloids: *Herald Sun* (Melbourne), *Advertiser* (Adelaide) and the *Mercury* (Hobart) have many strong similarities with the *Daily Telegraph*.[31] Like the *Daily Telegraph* they favour large, bold, dramatic headlines on the front page relating to a single story and accompanied by a dramatic photograph. Sometimes they will include a second report across the bottom or down the side of the page. They all have a strong emphasis on local issues, events and personalities, with

[31] The *Advertiser* was published in broadsheet format for part of the period of study. In that format it was quite similar to the Brisbane *Courier Mail* but once it became tabloid in format it became very similar in tone to the Melbourne *Herald Sun*, although its focus was on local South Australian issues not Victorian ones.

limited coverage of national and international issues placed many pages into the paper. Generally, they are regarded as conservative on industrial issues although there are occasional local exceptions. For example, the *Advertiser* has run occasional supportive features on the plight of clothing outworkers and also workers subjected to workplace bullying. In both these instances, like that of the *Daily Telegraph's* coverage of the miners' lost entitlements, the story could be, and was, constructed as that of the little Aussie battler pitted against unscrupulous business crooks, rather than a systematic pattern of worker exploitation. These four papers periodically syndicate stories and photos especially when a significant local event occurs. The *West Australian*, although independently owned, adopts a very similar format. It too has strong local, even parochial, emphasis.

The Impact of News on Consumers

The 'Commonsense' of Industrial News: Trade Unions are 'Trouble'

News discourse is structured around a presumption of 'commonsense' interpretations of events shared between the presumed or ideal audience and the news reporter/producer. The manufacturing of deviance continues to be a central strategy in the construction of meaning of events. However, and this is important for this project, more recent analyses understand this idea of a commonsense position to be more fragmented and more contradictory than previously thought and audiences are understood to be more diverse, segmented and to have greater agency (Allan 1999; Hartley 1996). News producers work to make their products appeal to different sections of these markets (Pearson & Brand 2001). Despite the continuance of news associating certain characters and groups with 'trouble' and/or anti-social activities, the commonsense interpretation may vary from one report to another, one page to the next, one day to another. Audience engagement "is likely to engender a complex range of (often contradictory) positionalities as the activity of negotiating meaning is always contingent upon the particular social relations of signification in operation" (Allan 1999: 119). However, these multiple potential meanings "do not exist 'equally'" (Allan 1999: 120). Simplification is a fundamental tenet of news values and news producers continue to apply a variety of techniques to news in

order to structure reports in such a way as to simplify events into easily explained narratives, to minimise complex or multiple viewpoints to a few 'major' issues and binary oppositions and to make their preferred account appeal to audience identification. However suspect, the concept of 'commonsense' remains critical to the structure of news and implementation of news values. As Hartley argues, it is the news routines, discourses and values "that *produce* and *reproduce* commonsense and classifications" (Hartley 1989: 105). Likewise, John Fiske points out that:

> [t]he way that experience, and the events that constitute it, is put into discourse—that is, the way it is made to make sense—is never determined by the nature of the experience itself, but always by the social power to give it one set of meanings rather than another.
>
> (Fiske 1996: 4)

Furthermore, much of the appeal of the news lies in its apparent capacity to reduce complex issues to easily comprehensible ones and in its invitation to audiences to share this view of the world, this classification and judgement of the events of a given day. In taking up this invitation one is affirmed as a member of the imagined community of viewers sharing a vision of society and national identity.[32]

News as 'Truth'

Another important factor in considering the workings of commonsense in news is the myth of news as 'truth'. Hartley's 1982 work *Understanding News* emphasizes that news is a discourse that has an important set of internal beliefs to do with news as '*truth*', as a reflection of reality, which are important to the authority of news, its place and role in the process of making meaning. These truth claims work in part by the "suppression of alternative possibilities" (1982, 1989: 24). They are bolstered through the systematic incorporation of binary oppositions that involve the construction of a deviant other, 'them', opposed to the presumed readers, 'us'. The discourse of news has its own set of 'news values' that works both to prioritise and

[32] See Anderson (1983); Bignell (2002); Kozol (1995). There is also, however, potential pleasure to be gained in resisting or rejecting the news' accounts of particular events. Particular alternate subjectivities such as race, gender, sexuality, political affiliation may lead to readers interpreting events differently and taking pride and satisfaction in their resistance to the dominant meanings. Alternatively, specialist knowledge of events or issues may lead to audiences challenging news accounts (Hay 1996).

to exclude items on the basis of their perceived 'newsworthiness'.[33] These news values have become internalised as the 'commonsense' logic underlying what is and what is not 'newsworthy' and what is the appropriate angle to take in reporting. As van Zoonen's research into the experiences of young women journalists demonstrates, the existence of 'taken for granted' professional journalistic values and practices genders the news more effectively than formal or informal barriers to employing women at any level of the news production process (van Zoonen 1994a: 57-8.)

The myth of truth is strongly associated with print and electronic news and probably most strongly with television, despite increasing public scepticism in relation to certain aspects of the television medium (Pearson & Brand 2001; 'Uncertain Eye' 1998). It is central to the status and authority that news itself and news workers hold in contemporary society and the privileges they receive (van Zoonen 1994a). Importantly, it works to mask the processes of selection and emphasis that are integral to creating meaning within news reports and to inflate the status of the interpretation offered as the single, credible account, rather than one possible interpretation amongst many (Hartley 1989).

News and Political Action

Given the focus of contemporary textual analyses on the polysemic nature of media texts the case for considering 'commonsense' and 'privileged' meanings in news texts needs clarification. Whilst accepting that reading media texts is an active exercise in which readers engage with and "may be able to construct, reinforce, modify and even reject the social identities offered [to] them" (Thwaites et al. 1994: 170), news analysts argue that in many instances, audiences are highly dependent on the information in media reports to construct their understanding of events. Indeed, the 'news as information' view is that news is necessary for people to act effectively as citizens (Corner 1991).

[33] See Allan (1999: 61-3); Bignell (2002 82-8); Hall (1981: 234-237); Hartley (1989: 75-80) amongst others, for various accounts of news values. All the subsequent work on news values follows from a study of foreign affairs reporting by Galtung & Ruge (1965).

News and information genres remain of central importance to the capacity of citizens (especially in contemporary Western societies) to obtain information about and to exercise their democratic rights in relation to political and, indeed, industrial action. This is despite the turn to alternative media forms such as television talk shows and talk-back radio by some audience segments in preference to traditional forms of news (Brand et al. 2001; Lumby 1999). These information genres construct particular political subjectivities that they invite audiences to take up and, within these, adopt preferred reading positions from which news reports and analysis make most sense. The news media remain influential sources of information through which people construct their sense of society, their sense of self, and their assessments of political representatives, institutions and disputes, and through which they exercise some of the practices of citizenship (Fiske 1996; Hay 1996). Indeed, they remain influential in assisting people to develop their own sense of themselves, their gendered and racialised identity, their identities as workers, voters, citizens, activists, mothers, fathers, and so on (van Zoonen 1994a).

Analysing these processes is political work and has significant implications for political struggles. Unless readers are directly engaged as participants/protagonists in a dispute, campaign or issue, the information available, from which readers make up their minds or take up a position, is largely constructed and circulated by information genres of the media. Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch argue this role of the media is increasingly important:

> Over the past quarter of a century the media have gradually moved from the role of reporting *on and about* politics, 'from the outside' as it were, to that of being an *active participant* in, shaping influence upon, indeed an integral part of the political process
>
> (Blumler & Gurevitch 1995: 3).

Indeed, some social and political issues become 'media events' in that they are not only known through the media, but are largely structured by, through and in response to media processes of reporting (Altheide & Snow 1991; Fiske 1996). In such media events the media representations have as much, or more, influence than the event itself. This clearly highlights the importance of the struggle for control of meanings in the media, especially in relation to contested and controversial events.

The news media therefore frames "the discursive context within which political subjectivities are constituted, reinforced and reconstituted" (Hay 1996: 261). Media accounts of particular events and assessments of the performances of political actors in the public sphere, invite audiences to recognise themselves in and/or to assume various subject positions, each of which has ideological implications. The aim of this thesis, in conjunction with other feminist media research into information genres, is to reveal how this discursive context is gendered and how ideas of race, gender, age and sexuality are deployed within the subjectivities offered in political reporting.

Hartley argues that the news functions to produce social knowledge and cultural values which contribute to audiences' "horizons of possibility", and to the process of marking the limits of acceptable thought and action (1989: 55). This process has particular significance for women trying to gain equality within the public sphere. As Mary Vavrus argues, "news narratives about 'political women' are ... composed of contests of meaning around definitions of womanhood, feminist politics, race, and power" (Vavrus 2002: 15). Therefore, news accounts of women as political actors may have important effects on the attitudes of people towards, and women's participation in, political life. Assessments of the relationship of women and politics, and individual women's performance in the public sphere, are reported within gendered news frames. They incorporate a wide range of particular constructions of femininity, some of which work against the usual criteria of agency and authority. These representations circulate both through direct news reports of their actions and via the wider (gendered) discourses of politics. The gender differences in relation to politics and political performance are structured and experienced in relation to other discourses such as race, age, class and sexuality (Fiske 1996). They are also structured and experienced in relation to the historical, but still powerful, myth that women belong in the private sphere in opposition to (the public sphere of) politics (Sreberny & van Zoonen 2000). These beliefs continue to structure and be structured by both news discourse and more general political discourses. The news reporting of Jennie George's term as ACTU president demonstrates these discourses and practices in action. By closely examining the construction of news reports of George and her leadership of the ACTU we can

clearly see the practices and conventions of news reporting of gender, politics and industrial relations in operation. This in turn enables us to investigate the related processes of "discursive contestation by which [these] discourses work to repress, marginalize, and invalidate others" (Fiske 1996: 4).

This thesis takes, as a central concern, the ways news discourse is gendered and how this gendered discourse produces accounts of the performance, experience and credentials of women as political actors. Its theoretical approach is informed by the insights of the cultural studies theories of media analysis, particularly the recent developments in analysis of news as a discourse and a site of discursive struggles. It is informed by the work of feminist media theorists who have reclaimed the news as a site for the study of both the production of gendered meanings, and for investigation of how gender articulates with other aspects of identity (such as race, class, sexuality and age) in production of political subjectivities. This work is discussed extensively in the next chapter.

News media claims an authority and a 'truth effect' that works differently to the genres of fictional and entertainment media in which the fluidity of meaning may be built into the story. In this context news practices that privilege particular meanings remain central to the contemporary analysis of news. Chapter Two considers the techniques used to privilege particular meanings and the construction of commonsense within news reports.

Conclusion: Gender, Politics and Industrial Relations—Constructed, Circulated and Contested in a Terrain of Struggle

As the contextual background presented in this chapter demonstrates, mid-1990s Australia was at a key point of transition in its recent history. A historic period of Labor Government was coming to an end and was replaced with a conservative Coalition Government with a broad agenda for change, including a stated intent to curtail the operations of the trade union movement. It has transpired that this Government has sought to overturn the cultural changes wrought by the Hawke-Keating ALP governments across all sectors of society and especially targeting unions.

At the time of Jennie George's election as first woman ACTU president, the Coalition victory was predicted and the importance of the struggle over industrial relations reforms recognised as the most critical challenge she would face, together with the decline in union membership. Her election was significant not only for its timing at the end of a historic period of cooperation between government and unions in Australian history, but also as it was seen to signify important transformations in trade union culture, organising practices and priorities. George was also symbolic of the increased entry of women, feminists in particular, to leadership positions in the public sphere. The chapter has argued that the particular complexities and challenges experienced by women in leadership positions in both unions and political parties are relevant to the analysis to come, particularly in relation to the ways they are constructed by, reported in or absent from newspaper reporting.

Media ownership also forms crucial background to the study and raises questions on the nature of reportage, the control of editors and the effects of ideological leanings of particular papers. Finally, reference to the cultural assumptions in relation to the 'commonsense' values and 'truth effects' of a 'free' press, provide a problematic framing for understanding the impact of news media as a key institution in Australian public life.

2 Theoretical Perspectives on News of Unions and Women Political Leaders

Introduction

Historically, labour scholars have paid scant attention to media and cultural representations. This lack of attention is understandable given traditional beliefs in material practices and political agency by unionists and the left in general and their resistance to and mistrust of 'theory' that does not seem to contribute directly to action, also compounds it. The inattention to media representations leaves unasked questions about how audiences (including workers) make meanings from the limited discourses and representations of unionism available through the media. It is widely acknowledged that the discursive context within which unionism and industrial action is reported is hostile to the general role and principles of unionism.[1] However, the ways in which it is also often *gendered* is rarely examined (Muir 1997b). In addition, as feminist media theorists have demonstrated in other contexts, symbolic practices are integral to the constitution of material conditions and quality of everyday life.[2] In contrast to the focus of labour researchers, many early Marxist news media scholars did choose news reporting of industrial disputes and trade unions as a site for their research. This choice reflects the priority given by many in the late 1960s to early 1980s, to attend to representations of class over other identity fields of politics and struggles beyond 'the political' as a narrowly defined field of action.

This project addresses this gap in the labour movement and wider political scholarship by examining media representations of gender and unionism in relation to significant recent Australian industrial events. The thesis, through its analysis of reportage of Jennie George, argues that the understandings of how unions, union campaigns, party

[1] See for example Allan (1999); Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG 1976); Hartley (1989); Puette (1992); and Ward (1995).

[2] See for example Marian Meyers (1997) work on the way news media reports of violence against women construct the violence as the woman's fault. The significance of representational practices to material lives is also cogently demonstrated in other contexts, such as the work of many media theorists into the ways racism is constructed and circulated within and through symbolic practices. Here the work of Steve Mickler in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians provides a powerful example (Mickler 1998).

politics and women political actors are constructed in the public domain are crucial to the fortunes of women's leadership in both unions and parliamentary politics. It also illuminates the role of media in constructing and interpreting possible meanings of union action and policy that are made available to audiences through mainstream news reporting of key events and disputes, including which meanings and interpretations are *not* offered or are marginalised within reports. It draws on theories and methods of news analysis of industrial disputes taken up by both the Marxist-aligned British media researchers from the Birmingham Centre for Critical Cultural Studies (BCCCS) and the Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG) to develop the frameworks of analysis as well as the more recent work of cultural studies and feminist media scholars. In particular, it considers early Marxist critiques of news media for the relevant insights and limitations that they can provide to the way news about trade unions, unionists, political and industrial disputes are constructed and the ways discursively constituted truth values that adhere to news create appeal for particular audiences and impact on reader subjectivities in often multiple and contradictory ways. It turns to more recent cultural studies and particularly feminist media studies theory, for insights into the ways in which multiple and contradictory signifiers of femininity, masculinity, race, class and nationalism articulate in media texts to produce complex meanings about women political actors, as well as their experiences and performances as political leaders.

The chapter situates the analysis in the context of two significant recent phenomena. One, is the increasing tabloidisation of news media and the associated blurring of the boundaries between public and private spheres. Another, is the mediatization of politics and the consequent pressure nearly all political actors face to perform themselves in ways that are newsworthy, to engage with the media and to gain media coverage. Without such coverage the individual politician's actions, policies and performance are largely invisible both to the public/voters and to political power-brokers. The chapter discusses these phenomena in relation to the reporting of women political actors in general and the situation of Jennie George, as ACTU president, in particular. These questions will be returned to, where relevant, in the analysis of specific reports and patterns in news reporting of pivotal events in George's presidency in considering ways in which such trends may effect public understandings of the experiences and performance of women politicians.

Media and Cultural Representations: Labour Studies's Blindspot

There is a small body of labour studies research that examines specific media representations of labour issues, or union campaigns in the news and popular media.[3] There are a few general studies of news media representations of unions and disputes (Puette 1992; True 1999). In the main, these are aimed at a 'rank and file' labour movement audience. They generally focus on exposing basic oppositions and stereotypes within textual reportage. For example, William Puette's extensive study of the portrayal of organised labour in the USA press, on television news, in cartoons, the movies and television dramas, focuses on the themes, issues and bias within the content of reportage but does not include analysis of any visual images. Nor does his analysis pay attention to the ways such media representations construct the worker/unionist as male. The studies in this field commonly rely on simplistic 'transmission' models of communication and acknowledge neither the audience's agency in constructing meaning, nor the polysemic nature of signs. Labour studies research has largely ignored the role of cultural representations in developing and circulating gendered meanings of unions and union leadership in particular. Alex Carey is one exception who argued, for years, for the need for unions to pay attention to what he described as "the ideological management industry" (Carey 1987).

Few labour studies writers have focussed on media or popular culture representations of the labour movement and how such representations may normalise or perpetuate gendered practices of leadership and particular expressions of unionism. David Atkin (1991), Joy Damousi (1994) and Elizabeth Faue (1991) are exceptions who look at such representations within particular historical periods. Suzanne Franzway (1994) and this author (Muir 1997a, 1997b, 1999, 2000) consider some contemporary representations of unionism within the mass media and the gendered nature of such representations. Feminist critiques of the gendered nature of trade unions and of unions' internal structures and practices have contributed much to our understanding of the gendered relations of power within industrial bargaining and industrial representation. These critiques, however, have generally not considered how cultural representations

[3] For example Kumar (2001); Manning (1998).

and signifying practices contribute to and consolidate these gendered norms.[4]

Sometimes, too, the critiques of industrial bargaining practices and trade unions' internal structures and practices have paid inadequate attention to the experiences of different groups of women within the union, homogenising and universalising the experiences of these women, rather than acknowledging the differences between groups.[5] Media and cultural representations often create or extend ideas of a normative white experience or contribute to the positioning of a particular experience as the universal. Whilst existing studies provide important contextual information about the way the structures, traditional cultures and procedures of unionism maintain male advantage they could go further by questioning the operations of discourses and signifying practices in constructing and maintaining particular relations of power and dominance. As Suzanne Franzway (1994) argues, such analysis is vital as the availability of particular discourses impacts upon how women see themselves and are seen by others as unionists.

The Contribution of Marxist Media Analysis to Understanding News of Trade Unions and Industrial Disputes

Among the first to pay critical attention to news reporting of trade unions and industrial disputes were two Marxist-aligned British groups of media scholars. These are researchers associated with the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCCS) and the Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG) during the 1970s and early 1980s.[6] Another important contributor to this field is John Hartley whose foundational study of news media, *Understanding News* (1982, 1989), includes many examples of news coverage of industrial disputes. His analysis is strongly influenced by the early works of Stuart Hall, David Morley and other BCCCS members. These

[4] Sheila Cunnison and Jane Stageman provide a brief account of changes in unions' image making strategies in their efforts to reach potential women members, they refer to these as "policies of attraction" (1995: 133). They conclude that such strategies make women feel included but they do not examine particular representations in any detail or discuss which groups of women they may be addressing.
[5] For critiques of the marginalisation of non-English-speaking background women workers and unionists see Alcorso & Harrison (1993); Bertone & Griffin (1993).

[6] See, for example Beharrel & Philo (1977); Eldridge (1995); Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG 1976, 1980); Hall (1980b, 1981); Morley (1976, 1980a, 1983) and Philo et al. (1982).

researchers, predominantly men, were working within the emerging field of British Cultural Studies and employed Marxist and semiotic approaches to their study of news reporting of industrial relations and to the ways in which meanings are constructed in news reports.

Early cultural studies approaches demonstrate the operations of ideology through media reports. In particular, they reveal the ways in which particular class interests are 'favoured' or 'naturalised' within media reports of political or industrial conflict.[7] Studies of news reports of specific industrial disputes and of industrial relations reporting, in general, have usefully revealed hierarchies of credibility and authority whereby accounts from government and employer representatives are routinely favoured over accounts by unionists.[8] These early studies pay attention to issues of institutional and class power, they also closely examine reporting techniques and editorial strategies to reveal the range of ways particular accounts are privileged. They reveal that the repertoire of deviance is a particularly common and persistent frame for reporting industrial and other social movement disputes.[9] Another important legacy of the early BCCCS research has been the close attention paid to the construction of race within news reports (Hall et al. 1978). This has likewise been a continuing focus of news media research.[10]

Another Marxist-aligned group of media researchers, the Glasgow University Media Group (GUMG) also undertook studies of British news (particularly television) reporting of political and industrial disputes during the 1970s and early 1980s. They, too, make important contributions to subsequent understanding of the construction of meaning in news media. Despite criticisms of their work as being too ideological (Harrison 1990), GUMG's detailed examination of the techniques applied to the

[7] Such as Hall (1981); Hartley (1989); Morley (1976); Philo et al. (1982).

[8] Morley (1976); Philo et al. (1982); Walton & Davis (1977).

[9] For example works by Ericson, Baranek & Chan (1987); Gitlin (1980); Hall (1980c); Hall et al. (1978); Hartley (1989); and more recently McLeod (1995); McLeod & Detenber (1999); Scalmer (2002); and Ward (1995).

[10] Subsequent works on race reporting that acknowledge a debt to this pioneering work include: Cottle (2000); Dines & Humez (1995); Gilroy (1987); Hartley & McKee (2000); Jakubowicz (1994); Meadows (2001); Mickler (1998); van Dijk (1991, 2000).

construction of meaning in news reports usefully demonstrates the ways particular class interests are privileged by the media. Their studies, published as *Bad News*, *More Bad News*, and *Really Bad News* argue the case that the structure and values of news *always* positions unions as being to blame for disputes and as having negative consequences for the economy and everyday life. They argue that journalistic criteria in reporting industrial disputes frame reports against the assumption that there is a community consensus about the desirability of industrial harmony. News reporting assumes the need for cooperative relations to ensure industrial and social survival in an era of competition and it presents industrial action as *always* causing disruption and inconvenience to the consumer (GUMG 1976, 1980; Philo et al. 1982). GUMG's research identifies many continuing news conventions and common techniques of reporting which work to diminish the authority and credibility of unionists' and workers' accounts of events. These include the frequent omission of strikers' views about industrial action or demonstrations (GUMG 1976); the omission of contextual information about the events and issues leading up to the dispute (GUMG 1976; Walton & Davies 1977); the interviewing of workers and union officials in situations where noise and visual distractions diminish the clarity and authority of their account, such as at factory gates or outdoors (Walton & Davies 1977); and the focus on unions as "dispute organisations" with little or no attention given to their broader role for their members in social and economic spheres (GUMG 1976: 228).

Whilst the early GUMG and BCCCS studies of news reveal significant reporting conventions in relation to class interests and political allegiances, they do not fully take account of the operations of polysemy in relation to signs and the ways this leads to a series of contradictory and conflicting meanings in many texts. Furthermore, they take little notice of the gendered nature of news discourse. In 1977 GUMG researchers note, but do not explore further, women unionists' concerns "that the news simply tends to assume that workers are men … These two words are often used interchangeably in the news" (Walton & Davis 1977:128).[11] Likewise the construction of particular or conflicting masculinities is not a focus of their investigations. It is also interesting that

[11] It is notable that the gendered nature of reporting was raised in a few studies during the mid-1970s but was not considered a worthy focus of research in its own right by those (men) working in this field. See, for example, Brunsdon & Morley (1978), Morley (1980a).

neither the arena of industrial reporting, nor political reporting more generally, was taken up by feminists working in the field of media studies during the 1980s.[12] Despite feminist concerns (and especially socialist feminist concerns) for social change, their efforts to promote such change by and large did not include analysis of news media reporting of political issues of concern to feminists such as abortion, women's health, the women's movement and the rights of single mothers, lesbians, women workers, women unionists etc. The feminist analysis of news media, undertaken in the late 1970s and 1980s largely focusses on the use of gender stereotypes in news reporting and on the absence of women in positions of power in news organisations—for example as senior reporters and editors. Liesbet van Zoonen has expressed her surprise over this omission and makes the point that such analysis of how the political agendas of feminism have been represented in the media would be useful to the movement (van Zoonen 1994a: 153).

Important questions of how presumptions of gender and race might structure the reporting and the preferred meanings within reports of industrial issues will be taken up extensively within the applied critiques that follow in this thesis. In situations where the disputes are clearly between two or more competing traditions of masculinity, the masculinities themselves need to be 'unpacked' to see what assumptions and associations are embedded within these signs, especially those to do with sexuality and physicality (Connell 1987, 1995). These questions are particularly pertinent in the analysis of the reporting of Cavalcade to Canberra that follows in Part III, Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

During the 1980s and early 1990s others writing about political and industrial disputes, such as Norman Fairclough (1989, 1995), Roger Fowler (1991) and Colin Hay (1996), turn to linguistics and discourse analysis to examine the meanings made within media discourse, particularly the narrative accounts of particular political disputes. Colin Hay, writing about the prolonged industrial dispute throughout the British 1978/9 'winter of discontent', usefully demonstrates how the dispute was discursively constructed by the

[12] See Davies et al. (1987); National Working Party on the Portrayal of Women, (1993); Tuchman (1978a). The news reporting of some of the central issues of concern to feminist activists—such as abortion, domestic violence and the women's movement itself—have been the subject of feminist research from the 1990s onwards. See for example Carter, Branston & Allen (1998); Kozol (1995); McDermott (1995); Meyers (1997); Rhode (1995); van Zoonen (1992); Vavrus (2002); Wykes (2001).

media as a serious national crisis and how it became "lived in these terms" (Hay 1996: 255). The 'winter of discontent' is said to have cost the Labour Party the following election (Clutterbuck 1981; Hay 1996). Hay argues that the discursive "construction of the 'winter of discontent' as symptomatic of a more fundamental crisis of the state" had profound political implications as it called for a particular kind of political intervention (1996: 253). The dominant perceptions of the media and political commentators about the nature and scale of the crisis made 'New Right' policies appear the logical solution and the Conservative Party the only group able to implement the solution. Hay's study of the tabloid media's use of rhetorical strategies and linguistic devices in discursively constructing the events as a political crisis is relevant to the discussion of the reporting of the Cavalcade to Canberra.

In Australia, Ian Ward's research into political reporting reveals the ways that conventions of news reporting employ particular symbolic codes, myths and news frames to organise material into recognisable stories (Ward 1995). These patterns and conventions of reporting frequently position trade unionists and other political demonstrators as 'deviant', unreasonable and as a threat to public order (1995: 262-3). Indeed, these patterns of reporting "label direct political action as illegitimate rather than celebrating it as a vibrant expression of democracy" (1995: 267). Ward's observations into the reporting practices of the Australian press are also relevant in the analysis of the Cavalcade to Canberra demonstration.

Despite the limitations of the early Cultural Studies structuralist framework to this project, the early work of theorists such as Hall, Hartley, Fiske and the academics associated with the Glasgow University Media Group make significant contributions to understanding of how certain class, race and occupational groups interests are favoured within specific disputes through particular structures, codes, conventions, values and techniques of news reporting. Whilst GUMG (for example) acknowledge that audiences may make alternative meanings from reports, their early work focuses upon *how* journalistic criteria and values structure selection of stories and the structuring of reports (through news talk and visuals) to privilege particular interpretations of events as the '*commonsense*' and 'balanced' account of what happened and what it means (GUMG 1976: 30-31). The structuring of news around binary oppositions that classifies

one set of actors and their interests as 'deviant' in opposition to those of the presumed reader, is a fundamental practice of news. It is necessitated by the drive to simplify complex issues into easily communicable narratives with familiar characters and problems, and an apparently logical or '*commonsense*' solution. The issue of how news constructs deviance has been widely studied in relation to trade unions, race, crime, other social movements and young people.[13]

These early, Marxist-aligned, cultural studies approaches to news analysis are particularly concerned with how ideology is mobilised within news reports through constructions of commonsense and representations of deviance (Hall 1981). They employ Antonio Gramsci's (1971) theories of hegemony and Louis Althusser's (1971) theories of interpellation to account for readers' identification with particular positions, even when these might be against their class interest to do so. The assumption and construction of consensus by the news leads to the belief that there is only *one* perspective on events, one 'commonsense' news account (Hall et al. 1978; Hartley 1989). Such an assumption, Hartley points out, has political significance in its denial of structural discrepancies and its positioning of "groups outside the [presumed] consensus as deviant, and marginal" (1989: 83).

Cultural Studies and Feminist News Analysis

By the mid-1980s media analysts influenced by the growing field of cultural studies were increasingly utilising postmodern approaches. In particular, they were acknowledging the polysemic nature of signs and the impossibility of the news actually 'fixing' meaning, despite its often strenuous attempts to privilege particular interpretations. The influence of cultural studies was increasingly visible throughout the 1980s. Mainstream news is a modernist genre, given its stated purpose to deal with 'facts' through 'objectivity' in reporting and its presumption of the existence of 'commonsense' and a singular 'truth'. Despite the changes to the genre being wrought by tabloidisation, these values continue underpin the way news promotes its role, if not

[13] See, for example, Beharrel & Philo (1977); Ericson et al. (1987, 1989, 1991); Gitlin (1980); GUMG (1976, 1980); Hall et al. (1978); Hartley (1989); Hollingsworth (1986); Masterman (1985); McLeod (1995); Mickler (1992, 1998); Pickering (2001); van Dijk (1991, 2000); Ward (1995); Wykes (2001).

the presentation of its material.[14] The early modernist communications models of the transmission of a message by a news producer assumed it was received intact by the audience and internalised by an audience member.[15] This model was shown to be wanting (Hall 1980c; Morley 1980b, 1983). The early Marxist analysis is particularly concerned with the idea of textual power in relation to the class interests it served. Hall et al. (1978) also question the way news reportage of race issues serves to perpetuate and legitimate racial discrimination. Early work by David Morley and Charlotte Brunsdon demonstrates the diversity of ways particular audiences made sense of the news (Brunsdon & Morley 1978; Morley 1980a). Developments in news media research, informed by studies of reception, demonstrate that audiences do identify with subjectivities that differ from their own class, race and/or gender position. The impact of research into audiences' consumption of both news and entertainment genres changed the understanding (presumption) of textual power.[16] This development breaks with the constrictions of modernism and is one of the key influences of postmodernism on cultural studies and media research.

Early feminist studies of news initially focussed upon 'images of women' disseminated in the news and the effects the use of stereotypes might have on women's lives.[17] Such approaches to media studies have since been critiqued by feminists whose approach to media is informed by alternative sources such as structuralism and psychoanalysis.[18] Joanne Hollows, for one, argues that these critiques:

> led to the development of one key focus of feminist media, film and cultural studies: how the processes and practices of representation worked to produce ideas about what it means to be a woman.
>
> (Hollows 2000: 20)

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[14] Hartley (1996; Pearson & Brand (2001); Turner (1999); 'Uncertain Eye' (1998).

[15] Carey J. (1989); Friedan (1963); Tuchman (1978a).

[16] See Ang (1985); Brunsdon & Morley (1978); Morley (1980a); and Radway (1984) amongst others.

[17] See for example Edgar & McPhee (1974); Friedan (1963); Tuchman (1978a).

[18] See Byars (1991) for critiques of 'images of women' approach to feminist media studies. See also Ang & Hermes (1991); Grace & Stephen (1981); Hollows (2000); Macdonald (1995); and van Zoonen (1994a) for discussion of these early studies.

However, these developments should not be taken to indicate that all texts are equally amenable to infinite readings. It is clear that many kinds of texts, news in particular, actively restrict the available meanings. The methods employed to do this, the processes of selection and emphasis involved, the relations of power established within the text are all of interest in contemporary (news) media research. The focus on representations has shifted from the modernist approach which saw representations as being reflective of a prior reality to a more postmodern position which sees representations as being "actively constituent of reality" (McRobbie 1997: 172). Developments in postmodern and poststructural theory have increased researchers' awareness of (and interest in) the complex politics of identity and difference and in the ways they are constructed within/through media texts. These questions are of interest to many media researchers, not least to feminist scholars in this field.[19] Also of interest to contemporary media analysts, especially those whose critique is influenced by feminist, black or queer theory, are inconsistencies in the texts. These inconsistencies and gaps create spaces through which alternate meaning can be made (Trinh 1991).

News media has been relatively neglected by feminist postmodern analysts in comparison to the attention given to entertainment genres. This may well be due to the characteristic association of postmodernism with textual fluidity and the pleasures available through textual play, and perhaps also to the cultivation of 'feminine' reading skills in the construction of entertainment narratives and characterisation. In this light, news media may appear 'boring' and an 'old-fashioned' genre of less interest than entertainment such as soaps and films or new forms of 'infotainment' such as talk-back radio and television talk shows.[20] This thesis addresses this relative gap in feminist media analysis.

Postmodernism has impacted upon feminist media research in a variety of ways including prompting the study of women's genres and audiences and their pleasures.[21]

[19] For example Ang (1990, 1991); Hermes (1995b, 1997).

[20] See Catharine Lumby (1997, 1999) for a positive view of tabloidisation and the benefits for women as media participants. In particular her argument that US talk-shows offer a venue for voices that are largely missing from the public sphere "they comprise and speak to a predominantly, ethnic, female and blue-collar audience" (1999:9). See also Hartley (1996) and Turner (1999) for a discussion of tabloidisation.

[21] See for example Ang (1985); Hermes (1995a); Stacey (1994).

Natalie Fenton argues that, for those with a focus on the text, the emphasis shifted "to how discourses comprising words and statements and other representational forms brought together into a field of coherent textual regularity actively produce social realities as we know them" (Fenton 2000: 727).

For feminist researchers it is not just social realities in general that are of concern, but the particular relationship for women between the text and social realities. Fenton continues:

> [t]he material existence of women is seen to be borne through different, often competing discursive strategies which in naming, classifying or speaking the truth of women, also bring her into being.
>
> (Fenton 2000: 727)

News reports of women as political actors are a prime example of this relationship for these reports both purport to reveal the 'truth' of individual women's experiences, whilst at the same time articulating with social myths and contradictory beliefs about women in general. This project engages directly with news accounts of women's performance as political actors within the public sphere and, in particular, with the ways that myths and stereotypes of femininity are employed within these representations.

News shapes public knowledge. Despite the changes occurring within specific forms and across media genres through the effects of globalisation, new technologies (such as cable television and the internet), and tabloidisation, the news continues to be one of the primary sources of information for people about events in the world and their own society. News producers, institutions and individual reporters are granted significant privileges on this basis—at least in most western democracies—and their responsibilities as professionals, having such privileges (and power), are recognised in their various professional codes of ethics and the activities of various regulatory bodies such as the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal (van Zoonen 1994a).[22] Therefore it is imperative that

[22] See for example the Journalists Code of Ethics adopted for Australian journalists by the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance at http://www.alliance.org.au/ (accessed 12/10/2003). Some news publishers such as Fairfax have their own internal Codes of Ethics. However, notably, some well-known Australian broadcasters such as John Laws have argued they do not need to conform to such codes of practice as they are 'entertainers' not journalists. For a recent discussion of ethics in the Australian media see Probyn & Lumby eds. (2003).

news reportage be subjected to a rigorous critique of its assumptions and representations of gender.

(Re)discovering News as a Site of Construction of Gendered Meanings: Feminist Approaches to News Media

In 1994 Dutch feminist media theorist Liesbet van Zoonen published her foundational book *Feminist Media Studies*, that established an overview of the "enormous heterogeneity of feminist media theory and media research that has been produced in the past decades" (van Zoonen 1994a: 2). She notes a fundamental point of commonality between feminist media studies projects and cultural studies' approaches to media—a common claim to be political in their intent and practices. As well as providing an overview of feminist media analysis, van Zoonen also identifies an activist agenda in her own work through her statement that her "book is aimed at developing a cultural understanding of the relations between gender, power and the mass media" (1994a: 7). Importantly, van Zoonen regrets the lack of feminist attention to news accounts of feminism and the women's movement; to the production of gendered meanings within news genres; and to the 'public knowledge' project more generally (1994a: 152).[23]

This gap in feminist media research is taken up, during the 1990s, by a small but growing number of feminist researchers who turn their attention back to news and information media and to investigations of the construction of gendered meanings within these sites. Whilst some of this research assumes a transmission model of communication, or limits itself to analysis of stereotypes, others employ feminist cultural studies techniques in their analysis of news. An examination of the literature has identified several topics of news reportage that have been researched by feminist scholars during the 1990s and several methods of research that are pertinent to this study. Although the topics are different the findings of several studies demonstrate the continued existence of various gendered reporting practices that are relevant to this analysis. The three areas of research that have most relevance to this project are: the

[23] A special issue of the journal *Signs* was published in 1995 (Vol. 20, No. 31, Spring) featuring feminist critiques of news media and a few edited collections have been published in the late 1990s but this remains an under investigated area (see Dines & Humez 1995; Carter et al. 1998; Sreberny & van Zoonen 2000). The new international journal *Feminist Media Studies* which commenced in 2000 may assist in redressing this imbalance.

reporting of domestic and sexual violence, feminism and the women's movement, and politics.

Firstly, a growing body of feminist research examines the reporting of domestic violence and sexual assault on women. Marian Meyers' (1997) book *News Coverage of Violence Against Women: Engendering Blame* investigates the kinds of news frames within which violence against women is reported and the ways particular constructions of femininity are deployed within news reports to produce particular meanings of the events. Meyers argues that in examining news genres it is critically important to acknowledge that the conventions of news and operations of news values work to privilege particular meanings and suppress others. In particular, that the gender dimensions of these practices of privilege and suppression are of great relevance to feminist research into media representations. Meyers' analysis is useful to this project. The thesis builds on Meyers's work, paying more attention to other contradictory meanings within the texts and the potential for audiences to identify with multiple subject positions, or to make contradictory and partial meanings from the images and narrative accounts of events.

Several other essays on media coverage of violence against women have been published in a volume of essays edited by Cynthia Carter, Gill Branston and Stuart Allan, *News, Gender and Power* (Carter et al. 1998). In their introduction Carter et al. outline eight "critical modes of enquiry" or research 'problematics' that inform contributions to the book. These provide a framework for both feminist and 'gender-sensitive' critique. They also provide the scope within which to apply "a politics of intervention" (Carter et al. 1998: 3). The essays in this volume exemplify the range of directions in which feminist analysis of news may be undertaken, including some which are informed by a similar cultural studies paradigm to this thesis (Bradley 1998; Holland 1998).[24] Maggie Wykes (2001) has also published on the reporting of crime and how views about gender, race, class and poverty are constructed within, and through, news reporting of crime. Her findings contributed some insights about the construction of criminality relevant to the analysis of the reporting of the Cavalcade to Canberra.

[24] Others to study media coverage of violence to women include Benedict (1992); Kozol (1995); and Rhode (1995).

Secondly, feminist news media research looks at representations of the women's movement and how 'feminism' is constructed within a range of different kinds of news media reporting. These approaches range from content analysis[25] to semiotic textual analysis (Schaffer 1998). They provide useful insights into the ways in which feminism as a political belief and feminists as political actors have been categorised and reported at different times, in particular contexts and across different media genres. One of the most significant findings of such research for this thesis is the way representations of feminists frequently oppose them to 'normal' or ordinary women and demonise them as extremists.[26] If the aims of a feminist politics include mobilisation and empowerment of women, then the ways in which feminism itself and feminists as actors are reported are crucial in considering how meanings are made about feminist political interventions. It is useful to consider these reporting frameworks in assessing how successful particular campaigns have been and to consider alternatives that work towards change. These studies are particularly significant in considering how Jennie George's feminism is reported and, in particular, how it is deployed within news accounts of particular events as a signifier of deviance from 'normal' femininity, and therefore to add weight to certain interpretations of events.

The third key theme in feminist news media research, and the one of greatest relevance to this project, is the construction of femininity in reports of political issues and particularly in reports about women politicians. After high-profile debates and campaigns around equal opportunities during the 1980s, the 1990s have seen increasing public interest in news reports of the growing number of women politicians and political candidates. This has to do with the increasing number of women active in politics and public life more generally and increased public interest in the experiences and performance of those who attain positions of leadership and/or power. It may also be related to the push by media organisations (and their advertisers) to reach new audiences from the demographics 'ABs', that is, women and younger people.[27]

[25] For example Huddy (1997); Lind & Salo (2002); and Rhode (1995).

[26] Baker Beck (1998); Faludi (1992); Hollows (2000); Lind & Salo (2002); McDermott (1995); Schaffer (1998); Vavrus (2002).

[27] See Lumby (1999); Schaffer (1998).

On the one hand, much feminist research into gender and politics considers the obstacles women face in gaining pre-selection and election. Issues such as the nature of opposition to women's pre-selection; the standards of behaviour expected of women politicians as opposed to men; and the masculine culture of political parties and Parliament, itself, are quite commonly raised by women politicians themselves and by journalists interviewing them.[28] Additional related matters of interest to political scientists, feminist sociologists and women activists include logistical problems such as adequate financial and family support to campaign successfully.[29] This research is often interview-based and sociological, placing the emphasis on the women politicians' first-person interpretations of their experiences, and within it media reporting may be one of several foci. Some of this work is aimed at a popular audience.[30] There are also some books and articles on the subject aimed at a more politically informed or academic audience.[31] These accounts include discussion of electoral strategies, specific women candidates' experiences and comments on their own and others' treatment by the media. However, detailed semiotic analysis of the ways in which femininity is constructed within news frames or particular news reports is rarely attempted. Much of this work is biographical and positivist. It is concerned with the personal experiences of that unusual woman—the female politician—and, as such, does not extend knowledge of theories of media representation, although it can provide some useful examples of the application of gendered news frames and women's reactions to them. Some Australian women politicians, including former Australian Democrats Leader Janine Haines, former Victorian ALP Premier Joan Kirner, former Democrats Leader then ALP politician Cheryl Kernot, and another former Democrat Leader, Natasha Stott Despoja, have published accounts of their experiences and responses to media representations of women politicians' performances in parliament.[32] This work, too, is aimed at a popular audience and, whilst it provides more information as to the context in which women

[28] For example Braden (1996); Deverall et al. (2000); Henderson (1999); Kahn (1996).

[29] These are discussed by Henderson (1999); Sawer & Simms (1993); and van Acker (1999) amongst others.

[30] For example Deverall et al. (2000); Henderson (1999); Mitchell (1996b); Kernot (2002).

[31] Those in this group that have been useful to this project include Braden (1996); Haines (1992); Kahn (1996); Sawer (1990); Sawer & Simms (1993); Witt et al. (1994) and van Acker (1999).

[32] Haines (1992, 1993); Kernot (2002); Kirner & Rayner (1999); Stott Despoja (1997).

politicians negotiate their professional performance, it provides limited insight into the processes of signification in news reporting.

On the other hand, some feminist media scholars focus on news reporting of women politicians. They investigate how news reporting frames the experience, professionalism, performance and potential of women within particular discourses of femininity and of politics.[33] Such framing creates particular meanings about the relationship of women to politics. They also examine the way particular myths and figures of femininity are deployed within the narrative and the images used to accompany such news reports. This area of research has usefully informed this project and has provided some relevant international examples that indicate ways that news discourse is itself gendered and how it articulates with the masculinised arena of politics to create particular challenges for women, especially feminist, political actors.

Gendered News Frames

Pippa Norris's study of the representation of women political leaders in their first week in office offers useful insights into particular patterns of gendered representation, specifically the use of 'gendered frames' (Norris 1997a: 2-11). Norris's development of the idea of gendered frames is an extension of the concept of news frames itself, developed from Erving Goffman's theory of frame analysis (Goffman 1975).[34] It has provided a useful starting point for this project. News frames, or as Gitlin calls them 'media frames', "are persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual" (Gitlin 1980: 7). Norris adopts a slightly broader definition seeing frames as "interpretative structures that set particular events within their broader context" (Norris 1997a: 2). News frames are part of the institutionalised and commonsense news discourse of news journalists, producers and organisations.

[33] See in particular McNeil (1991); Muir (1997a, 1997b, 2000); Norris (1997a, 1997b); Ross & Sreberny (2000); Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross (1996); Sreberny & van Zoonen (2000); van Zoonen (1998a, 2000); Vavrus (2002) and Walsh (1998).

[34] For early discussions of news frames see Gitlin (1980c); Hall (1973); Tuchman (1978b).

News frames work to categorise events and slot them into pre-existing codes and patterns of meaning. This process has particular implications for the reporting of women political actors because many of these patterns rely on certain assumptions and myths of femininity or connote certain kinds of femininity. Norris's research, and that of other feminist media analysts in this area, demonstrates that gendered frames are regularly employed in the reporting of women and men in public life. Norris argues that with "the heightened salience of gender politics on the American agenda" news frames are increasingly, explicitly gendered (1997a: 6-7). Gender now features as a key theme and organising principle in a wide range of stories about candidates, voting patterns, leaders in the USA and internationally, and policy debates. She notes that gender politics is becoming "one of the core dividing lines defining the identity of politicians, parties, issues and voters in America" (1997a: 1). Norris and her co-contributors to *Women, Media and Politics*, seek to establish "whether the (American) media frame gender politics 'with a different eye' which hinders women's participation in public life" (Norris 1997a: 11). She argues that "whether stories are framed as gender-neutral or gender-relevant is itself part of the battle of cultural politics" (1997a: 6-7). Her observations about the rise of gender as a key theme in the organisation of news reports of politics, and certain public policies,[35] are relevant to Australia, Canada, Britain, Europe and other countries experiencing an increase in the participation of women in public life.[36]

British researchers Annabelle Sreberny and Karen Ross concur with Norris on the likelihood of gendered news frames inhibiting women's success in politics. Supporting this view is their analysis of the reporting of Margaret Beckett's candidacy for leadership of the British Labour Party (Ross 1995; Ross & Sreberny 2000). Interestingly, their interviews with women politicians find that these women have mixed responses to the ways in which their activities and achievements are reported, in some cases believing that a gendered frame works to humanise them and add to their appeal to the voter. Also demonstrating the problematic effects of gendered news frames for women is Liesbet van Zoonen's research into the reportage in the Dutch gossip press of Dutch politicians and

[35] The sorts of public policies that are especially likely to be represented through a gendered frame include abortion, reproductive technology, affirmative action, family breakdown and divorce; work and family 'balance', women and work, and family support.

[36] See for example Muir (1997a); Ross & Sreberny (2000); van Acker (1999); van Zoonen (2000).

their families. She argues that gendered frames can work in such a way that men gain in credibility in reference to their domestic responsibilities whereas women rarely do (van Zoonen 1998a, 2000). She argues that,

> gossip coverage of the family constructs an important stage for male politicians on which their worth as politicians can be established … [whereas] the attention for the family lives of female politicians functions as a continuous reminder of women's odd position in politics.
>
> (van Zoonen 2000: 117)

In addition to considering gendered news frames, some feminist researchers in this area pay close attention to the deployment of particular rhetorical and visual signifiers of femininity and the ways they construct particular and/or contradictory meanings of femininity in the reportage of women politicians.[37] Most of these studies have focussed on elected women politicians. However, Wahneema Lubiano's (1993) analysis of the reporting of Law Professor Anita Hill, a black American academic who accused black USA Supreme Court nominee Judge Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment, is a notable exception. Hill's allegations provoked not only a highly-charged and racialised war between the sexes (and indeed between different groups of black and white women and men) but one played out in the media and taken up by a number of cultural studies and media theorists.[38] Lubiano analyses the articulations of race, gender and class in some of the media coverage, with particular attention to the image-text relations in the reportage and the deployment of particular figures of femininity. Her attention to the articulation of these diverse elements in producing meaning about the actions of one particular woman political actor and what these go on to suggest about contemporary American women—black women and feminists in particular—and affirmative action, offers a model of analysis that has been useful in studying the reportage of Jennie George.

Australian work on gendered reporting of women politicians includes Elizabeth van Acker's chapter on media representations of women politicians in her book on women in politics *Different Voices: Gender and Politics in Australia* (1999). Van Acker argues

[37] Including Brown & Gardetto (2000); Ross (1995); Ross & Sreberny (2000); van Zoonen (1998a, 2000); and Walsh (1998).

[38] See Toni Morrison's edited collection *Race-ing Justice—Engendering Power* (Morrison 1993) in which Lubiano's essay is published, also Fiske (1996) and Vavrus (2002) amongst others.

"that producing and utilising representations of gender is a political issue" and that the media constructs as well as reflects political beliefs (1999: 141). Her work is useful for its Australian inflection and the way it identifies parallels in reportage of Australian politicians to those this study finds in the coverage of Jennie George. However, van Acker's book appears to be designed primarily for the tertiary education market and her analysis of the effect of gendered frames is largely confined to an identification and discussion of the employment of stereotypes within the reporting of women's participation in the public sphere.

Iva Deutchman and Anne Ellison are two Australian scholars who have produced a perceptive critique of the way the media constructed diverse and contradictory gendered images of the Australian right-wing, populist, maverick politician Pauline Hanson, and indeed 'produced' her as a force in Australian politics. However, because their research is limited to the textual content of news reports it does not include an analysis of the extensive array of visual images, photographs and cartoons of Hanson and the ways these deployed particular constructions of femininity for dramatic effect (Deutchman & Ellison 1999).

Despite this growing interest in women as political actors, there is still relatively little feminist media analysis of the ways news frames, values, conventions and specific visual and rhetorical techniques of reporting construct images of hegemonic masculinity; of traditional, exceptional or deviant ideas of femininity in relation to women politicians; or of how such ideas of femininity are employed in press reports and assessments of their activities, experiences, policies, performance and credibility. It appears that there is not much academic interest in analysis of the reportage of high-profile women unless they are made spectacular through scandal or crisis. These are critical issues in the analysis of the reportage of Jennie George to follow.

The Feminisation of News Media: The 'Tabloid Turn'

In the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century, news reporting is increasingly incorporating the concerns and forms of popular entertainment in its drive to maintain its audience share and to attract certain audience segments who have turned

away to non-traditional sources of information, such as television talk shows and talk-back radio. The lines between news as entertainment and news as information are becoming increasingly blurred. This phenomena is referred to by some as 'the tabloid turn' or 'tabloid trend'.[39] Some of the characteristics of the tabloid trend include increasingly informal tone of address, increased reliance on sensationalised styles of reporting, increased reliance on visuals over text, shorter reports, greater emphasis on human drama over policy issues, on personal stories over 'impartial' expert commentary, and on reports about celebrities over current affairs issues (Turner 1999). One aspect of this trend of particular relevance to this study, is that the reporting of public figures increasingly focuses on them as individuals—on their private lives, self-presentation, personal histories, lifestyle, and views on domestic or private sphere concerns—rather than on their performance of their public duties.[40] This mode of reporting has close similarities with that of reporting on celebrities in the tabloid and gossip press.[41] Increasingly, public figures and politicians are participating in personal profiles, in-depth interviews at home, television game and panel shows, and gimmicks such as personal 'make-overs', organised by women's magazines in co-operation with well-known fashion houses. Participation in these non-traditional forms of media coverage not only generates publicity but is an attempt to reach new audiences especially young people and women voters. Research shows that such audiences are less likely to engage with, or rely upon, traditional 'hard' news coverage of political issues and events (Pearson & Brand 2001).

The behaviour of these politicians, then, is influenced by their need for media exposure. Increasingly, political and public figures are allowing access to their private lives in an effort to boost their public career and approval rating. Karen Ross and Annabelle Sreberny (2000: 88) argue that the "tyranny of telegeneity" also affects male politicians, but that it has a disproportionate impact on women who are always represented as women first and as politicians second. They also note, however, that many of the British women politicians they interviewed, although irritated by the media's emphasis

[39] Featherstone (1991); Hartley (1996); Lumby (1997, 1999); Schaffer (1998).

[40] See Featherstone (1991); Hollows (2000); Lumby (1999); Schaffer (1998); Sreberny & van Zoonen (2000); Turner (1999); and van Zoonen (1998a, 2000).

[41] As discussed by Lumby (1999); Turner et al. (2000); and van Zoonen (1998a, 2000), amongst others.

on appearance and domestic issues, were prepared to continue to co-operate with requests for such interviews as "it is better than not being reported on at all" (2000: 94).

Politicians can achieve increased recognition through these tactics and can form rapport with audience segments, and potential voters, who identify with their media image, particularly their style, humour and positions on those issues that they are able to articulate within the limited framework of these infotainment programs. However, some audience segments, and many political commentators, are cynical about such populist attempts to appeal to voters through non-traditional channels. For example, former Australian Democrats leader Natasha Stott Despoja has been characterised as paying too much attention to her media image and not enough to her policies (Ellingsen 2001). Her frequent appearances on infotainment and magazine style television and radio programs aimed at a youth audience were, on the one hand, an attempt to get the party's message across to disaffected young voters that the Democrats cared about them and were attuned to their issues, and on the other, that the Democrats had a Generation-X leader in contrast to the uniform middle-aged grey male image of the major parties.[42] These tactics were an attempt to use the characteristics of tabloidisation and personalisation for the benefit of the minor political party. Given the limited attention their policies had received in the traditional political news coverage it was a reasonable strategy, and to some extent it worked. However, Stott Despoja's extensive engagement with the media also produced resentment from some (rival) members of her own party. They accused her of being narcissistic and intent on building a personal 'celebrity' status instead of a strong party profile.[43] Her media profile had her commenting on 'soft' issues or participating in so-called 'media stunts' to promote new policies in ways that could be used by her critics to suggest that she was 'flakey', a light-weight and more interested in presentation than policy (Muir 2001).

[42] Stott Despoja appeared regularly on television shows such as 'Good News Week', 'The Panel', 'The Glasshouse' and 'Rove Live' and in television specials such as *Marie Claire* magazine's 'What do women want?' program. She also maintained her own website in an effort to communicate directly with young voters. This was another strategy that was criticised by opponents and some political reporters as building the 'cult' of Natasha rather than a following for the Australian Democrat party.

[43] See numerous reports including Farr (2002, *Daily Telegraph*); Peake (2002, *Canberra Times*); Ramsay (2002, *Sydney Morning Herald*) and Seccombe (2002, *Sydney Morning Herald*).

An interesting contrast to Stott Despoja, is Queensland Premier Peter Beattie who is frequently accused of being a 'media tart' for his willingness to launch anything if there is a television crew watching and likewise for participating in a wide range of media fora. However, the attacks on Beattie are less sustained and do not articulate with existing myths of narcissism about men. The attacks on Stott Despoja deploy particular constructions and connotations of femininity to suggest variously that she is vain, superficial, without substance, not to be taken seriously, petulant, power-hungry, autocratic, and ultimately, unfit for leadership.

The trend to tabloidisation, then, is one that has profound and contradictory implications for women and their attempt to move into more leadership positions. Whilst it can work to their advantage in providing a vehicle through which to access certain audience segments, it also creates opportunities for traditional signifiers of femininity to be deployed against them and provide criticisms of their fitness to lead.

The news media incorporated private sphere matters in their reporting of Jennie George's professional capacities. In analyses to follow, this thesis examines some of the in-depth background reports and interviews that purport to reveal George as a private individual and considers how these provide particular contexts which inform assessments of her professional performance. The private sphere is always already present within the reporting frame placed upon the activities and performance of any woman political actor. The increasing news media focus on the private lives of public figures (particularly women) emphasises personal relationships, family matters, leisure activities, emotional life, self-presentation and appearance issues.

The actions, performance, achievements and policies of public figures are now less often evaluated in relation to their effectiveness and integrity in their professional capacities. Instead, audience judgements are invited on their presentation of self, their behaviour and life as husbands or wives, fathers or mothers, daughters or sons, lovers, friends, social animals, drinkers or non-drinkers, and as 'good' or 'bad' women or men. Whilst such tactics may appeal to some disenchanted voters, they may also prove disadvantageous for women as the social expectations of women's private lives are set far higher than for men. Also myths and stereotypes of femininity deriving from 1950's

conservative views of women's role in the private sphere are still circulating in reports on, and judgements of, the performance of women in the contemporary public sphere.

These ideas of traditional femininity have been employed in particular instances in creating assessments and meanings of key events during George's presidency. In the analysis of both the personal features on Jennie George and the reports of her professional activities, the thesis considers to what degree personal history, self-presentation and private sphere concerns feature in constructing evaluations of her performance. This analysis also seeks to make apparent the ways in which representations of 'good' and 'bad', or conventional and deviant, femininity have been mobilised in representations of her performance generally and within political disputes in particular.

Women Politicians Acting in, and Reported Within, a Masculine Context

Central to this thesis are the feminist critiques that news media is itself a masculine genre;[44] and that it is, at the same time, one of the "'technologies of gender', accommodating, modifying, reconstructing and producing, disciplining and contradictory renditions of sexual difference" (van Zoonen 1994a: 66). Stuart Allan points out that one of the fundamental principles of journalism, its claimed objectivity, involves a "patriarchal inflection of truth ... within what is a discursive economy of Otherness where women's experiences are recurrently effaced, trivialized or marginalized" (Allan 1999: 147-8). Even women who are leaders within the public sphere, and thus take up masculine subject positions, are frequently reduced to the position of other to the masculine norm in political reporting. This occurs through the operation of gendered frames and techniques of reporting, and through the gendered norms of news discourse (and indeed of political discourse). Women "*signify* nature/sexuality/family, even as they engage in the social realm of *rational* and *universal* citizenship" (Brown & Gardetto 2000: 25). Women who speak publicly and politically as leaders and elected representatives of others "speak from a 'masculine' position in a 'masculine realm'" (Brown & Gardetto 2000: 25). This is particularly

[44] See for example: Brunsdon & Morley (1978); Holland (1987); van Zoonen (1994a, 1998b); Walsh (1998).

problematic for women who are leaders of organisations with deeply embedded masculine cultures, such as trade unions and many political parties. There are limited opportunities to practice alternate (feminine) leadership styles. Furthermore, the media has inadequate language and almost no existing storylines, or frames, to use to report women practising alternate (feminine) leadership styles.

The gendered practices of political reporting cannot, however, be simply attributed to the historical conceptualisation of the public sphere and citizenship as masculine. Gender differences are marked, created and circulated through reporting practices at every level of news production. As Mary Vavrus argues, news reportage of women political actors is important for:

> the commentary that it provides media audiences about feminism and femininity at particular junctures; about idealized gender roles and transgressions from these; about the media's investments in particular constructions of femininity and feminism; and about the representational process itself—a process that has, historically, generated both progressive and hidebound models of gender.
>
> (Vavrus 2002: 2)

The effect of mediatized political discourse on women's experiences as political actors, and public understandings of these experiences, does not operate through individual articles, "or even a series of articles, but on systematic tendencies in news reporting whose effect is *cumulative*" (Walsh 1998: 211, italics added). Gender difference is reported through these techniques and systematic patterns, reinscribed and normalised through imagery and the rhetoric of news discourse.

News Discourse: Shaping the Meaning of Events

The following discussion considers how news discourse shapes the meaning of events and, most crucially, political disputes.[45] The contest for meaning played out between rival political groupings and key protagonists within disputes (or power struggles) is outside the direct experience and knowledge of most people in society. Media frames "the discursive context within which political subjectivities are constituted, reinforced and reconstituted" (Hay 1996: 261). Media accounts of particular events and

[45] See Croteau & Hoynes (1994); Ericson et al. (1991); Fiske (1996); Hay (1996); Tiffen (1989, 1999); Ward (1995), amongst others, for discussion of ways news shapes meanings of political events and crises.

assessments of the performances of political actors in the public sphere invite audiences to recognise themselves in, and/or to assume various subject positions, each of which has ideological implications. This process is significant as, for many people, the news is their main source of information on events outside their personal day-to-day experience. News, itself, constructs its role as the information one needs to act in the world. News producers work hard to present news in ways that will attract consumers and therefore will deliver audiences to their advertisers.[46] The privilege and status accorded to news organisations and their reporters in contemporary society reflects the widespread view of news as the primary provider of information (van Zoonen 1994a).[47] Therefore, how news discourse operates through established news values and news frames that work to construct interpretations of events in particular ways, is also considered in the analysis of Jennie George as ACTU president.

Stuart Hall precisely demonstrates the operations of discourse and how it sets limits to debate, in this case about women's performance as political actors, in his 1997 discussion of the processes of representation.

> [D]iscourse constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others.
>
> (Hall 1997c: 44)

News discourse, the logic, values and practices of the news business and professional practices of news, constructs the topics of news reports. It determines which topics are considered newsworthy; what angles will be researched in most depth and presented as the dominant meaning or significance of events; whose views will be canvassed and what factors are emphasised in reports (Allan 1999). One of the key components in

[46] News programs are among the highest rating television programs and are able to command the highest fees for advertising ('Uncertain Eye' 1998). Television stations advertise their news bulletins as do newspaper proprietors, as essential information for audiences to act effectively in the world.

[47] A case in point was the attack on the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001. The central role of news as providing information necessary for people to act and shaping the meaning of events could not be better illustrated than the three days immediately following the disaster when every Australian television station tuned into USA news services mainly CNN but also ABC (USA). Throughout these few days a majority of offices, shops and many schools and universities had at least one television station and often a radio station playing in the office. Newspaper circulation boomed. Also Australian news media web sites were invited to include the *New York Times* headlines and links on their websites and many did.

determining news value is the likely commercial value of particular stories or aspects of stories, in terms of their capacity to attract audiences, ratings and advertising. From these considerations other decisions are made regarding the 'best' lead story, the best image to use on the front page and the 'logical' headlines. Often the availability of a sensational or dramatic image determines which of several possible stories is the lead for the day—the news value of an event is not something intrinsic to its political or social significance, but owes as much to its commercial potential.

News Constructs Subjects

The discourse of news also constructs identities for the journalist. These identities are romanticised and mythical but are no less powerful for that. Some of these identities or subject positions include the reputation of reporters being fearless investigators of the truth; being incorruptible; and facing prosecution rather than revealing their sources.[48] There are also contradictory ideas circulating about journalists. These include the images of journalists who will do anything to get a story; reporters who use bribes and threats to gain access to sources; journalists' reputation for hard drinking and huge egos; and of the 'pack mentality' of the press—all chasing after the one story and the one angle to the story.[49] These professional myths construct both public images of journalism and some of journalism's own practices. Interestingly, these are highly masculine and often 'macho' subject positions that have contributed to the development of the news as a masculine genre. The discussion of the reporting of the final months of Jennie George's presidency in Chapters Nine, Ten and Eleven includes reflection on the role assumed by one journalist in particular, Brad Norington, who appears determined to bring George down, apparently for having not fully co-operated with his questions about her past.

The media operates discursively in a two-way operation. As a media consumer the reader/viewer is produced within, and subjected to discourse. Audiences are constructed as dependent on news to act in an informed way. News is portrayed as necessary to

[48] Allan (1999); Ericson et al. (1987, 1991); Ward (1995).

[49] Blumler & Gurevitch (1995); Ericson et al. (1991); Tiffen (1999).

rational action, for example through television news advertising slogans: 'Nobody knows Adelaide like 7'[50] or 'All the news you need to know'. Keeping up with the news is presumed to be a necessary function of daily life in the public sphere, if an event is not on the news then it did not happen, or it is not worth knowing about ('Uncertain Eye' 1998). Of course, this is also a myth. Media producers develop material to appeal to what they know about the viewing habits and preferences of their target audiences gathered from intense scrutiny and surveillance.[51] The media constantly turns its gaze to an imagined audience, whom their business constructs and sells to advertisers. This scrutiny is especially influential in magazine-style current affairs reportage, commercial television production, talk-back radio and in the tabloid press. This imagined audience is, in turn, developed as a commodity and sold by media organisations as constituting communities with whom the target audience is invited to feel affinity. The modes of address of newspapers—tabloid and broadsheet—and television programs, are designed to appeal to particular audience segments and to build loyalty and familiarity with this media environment. They are also designed so that news appears to engage in dialogue with the reader (Bignell 2002).

The commercial imperative to programming is in part responsible for the trend to increasing the entertainment value of news, which has been referred to by some as the 'feminisation of news' discussed above. Although we cannot know how actual readers interpret particular news stories without an ethnographic or reception study, it is possible to think about the potential effects of reports and of patterns of reporting upon audiences and on political actors themselves. This is also important because media producers, themselves, know a lot about the preferences, interests and responses of their generalised audience characteristics (Allan 1999). It is also important because one of the specific strategies producers are using in response to increased competition is an attempt to boost sales through increasing their product's appeal to women It is also clear that the structure of a newspaper or television bulletin, the choice of topics, the angle of individual reports within it, and the specific style adopted by the organisation (and their

[50] This was the promotional slogan for Channel 7 Adelaide's 6pm News service during the mid 1990s it was adopted from similar USA television news advertising campaigns.

[51] Scrutiny through intensive opinion polling and audience monitoring practices including the use of 'people meters', viewing diaries, audience surveys and focus groups. (Pearson & Brand 2001; 'Uncertain Eye' 1998).

stand on particular issues) are the result of conscious choice and selection of material. So-called 'neutral' reportage is neither neutral, accidental nor random.

A second media gaze also operates on media performers, both professional and non-professional.[52] Media performers or actors may seek media attention, may issue press statements, give interviews and press conferences. However, they are still embedded *within* media discourse. Their actions, experiences and views are only reported by the media if they fit pre-existing criteria of news or entertainment value, and then they are presented within a frame, format and context that suits the programming and reporting conventions of the media organisation. Even those media actors with considerable power or commercial appeal who retain the right of final approval over the interview text, are unable to control the context or frame in which it is presented—let alone the meanings made of it by the audience.

Many media performers, particularly politicians and heads of organisations, are, to a large extent, constructed by their attempts to be 'newsworthy'. They may work extremely hard for their constituents, but if their work is not publicised it is not visible and their efforts receive little recognition. Recognition is essential for re-election, re-appointment, promotion and for increasing the credibility and perceived value of their organisation. In this way these media performers are embedded within news discourse and forced to 'play the game' (that is the media and public relations game) to be *seen to be* doing their job. Karen Ross and Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi observe that although the women politicians they interviewed "are cautious about taking up media opportunities because of the personal and professional risks they are nonetheless hungry for the exposure" for without it there is no recognition (Ross & Sreberny-Mohammadi 1997: 105).

The more the performance of these actors converges with accepted conventions of news discourse and the established roles of media players, the more they subject themselves to the discursive context established by the news and/or other informational media. The

[52] This refers to professionals who are paid by media organisations, television, newspapers, radio film, public relations and so on. Non-professionals include politicians and other elected representatives, public spokespeople for business, non-commercial and community organisations.

way news reports construct such media performances fits within existing conventions of both news discourse in general, and in particular to the specific genre in question be it television current affairs, public television news, gossip or tabloid newspapers. News discourse also fits within the conventions of media reporting of other discursive formations; for example, industrial relations, race, gender, party politics, religion, economic rationalism (Hall 1997c). These discursive formations articulate with, and within, news reports to construct a 'truth' or 'commonsense' account of a particular event, action, policy or decision (Fiske 1996; Hay 1996). The final commonsense news account may diverge from the meaning of the issue or event the political actor who triggered the story had in mind when s/he initially engaged with the media.

In addition, as Tony Thwaites, Lloyd Davis and Warwick Mules note (1994: 137), the "[o]ne institution and its discourses (politics) are thus mediated by another (news broadcasting)". This point applies equally to the union movement. The public relies upon the news for knowledge of events, decisions and actions occurring in the public sphere, in government, or in the negotiations between workers and their employers. The capacity of audience members to act as citizens is "conditioned by the intervention of media discourse" (Thwaites et al. 1994: 137). It follows then, that news discourse has an influential relationship with how audiences "think of their relationship to the state" and other major contemporary institutions (ibid). Therefore news discourse produces meanings of events for audience consumption and social identities with which it hopes we will identify. The news is not the *only* source of information people get about happenings in the world around them. There are multiple and diverse sources, ranging from conversations with friends and family members, to talk-back radio and the contents of television soap or panel shows, that increasingly contribute to people's understanding of the world around them and their sense of themselves within it (Pearson & Brand 2001). However, news carries greater authority through the myth of truth and news workers have a privileged status and an aura of authority (Bignell 2002).

The Rise of Mediatized Politics

News not only structures events but, increasingly, political events, decisions and actions are shaped by, and constructed for, the demands of news and news producers.[53] Tailoring political policies or events and training politicians to fit the requirements and style of media presentation is a highly specialised skill. The demand for this expertise has led to phenomenal growth and increased influence in the public relations industry (Tiffen 1989). Image management is an increasingly central function of political campaigns. Indeed, Rodney Tiffen argues that "the battle to influence news coverage is a central arena in most political conflicts" (1989: 93). Increasingly, the media itself is seen as "the *real* public space in which politics occurs" and it is largely through and within the media that audiences make sense of, and engage with, the political process (Ross & Sreberny 2000: 80). David Altheide and Robert Snow go so far as to argue that "political behaviour today is intertwined with media formats to such an extent that politics is *media politics*" or in other words is now 'mediatized politics' (Altheide & Snow 1991: 82).

News discourse, especially the values and conventions of news reporting increasingly shape not only what and how we know about events, but also the events themselves. Consequently, critical analysis of news media representations of political issues, disputes and of particular groups involved in the political process, is increasingly important to understanding the (mediatized) political process. Discourse not only produces knowledge through construction, but also through the reverse processes of exclusion, limitation and restriction. Therefore, what is left out in accounts of political or industrial disputes, or in accounts of women's performances as political actors, is as significant as what is included. Hartley, for example, argues that "meaning in news-discourse is ... also [determined] by what is absent, not selected, discursively repressed" (1989: 117).

Media analysis can reveal useful information about the ways reporting and public debates construct and circulate gendered representations of leadership, especially for those frustrated by the slow movement of women into leadership and authority positions in political parties, the state, unions, and the private sector. Such representations

[53] Altheide & Snow (1991); Fiske (1996); Tiffen (1989).

invariably impact upon the assessments of candidates as suitable for promotion (or election) to such authority positions. Women politicians who hope to attain leadership positions, are advised to reconstruct themselves as certain kinds of women to fit media expectations and appeal to what public relations and image consultants believe that certain audience segments, or categories of voters, want. However, as seen in the discussion of Natasha Stott Despoja, engaging extensively with popular media on their terms can also lead to charges that the woman politician is more concerned with style than policies. The discursive construction of gender and leadership has material effects on assessments of the performance and capabilities of political actors.

For many feminists, and those active in labour or other social movements, the increasing mediatization of politics raises a number of concerns. These include concerns that the struggle for both meaning and change is increasingly occurring in a textual space distanced from many participants' lived experience and spheres of influence, and it is increasingly subject to the influence of those with commercial interests, such as advertisers and shareholders, as well as proprietors. Given the marginalisation of feminism and feminist critiques of political issues and social policy from the mainstream newspapers there is a concern as to where and how these perspectives are aired and accessed by audiences. There is also related concern as to how audiences develop subjectivities as active citizens (as feminists, environmentalists, and unionists for example) or as critical consumers in the face of limited media exposure to the ideas and values of such social movements.[54] Certain issues, people and events are covered to saturation point by the mainstream media, whilst others (including the viewpoints and concerns of particular political and social movements, racial or ethnic minorities) are deemed to have little news value (Fiske 1996).

[54] Others would challenge this pessimistic view and suggest that in an era of the internet and cable television, media coverage is more diverse and social movements and other minorities are more easily able to disseminate information about their activities and campaigns than ever before thus increasing the opportunities for people to develop subjectivities or identify as activists [See: Atton (2002); Downing (2001); Hartley (1996); Lee (1999); Meikle (2002)]. Whilst there is undoubtedly great potential for activists to organise and communicate through alternative technology such as the internet, as the recent demonstrations opposed to globalisation—such as those in Seattle in 1999 and S11 in Melbourne 2000—have demonstrated, these forms of communication reach those who are already interested. The complaint about the traditional genres of news and current affairs arguably remains valid.

Conclusion

This chapter surveys a variety of approaches to media analysis. As the section on cultural studies and news analysis notes, print media has been of interest since early cultural studies days. Marxist and structuralist in approach, the early media research provides foundations (however challenged by contemporary cultural studies and feminist media theory) for contemporary research into news media. The chapter argues for the importance of feminist analysis of news as public knowledge and supports the case for a re-engagement of feminist scholars with news media genres. It contends that the move to infotainment and personalised reporting, associated with tabloidisation, needs to be considered for the ways in which it deploys signifiers of femininity, especially given the masculine context and values in which women politicians operate and the link between media coverage and political success.

The chapter maintains that mediatization of politics increases the necessity for women politicians to construct themselves as newsworthy. The assessments by political commentators of a women politician's political and leadership expertise, however, revolve around different criteria to newsworthiness including the reliance upon masculine models of successful leadership. In this context news reports of women politicians variously construct their difference from male politicians as a refreshing difference and/or as weakness. Both representations are problematic. Such preconceptions rely upon pre-existing categories of gender that privilege masculinity as normative and impact generally not only upon the public opinion of politicians, but also, in particular, on women's public performance and credibility.

3 Methods of Analysis

Introduction

This chapter details the processes used to collect news reports of Jennie George's presidency of the ACTU and the selection of pivotal moments for the in-depth analysis of reports. It outlines the leading questions for the thesis and the modes of analysis applied to the extensive body of news reports collected.

The Key Events: Pivotal Moments in George's Presidency

Collection of Newspaper Reportage On Pivotal Events

The approach taken to analysing the reportage of Jennie George's presidency entailed collecting newspaper articles about her, about the ACTU and its specific campaigns, or unionism in Australia, in which she featured prominently, from twelve major Australian capital city and national daily newspapers.

The collection of materials that relate to her presidency of the ACTU commenced in July 1995 when her name first arose as the likely replacement for then ACTU president, Martin Ferguson (Rintoul 1995). It continued until George's retirement as president on 8 March 2000 (International Women's Day). In researching the coverage of Jennie George and unionism in Australian in general, the *Australian*, the *Age* and the *Advertiser* newspapers were initially used to monitor news about unions, industrial action, ACTU policies and Jennie George herself. At the time of a key event, such as a major national industrial dispute, an ACTU sponsored wage case, the launch of an important government industrial relations policy, or an ACTU policy, the election of the ACTU president, or some other campaign, the primary research was extended to include an examination of the reporting in every capital city and national daily newspaper in the sample, as well as the weekly *Bulletin* magazine and the socialist paper *Green Left Weekly*. Audio and video tapes were collected of selected television and radio news and current affairs programs and transcripts of others were obtained from web sites. Although the case study specifically focuses on print media representations, as many reports as possible were collected from other media to see if the reporting frames differed in any major way.

Occasionally, examples from electronic media are referred to in the discussion to point to the availability of alternate accounts. However, the analysis of the reportage of key events is performed with reference to mainstream *print* media.

Reports of a number of pivotal events and issues during Jennie George's presidency were collected as potential issues for analysis. These moments were of heightened media interest. They concern the ACTU and trade unionism generally and Jennie George in particular, including the widespread, and mainly congratulatory, coverage of George's initial election as ACTU President-elect in September 1995 and her role, shortly after her election, in the dispute between mining company Conzinc Riotinto Australia Limited (CRA) and the union movement. This dispute related to CRA's attempt to move its workers onto individual contracts at its Weipa bauxite mine in Queensland during November and December 1995. Other significant events include George's role in the federal election campaign during February and March 1996; the ACTU's campaign against the incoming Liberal-National Coalition (conservative) Government's proposed changes to the industrial relations laws and specifically the ACTU's August 1996 mass rally—the 'Cavalcade to Canberra'—to protest at the Government's proposed Workplace Relations Act Amendment Bill; the political fallout from the attempted forced entry of Parliament House by protesters during this rally and the associated property damage and injuries; George's involvement in national wage cases and the ACTU's equal pay case; the Maritime Dispute in 1998; and speculation over her potential retirement, her possible move to Parliament and the question of her successor over the period 1999 to 2000.[1] Many of these events were reported as crises for the ACTU/unions and raised doubts about George's capacity to lead the ACTU effectively. Obviously, it has not been possible to analyse *all* of these events in any detailed or systematic way although the reporting of all is of interest.

[1] It is important to record here that one very significant industrial dispute which occurred during the period of George's presidency does not offer comparable potential for analysis. The 1998 Maritime Dispute was a major news national story of critical political and industrial importance which continued for over two months. However, the reporting focussed primarily on four men: Patrick Stevedore's chief executive Chris Corrigan; Workplace Relations Minister Peter Reith; Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) Secretary John Coombs; and ACTU Assistant Secretary Greg Combet. Although Jennie George played an important role in the dispute, it was primarily a supporting role to the key union media performers Combet and Coombs. She, therefore, was not the focus of the media attention. This dispute was a media event of great significance, and ultimately a critical victory for the trade union movement. The reporting of it is worthy of a study in itself. However, as it does not add significantly to the evidence of how representations of Jennie George (or other women political actors) are gendered in particular ways at particular times, it does not form part of this analysis.

Three events were selected for analysis. These are: firstly, Jennie George's election as the first woman president of the ACTU; secondly, the most prominent (or, depending on one's perspective, infamous) campaign of her presidency, the 'Cavalcade to Canberra' protest, the so-called 'riot' and the associated criticisms of her leadership; and thirdly, an analysis of the reporting of her resignation from the ACTU presidency and assessments of the success of her term. This final event is also analysed in the context of some reports from earlier months in the same year in which *Sydney Morning Herald* reporter, and George's biographer, Brad Norington attacked her credibility and integrity over the matter of her previous membership of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). These reports paved the way for a campaign against George that ultimately led to her early resignation.

First Woman President

The first key event analysis concerns reportage of George's election as the 'first woman' ACTU president in September 1995. This period is significant in its own right and also because it establishes a reference point, a framework, and a set of meanings that are foundational to later coverage. Her election coverage also offers an important point of comparison to international feminist research on the reporting of women politicians in their first week in office. Norris's (1997b) research on the application of gendered news frames to the reporting of international women political leaders provides a starting point. The three major news frames she identifies are: 'breakthrough for all women'; 'women leaders as outsiders'; and 'women leaders as agents of change' (Norris 1997a: 16). The reporting of Jennie George is examined to ascertain whether, and to what degree, it conforms to these patterns. It asks whether alternate frames of reporting are employed, whether or not, and how they are gendered. The analysis also investigates the presence of signifiers of femininity in the news reportage and their role in establishing meanings about her election. These factors have been identified as important in research undertaken by overseas feminist media analysts. Liesbet van Zoonen (1998a, 2000), in her research into the reporting on Dutch women politicians, notes that gendered myths, stereotypes and rhetorical tropes are pervasive. British researchers Karen Ross and Annabelle Sreberny also find them to be widespread in news reports of British women politicians.[2] The analysis of Jennie George builds upon their research while also drawing upon the work of John Hartley. Following Roland Barthes, Hartley attends to semiotic elements in news

[2] Ross & Sreberny-Mohammadi (1997); Ross & Sreberny (2000); Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross (1996).

reporting to ascertain the operations of various signifying processes within them, particularly with reference to denotation, connotation, myth and ideology (Barthes 1972; Hartley 1989). The analysis which follows goes beyond Hartley's methods to deconstruct the specific cultural and discursive contexts of the news reports, as such contexts work together with editorial techniques to influence the multi-accentual nature of signs by establishing preferred reading positions and preferred meanings.

To conduct the analysis, all the reports of ACTU Congress activities in two national and ten city daily papers were examined from the period 26 September 1995 to 2 October 1995, the week surrounding George's election on 27 September. There were twenty-six reports dealing with her election. Seventeen of these reports were published on the day following her election and of these fifteen refer to her directly or implicitly as the 'first woman leader'.[3] A content analysis is performed on this collection of reports and the findings are discussed in Chapter Four. Of these, four key articles were chosen for semiotic analysis and discussion as examples of the range of coverage overall. These articles, addressed in Chapter Five, were selected according to whether or not they illustrated the reporting frames Norris identifies in relation to women political leaders (1997a, 1997b). These reports and their presentation are subjected, variously, to content, semiotic feminist and deconstructive analysis. The techniques adopted to perform such analysis are outlined below.

In analysing the reports from the first week following George's election two questions are posed. Firstly, do the reports indicate similar gendered frames operating in the reporting as those applied in the reporting of women political leaders internationally? Secondly, how are particular figures, images and myths of femininity incorporated within specific reports to bring the story of George and her personal history in line with the established news frames. This research is particularly concerned to find out to what degree, and how, ideas of femininity and masculinity are deployed in discussing the likelihood of George succeeding as ACTU president, given the traditionally masculine culture of trade unions. This culture has been identified by a number of feminist labour scholars as being one of the key barriers to women's success in the union movement.[4]

[3] Specific details of the process used to collect and select reports for analysis are provided in the introduction to each of the case studies in the relevant following chapters.

[4] As discussed in the Chapter One and see, for example, Briskin & McDermott (1993), Cockburn (1983); Franzway (1997, 2001); Pocock (1997a, 1998).

The Cavalcade to Canberra

During Jennie George's presidency one of the major events to capture media attention was the Cavalcade to Canberra (19 August 1996). This was also clearly a key event calling for detailed critical attention for several reasons. Firstly, the mass rally against the Coalition Government's Workplace Relations Bill inspired more unionists to protest than had been mobilised since before the Hawke/Keating Labor Government (1983–96) had been elected and established the Accord with the union movement. As a major political event the Cavalcade to Canberra was widely covered in the media as was the conflict that ensued. Secondly, the rally was George's initiative and she worked extremely hard to get the support of affiliated unions and community organisations to make it happen. She was, therefore, closely identified both by the union movement and within political circles with the success (or failure) of the rally.

Thirdly, although the rally could be assessed as successful in relation to its widespread participation and support across unions and its high level of community sector involvement, in an important test for unions in Australia, the rally's success would be almost totally discounted by the media. This was due to the media decision to concentrate reportage on the actions of a small, breakaway, group of protestors—who attempted to force their way into Parliament House, causing some property damage and some injuries in the process. In the press reports this 'riot' becomes a synecdoche of the whole rally, excluding the peaceful demonstrators not only in Canberra but also in other capital cities and their objections to the Bill. The media universally described these isolated acts at Parliament House as a 'riot' on every front page and news bulletin across the country. These events transformed this aspect of the nationally coordinated political rally into a media event with a specific, conflictual focus (Altheide & Snow 1991; Fiske 1996). Fourthly, the forced entry into Parliament House and reports of associated damage presented a political opportunity for the Prime Minister and his Workplace Relations Minister, Peter Reith, to attack the trade union movement as 'thugs', 'bullies' and 'enemies of the state',[5] thus neutralising the impact of unions' criticisms of the Bill and justifying the Government's tough new labour laws. Government ministers' also utilised the opportunity to attack George's credibility and strength as ACTU leader. These attacks were widely publicised in the media, as was speculation that she would be replaced or

[5] Traditional descriptors used by the right to discredit unions, their activities and views (Morley 1976; Philo et al. 1982; Walton & Davis 1977; Ward 1995).

resign as ACTU leader. These attempts by her political opponents to discredit George's leadership through media attacks on her personally and on the ACTU and unionists more generally, are significant in this analysis.

The research into the reporting of the Cavalcade to Canberra resulted in a collection of 176 cuttings from twelve newspapers. Eighty-seven reports were published the day after the rally and eighty-nine appeared from 21 August 1996 to 12 September 1996, a period of twenty-three days following the rally. Fifty-one of these eighty-nine reports after the rally concentrated on the issue of the adequacy of the ACTU leadership with particular emphasis on George's leadership as president. A simple content analysis was performed on both the news reports and the photographs accompanying them. In this process headlines, captions, pull quotes, key words and the content, position and size of all the photographs were recorded. Three chapters of the thesis examine these reports using semiotic and deconstructive techniques. Two chapters look in detail at the reporting of the rally and adjacent 'riot' and the other considers how George, herself, was represented in relation to the 'riot', both at that time and subsequently. The analysis of the reports focuses particularly on how ideas of gender, class, race and nation intersect, conflict and are mobilised to 'make sense' of the events.

Jennie George's Resignation

The final key event concerns the reporting of Jennie George's final months as ACTU president. This analysis includes *Sydney Morning Herald* reporter (and George's biographer) Brad Norington's attempt to bring her down by reporting (as scandalous) her previous membership of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) (Norington 1999a, 1999b). By this time (late 1999 to early 2000) numerous attacks on unions as outdated and irrelevant institutions had been mounted politically and through the press. These had been particularly vehement in the lead-up to the 1996 federal election and since the conservative Coalition Government took power. Such attacks were a distinguishing feature of the Howard government's determination to dismantle the Australian industrial relations system and the role of unions within it. The media's role in publicising these attacks on unions and discounting George (particularly in relation to the Cavalcade to Canberra) was a significant factor in turning public perception against her. This campaign

to discredit her had potential implications for the credibility of women leaders more broadly.

Norington campaigned vigorously against Jennie George through the pages of the *Sydney Morning Herald* (the 'quality' broadsheet daily newspaper of her home city) over the last months of her presidency.[6] The campaign was intensified by widespread media speculation that she would retire early. It was also complicated by the apparent inability of Australian Labor Party powerbrokers to identify a parliamentary vacancy for George that satisfied her desire to be based in Sydney, near her aging mother. The career transition to Parliament was one that had been effected for all previous ACTU presidents. This struggle between George and her party was also the subject of numerous reports and constructed as a gendered contest by many. The campaign against her that occurred via the press in her final months as ACTU president and the final assessments of her contribution and achievements, form the basis for the final discussion in Chapters Nine to Eleven. The analysis of the selected reports pays particular attention to the ways in which codes of femininity are deployed in reports of Jennie George's term as president and her parliamentary future.

The reporting of these three contrasting events—Jennie George's election to the presidency of the ACTU, the Cavalcade to Canberra rally and its aftermath, and George's resignation, form the key events analysed in Chapters Four through to Eleven. The reporting of these events provides a wide range of examples of the ways the press reports on women as political actors. The key events selected cover the period of peak public acclaim and media interest in George (the moment of her election) and the periods where she was under greatest political and media attack.

Leading Questions For The Thesis

For the purposes of this project the critique focuses on a number of leading questions. In particular: how has the 'news' changed in its turn from broadsheet to tabloid reporting and what impact does this shift have on women political actors; how is news presented to be consumed in ways that deliver audiences to advertisers; how are actors embedded within

[6] One key report was simultaneously published in Fairfax's *Age* newspaper to a Melbourne audience that would include key ACTU officials as the ACTU offices are in Melbourne (Norington 2000a, 2000c).

media discourses as newsworthy; how does news construct the 'truth' about its subject; and how have media processes transformed politics into a 'mediatized politics'. This issue of how news constructs the 'truth' encompasses several related questions. These include: the matter of selection, what is included/excluded; the matter of how news values are determined; and, of prime importance for this study, the question of how sexual difference is represented as truth and how is it deployed in creating *newsworthy* reports of events that privilege one meaning of events or actions over others.

The discussion includes consideration of the ways in which news reports invite reader identification through the construction of complex relations of oppositions. Here John Fiske's (1996) concept of an articulation of multiple discourses is used to expand the analytical methodologies of 1970s and 1980s media scholars, to develop an approach that facilitates the unpacking of processes of multiple 'othering' and reader positioning that occur within the reporting of the events that comprise this study. Drawing on Fiske's work multiple factors, including gender, class, race, occupation and political affiliation are considered in examining how meaning is constructed, and readers positioned, within news reports of Jennie George's presidency.

This critique also investigates additional aspects of the reporting process including consideration of the various techniques—textual, structural and compositional—used to create meaning within news reports. It includes discussion of the figuring process and its role in constructing gendered representations and debates. In particular, the incorporation into news and current affairs reporting of particular rhetorical 'figures' of femininity to signify particular positions or effects (Fiske 1996). Structural and compositional techniques of creating meaning are examined with particular emphasis on the image–text relationship. These include the elements of photographic framing, location and composition, together with the elements of page layout. In considering textual elements the issue of news frames is significant and attention is paid to the approaches adopted by overseas researchers and their respective findings in regard to the ways linguistic constructions of femininity are employed in reporting women political actors.[7] Specific attention is paid to the ways that techniques of demonisation are applied to women politicians suggesting that powerful women are a threat to established male authority. Other strategies of demonisation include the ways in which the traditional liberal

[7] See, for example, Fowler (1991); Ross & Sreberny (2000); van Zoonen (2000); and Walsh (1998) amongst others.

discourses of the family are deployed to suggest that career women are 'unnatural' or are 'bad mothers'. Also considered are references to women by their first names; the question of whether framing a woman as 'exceptional' constructs her as 'unnatural'; and the effects of attention to a female politician's dress and appearance. Compositional elements that construct public and private as gendered realms are also subjected to analysis. The potential effects of gendered reporting of women political actors is considered for women's participation and credibility within the public sphere and as political actors and leaders.

Modes of Analysis

After isolating the key events of her presidency and collecting all relevant articles for analysis the thesis considers particular textual, structural and visual elements of news reportage. The modes of textual analysis applied in the chapters to follow are indebted to insights and methods derived from content, semiotic and critical discourse analysis and attempt to reveal the 'thickness' of the news reports and the role that they play in contributing both to public understandings of political events within the Australian context and their role in constructing and circulating meanings of gendered, racialised and classed identities and gender relations. They are dependent on a close reading of the relationship between headline-text-image and placement of the news item on the page. Whilst recognising that there are multiple possibilities for interpretation of the individual (and collected) reports that form the case study, the analysis pays particular attention to the ways in which contextual factors such as composition, the conventions of news discourse and the construction of a political logic or commonsense in the news reporting of particular political events (and indeed gender relations) work to privilege certain meanings. The analysis undertaken in the chapters to follow is informed by insights from the disciplines of cultural, labour and women's studies as well as the author's personal history: including her experiences as a trade union member, an employee of a state-based Labor Council, her work as both a visual artist and an academic and her identification as a feminist.

The modes of analysis are deployed somewhat differently in relation to each of the three key moments for analysis, in order to best suit the nature of the event and the nature of the news coverage. In relation to George's election and the Cavalcade to Canberra, content

analysis is performed on the articles to reveal dominant news frames and repeated (rhetorical and/or visual) signifiers of femininity within the reports. These patterns are analysed for what they reveal about gendered reporting practices in relation to the reportage of George's presidency and implications for the reporting of Australian women politicians more generally. Semiotic analysis is performed on a smaller sample of representative articles in relation to George's election and her resignation. The reporting of these two events is more suited to semiotic analysis, as there are variations in the coverage that are important to tease out. The reporting of the Cavalcade to Canberra, and George's role in relation to that event, is treated somewhat differently. This is because of the vast quantity of reports and the fact that they repeat dominant constructions of the event. It is this dominance that is important to reveal and analyse for its deployment of signifiers of femininity, Aboriginality, unionism and nationalism. It is also critical to analyse the implications of the patterns in this reporting for George's political future.

Different representations of femininity occur within the three contexts. However, there are certain semiotic elements that recur, with different valence, across contexts and time. Techniques drawn from semiotics and deconstruction enable the rhetorical and visual elements of the reports to be analysed for the ways they construct meanings of women as political actors. This approach owes much to Roland Barthes work on image-text relations and John Hartley's application of these methods in his work on news analysis (Barthes 1967, 1972, 1977; Hartley 1989). Specifically, the analysis focuses on image-text relations in news reporting including the operations of denotation, connotation, ideology, myths and figures of femininity These elements include several dominant themes: whether George would be 'tough enough' to succeed as president; the loneliness of women political leaders (and career women generally); and the theme that women leaders are both insufficiently trustworthy and too emotional to be reliable under pressure. By making the reporting of one woman the subject of a detailed analysis, it is possible to see the variations and patterns in how the media constructed elements of her character and her performance in gendered terms at various stages of her career.

These key events also provide the opportunity for a detailed study of the variations and similarities in the framing and construction of meaning across a large number of reports from a wide variety of sources. These examples provide a diverse body of reports through which to investigate the ways that representations of femininity are used in a detailed case

study of one specific woman as political actor. They also provide substantial opportunities to test the hypothesis that the media are most likely to use gendered stereotypes and myths to position women as deviant/marginal/other when reporting the performance of women in situations of political dispute or crisis. The thesis demonstrates ways that gendered frames are applied by the news media to 'make sense' of, and bring into question, the experience of women political actors and their performance as leaders, especially in periods of crisis, including the ways the press can, and did, create ambivalence in the minds of readers previously aligned with Jennie George's platform and leadership performance.

Reading the Reports

The analysis of the reporting of Jennie George's presidency of the ACTU engages with the questions of how news discourse operates to construct news reports and the publicly available meanings of events, particularly with regard to its assumptions and representations of gender and femininity. In this instance, it examines how news discourse, news values and specific techniques of news reporting have constructed particular meanings of Jennie George as an individual; of the success or failure of her performance as ACTU president; of particular events that occurred during her term as president; of gender relations within the Australian union movement; and of the relevance of unionism itself. Whilst all news reports are open to multiple interpretations the analysis traces the ways certain meanings are privileged over others. As seen in Chapter One, the conventions of news reporting together with the operations of ideology in neo-liberal societies position unions and unionists as 'other' to the presumed reader in most reports of industrial issues. Jennie George was elected as leader of the Australian trade union movement at a time of concerted political attacks on the role and practice of unionism. These factors are significant in the ways her activities and views are reported, and the reports are analysed for ways that images and values of unionism are deployed, just as they are analysed for ways those about femininity are deployed. The way the two identities, or subject positions, woman and unionist are articulated is also critical to explore. There are other related identities that are mobilised in particular reports that will also be discussed. These include the representation of George as the quintessential 'Aussie battler', the significance of her non-English-speaking background, her feminism, her affiliation with the Left and her white-collar teaching profession.

Two functions of news—information and entertainment—have shaped the way Jennie George has been reported. In particular, the tabloid trend, or the blurring of these functions through the rise of 'infotainment', has shaped the framing and reporting of her presidency. In the analysis of key events certain questions are addressed regarding the tabloid turn: has the attention paid to George's personal life and gender been handled differently by different categories of newspapers, or is this increasing emphasis on the personal, part of a general move towards a tabloid or 'infotainment' style of reporting across all papers? Given the increased personalisation or 'sexualisation' of news structures reports of women as political actors, what effect does it have on their credibility as leaders and on Jennie George in particular?

Reading the news reports that comprise this case study requires both 'reading' in the literal sense and 'reading' in the deconstructive sense. It is necessary both to comprehend the narrative account of events presented for audience consumption and also to investigate the context of the production of these accounts. The production of any news account of an event, or any interpretative account of its implications, necessarily involves processes of selection.[8] Discussions about which meanings are privileged and which accounts are marginalised or ignored, rely on a cultural studies tradition of news research. Since the early news analysis undertaken by those working within the British cultural studies tradition, these methods have further evolved; they have been modified and supplemented through contributions from scholars working in other fields such as feminism, deconstruction, film studies, psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, reception theory and the attention to the power/knowledge nexus as advanced by theorists such as Michel Foucault. These influences have informed the analysis undertaken in subsequent chapters.

The next section discusses the way the reportage is analysed for both rhetorical and textual constructions of femininity and how the visual elements are analysed. Both image and textual elements are critical to the construction of meaning and the ways the two elements together work to add additional layers of meaning is particularly significant and forms a central element of this analysis.

[8] Allan (1999); Hartley (1989); Ward (1995).

The Figuring Process in News Reporting

One narrative process that is highly relevant to news reporting of social and political debates, such as those around feminism and the rise of 'career women', is the figuring process. One example may serve to demonstrate how people become 'figured' within news reports of social and political debates. The reports on women politicians' difficulties with balancing work and family are part of an on-going public conversation about the oppositions between motherhood and public life usually in regards to full-time work (Pocock 2003; Probert & MacDonald 1996)). Particular female political actors may become a 'figure' in this debate spoken through the discourses of feminism, equal opportunity, working mothers who are advocates for more 'family friendly' work practices and/or advocates of traditional 'family values', and those who believe childcare damages children. This figuring process occurred to Jennie George in relation to her status as a feminist and as a unionist, as well as her role as a woman leader.

John Fiske defines a figure as "a human simulacrum ... one that simulates a person, and its simulation is what a person has become in hyperreality" (1996: 68). He adds:

> Figures are simulacra that speak and take up positions, and thus social interests can speak through them, occupy positions within them. Their degree of agency in the figuring process is open to question: the extent to which their personal history before their figurehood prefigures it or merely precedes it can be analyzed only in each configuration ...
> The individual's history is often the least significant component of a figure. Its fluidity and volatility do not allow it to serve as the final truth of the figure, but the still-lingering belief that truth lies in the individual history, whichever truth is being claimed, allows it to function as an authenticator, as a sign of truth.
>
> (Fiske 1996: 70-71)

This concept of the essentialising figure is especially useful in thinking about femininity as constructed and how Jennie George is used to signify various, often conflicting, things to different audiences. The traditional importance for feminism of personal history and 'authentic' voice, an importance that has been problematised by postmodern theories of subjectivity, is complicated also by the ways people become figures in media and public debates. In these situations the specific circumstances and contexts of (say) a woman leader's experiences no longer matter. She may become a figure, the 'successful superwoman' who has it all, or the 'lonely unfulfilled childless woman', or others that suit particular debates. The actual woman has little agency in how she is figured in such debates, she is spoken through them. However, as Fiske points out her body:

> is extremely powerful in giving the histories and alliances a material presence, in making them live, in making them visible and audible ... If not figured into a living body, the clash of social alliances and of different histories can seem abstracted and distant, ... embodied histories and politics are the ones that matter, the ones people are most ready to engage in, because alliances, for and against, are more easily formed with a figure than a political position.
>
> (Fiske 1996: 71)

The increased significance of the essentialised figure is clear (and also its anachronistic attachment to outdated gender stereotypes) in a time when the media is more personalised and individualised than ever before. The figuring process becomes inescapable, and especially so for women, because of their existing social and cultural connections with the private sphere and personal history. What many women political actors learn through bitter experience, is that even though one may retain control over an interview context and photo-shoot, one is powerless to determine how the character that one becomes within that media engagement is then figured in wider debates.

The figuring process is also closely allied to the personalisation of politics which is an increasing and irreversible feature of political communication (Tiffen 1989; van Zoonen 1998a). Therefore, the emphasis on gender, being one of the most visible aspects of a politician's identity, is likely to increase, especially in the popular genres (van Zoonen 1998a). Van Zoonen argues that the popular culture genres of gossip magazines, talk shows, and celebrity journalism will play an increasingly important role in relation to political communication and campaigning. She suggests that these become crucial sites for the investigation of how "gendered personalities are constructed, in what kind of context they are presented, and how they are evaluated" (1998a: 50). Whilst these popular culture genres may be both proliferating and becoming increasingly appealing, news genres remain highly influential (and indeed privileged) sources of information.[9] It remains critically important to analyse gendered reporting within traditional and evolving news genres. It is also important to consider the ways such genres are adopting the practices and features of 'infotainment' for indications of whether, and how they manifest gendered reporting and news values.

[9] Indeed some print news publishers seek to distinguish their influence and gain market advantage by promoting themselves as a paper of 'record'.

Visual and Layout Elements of News Reports: Constructing Images of Femininity Through Photographic Framing, Location, Composition and Intertextual Relations

The relationship between image and text is another central issue to consider in news reports. The practice of locating women politicians in domestic or interior contexts in photographs emphasises women's association with the private sphere (Ross & Sreberny 2000; Sreberny-Mohammadi & Ross 1996). The placement of photographs on the page can signify relations of power, as Wahneema Lubiano (1993) clearly demonstrates in her contrast of the placement of images of Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas.[10] The placement of images and their proximity to other reports, headlines or advertisements can invite intertextual readings and identification from particular male or female readerships.[11] This can occur both through composition within the image and through the gaze of the photographic subjects.

Relations of the gaze are important in news images as they are in film, television and other visual media (Mulvey 1975). Reader/viewers are invited into the image to identify with particular points of view by technical attributes of the image, such as camera angle or focus; by textual relations such as headlines; and by features of the subject, such as their look or smile.[12] The woman's smile is traditionally seen as an invitation to male viewers or as an indication of a subordinate or complicit relationship between her and the viewer.[13] A woman's smile also frequently 'softens' the impact of the photograph—and the issue—making it a more intimate appeal to audiences that may fear, or be alienated by, a too 'masculine' woman leader. The smile then mediates a woman leader's relationship with the audience/constituency and can work in contradictory ways depending upon the context. Newspaper conventions of photographing women can impact on the degree of power and authority they appear to possess. Women are more frequently

[10] In her discussion of the gendered nature of the reporting of Hill's challenge to Thomas' nomination to the USA Supreme Court, Lubiano (1993) shows how news photos and reports both reveal and mask the operations of political power. She examines the relationship between several sets of images and news reports and discusses how, in one instance adjacent positioning of photos of Hill and Thomas, identically posed for their swearing-in, suggests an apparent equality of power and reporting. This placement she argues "obscured the dramatic disparity of power between the two" (1993: 324). A second set of, similarly close-up, photos published the next day, are arranged with the photo of Thomas directly above that of Hill in a visual metaphor of traditional and specific power relations between the two and of the "missionary position" (1993: 326-28).

[11] See for example Barthes (1972, 1977); Bignell, (2002); Hall (1981); Thwaites et al. (1994).

[12] Barthes (1972, 1977); Hall (1981); Thwaites et al (1994); Williamson (1978).

[13] Berger (1972); Holland (1998); Williamson (1978).

photographed looking down and away from the camera, whereas their male counterparts may be pictured looking outwards, directly engaging with the viewer and forwards towards the future.[14]

Composition and placement of characters in a staged photograph can demonstrate how news agencies conceptualise women's roles and relations both to men and to each other. Technical and compositional features such as framing, cropping, focus, lighting, setting, camera angle, direction of the gaze, relations between subjects within the frame, and metonymic relations between the image and the story are all important to examine when analysing how meanings are constructed.[15] Whilst male news media analysts (especially of the 1970s and 1980s) have paid attention to these features in examinations of relations of race and class power, they have paid less attention to how gender relations are constructed within media images and through their relationship to the text.[16] The visual aspects of print and television news are critical to examine in a consideration of gendered representations.

In feminist semiotic and discourse analysis, photographs and other visual images, such as graphics and cartoons, are analysed together with elements such as headlines, pull quotes and captions. In the analysis of the reports comprising this case study, attention is paid to the inter-relationship of all these elements, their placement on the page and their relationship to other, adjacent reports, images and advertisements that impact upon how they may be read and how they signify gender. Women politicians occupy complex and often contradictory positions depending upon their audience and the context in which they are read/represented. Jennie George's position as a feminist, left-wing union leader includes elements that are reported within specific, and different, conventions of reporting. The way her actions and views are read by different audiences will also be mediated by their ideological relationship with elements of her identity and the way these

[14] Thwaites et al. (1994); Williamson (1978).

[15] Barthes (1977); Bignell (2002); Hall (1981, 1997c); Williamson (1978).

[16] Examples include: Hall (1981, 1997b); Hartley (1989); Masterman (1985); Puette (1992). However, one more recent exception to this trend is the analysis of media coverage of the British Ambulance strike of 1989-90 undertaken by Paul Manning (1998). In this analysis Manning pays attention to the ways the three unions involved pursued a media strategy that focussed on individual members of the union and put forward examples of female ambulance workers with children, including single mothers, to demonstrate that their members were 'struggling' financially and to counter some of the stereotypes of union militants as greedy, selfish men. He refers to this as a 'feminised' representation of the dispute.

elements are deployed within news reports. These elements can create complex and contradictory meanings and the analysis below addresses these complexities.

Textual Constructions of Femininity as Difference

The issue of the presence or absence of textual signifiers of femininity in news reports, how they are used, and what meanings they support of a woman politician's performance, is a key issue in the analysis of the reporting of George. Rhetorical strategies that emphasise difference or that demonise women through particular connotations and myths of femininity are pervasive and diverse. Many of them work in contradictory ways or may resonate differently with particular audiences or political constituencies. The work of several media feminist scholars identifies repeated textual signifiers of difference in news reportage, contrary to Norris's findings that the gendered stereotypes and references to women's appearance were *not* prevalent in the reporting of women leaders in their first week in office (Norris 1997a, 1997b).[17]

Wahneema Lubiano's (1993) examination of the use of particular narrative figures or 'cover stories' in the reporting of the United States Senate hearings into the nomination of Judge Clarence Thomas to the U.S.A. Supreme Court and Professor Anita Hill's charge of sexual harassment against him, strongly demonstrated the demonisation of Hill by the press. Lubiano clearly shows how particular stereotypes and figures of femininity such as 'black lady' and 'welfare queen' were mobilised by Hill's opponents and used in reports to structure meanings.

Beliefs and stereotypes of female sexuality and influence are also employed to raise doubts about the legitimacy and accountability of women as political actors. Mary Ellen Brown and Darlaine Gardetto's study of the reporting of Hillary Clinton in relation to the Whitewater inquiry, argues the existence of stereotypes of women as being unsuitable to hold power. Their research identifies how particular, often contradictory, myths and stereotypes within the reporting of Clinton, as a (public) wife with (undue) influence over her husband and as "a postsuffrage woman symbolizing equality", produce anxieties

[17] It is notable that similar applications and effects of myths and stereotypes of femininity have been identified in several different geographical locations with diverse political and media systems and cultures.

about the "relationship between women, sexuality, and power" (Brown & Gardetto 2000: 25).[18] These practices worked to demonise Clinton in reports of the Whitewater Inquiry. Techniques of demonisation that focus upon the presumed threat that women represent are at one end of the spectrum. At the other end are stereotypes that diminish the authority and agency of women as political actors—stereotypes that speak of women's weakness, emotional natures and their location in the domestic sphere. Clare Walsh's analysis of Margaret Beckett's campaign for the leadership of the British Labour Party in 1994, demonstrates that stereotypes of femininity are used to express both personal and political criticism of Beckett (Walsh 1998). In particular, Walsh observes that low-status metaphors associated with the private sphere and genres such as the romantic novel are employed in relation to Beckett and other female politicians (1998: 210). These metaphors are sometimes fully expressed and at others implied through "common collocation" where certain words, especially when emphasised in headlines, suggest certain ideas of femininity.[19] Her work demonstrates the importance of including linguistic construction as one consideration in the analysis of media representations of Jennie George.

In their study of British women politicians Karen Ross and Annabelle Sreberny (2000) find signifiers of femininity that connote old myths and stereotypes are still commonly employed in news reports. Their analysis of media representation of Margaret Beckett's leadership campaign finds that Beckett was trivialised as a *woman* rather than as a politician. Karen Ross's research into the reporting of Margaret Beckett's leadership campaign shows she was criticised as "fickle and dishonest" (Ross & Sreberny 2000: 82-3). The article goes on to identify various reporting techniques that stereotype or trivialise women including: "a sexualized, over-personalized gaze; the use of different criteria to assess women in comparison with men, and the marginalization of women from core political issues and challenges" (2000: 84). Trivialisation and demonisation of women have been identified as parts of a general problem that is exacerbated through the persistent use of gendered frames and repetitive rhetorical motifs.

[18] Mary Vavrus (2002) has also analysed media reporting of Hillary Clinton in relation to her campaign for election to the USA Senate.

[19] One example she provides is the headline "Deserted", suggesting a deserted wife and also referring to Beckett's own affair with a married man (Walsh 1998: 210).

References to Family Life: Differential Effects for Male and Female Political Actors?

One fundamental paradigm through which women politicians are demonised is that of the 'unnatural' career woman who pursues her ambitions for power at the expense of, or instead of, a 'normal', 'fulfilling' maternal role. Such representations mobilise male anxieties about powerful archetypal and mythical female figures such as Medusa, Circe, Delilah, Jezebel and Boadicea. These representations also appear in visual characterisations of the female politician as dominatrix or as the phallic woman and these are discussed further below in relation to specific reports of Jennie George.[20]

Liesbet van Zoonen's long term study of the representation of male and female politicians and their families in the Dutch gossip press also reveals very significant aspects of gendered reporting that effect the representation of women in public life generally (van Zoonen 1998a, 2000).[21] Her detailed study of the way the struggle to balance family and public life is reported *differently* for male and female politicians, demonstrates key points about the impact of gender discourse on the ways representations of women's femininity shape assessments of their professional credentials. These findings are particularly relevant to the study of the reporting of Jennie George's presidency.

Van Zoonen demonstrates that traditional gender discourse articulates with political and news discourses in ways that add to the moral status and public appeal of male politicians and diminish (or at least do not enhance) that of most female politicians. Through her analysis van Zoonen reveals how "gendered political personalities are constructed, in what kinds of contexts they are presented, and how they are evaluated" (1998a: 50). In particular, she demonstrates that personalisation of politics and the focus on politicians' family lives offers male politicians the opportunity to be seen as more rounded human beings. For example, while male politicians' families are *expected* to sacrifice, some of the men interviewed in these reports worry about the impact of their absence on their

[20] Mary Vavrus (2002) notes that Hillary Clinton "was lampooned as a dominatrix; decked out in leather and a whip" on the cover of *Spy* magazine (Vavrus 2002: 152). Then Australian Democrats leader Meg Lees was similarly depicted in a series of cartoons by cartoonist Bill Leak in the *Australian* newspaper at the time the Democrats were engaged in tough negotiations with the Coalition Government over the introduction of a Goods and Services tax (GST).

[21] There is no comparable, established body of gossip press in Australia to that analysed by van Zoonen, instead this analysis focuses on mainstream newspaper reporting. However, van Zoonen's findings on gendered reporting of women's and men's struggles to balance work and family in the Dutch gossip press have strong and important similarities with the reporting frames utilised by the Australian print news media.

families, about being available to their children, and trying to be a 'good father'.[22] These discussions make a space for men to present the compassionate, caring and vulnerable sides of their personalities that are suppressed in normal political discourse. For women politicians such discussions close off certain opportunities for their personalities to be expressed. Although they open up some opportunities for new subject positions, the risk is that these are reported in ways that alienate certain audiences/constituencies. The danger is that the masculine position as politician can arouse fears of women's deviance and their distance from the traditional liberal model of a 'good mother' is emphasised and their family is seen as suffering. A sacrificing male partner is outside the boundaries of gender stereotypes that are more traditionally likely to view him as a *neglected* husband and the children, too, as neglected. The ambitions of female politicians can therefore be depicted as hindering *normal* family life.

In traditional gender discourse such a woman is likely to be classified as a 'bad mother'; and as selfish for putting her ambitions and needs before those of her family. A female politician who is unmarried, or childless, may also be represented as deviant through this gendered liberal family discourse. She may be demonised through the deployment of signifiers that connote myths of unfulfilled, barren women, or that suggest she is unlovable. In contemporary popular culture representations of ambitious career women as unlovable, ruthless and/or dangerous to men, play on old fears of castrating women and work to preserve outmoded sex roles. They also work in complex and contradictory ways to alleviate and/or exacerbate fear of sexual difference, preserving the masculine category as normative.[23]

One potential explanation for the differences between Norris's findings and those of these other feminist scholars, is that Norris's focus on the women leaders' *first week* in office

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[22] It is interesting that their concern is that their *children* are missing out rather than their *spouses* and they do not express publicly anxiety as to their performance as a good husband. Clearly women are still *expected* to sacrifice, although children are now seen to need a father's presence and influence.

[23] See for example films such as *Disclosure* (1994); *Working Girl* (1988); *Fatal Attraction* (1987) and *The Last Seduction (*1993) as discussed by Charlotte Brunsdon (1997a), Barbara Creed (1993) and Yvonne Tasker (1998), These representations are extreme interpretations of 'commonsense' beliefs about the costs of women's career aspirations as you 'cannot have it all'. These beliefs persist in the coverage of Jennie George. Others to comment upon the representation of career women as 'lonely', 'unfulfilled', 'unlovable' and 'bad mothers' include Braden (1996); Faludi (1992); Rhode (1995); Rivers (1996) and Walters (1995).

may have affected her findings.[24] Traditionally, political leaders and political parties enjoy a 'honeymoon' period when first assuming office, one that is relatively free from political or media attack. Other feminist researchers argue that the presence of stereotypes in news reporting of female politicians and the focus on femininity is frequently a technique used to delegitimate the woman as a political leader over time (Ross 1995; Walsh 1998). This focus also operates as a way to remind voters and media audiences of her otherness to traditional leadership models and the political sphere itself. If this is a common pattern, then gender stereotypes and myths would most likely increase later in the woman's term in office and be concentrated at times of political controversy and dispute or associated with challenges to her leadership. Furthermore, they would most likely be employed in ways that discredit the woman leader. This is exactly what Walsh (1998) and Ross and Sreberny (2000) find in their separate discussions of Margaret Beckett's campaign for the leadership of the British Labour Party. Despite the differences between the British parliamentary system and the Australian system there are common patterns in the masculinist nature of the political parties and the parliamentary processes; likewise in the gendered nature of news reporting more generally.[25] This issue of the use of gender stereotypes and myths in ways that discredit the woman leader at times of political controversy or dispute, is a key question in the analysis of the reporting of Jennie George.

Strategies of Naming: Jennie George and Gender Ambivalence

The use of female public figures' first names by the media can be a tactic to highlight their femininity and can generate conflicting audience responses. Some feminist scholars

[24] Norris's reasoning for focussing on the first week in office was that the "initial frames provide an important indication of what is expected about women in politics" (1997b: 157).

[25] One of the key differences between British politics and Australian relevant to this discussion is the long and 'successful' leadership of Margaret Thatcher. However, despite her being the first female Prime Minister of Britain, her success has not diminished the gendered nature of reporting of politics nor of party culture and practices. Fairclough (1995: 180) has observed that the only models of successful political leadership available to Thatcher "had strongly masculine resonances so she had the dilemma of needing to appropriate masculine models without compromising her femininity". Thatcher reconstructed herself to fit within both the masculine leadership models and available forms of femininity that were conservative and traditional to some degree, albeit at the same time transgressing the previously accepted boundaries of female participation in the public sphere. Perhaps because her approach was conservative, certainly not feminist, and perhaps also because of the simultaneous presence of the Queen as the most recognisable British public figure, Thatcher succeeded in communicating to the press a particular variety of female leadership. She was, however, ridiculed by some sections of the press at various times through her chosen modes of femininity. At the same time other sections of the press lauded her through equating her with various female warrior heroes such as Boadicea and Britannia herself. For a fuller discussion of Thatcher in the press see Webster (1990).

argue it works in the woman's favour inviting audience identification,[26] whereas others argue it suggests patronising attitudes to women and/or diminishes their leadership status.[27] In Jennie George's case, she is widely known by the name Jennie. So, although the use of her first name, rather than her title, implies familiarity, intimacy and patronage, it is not a media-originated corruption of Jennifer. Jennie George is the president of a labour movement of (ideologically constructed) equals, 'comrades'. The use of her first name within the movement may convey this equality, as well as a proprietorial sense, despite it also, at the same time, signifying her difference from her masculine predecessors. However, its use by the press can suggest an unequal power relationship or difference in credibility in situations where she is referred to by her first name and the other participant in an interview, or her opponent, is referred to by the title Mr or Minister.[28]

A particular dilemma attached to her name is that her last name, George, is a man's first name. This raises a unique problem and can suggest gender ambiguity when she is referred to as Ms George, or simply 'George', especially in a context in which her femininity is already being called into question. The significance of the deployment of her first and second names will be considered in the analysis of headlines, captions and reports.

Exceptional Women

Additional elements that are frequently deployed in media representations of women as political actors include marking individual women as 'exceptional', due to exceptional talent or high ambition. This can set the woman and her achievements apart from the situations of ordinary women and make such positions appear inaccessible (Muir 2000). Women who have been represented as 'exceptional' include examples as diverse as

[26] Deutchman & Ellison argue this in relation to Pauline Hanson (1999) and many of the British women politicians interviewed by Karen Ross and Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi felt positive about the use of their first names by the press believing "that it made them seem more accessible than their male counterparts" (1997: 106).

[27] Meyers, however, argues that "the use of first names in journalism is generally reserved for children, women and pets" and their use juvenilizes the woman concerned (Meyers 1997: 2; see also Fowler 1991).

[28] For example in some relatively heated media debates on programs such as the ABC's '7.30 Report' and 'Lateline', in relation both to the Cavalcade to Canberra and later the Maritime Dispute George was regularly referred to by both the interviewer and the Minister as 'Jennie'. However, the Minister, Peter Reith, was regularly referred to as Minister or Mr Reith by both George and the interviewer. Such differentiation in referral suggests difference in authority, and potentially, in credibility.

maverick Australian right-wing politician Pauline Hanson, on the one hand, and British Labor deputy leader Margaret Beckett, on the other. Hanson is reported as being exceptional in her rapid rise to prominence, her refusal to fit within political norms, and in the use of her body and her sexuality in her attempts to 'woo' the voters and sometimes the media (Deutchman & Ellison 1999; van Acker 1999). She is considered to be unusual in her choice of eye-catching and fashionable attire, often choosing a style of dress that accentuates her femininity and her body in contrast to the more traditional approach of women professionals who choose 'dress for success' suits and tailored clothing (Kingston 2000). A politician of a very different style, British Labour leadership contender Margaret Beckett, was marked as exceptional and indeed 'other' to the usual Labour members in terms of class, gender and generation. Indeed, Beckett was represented as *insufficiently* feminine as has been Helen Clarke, Prime Minister of New Zealand (Walsh 1998: 206).

Norris notes that the woman leader is frequently marked as exceptional within the frame "first woman as breakthrough for all women" and it increases expectations of her (Norris 1997b). These high expectations of the woman leader, both as a breakthrough for all women and as an agent of change lead, to a 'pedestal effect' whereby any perceived failure on her part is magnified by its contrast to the high expectations of her performance.[29] The reporting of women as exceptional also marks their difference from 'normal' women and can raise questions about their femininity. Such reporting could work to enhance the appeal and respect for the 'exceptional' woman for some audience members, whereas for others it could make it very difficult to identify with her or her actions.[30] Other ways women are regularly marked as different or exceptional, include the emphasis on their biography and personal history as an explanation for their difference, their achievement, or to account for their beliefs (Bell 1997). The analysis below will pay attention to the ways George's refugee 'battler' background (amongst other factors) is deployed in reports to mark her as exceptional. The expectation that women should account for their presence in this masculine domain (whereas men's ambition and

[29] (Norris (1997a, 1997b); Henderson (1999); van Acker 1999).

[30] British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was generally regarded as an 'exceptional' woman (McNeil 1991; Webster 1990). Her characterisation as the 'Iron Lady' required her to draw upon notions of masculine strength and toughness and also to utilise particular signifiers of femininity (such as handbags, hairdo, pastel colours and frills or ribbons) in order not to appear too masculine or too hard. However, her persona, as well as her politics, was one that generated highly polarised responses.

presence is taken for granted) indicates the continued existence of the gendered frame in the reporting of women as political actors.

Attention to Dress

Attention is frequently paid, especially in cartoons, to women politicians' dress, physical appearance and other aspects of their self-presentation (van Acker 1999).[31] Although Norris argued that excessive attention to dress was not evident in her research into the reporting of women leaders, others find it to be a key rhetorical and visual device in drawing attention to femininity.[32] Attention to the woman politician's dress also fits news values of unusualness and personalisation, conforming to the increasing adoption of tabloid tactics. It is an important aspect of visual reporting and is analysed in relation to the photographic images and illustrations that accompany reports, as well as in relation to linguistic features of reports.

Rhetorical Strategies that Affirm the Public Sphere as Masculine

Traditional news values assume that politicians occupy masculine subject positions in the public sphere, that women in masculine contexts are unusual, and that readers will expect or require some explanation to account for their presence. It is assumed that this explanation will relate to the women's personal history, their exceptional attributes or unusual beliefs. The emphasis on the personal history of women candidates also corresponds with the 'intimization' of politics and reporting practices whereby the personal lives and beliefs of politicians are increasingly reported upon by both tabloid and broadsheet newspapers (van Zoonen 1991, 1998a). This is a characteristic of the blurring of journalistic styles and categories and is likewise indicative of attempts to appeal to women readers in the quest for new audiences. However, whilst it may make political reporting more entertaining and will appeal to certain readers, the emphasis on the personal lives of women political and public figures invites judgements of them, from

[31] The issue of cartoonists depiction of the dress and appearance of women politicians has been publicly debated in Australia in relation to several different politicians. Former Victorian Premier, Joan Kirner, was greatly irritated by depictions of her as a housewife in a spotty dress but found a way to turn it into a humourous campaigning strategy (Kirner & Rayner 1999). More recently ALP shadow-minister Jennie Macklin complained in the press about sexualised cartoon images of then Australian Democrats leader Meg Lees as a dominatrix during the GST negotiations with the Coalition Government and previous representations of Cheryl Kernot in bed with ALP male politicians at the time of her defection from the Democrats to join the ALP (Macklin 1999). However, her complaint was treated by several cartoonists, particularly Bill Leak, and other commentators, as typical of feminists' incapacity to take a joke and as an example of political correctness carried to extremes (Leak 1999; Green (1999); MacDonald (1999).

[32] See for example Henderson (1999); Ross & Sreberny (2000); Stott-Despoja (1997); Vavrus (2002).

certain audiences, as different from their male counterparts who retain the normative positions that are valourised. It also invites judgements of them, both admiring and critical, as different from 'normal' women. Such comparisons can disadvantage women in relation to particular audience segments and constituencies, and in relation to particular conventions of reporting, whereas they often add to the credibility and appeal of men.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the parameters for media analysis in relation to women as political actors. In combination with Chapters One and Two it has discussed the range of newspapers selected and the choice of news media as a focus of investigation, and the methods used for analysis. The precise details of the report collection process and selection of those for close analysis are explained in the relevant chapters to follow.

It outlines the approach adopted towards, and methods developed to perform, the analysis of news reports of women as political actors within the historically masculinist discourses of politics, industrial relations and the news genre. Feminist news analysis reveals that assessments of women political actors' performance are frequently judged against traditional gendered beliefs about femininity. The analysis in chapters that follow offers detailed discussion of news frames together with the deployment of rhetorical and visual signifiers of femininity (and unionism) in the reportage of Jennie George. It also considers relations of power and politics, and readership practices involved in political/cultural reception of women in news, with particular emphasis on three crucial moments in Jennie George's career. News accounts privilege certain interpretations of political actors' experiences, credentials, achievements and performance because they do (or do not) fit with the prevailing commonsense news frames. Importantly, these accounts can cripple a career when linked to other frameworks and cultural beliefs in ways that instil fear and/or distrust of the woman leader in the larger public. But this is part of another story—one to come in the analyses of Jennie George in Chapters Four to Eleven

Part II: Election of the First Woman ACTU President

Chapter 4
'The People's Heroine': Representations of Jennie George's Election to the Position of ACTU President

Chapter 5
Reading 'Jennie George' as an Ambivalent Sign: Semiotic Analyses of the News Reports of her Election

4 'The People's Heroine': Representations of Jennie George's Election to the Position of ACTU President

Introduction

This chapter is the first of two which examine news media representations of Jennie George as 'first woman' in the reports of her election to the position of ACTU president in September 1995. In order to provide a context for the analysis to follow, this chapter commences with a discussion of the situation of Jennie George as the 'first woman' leader of a masculine movement, the trade union movement, and the similarities and differences between that situation and the position of a woman leader of a political party. It makes specific reference to patterns in the reporting of Australian women politicians (particularly those in the ALP) that developed during the 1990s and have continued since that time. These patterns are familiar to Australian audiences and are directly referred to in some reports of Jennie George's election and, indeed throughout, her presidency. Having established the relevant background, the chapter details the findings of a content analysis performed on twenty-six reports of George's election collected from twelve Australian daily newspapers. This chapter commences with a discussion of the representational category of 'first woman leader', how it developed and why it is worthy of examination. Utilising the concept of news frames (Gitlin 1980) it analyses how Jennie George's election was interpreted by the press, how it was made sense of as 'news', and how the reports were organised and structured. It turns to Pippa Norris's (1997b) work on gendered news frames in her analysis of the reporting of women political leaders as a starting point. The content analysis section investigates whether these three frames identified by Norris are applied in print media reports of George's election. Next the chapter considers certain additional themes and signifiers apparent in the reporting of George as the ACTU president, which intersect with the established framing of first women leaders.

The following chapter extends this analysis through the application of semiotic techniques to four key reports of George's election. The detailed analysis of the images, headlines, narrative and page layout deployed in these reports reveals the ways in which Jennie George's femininity, her feminism, her non-English-speaking background, and her affiliations with the left are used to make sense of her election to

office. In particular it interprets the implications and political effects of these reports for assessments of George's success or failure as ACTU president in the context of speculation about the challenges to the labour movement under a future hostile conservative government.

The period of reporting immediately following the election of a new leader is often referred to as the 'honeymoon' period, as the reports usually concentrate on the achievements and skills of the new leader, and the events leading up to their election. It is generally assumed that this will be (one of) the period(s) of the most favourable reporting the leader will experience. This period is also significant as expectations are established and predictions made about how she/he will conduct her/himself in office. These predictions reflect community and insiders' views and are also indicative of media organisations' particular interests and concerns. The predictions made in such news reports and profiles contribute to constituting the key issues for the leaders and their organisations; establishing an agenda for action; establishing the expectations of opinion makers and community members; and establishing the criteria for later measuring the success or failure of the leader. These are political effects and whilst the degree of their influence is difficult to measure, the reporting establishes key features of the developing discourse on her/his leadership.

The nature of such predictions and expectations of first women leaders reveal much about the gendered nature of reporting on women political actors. It is particularly relevant to look at the representations of Jennie George's initial honeymoon period and consider if they include the seeds of the intense media criticism she experienced less than one year later, in the aftermath of the Cavalcade to Canberra demonstration. The ways in which her election to office was reported is also significant to the analysis of her resignation (that appears in Chapters Nine, Ten and Eleven). The thesis argues, with reference to Pippa Norris's international research (Norris 1997a, 1997b), that there are indeed links between these periods of reporting, and that these connections relate to the gendered nature of reporting on women political actors and women leaders in particular. The thesis argues that they are also to do with the conventions of establishing conflict within news reporting.

Jennie George as First Woman Leader of a Male Movement

First Women—Exceptions Which Prove the Rule of 'Others'

On 27 September 1995 Jennie George was elected as the president of the ACTU. She was the first woman ever to be elected leader of this peak union body. The event drew widespread media attention. It featured in that night's television news on all three commercial networks and the publicly funded Australian Broadcasting Commission and Special Broadcasting Service. Seventeen newspaper items (reports and cartoons) relating to her election were collected from a search of two national (the *Australian* and the *Financial Review*) and ten city newspapers (the *Courier Mail*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Canberra Times*, *Age*, *Herald Sun*, *Advertiser*, *West Australian*, *Mercury* and *Examiner*) published on 28 September. Media emphasis on Jennie George as the *first woman* president of the ACTU deserves special attention.

The representational category 'first woman' has become one of the most familiar news frames in reporting of women's achievements of the past thirty years. The Women's Liberation Movement drew attention to the absence of women from positions of power and authority. Once absence was established as an issue, the media developed a gendered news framework which heralded women's entry into a wide range of positions and organisations as a 'first' for women (Greenfield & Williams 1988). News media have frequently purported to celebrate such women's achievements, usually as a major achievement for the individual woman, sometimes as an achievement for the organisation, and frequently for its significance as a 'breakthrough for all women' (Norris 1997a, 1997b).

Pippa Norris analysed the reporting of ten 'first women' Presidents or Prime Ministers in their first week in office in comparison to the reporting of close male counterparts (Norris 1997b). She analysed stories from three international newspapers, two wire services, two weekly news magazines, and the BBC world service. Norris's study employed content analysis techniques to count the number of stories that featured the new leader. From this she found that the male leaders received slightly more coverage than the female leaders. She also used "a more focussed, qualitative, interpretative

approach"(1997b: 157) to examine the main themes in the newspaper reports.[1] Norris argues that these themes or frames that arise in the first week of office are likely to be particularly important, as this is the period in which readers and the electorate is forming their opinion of the new leader. It is also the period when the greatest detail is provided as background about the new leader for the reader. During this period Norris argues "commentary often relies quite heavily on conventional interpretative frames" (1997b: 157). Later in the term of office the frames may change as incumbents may be judged on their records, specific actions and routines. Norris found that although sex-role stereotypes were uncommon in these reports, "the stories showed certain gendered news frames with common themes" (Norris 1997b: 161). The gendered news frames that were pervasive were first woman leader as a "breakthrough ... for all women, the woman leader as outsider, and the woman leader as agent of change" (1997b: 161).

The approach taken in this thesis differs from Norris's in several significant ways. Firstly, it is about the reporting of one individual rather than a group. Secondly, Jennie George is the president of the peak trade union body rather than the national political ruler and this difference has significance for the way her election and her access to power is reported. Thirdly, the reporting on Jennie George is not compared to that of a male ACTU president. Fourthly, the thesis examines several key moments in her term of office rather than just her appointment period. Fifthly, it focuses on Australian media reporting and an Australian woman leader rather than on international and USA reporting and international figures primarily residing in the northern hemisphere. This geographical difference has significance in relation to particular reporting and political conventions. Sixthly, it extends the approach taken by Norris as it involves a close, in-depth, semiotic analysis of particular articles, images and editorial devices (such as headlines and captions) in the context of their page layout and their relationship to reports elsewhere in the same or other papers. This approach enables the examination of the meaning of various elements in juxtaposition. It makes possible the detailed study of the way gender works as a structuring device within news reports of the woman political actor at every level of reporting. As Norris herself says:

[1] The specific methodology applied to study the reports, taken from the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and the *Financial Times*, is not explained in Norris's book.

> the nuances of sex stereotypes and framing can best be understood through a detailed qualitative deconstruction of what is, and is not, said about their portrayal, rather than through a more formal content analysis.
>
> (Norris 1997b: 157)

The Position of First Woman Union Leader: Similarities and Differences to that of a Woman Political Leader.

As leader of a masculinist organisation Jennie George, in common with many women politicians, is expected to follow established, masculine, patterns of good leadership. As the first woman to hold such a position her differences from the established mould stand out, are newsworthy and points of contention. As an 'other' she cannot *be* a traditional male leader, even if she would choose that way of operating. As a woman leader she can choose to adopt such masculine leadership behaviour in an attempt to blend in and minimise the evidence of her difference. She can choose to replace it with her own version of leadership practice or attempt to combine the two (Sinclair 1998; Sudano 1997).[2] The risk is that her innovations and achievements will be marked as primarily different from the (masculine) norm and may be assessed as less successful or 'lacking' in comparison to traditional leadership practices. This risk particularly relates to her political opponents or rivals who may seek to highlight her difference from traditional norms in an attempt to discredit her to gain support for alternative policies, or to further their own claims to future leadership positions. If such criticisms arise they fit immediately within the news values of political reporting that categorise political conflicts and challenges as potentially sensational and being of high audience interest. This increases media interest in, and reportage of, the controversy and the woman leader's (apparent) difference.

There are particular circumstances relating to Jennie George's situation that distinguish her from the subjects of Norris's study. It is important to take account of these circumstances in considering the reports as they may influence the way that news frames are applied to her. Jennie George's status as head of the Australian trade union movement is somewhat different from those women politicians who are head of

[2] Whatever style of leadership the woman leader chooses to adopt, she has limited capacity to influence whether the media reportage of her performance will reflect this style. Instead, media reports may, from time to time, or consistently, emphasise her difference and her femininity, even if her strategy as leader as been to adopt masculine leadership practices and modes of presentation that minimise gender difference.

a major political party. The trade union movement does not have the accepted legitimacy of a political party and, indeed, is often reported as being against the interests of the presumed readership (Hartley 1989; Philo et al. 1982; Ward 1995). This traditional media suspicion and hostility to unions may intersect with gendered news discourse in a way that throws up alternate reporting frames for Jennie George. The existing commonsense categories of representing union personnel position unionists (generally) as being opposed to the presumed reader. This may articulate with gendered news oppositions of masculine and feminine in interesting and unexpected ways, complicating the framing conventions of 'first woman' as described by Norris.

Jennie George is an avowed feminist and took office at a time when some argue the media was developing a 'backlash' against feminism (Faludi 1992; van Acker 1995; Whelehan 2000). She is also a member of Left factions of both the union movement and the Australian Labor Party (ALP). The 'Left' is traditionally regarded by the media as potentially dangerous, disruptive to business and social order, and is widely reported within frames of deviancy and militancy (Philo et al. 1982; Ward 1995).[3] In some instances the reports of Jennie George's election demonstrate 'commonsense' antagonism to unions, the left, and/or to feminism. It is apparent that gender is not the only frame operating in the reporting of her election (although it may frequently be the most obvious one) and the analysis below will take account of these various intersecting frames and discuss their effects on the preferred meaning of the reports.

Reporting on Women Political Leaders in the Context of Late Twentieth Century Australian Politics.

In recent Australian political history there have been two women elected to party leadership and simultaneously to the position of State Premier, in circumstances that warrant recording for their impact on the ways women political leaders (especially of the ALP) have been reported. They are Carmen Lawrence elected as leader of the West Australian ALP in 1990 and simultaneously as State Premier, and Joan Kirner

[3] Despite frequent media reports of the Left as a single cohesive and monolithic block there are in fact many (shifting) left groupings as well as the formal factions. Furthermore, the ways in which individuals and trade unions line-up within the union movement may differ from how they line-up inside the formal factions of the ALP.

elected as leader of the Victorian ALP and Victorian Premier later in 1990.[4] These women's achievement of party and state leadership were celebrated at the time as historic 'firsts' for women, in ways similar to those documented by Norris. However, the circumstances of their election were complex, both governments were performing extremely poorly in the opinion polls, they were accused of economic mismanagement and their male predecessors were blamed. The appointments were attacked by opponents as political 'tactics', the ALP was accused of taking the cynical attitude of 'if all else fails, put in a woman' and criticised for handing its best-performing women a poisoned chalice (van Acker 1999). The coincidence of two women being elected to the ALP leadership in similarly challenging circumstances, within the same year, gave rise to an intense body of reportage, which familiarised the Australian public with gendered reporting frames of women leaders, in particular with the 'breakthrough for all women' and women as 'agent of change/saviour' frames. The precariousness of the pedestal upon which a perceived 'saviour' is placed and the rapid transformation of the circumstances of such leadership into a poisoned chalice is one that has become 'commonsense' in mediatized Australian political discourse. Despite this, media reporting on Australian women politicians frequently assumes a community consensus exists around women only being given leadership when all else has failed. References to Kirner and Lawrence continue to be made in media reports and commentary about women's leadership experiences and credentials in Australia, and particularly in relation to women in the labour movement.

The context of Carmen Lawrence's election to party leadership and Premiership included widespread accusations of improper business dealings against the two previous ALP Premiers, Peter Dowding and Brian Burke. Lawrence was positioned both representationally and politically as an agent of change who would clean up corruption in the party. When she failed to deliver victory to the Labor Party at the 1992 State election she was represented as a failure. In the early period of her term as

[4] Kerry Chikarowski was elected as Liberal Opposition leader in New South Wales in 1998 shortly before a State election, when the Liberals were doing poorly in the opinion polls. She did not manage to win the election for the Liberals, although there may have been expectations that a 'cleanskin' could save the Liberals. The 'breakthrough for women' and 'agent of change/saviour' frames were evident in news reports of Chikarowski's performance see Jenkins (2000). Two women have led their parties to victory in elections in Australian territories. Kate Carnell was elected Chief Minister of the Liberal Government in Australian Capital Territory in 1995, and Claire Martin as the ALP Chief Minister of the Northern Territory in 2001.

Premier, Lawrence was courted by the media who represented her as talented and highly professional, a Labor 'star'. Later, she was herself accused of misleading Parliament, brought to answer these claims before a Royal Commission in 1995, and subjected to a particularly intense political and media campaign to discredit her (Eveline & Booth 1997; Mitchell 1996b). Lawrence's transformation has been described by the senior political reporters as the 'Madonna-whore' syndrome (Wallace 1994, 1995).[5] Others have referred to it as an instance of the pedestal effect and an example of poor treatment of women by the Australian Labor Party (Else-Mitchell 2000; Henderson 1999; van Acker 1999). The ALP has been accused of only electing women to leadership positions when it has got itself into an impossible mess and want either a miracle or a 'fall girl'.

Likewise, when Joan Kirner was elected leader of the Victorian Labor Party and Premier of Victoria, after John Cain resigned, it was reported as an instance of the ALP being desperate for a fresh face. The Victorian Labor Government was in a deep trouble due to several unpopular political decisions, the collapse of the Tricontinental Bank and a severe downturn in the economic cycle. The Victorian Government faced a crisis with a significant reduction in income and a high demand for services at a time when financial mismanagement was a major electoral issue. Kirner was elected leader (and Premier) with a seemingly impossible task of turning around public opinion within two years of the election. Leadership again was both materially and representationally a poisoned chalice, although in Kirner's case she did not enjoy media favour the way Carmen Lawrence did. Instead, from early in her premiership, Kirner was demonised by the media, especially the Murdoch press (News Limited). She was reported through characterisations that had various negative connotations including being branded for her alleged incompetence, domesticity, housewifery, obesity and Stalinism. She was designated as 'Miss Piggy' and 'Mother Russia' to characterise her as a defective leader with reference to stereotypic categories that

[5] Christine Wallace was the first to use this phrase in relation to Carmen Lawrence in a report in the *Australian Financial Review* 15/3/1994 on comments made by Lawrence about media stereotyping of female politicians. She is reported as saying: '(There) are too few of us, so we tend to become the focus of both extravagant praise and excessive criticism ... The assessment of your capabilities tends to be exaggerated, and it means when you fail, you fail that much more conspicuously.' Other journalists who have remarked upon the syndrome in relation to Lawrence include Bagwell (1995) and Willox (1995). Other writers who discuss the extremes in the reporting of Lawrence's career in the early-to-mid-1990s include Eveline & Booth (1997); Else-Mitchell (2000); and van Acker (1999).

called attention to her femininity, her physicality and her political leanings (Kirner & Rayner 1999; van Acker 1999). Kirner found various effective ways to turn the tables on her media tormentors, and to laugh off their attacks.[6] However, the effect of these characterisations of both her and Carmen Lawrence, has been to establish a *repertoire of representations* of Australian women political actors, especially those affiliated with the Labor Party (Else-Mitchell 2000; Henderson 1999).[7] This history is particularly relevant as both direct and implied references are made to it in news representations of Jennie George both at the time of her election and subsequently. One example of this is the headline that directly equates the two women in the pairing 'By George, its Carmen's script' (Akerman 1996).[8]

In summary, it is clear that the reporting of Jennie George as first woman leader of the ACTU sits within several conventions of news reporting. Thus the analysis of specific reports needs to take account of the ways these conventions work together and in opposition to each other. These conventions include the gendered news frames identified by Norris and the broader gendered reporting conventions that position women with power as other to 'normal' women and also as other to men. They also include the conventions of industrial reporting that represent unions as hyper-masculine, disruptive, deviant and a threat to national stability. In addition there are specifically Australian factors operating that position the appointment of women to (especially Labor) leadership as a suspect or desperate political strategy. All of these conventions operate within news discourse that ranks conflict as a primary news value and this hierarchy operates on the structure and narrative of reports in fundamental

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[6] Joan Kirner and her supporters objected to repeated representations of her in a polka-dot dress and devised a 'spot on Joan' line of campaign materials including shopping bag, badge and T-shirt, to turn the image around and make it work for her. For discussion of Kirner's response to these attacks see Kirner (1996), and Kirner & Rayner (1999). The impact of these representations of both Lawrence and Kirner is also discussed by various politicians interviewed by Anne Henderson (1999) in *Getting Even*.

[7] During this time in Australia there have been several other significant female leaders, however representations of these women and their performance have not so directly related to reportage of Jennie George as these two ALP leaders. The Australian Democrats, a minor but significant party that has on several occasions held the balance of power in the Senate, has been led by several women. These include Janine Haines, Cheryl Kernot (who left the Democrats leadership to join the ALP in 1997), Meg Lees and Natasha Stott Despoja. The other internationally known female Australian political leader is Pauline Hanson, a former Liberal candidate who was elected as an independent and formed the right-wing One Nation Party. Hanson's representation in the media is especially interesting but is outside the scope of this study.

[8] Other reports that make reference to the experiences of Lawrence and Kirner in their discussion of George's election include Ackerman (1995a); Brown (1995); *Herald Sun* (1995); and Meade (1995).

ways. The second part of this chapter expands upon the gendered frames identified by Norris and utilises content analysis to identify their occurrence within the reporting of George's election. It then discusses a broader range of news frames and recurring signifiers of femininity and unionism that are deployed in the reports of George's election.

Content Analysis of News Reports of Jennie George's Election as ACTU President

Content Analysis Background

This section employs content analysis to chart some of the common news frames and significations utilised in the news reportage of Jennie George's election. It examines how the reports of her election are situated in, and conflated with, discussions of the upcoming federal election and, in particular, the labour movement's future under a hostile government. It considers how the reporting emphasises issues such as the challenges for the labour movement and for Jennie George as its leader; the union movement's 'survival' and the role of Jennie George's leadership of the ACTU in contributing to that survival.

It locates use of myths and figures of femininity that are repeated in accounts of her election, especially the figures of 'union maid' and 'feminist heroine', and how these mark her as different from, or similar to, traditional male union leadership in Australia. It also analyses how traditional reporting frames about the 'left' and unionism differentiate the reporting of her election from that of other women politicians. It investigates how news media report her role in ways that evoke connotations of an Australian imaginary and mythic historical consciousness.

Twenty-six reports relating to George's election were analysed for the presence of key news frames and signifiers of femininity and/or unionism. The specific categories employed include the identification of George as the *first woman* president, the three gendered news frames identified by Norris: 'breakthrough for all women'; 'agent of change'; and 'woman leader as outsider'; together with additional categories relevant to this specific context. These additional categories are the association of her election with the federal election, the representation of George as 'exceptional', the size of the

challenge ahead, the question of her 'toughness', the reference to her communist connections and in particular her previous marriage to Paddy George, and her feminism. It also locates use of myths and figures of femininity that are repeated in accounts of her election, especially the figures of 'emotional woman', 'token woman', 'union maid' and 'feminist heroine' in the news reports of her election. It considers how these representational tropes mark her as different from traditional male union leadership and how they are deployed to make sense of, and predict the success of, her election. These findings are summarised in Tables 4.1 and 4.2. The degree to which the representational categories are present is indicated by the number of ticks in each column. The findings of the content analysis form the basis of the discussion in the rest of this chapter.

Analysis of News Frames in Specific Reports

The first weeks following the election of a new government or leader are, as noted above, regarded as a 'honeymoon' period. The ways in which Jennie George was reported at the time of her election can, therefore, be expected to be more favourable than the reporting of later events in her presidency. Pippa Norris's identification of three gendered news frames operating within the reporting of international women political leaders provides a useful starting point for the analysis of the reporting of George's election to the ACTU presidency. The content analysis discussed below identifies the frequency of the application of these news frames and the application of others, including those specific to the Australian context, that were not identified as significant in Norris's study. The semiotic analysis of the individual reports (in Chapter Five) will consider to what degree these reports conform to, or deviate from, the gendered news frames identified by Norris. Chapter Five also identifies the presence of particular signifiers of femininity that work on different levels to the news frames identified by Norris.

Seventeen newspaper reports and/or cartoons were collected on the 27 and 28 of September 1995, the day of and day following George's election, that directly discussed or referred to her election. Of these fifteen referred to her explicitly or implicitly as the 'first woman' leader and usually in terms of breakthrough, outsider and/or agent of change. An additional nine reports were collected across the period 28

Table 4.1 Content Analysis of reports of Jennie George's election (part 1)

Date	Report title	Photo/ Image	Paper + page	Author	First woman pres.	Break through for wm	Agent of change	Outsider	Exceptional woman	Federal Election	Size of challenge	Tough Enough	Emotion	Battler Refuge	Communism	Romance	Other
25/8/95	**Stemming the Flow**	B&W med-large	Advert. p13	David Penberthy	√√		√√ (saviour)	√		√	√√√	√		√	√		Image rare feminist & lab hist connect. Challenges = recruiting & election
27/9/95	**George tells PM: Cough Up**	B&W med	Courier Mail p2	Ed Southorn	√		√	√		√	√						Agent of change frame implied but not strongly Covers her priorities
28/9/95	**A place in history by George**	B & W v small	Mercury p2	AAP	√					√							
28/9/95	**The movement greets its new face**		Daily Tele p18	Peter Lewis	√	√	√			implied thru adjacency			√				Celebration 'anointed' 'emotional address'
28/9/95	Unions, Democrats in election alliance		Daily Tele p18	Peter Lewis	implied thru adjacency		√			√							Adjacent previous Election context move to social unionism
28/9/95	**Tears, cheers for ACTU first lady**	B&W med	SMH p11	Norrington	√		√	√		√			√√	√		√	Emotion, high expectations
28/9/95	**Dawn of the reign of George the first**	B&W small	Fin Review p5	Mark Davis			implied but also reaffirms trad values	√ breaks mould	√	implied thru adjacency						√	Multiple differences 1st wn NOT mentioned, skills, ethnicity, white collar etc
28/9/95	**Its my party & I'll sing if I want to**	Col Pix med	Austn p1	Ewin Hannan	√	√√	√			√			√√√			√	Celebration & emotion, tears
28/9/95	**Keating George form a new Accord; surtitle 'A victory for all women'**	Col Pix m-large	Age, p1	Joanne Painter	√	√√√	√			implied thru adjacency			√			√ photo & caption	Historic, celebration Adjacent story re election context
28/9/95	**Arrival of George**	B&W drawing	Courier Mail p15	Ed Southorn	√	√	√ Saviour ?	√		√	√√√	√√√					Emotion, tokenism, puppet of men? Domestic frame.
28/9/95	**Union boss the best**	(above photo of BK PK)	Courier Mail p 13	Ed Southorn	not directly	√	√	√	√	implied thru adjacency			√	√	√	√√	'elated and tearful' 'battled tough times' 'proud feminist'
28/9/95	Tears cross party lines	B&W med	Courier Mail p1	Ed Southorn	√	√	√ (saviour)			implied thru adjacency	√√ *		√				Wonderful for wm' CK * adj report 'Labor's polling signals disaster'
28/9/95	Workers must stick with ALP	B&W small	Canb Times p1	Ross Peake						√							ACTU in election context But NOT first wm JG 'incoming pres'
28/9/95	**ACTU crowns its queen — as women dance for joy**	B&W med	Advert p 2	Ed Rush	√	√√	√	√	√				√√√	√			Celebratory 'feminist battler' 'powerful wm cried & danced' 'achievement for all of us'

Source: Compiled by the author

Articles in bold indicate sole focus on Jennie George

Table 4.2 Content analysis of reports of Jennie Georges election (part 2)

Date	Report title	Photo/ Image	Paper + page	Author	First woman pres.	Break through for wm	Agent of change	Out-sider	Exceptional woman	Federal Election	Size challenge	Tough Enough	Emotion	Battler refugee	Communist	Romance	Other
28/9/95	**Triumph for women, by George**	B&W large	Herald Sun p5	Sarah Dolan	√	√√	√√	√	√	implied thru adjacency			√	√			Celebratory, 'Tough new pres of ACTU choked back tears' battler 'one of... toughest operators'
28/9/95	**George vows to cast the net wide**		Herald Sun 4-5	Neil Wilson	implied thru adjacency		√√			√			implied thru adjcncy				Although 1st wm not mentioned here we know she is as adjacent to 'Triumph for wm'
28/9/95	The challenge for Jennie George		Herald Sun p 19	Editorial segment	√					√	√√√	√					'if she is to demon- strate her ascendancy is more than tokenism'
9/28/95	Jennie to be ACTU head		Examiner p6	na	√												
28/9/95		cartoon	Herald Sun p19	Knight	implied	√											
29/9/95	**Jennie George and the ACTU**		Austn p9	Editorial segment	√		implied	√	√√ remark able psnl	√	√√	√		√			Strongly individual focus 'comes to pres at critical time' Election context
29/9/95	**Key election role for a labour hero**	B&W small	West Austn p8	Mark Duffield	√√		√		√√	√	√			√	√		celebratory, psnl background, heal rifts.
1/10/95	**Jennie takes the helm of a listing ACTU**	B&W small	Sunday Tele p24	Piers Akerman	√	√ (at expense of men)		√			√√	√√	√		√√		gender's the jewel' tokenism, 'poisoned chalice' demonises feminists hysteric register
29/9/95	Tough survival test dictates a tame show		Herald Sun p17	Neil Wilson	√					√	√√	√	√				Short discussion of JG mention of emotion
29/9/95	Keating's weapon to be reckoned with	B&W v small	Courier Mail p13	Wallace Brown	not directly assumed readers know	√	√	√	√	√	√√	√					JG 'on a pedestal' 'widow of prom. Oz comnst' Front page 'Sister George Labour's last hope'
29/9/95	Rumblings from the floor		Daily Tele p 22	Peter Lewis	no mention 1st wm					√			√				Assumes know. 'slick packaging', tears cheers looked great on TV, lack of debate
1/10/95	Unions brace for winds of change		Sunday Age p 12	Editorial	not directly		√			√	√√	implied		√			small mention of JG
2/10/95	**George fears anti-women witch-hunt**	B&W med-large photo	Austn p5	Amanda Meade	not directly i/v @ Women & Labour Conf	√	√			√							JG 'expects to be attacked by misogynists' 'tough feminist rhetoric' CL subject of witch-hunt

Source: Compiled by the author

Articles in bold indicate sole focus on Jennie George

August 1995 to 2 October 1995 making a total of twenty-six reports that directly referred to her election. Twenty-two of the twenty-six represented her achievement as being a breakthrough for women.

The News Frame of 'Breakthrough for All Women'

The news frame of breakthrough, Norris argues, always stresses the historic 'first' status of the achievement and "almost invariably ... with a positive slant for the woman who has won against the odds" (1997b: 161). Whilst this slant is evident in the coverage of George's election, this study finds that the frame of breakthrough for all women incorporates both positive *and negative* connotations. The positive connotations are incorporated through the articulation of the skills and qualifications of the individual and the generally upbeat tone of such reports. They may also incorporate discussion of luck, patronage, inheritance or other factors which may detract from the emphasis on the successful candidate's achievements and skills and may place as much credit on the organisation for adopting 'progressive' measures to facilitate the promotion of women.

The positive reports on the 'first' woman as a 'breakthrough' frequently stress the 'exceptional' qualities of this particular woman. Here the frame of breakthrough may overlap with that of 'first woman as outsider' (see below). To be exceptional indicates that she is not representative of ordinary women nor of men. Her femininity links her to the 'otherness' of women; however, her personal history, achievement and its characterisation as 'exceptional' mark her out as different from other women and maintain the position of women in general as outside the masculine public sphere (Pettman 1996). It is only the exceptional woman who can attain entry into the public sphere. The framing of first woman as 'exceptional' can have negative connotations as well as positive ones. Such women can also be seen as 'unnatural' (Cockburn 1991) and unwomanly; as deviant from, or transgressive of, accepted feminine behaviour (Ross & Sreberny-Mohammadi 1997). It can also make "them the target for 'tall poppy' critics" especially in Australia where there is a tradition of harsh critique associated with public success (van Acker 1999: 200). In such representations the 'first woman's' credentials may be dequalified through questions posed about her skills as opposed to her luck, or suggestions that her appointment was 'tokenistic',

made because the time was 'right' for a woman.[9] Jennie George's femininity guarantees her difference from the normal male leadership incumbents and this difference is newsworthy of itself. The reportage of her breakthrough and her difference can be read ambivalently.

As the 'first' woman president of the ACTU, George is reported as the exception opposed to most other women. Her very 'exceptionalness' further confirms what she is not, that is she—unlike most women, particularly within the union movement— has managed to access a position of power despite being 'other' to the normal incumbents of such positions, that is, men. However, she is also placed in a position of difference to other women, her 'sisters'. She has been the exceptional one to 'make it' whereas they have either not chosen to contest such (traditionally masculine) positions, or have not been successful in their attempts. Men who achieve positions of power are not necessarily represented as 'exceptional' in this way, although they may be represented as being very talented, skilled or ambitious they are not marked as being different from their brothers in such a fundamental way. The 'exceptionalness' of Jennie George has further complexities since the woman carries a surname that is also a male first name. This textual ambivalence produces diverse and contradictory representations that are considered in relation to specific reports below.

The theme of 'breakthrough for all women' has within it the explicit expectation that the first woman will make it easier for others to follow. Such an expectation relies upon the first woman succeeding, for if she fails it may be harder for subsequent women to be elected. This expectation may be both represented, and experienced, as a heavy responsibility, especially for feminists committed to supporting other women's progress through the ranks (see Mitchell 1996a).[10] This expectation is established within reporting of the woman's first week in office and then becomes one of the criteria against which their subsequent performance is measured. The pressure to succeed, and accompanying risk of failure, adds tension to the reports functioning as a

[9] See discussion of Akerman's report 'Jennie takes control of a listing ACTU' below (Akerman 1995a).

[10] Susan Mitchell (1996a) discusses this expectation—that her presidency will be successful thereby making it easier for other women to follow—as a burden for George, in an article published in the *Weekend Australian*. Based on an interview with George, it assessed her presidency a couple of months after the Cavalcade to Canberra demonstration and the associated media and political fall-out. Mitchell also discussed the personal impact on George of the way that event was 'hijacked'.

form of conflict to increase their newsworthiness. In this case it should be evident in the reporting of Jennie George's resignation and possibly in evaluations of her performance during her presidency (subsequent chapters will demonstrate the presence of this tension). Whilst the success of a woman in being elected is cause for celebration (for supporters of the increased participation of women in public life and other 'progressives') her subsequent performance is likely to be closely scrutinised. Any mistake or failure is likely to attract heightened media interest as it can be reported within the context of disappointing these high expectations thereby creating the required element of conflict to satisfy news values. This has been referred to as the 'pedestal' effect (Else-Mitchell 2000; Henderson 1999; Norris 1997b). In this account the woman leader is placed on a pedestal by her political supporters and, as Rosamund Else-Mitchell describes it, "the statue [is] gilded and photographed by the media …The lone woman—feted, 'mediarised' [sic], in the spotlight [is] then sharply dethroned" by critics, likewise with full media coverage (2000: 11). The analysis of the reports of Jennie George's election demonstrates both the positive and negative operations of this news frame.

The News Frame of 'Woman Leader as Outsider'

Eleven of the twenty-six reports collected position George as an outsider. Pippa Norris argues that the news frame of 'outsider' commonly stresses "the lack of conventional qualifications and prior political experience of many of the women leaders" in her study (1997b: 162). The frame of woman leader as outsider reminds readers that leadership is a masculine activity and the leader is traditionally male. Political and organisational leadership takes place within the public sphere, which is traditionally regarded as a masculine domain. Any woman who attains such a position can be positioned as unqualified simply through her gender difference. Furthermore, this theme stresses masculine assumptions about the necessary characteristics and experience for leadership based on the "characteristics of the past office holders" rather than on the requirements of the job (Norris 1997b: 162). It means the woman candidate is assessed in relation to a male model, positioning her in terms of 'lack' rather than in terms of her specific skills, qualifications and experience. Karen Ross and Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi argue that such framing means that in reports of the woman politician "her sex is always on display" and that she is represented as "a special kind of deviant professional, a *woman* politician" (Ross & Sreberny 2000: 88;

see also Ross & Sreberny Mohammadi 1997). This type of reporting strategy dequalifies different or broader experiences and skills which the woman candidate brings to the position and under-estimates the woman's capabilities (Kirkpatrick 1995, cited in Norris 1997b).

Once constructed by the media, the automatic question this woman as 'outsider' frame raises for media commentators and political critics, is the question of whether the woman leader will be *tough enough* to succeed in a man's job (Cockburn 1991: 68; Gray 1993: 384). Eight of the twenty-six reports raised this question, either directly or by implication, in relation to George. It was a dominant theme in two of them. If women leaders are portrayed as being 'tough' they are often represented as being 'nasty', bossy and ruthless (Cockburn 1991; Inness 1999). Whilst tough men are regarded as having the necessary strength required to make difficult decisions and to exert authority over, or gain respect from other men—competitors, colleagues and opponents—tough *women* are represented as unwomanly, deviant and unlikable (Cockburn 1991). Toughness has an additional meaning within the trade union context. Here it exemplifies media conventions that portray unionists as bullies and wreckers (Philo et al. 1982). References to toughness in media assessments of George's election and capacities for leadership will be examined closely for the ways they evoke and deploy connotations of industrial militancy and/or feminine weakness. One rhetorical strategy that is related to the questioning of the leader's toughness is an emphasis on the size of the challenge ahead, thus implicitly raising the question of the leader's skills and chances of success. Eleven reports emphasised the scale of the challenge to George.

In considering the press reports of Jennie George's election one would expect to find multiple references to her as an 'outsider', especially in relation to her differences from the usual norm of ACTU presidents. Eleven reports referred to her in this way. These differences specifically include her gender, her white-collar and professional work background, her feminism, and her ethnicity.

The News Frame of 'Agent of Change'

The news frame of 'agent of change' often signifies a "break with politics as usual" (Carrol & Schreiber 1997 cited in Norris 1997b: 164). This frame often has positive

associations with cleaning up corruption in politics or overcoming divisions in factions or the country. As Norris (1997b: 163) notes "[a]ny change in leadership is likely to attract this angle, but with the entry of women this becomes one of the dominant motifs". Positive associations with this frame include those of healing the wounds and/or saving the country/party/organisation from disintegration or disaster. Negative associations can include fear of the unknown and the threat of a particular minority interest group or faction gaining control, such as the left, or in the case of women leaders, feminists. Such associations may suggest that perhaps women will be favoured over men for the sole reason of their gender. The suggestion that the woman leader might transform (and save) the organisation/country may connect with the traditional associations of women as morally superior or as 'guardian angels', as more humane and compassionate than men.[11] Representations that associate women political actors with such qualities, and transformations, also set women on a pedestal. Such expectations increase the scrutiny of such women's performance by both their opponents and the media in the expectation that "they will stumble or fall" (van Acker 1999: 148; see earlier discussion of the reporting of Carmen Lawrence and Joan Kirner). In such cases the representation of woman leader as agent of change can lead to the prize of leadership being equated with the poisoned chalice of inevitable failure.

Nineteen of the reports collected referred to George as an agent of change. Those news reports that predict the impact George might have on the union movement as a whole, and on the situation of women workers in particular, employ the news frame of 'first woman as agent of change'. Any reference to her as 'saving' the union movement also makes use of this frame. The five reports that position her as 'saviour' set very high expectations of her performance and establish a pedestal effect. If particularly high expectations are established for the woman leader it increases the likelihood of subsequent unfavourable reports that the leader has failed to meet expectations. The semiotic analysis of certain reports of Jennie George's election (in Chapter Five) considers the specific expectations that are created of her as an agent of change and how these establish criteria against which her performance will later be judged. These

[11] Many women politicians (such as Liberal Senator Amanda Vanstone) reject this expectation whilst others (such as former Democrat leader Cheryl Kernot) argue that increased numbers of women in Parliament would improve the quality of debate and behaviour (Mitchell 1996b).

expectations are also considered in the analysis of reports of her performance in the context of the Cavalcade to Canberra and at the conclusion of her presidency.

'First Woman' News Frames Create Expectations of the Performance of Women Political Actors

Two of the news frames identified by Norris, 'agent of change' and 'breakthrough for all women', function to place considerable pressure on the woman leader to perform her job successfully. Firstly, she is already under scrutiny as an outsider in a traditionally male arena, and watched particularly closely by those who are opposed to the entry of women into such arenas and would rejoice at her failure (Cockburn 1991). Secondly, her performance in achieving changes in policy and practice that benefit various groups of women will be evaluated by women members and external commentators. Furthermore, women leaders themselves and women members (especially in democratic organisations such as unions) are aware that the performance of the *first* woman leader will impact upon the future chances of other women's success in winning leadership positions (Gray 1993; Pocock 1997a; Sudano 1997). The news frames of breakthrough for all women and agent of change, together with reporting strategies that create a pedestal effect increase the newsworthiness of reporting of women gaining power, as they establish potential conflict within the situation: will she, or will she not perform to expectations or fall off the pedestal?

The failure of a woman leader may give male (and some female) opponents of women in positions of power the opportunity to rejoice and win back ground. Cockburn has found some men in organisations "have a repertoire of negative representations of women" in relation to authority (Cockburn 1991: 68). They specifically revolve around the themes of women not being capable and of women becoming nasty when they are in positions of authority. She also found that these men were delighted when women in power had a setback or suffered a humiliation (1991: 67). Some of the representations of triumph and celebration (for women) that attended the election coverage for Jennie George established the potential for smug or cynical responses (by men) to news of problems or setbacks which George would inevitably face in her term

in office.[12] These inflated expectations of an individual woman 'solving' the problems of discrimination and access to power and authority for other women add to the pedestal effect or 'golden girl' syndrome adhering to first women leaders.[13] These expectations, in turn, become part of the discourses about women leaders. As they are established in news reports they work through relay to construct consumer attitudes to women politicians and are then reflected back by further news reports on consumer attitudes and/or voting intentions. Media representations of the performance of women such as Jennie George, play a key role in influencing how their success or failure is assessed. They also work to establish, through intertextual resonances, patterns in other media reports of this emerging category of women political actors and women leaders.

Media representations of the success or failure of women as political actors can communicate the responsibility and difficulty of being a woman leader as a superhuman challenge, one which is unrewarding and that has severe personal consequences.[14] Reports that focus on the personal challenge for women of political success exemplify the tabloid turn in contemporary newspapers. The emphasis on the personal may attract a particular audience segment but it may also reinforce myths about women's unsuitability for the political office amongst other audience segments. A form of 'gate-keeping' can be accomplished through such representations as the effects of such representations include discouraging some women from making the attempt and encouraging others to leave leadership positions for more rewarding areas of work (van Acker 1999).

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[12] This point is important to keep in mind in considering reports of internal criticisms and attempts to destabilise George's leadership in the wake on Cavalcade to Canberra and in the final months of her presidency.

[13] See Else-Mitchell (2000); Henderson (1999); (Norris 1997b); van Acker (1999).

[14] Brad Norington's report 'Soft heart, hard line' published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Age* 'Good Weekend' magazine in December 1996 provides an example of how George comes to be characterised, in some reports, as 'a woman who has loved and lost' (Norington 1996e, see Figure 9.1). The front cover of this magazine featured a full length photo of George together with the title 'Jennie George: Love and Other Catastrophes'. This title was a pun on the title of a contemporary Australian feature film, and also a reference to the public relations disaster the ACTU experienced in the wake of the Cavalcade to Canberra demonstration that occurred a couple of months earlier. However, it also clearly signifies George as a woman who has had a disastrous love life, linking her to the myths about career women being 'unlovable'. The report includes discussion of George's own personal doubts about the costs to women of working in 'greedy' institutions (Franzway 1997), and the "big personal sacrifice" attached to their success in public life (George in Norington 1999e).

As news media works intertextually, reporters themselves pick up frames and also signifiers introduced in other reports. Some reports incorporate signifiers and figures of femininity that are in common use in genres such as women's and men's magazines, popular film, television and music. These early reports on Jennie George establish key historical information and place on the public record predictions of her likely strengths and weaknesses, success or failure that may be revisited in later assessments of her performance. Signifiers of femininity play a key role in developing such meanings. News media reports are also important as they both reflect and influence the opinions of other important political players. These include politicians, business leaders, industrial tribunal commissioners, and other key union leaders. An important factor in successful leadership in contemporary, highly mediatized, society is the capacity to perform well in the media. Therefore, this initial reporting of George is important in early assessments of whether she would be, as was hoped, a much-needed media 'plus' for the union movement.[15]

The Context of the Federal Election: Jennie George as an Electoral Asset for the ALP and/or as the 'Colour Supplement' to the Election Story

Jennie George's election was frequently reported within the context of the upcoming federal election. Indeed, this news frame was present explicitly in seventeen reports and implied through the adjacency of the report to others about Prime Minister, Paul Keating's address to ACTU Congress calling for union support in the election campaign in a further six instances. This provided a particular political, and frequently ideological, context to the discussion of her election and the assessment of her potential capacity to succeed as leader.

Six newspapers gave the lead story status of 28 August 1995 to the Prime Minister's address to the ACTU Congress and utilised George's election as a complementary 'colour' or 'soft news' story: they were the *Age, Australian, Daily Telegraph, Financial Review, Mercury* and *Sydney Morning Herald.* In only one of these newspapers were the reports *not* placed in close relationship. In the *Sydney Morning Herald* the Prime Minister's address is placed on the front page and extends to page

[15] See Norington (1998) for a discussion of the ACTU's need for a good media performer and his assessment of George's capacities in this regard.

two whereas the reports of Jennie George's election and Martin Ferguson's retirement are printed on page eleven. The *Courier Mail* gave both stories equal prominence whilst the *Herald Sun*, *Advertiser* and *Examiner* gave greater emphasis to Jennie George's election. Two papers, the *Canberra Times* and the *West Australian* only refer to George's election as a point of interest within the story of the Prime Minister's address to Congress, giving her only a paragraph. However, the *West Australian* published a separate profile on George, 'Key election role for labor hero', the following day that clearly positioned her in the political context (Duffield 1995). The Adelaide *Advertiser* of 28 September 1995 reported both stories but as separate items. It placed the report of George's election on page two and the report of the Prime Minister's address to Congress and the upcoming election on page seventeen. Only one paper reported the story of George's election without also reporting the story of the Prime Minister's address. The Launceston *Examiner* published a very short report on George's election on page six but did not mention Keating's speech (*Examiner* 1995).

Two papers constructed their front-page layout in ways which graphically incorporated George's election within the lead political news story, as a kind of subsidiary event (see for example the *Australian* Figure 5.4; the *Age* Figure 4.1 and the *Courier Mail*).[16] This is significant for two reasons. The Prime Minister's address to Congress established the event in a party political context, reaffirming the close connection between the ALP and the ACTU. It also positioned it in the context of a soon-to-be-held election that the ALP was likely to lose. Within these party political and election contexts George's presidency was less evaluated as the achievement of a talented woman and/or the overdue promotion of women to the leadership ranks of a male dominated organisation. Instead, the privileged interpretation of George's election became that which evaluated it as a political strategy by the ACTU and ALP hierarchies to appeal to a particular constituency. The close proximity of these reports on the front page of two newspapers, on the same, or adjacent, internal pages in another five papers, together with references to the federal election in several of the specific reports about George's election as ACTU president, link syntagmatically to

[16] Other papers such as the *Financial Review* (Figure 4.7 and 4.8) located the two stories on the same internal page thus establishing a close relationship between them. The *Herald Sun* located them on adjacent pages with a combined headline 'George vows to cast the net wide' across the double-page spread uniting the reports (Wilson 1995).

Figure 4.1 Age, 28/9/95, p.1.

THE AGE
THURSDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 1995
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SPORT MAKE MINE GEELONG

'Blackmail,' says state

New Hudson Conway claims

EXCLUSIVE

By DAVID WILSON

The State Government and the former Gas and Fuel Corporation have made an allegation of blackmail against a senior manager of Hudson Conway Limited, the main shareholder in Melbourne's casino.

The managers has been accused of trying to blackmail a representative of an engineering firm during a telephone conversation on 11 June 1992.

The blackmail claim is believed to be a major focus of investigations by police and the Casino and Gaming Authority into alleged criminal conduct involving Hudson Conway.

The investigations, which came to light last week, have raised questions about the future ownership of the casino because of probity requirements imposed by the state Casino Control Act.

According to a transcript of a conversation in which the blackmail allegedly occurred, the Hudson Conway manager says: "...If you make it hard for me, I will make it hard for you."

The engineering company employee allegedly said: "I understand that our fees are fixed."

Hudson Conway employee: "I will unfix them if you don't cooperate, think about it. I will unfix them . . . Don't dismiss me, think about it! If you don't cooperate, it won't be easy for you."

Two other employees of the engineering company are believed to have stated that they heard the conversation, and have signed a document attesting to its authenticity.

Matheson Stanley Jacques solicitors acting for the Government and the former Gas and Fuel Corporation, says that the Hudson Conway employee may have breached section 81 of the Crimes Act, which covers blackmail. An offence under this section carries a maximum penalty of 14 years' jail.

The joint managing director of Hudson Conway, Mr Lloyd Jacobson, who is also chairman of Crown Limited, the casino owner, was unavailable for comment last night. But he has stressed repeatedly over the past few days that neither Hudson Conway, its directors nor staff have been involved in or associated with any wrongdoing.

Hudson Conway has given the police major legal groups a further 600 pages of material relating to the case, on top of about 200 pages given to the fraud group last week.

The initial allegations of criminal activity involving Hudson Conway came to light last week in the course of a separate legal battle over the scrapping of a multi-million dollar redevelopment of a building site.

Glenn Pty Ltd, which is owned by insurer Mr Hudson Conway and the Foster's Brewing group, launched a $120 million civil action after a State Government decision in May 1993 to scrap a proposed 99-million office tower for the Gas and Fuel Corporation at Spring Street.

Glenn is seeking damages from the Gas and Fuel Corporation and the Government. In turn, the Gas and Fuel Corporation has claimed it was misled by Hudson Conway over the deal.

Matheson has documented allegations of "personal conduct unbecoming" against Hudson Conway and/or some of its employees.

Details of the allegations are expected to be outlined in the Supreme Court tomorrow when the court is expected to begin hearing an application by Melbourne Star legal consultant Ability be waived to allow the head

Continued: PAGE 4

ABC to axe state shows

By BEN POTTER, Sydney and KENDALL HILL

ABC television is to scrap its state based current affairs programs. *The 7.30 Report*, in favor of a national program based in Sydney as part of an effort to take up of news and current affairs.

Under the revamp, announced yesterday, the ABC will launch new weekly state and regional current affairs shows and hourly news updates. And two long-running programs are to be axed: the business program *The Nation Line* and the weekly consumer affairs show *The Investigators*.

The new national current affairs program will inherit *The 7.30 Report* name and will be presented by Mr Kerry O'Brien, one of the ABC's most experienced presenters, from December.

The future of the current state-based *7.30 Report* presenters, including Ms Sarah Henderson in Melbourne and Mr Andrew Olle in Sydney, is unclear.

Ms Henderson said last night that she was not surprised by the announcement. She said that when she took over the anchor role earlier this year, talk of the program going national was already well advanced. She said she was personally disappointed to lose the company's job, and generally concerned that the coverage of state issues could suffer.

The ABC's managing director, Mr Brian Johns, said after an ABC board meeting in Melbourne yesterday the changes would help the ABC retain its authority amid the proliferation of new pay TV services in building on its strengths in news and current affairs.

Mr O'Brien, who presents the late night current affairs show *Lateline*, will become editor and anchor of the *7.30 Report*, sharing editorial control with Mr Ian Carnell, and conduct major political interviews. Mr Carnell will become The *7.30 Report*'s senior Canberra correspondent.

Mr Johns said *The 7.30 Report* would include "thorough, accurate and challenging analysis of state politics". Each session would include in each state and the changes would "re-establish the program as the source of relevant and authoritative analysis of the events of the day".

The changes include elements of a more ambitious proposal for a nationally focused news and current affairs show. The idea met with strong opposition from state governments, which feared the program would become a platform for the state premiers' political opponents.

Mr Johns said the changes would not involve staff cuts.

PM urges labor unity in poll race

By JOANNE PAINTER and INNES WILLOX

The Prime Minister has appealed for unity between the political and industrial arms of the labor movement as he launched a pre-election attack on the coalition's industrial policies.

Speaking at the opening of the ACTU congress at Melbourne University yesterday, Mr Keating claimed that employers support for the coalition's industrial relations agenda was faltering.

He said the coalition could not be trusted on industrial relations. A coalition election victory would lead to lower wages and poorer working conditions.

"There is no time when the Labor Party and the industrial labor movement have had such shared objectives and have done so much together," he said.

"We have been able, through all the vicissitudes of a period of global economic change, to put a fair wage system into place and that is the message that we have to get to Australians."

The Opposition Leader, Mr Howard, accused Mr Keating of lying. He said the Government could only react to a fear campaign because it could not campaign on its record or the union of true.

"Apart from it being a unique lie and distortion about our policy, it defies all common sense," Mr Howard said of the Government's claim that he would campaign on a policy of cutting wages.

Mr Howard said the Government's campaign was characterised by conflicting messages that the coalition would cause a wages explosion while it cut take-home pay. "Which of these two lies do you really want the Australian public to believe?" he asked in Parliament.

Mr Keating's appearance before the 700 union delegates was one of a number yesterday

Continued: PAGE 4



'A victory for all women'

Picture: RAY KENNEDY



Jennie George and the Prime Minister, Mr Keating, enjoy a moment during the ACTU congress in Melbourne.

Keating and George form a new accord

By JOANNE PAINTER
chief industrial reporter

There was no sign of handshake, just a rapturous clasping of hands, a standing ovation that left no doubt about the warmth of feeling that accompanied Jennie George's ascension to presidency of the ACTU yesterday.

Ms George will succeed Martin Ferguson, but yesterday's announcement was more than a mere formality. It marked an historic changing of the guard in Australian trade unionism.

Ms George's installation as the highest-ranked female trade unionist in the country ends more than a century of male domination. Her victory, she said, was a victory for all Australian women.

"I have never forgotten the important issues of concern to women . . . It is not just me that has achieved a very important position in the union movement. I see myself symbolising the aspirations of women and I know they will be rejoicing in a collective sense knowing that every . . . achievement I have made has been for every woman."

Watched proudly by her mother, Ms Natalie Freedman, Ms George outlined an ambitious program of union reform and revitalisation.

Her friend and colleague, Australian Education Union federal president, Ms Sharan Burrow, shed tears of joy at the feeling of many women present.

Continued: PAGE 9

Blues do it for themselves

Sophisticated tools of modern management may play a part in the AFL grand final for the first time in Saturday's MCG clash between Geelong and Carlton.

Carlton coach David Parkin claimed yesterday that his 1995 side was the "least-coached" team in his 14 years in football.

On the advice of newly appointed club psychologist Anthony Mowatt, Parkin handed greater responsibility to his players and allowed them to set the goals and even write the club's mission statement.

The Blues coach said he had to step out of his usual mode of coaching, that of self-confessed autocrat.

"It's a major change," he said, "I suppose it's a trust factor."

PAGE 36: Full report

Genes the new key in the struggle against cancer

The war against cancer is slowly being won. **Steve Dow** explains.





Melbourne has launched a massive assault on cancer. At the Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute and the Royal Melbourne Hospital, more than 30 women have been tested for the breast cancer gene BRCA1. Soon, there will be testing for bowel cancer genes.

For the sisters and daughters of women tested for BRCA1 and the families of others who will take the test, the implications are chilling.

The cancer of a corrupt name. And BRCA1 has an 80 per cent chance of breast cancer, and a 40 per cent risk of ovarian cancer, by age 70 or 85.

Now these statistics mean 1000 families for a study to find the bowel cancer genes, and 1000 for bowel cancer genes. Cancer experts want a national genetic study committee begun by April, saying federal funding be set aside.

The world is winning the war against cancer, but slowly and painfully. Once it was a death sentence. Today more than half survive or the lives another decade beyond that. Nevertheless, cancer always have more than one million deaths each year, including lung, prostate and leukaemia cancers.

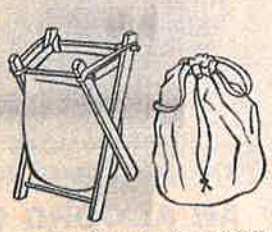
The cancer will hit 85,000 Australians in 1995 alone, will be young. Cancer rates are rising by 2 per cent a year. Only so much of this can be attributed to new longer lives and fewer heart attacks. Breast and prostate cancers and melanoma cases are up, even after allowing for more Australians in older age groups. Prostate cancer deaths have tripled since 1960.

Cancer still kills a quarter of us and all the treatments can't take the fact that it's still a cruel way to die.

The next attack in the war on cancer will take place within two years. Wide epidemiological screening for colorectal or bowel cancer will be introduced for all Australians over 50. The federal Health Minister, Dr

Continued: PAGE 9
PAGE 8: More reports.

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WEATHER



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ODD SPOT

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build a signifying chain. In this chain Jennie George becomes a political figure and a potential election weapon.[17]

This strategy is exemplified by the front page of the *Australian* (28/9/95 Figure 5.4 discussed in Chapter Five) and the *Age*'s (28/9/95 Figure 4.1). The *Age* ran two related Congress stories as its second lead. They were placed in a boxed frame and occupied about one third of the front page. Within the composition a major bold headline ran over the two left-hand columns 'PM urges unity in poll race'. Immediately to the right of this was placed a smaller quote as a secondary title: 'A victory for all women'. This was positioned directly above a full colour photograph of Jennie George and Paul Keating leaning towards each other across a table and laughing, it was captioned 'Jennie George and the Prime Minister, Mr Keating, enjoy a moment during the ACTU Congress in Melbourne.' As well as fitting the paradigm of romance (discussed below), this layout clearly establishes George's election within a political framework, even though Joanne Painter's report, itself, makes no mention of the election nor of the ALP. Painter's article utilises the news frame 'breakthrough for all women' to report on the ACTU's first woman leader. This category has less perceived news value to the presumed general readership than the category of conflict. Within the hierarchy of news values George's election was coded by many reporters and editors as an 'unusual' event and as the 'colour supplement' to the main story of the election. The election story fulfilled the news values of conflict and relevance and was therefore perceived as having greater news value.

Challenges for Jennie George

Fifteen articles directly reported the trade union movement as facing the threat of a hostile Coalition Government that was reported as planning anti-union/worker legislation that would threaten the unions' existence. Another five articles were positioned next to reports that detailed this threat. These were found in both broadsheet and tabloid papers. The reports speculated that the re-election of the ALP government was the only way to prevent such problem for unions. The achievement of

[17] See, for example, the *Courier Mail* report on George's potential campaign role headlined 'Keating's weapon to be reckoned with' (Brown 1995). See also 'Key election role for a labour hero' (Duffield 1995, *West Australian*) in which George's election contribution was further emphasised by the caption to her photograph which read 'Determined: Ms George is tipped to attack the Coalition all the way to polling day' and 'Keating's weapon to be reckoned with' in the *Courier Mail* on 29 September 1995 (Brown 1995).

this goal was then also posed as one of the challenges for Jennie George as president.[18] In his appearance at the ACTU Congress the Prime Minister appealed not only for votes but also for the organisational and financial support of unions for the ALP's campaign and this was posed as one of the challenges for the labour movement in several reports. At the same time, in many reports, an additional serious threat to unionism was outlined. This was the declining membership of unions. The extent of the challenge/s facing George was reported in eleven reports.

Significantly, these issues were usually phrased as *personal* challenges, the responsibility of George, herself, as leader. In this way the survival of unions and workers rights in a hostile political climate was established as a key measure of George's success as ACTU president. In five articles George is reported within the paradigm of potential saviour of unions through her presumed capacity to attract new members and reverse this trend. Her interest in forming alliances with welfare and community organisations is also sometimes reported as potentially being able to contribute to a new form of unionism that may attract new members.[19]

By establishing the crises of membership and change of government as *her* responsibility the reports simultaneously establish the criteria by which her performance will be judged. This is especially obvious in the case of the editorial pieces.[20] Editorials establish their papers' own priorities for George to address, and their preferred solutions. Such approaches are not likely to align with the ACTU's assessment of priorities and preferred outcomes. However, in this way, the papers' editors, editorial and feature writers establish their criteria (ostensibly on behalf of their presumed readers) and justifications for assessing George's performance both during and at the conclusion of her term as president.

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[18] See for example: 'The challenge for George' *Herald Sun* (1995); 'Jennie George and the ACTU' *Australian* (1995); and 'Keating's weapon to be reckoned with' Brown (1995, *Courier Mail).*

[19] See, for example, Penberthy (1995, *Advertiser*) 'Stemming the flow', Lewis (1995b, *Daily Telegraph*) 'Unions Democrats in election alliance', and Wilson (1995, *Herald Sun*) 'George vows to cast net wide'.

[20] See, specifically, editorials in the *Australian* (1995), *Herald Sun* (1995), *Sunday Age* (1995).

It is notable that these references to the parliamentary political context of George's election to the ACTU presidency are spread across both tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, national and state based papers and those owned by various media proprietors.

Signifiers of Femininity in the Reporting of Jennie George's Election

Many of the reports of Jennie George's election as first woman ACTU president include extensive information about her character and background to introduce her to the reader. This background encompasses descriptions of her life, personality, circumstances and character that employ a number of familiar myths and stereotypes of femininity to fit her into existing 'commonsense' stories about working women, trade unions, single women, family values, leadership and politics.

Women are Ruled by their Hearts: Myths of Heterosexual Romance in the Reporting of Jennie George's Election

The most consistent reporting of George within the paradigm of heterosexual romance was the implication of an affair between herself and Prime Minister, Paul Keating. This theme was found in four reports at the time of George's election and continued to be deployed through to the federal election in March 1996. It was an extension of an existing repertoire of representation that the ACTU was 'in bed with' the ALP but it took on particularly sexually charged connotations because of Jennie George being the first female head of the ACTU. This signification is particularly evident in the composition and captioning of the photograph on page one of the *Age* accompanying Joanne Painter's report 'Keating and George form a new Accord' (1995, Figure 4.1). It is a full colour photograph of Jennie George and Paul Keating leaning intimately towards each other across a table and laughing, it is captioned 'Jennie George and the Prime Minister, Mr Keating, enjoy a moment during the ACTU Congress in Melbourne.' In the photograph George is turned away from those in the hall (her members) and the photographer (the readers) and towards Keating. This report clearly pairs her visually, and through the headline and caption, romantically with the Prime Minister. This implied relationship might raise doubts in the minds of some readers as to where her allegiance lies. The connotation of romance is given additional resonance through the headline 'Blackmail' at the top-left of the page and the 'dirty laundry' ad

in the lower-right corner. As the reader's eye travels down the page the photograph of the intimate smile between George and the Prime Minister lines up with these other two elements to create a suggestion of an illicit affair that could damage either or both parties. This paradigm of romance or sexual relations is also implied in the reports which quote and extend Paul Keating's Congress joke about Jennie George kissing him and not John Howard (Hannan 1995; Southorn 1995a see discussion in following chapter).[21] The reference in many of the reports to George's widow-hood also hints at her 'availability' and links to the paradigm as a romance cut tragically short.

Whilst this can be seen as part of the increasing trend in news reporting to privilege the personal over issues or policy it ties in with the tradition of associating women with the private sphere and personal relationships and men with the public sphere. The emphasis in many of the reports is on George's personal history over her professional skills and achievements. In the context of political news reporting this emphasis operates to dequalify her as leader.

A notable instance of the emphasis on George's personal intimate relationships is the way she is referred to in some reports as the widow of leading, notable or prominent communist activist Paddy George.[22] This association with communist beliefs through marriage could suggest to readers that she is a 'red widow' figure: a woman who is committed to carrying out her late husband's political agenda fifteen years after his death. Several female political leaders have come to power through the 'widow's path' and it is one of the few ways women are likely to obtain power in countries that give

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[21] The paradigm of romance is even more clearly demonstrated in a series of three black and white photographs and their captions published, a few months later, on the front page of the *Australian* newspaper on 2 February 1996. The report, 'On the trail and of one accord', about a minor launch during the election campaign, is brief, only about two hundred and fifty words (Forbes 1996). However, what makes it remarkable is the accompanying photographs and captions. One medium and two smaller photographs are placed in the very centre of the page. They show the Prime Minister greeting Jennie George and shaking hands, then leaning forward and kissing her cheek. In the third image he turns smiling to the assembled crowd and photographer and Jennie George bows her head and appears to be blushing. The captions read "Perfect match: Paul Keating greets Jennie George . . . and plants the kind of kiss . . . that makes a union boss blush and a PM proud". The implied meaning of these photographs, privileged through the captions, is one of a possible illicit sexual relationship between the two. At the very least it suggests that George is a victim of the Prime Minister's legendary charm. Both these interpretations could raise concern amongst union members as to whether their leader really has their interests at heart or if her allegiance lies with the ALP government over the ACTU.

[22] Brown (1995, *Courier Mail*); Duffield (1995, *West Australian*); Penberthy (1995, *Advertiser*); and Southorn (1995a, 1995b, *Courier Mail*) make this point. Others such as Lewis (1995a, *Daily Telegraph*) refer to her as widowed and single without commenting on her affiliations with the CPA.

little support to women's pursuit of independent careers (Norris 1997b). Widows have other relevant connotations. Young widows have been considered untrustworthy at particular historical periods because they are 'sexually knowing' and yet unpartnered. They are sometimes regarded as dangerous, potentially predatory figures.

A female politician who is unmarried, or childless, may also be represented as deviant through the traditional gendered family discourse. The references to George's widowed and single status maintain the category of femininity within domestic boundaries and consolidate her outsider status.

Doing it Hard: Jennie George as 'Reffo' and 'Battler'

Other aspects of George's personal history that were reported include her birth in an Italian refugee camp, her migration to Australia at an early age, her childhood in Housing Commission flats in Sydney, her parents' marriage break-up when she was a child and the fact that she was raised by a single-mother. In all, eleven reports made a point of various difficulties she had had to overcome. These aspects of her history indicate that she is not only of working-class origin but also, in classic Australian battler terms, that 'she has done it hard'. Both George and her mother are 'battlers', traditional Australian labour movement icons.[23] This epithet establishes George's credentials as an Australian working-class heroine, whilst at the same time, in highlighting her refugee, non-English-speaking background, it reminds the reader of her otherness. Interestingly, one report coined the term 'feminist battler' (Rush 1995,

[23] The *Australian National Dictionary* (Ramson 1988) traces the evolution of the terms 'battler', 'battle' and 'battling' throughout Australian literary and cultural history. The terms connote poverty, unemployment (or irregular employment), surviving on one's wits, resourcefulness and cheerfulness in the face of adversity. The term battler is associated with the social-realist literature of Australian writers of the 1930s and 1940s such as Kylie Tennant, with the poems of Henry Lawson, and the early journalism of the *Worker* and the *Bulletin.* They are part of the romantic mythology of the Australian labour movement, of the (white) outback pioneers, itinerant workers, struggling working-class families and with warm-hearted 'tarts'.
The political identity of the 'battler' has become more fluid, complex and contested in Australia in the last decade. Previously the Labor Party cast itself as the only party that cared about the 'battler'. However, John Howard and the Liberal Party have tried to redefine the category of 'battler' to include middle-income families who are 'battling' to pay a mortgage, health insurance and even private school fees (Greenfield & Williams 2001). Pauline Hanson and the One Nation Party also complicated the definition of 'battler' with their claims that Hanson herself epitomised the 'battlers' as the traditional big political parties no longer understood the feelings and experiences of ordinary tax-paying Australian 'battlers'. Hanson was promoted as 'having a go' for the little person, battling against career politicians, party machines and city-based elites (Kingston 1999). When Hanson was jailed in 2003 for electoral fraud (her sentence was later quashed on appeal) her status as a battler confronting the established political system was confirmed.

Advertiser) an unusual slippage between terms, which, although it may accurately describe certain aspects of George's personal history may have contradictory connotations for readers (especially as the category feminist is often regarded as synonymous with educated middle-class women and battler as synonymous with working-class men). Whilst representing Jennie George in such terms provides short-cuts for the reporter seeking to establish her background in the minimum number of words, they also act to remind readers of her difference to the usual mould of trade union leaders—and remind them of the question will she be 'tough enough' to succeed in this 'foreign' environment. The use of signifiers of femininity, ethnicity, widow-hood, childless-ness, working-class, and battler identities together with left-wing and feminist political beliefs in reference to George develop complex and contradictory images of a woman political leader.

Since much of the background information about Jennie George pertains to her personal private sphere history and relationships the reader is provided with little information to assess her political, campaign, advocacy, strategic, negotiation and industrial expertise. The reader, therefore, is given little evidence upon which to base an alternative opinion of George's skills and likelihood of success. The construct of the weak female leader is privileged over that of the competent female professional.

Particular Figures of Femininity

Emotional Woman

In emphasising the emotional nature and scenes at George's election, her differences (ethnic and gender) from the traditional 'tough' union leader are highlighted. Contradictions in, or doubts about, her qualifications for the position are emphasised through these references to emotion. Her position (as a woman) as an outsider to the public sphere and more appropriately a denizen of the private sphere is implied through frequent references to both emotional and personal relationships. Eight out of the eleven reports published on 28 September 1995 that focus specifically on George's election, refer to it as an 'emotional' event. Out of the whole twenty-six reports collected twelve reports refer either to George's own emotions or the event as emotional and another two are placed next to a report, photograph or headline that

emphasise emotions. Phrases such as "the tough new president-elect of the ACTU choked back tears" present contradictory ideas of femininity (Dolan 1995, *Herald Sun*). On the one hand, it defines her as 'tough' in the sense of resilient. On the other hand, at the same time through the reference to "chok[ing] back tears", it emphasises emotional femininity in a way that raises doubts about her capacity to manage her emotions particularly in stressful situations (Dolan 1995). That these tears occurred whilst George was thanking her mother, position her within the context of the family, the traditional preserve of women, and also softened the myth of the unfeeling, hard career-woman. In emphasising George's tears, these reports particularised her as a woman, and nominated her as being of non-English-speaking (that is non-normative) background (Boscagli 1993; Braden 1996).[24]

'Token' Woman

One particular figure of femininity that is worth examining in some detail is the representation of George as a 'token woman'. Such references are associated with the presumption of reader opposition to feminism and/or to unions and work to mobilise such oppositions to contain or limit potential readership approval of, or identification with George's election. They are exemplified by an opinion piece in the *Sunday Telegraph* by right-wing columnist Piers Akerman; 'Jennie takes the helm of a listing ACTU' (Akerman 1995a). In this article the feminine—and feminists in particular—are constructed as a 'threat' to working-class men and democracy. Akerman argues George's election is gender tokenism and a 'sop' to feminist demands (Figure 4.2). A similar strategy was present as a second order sign in two further reports (*Herald Sun* 1995; Southorn 1995a). Akerman's report also includes the metaphor of unionism as a sinking ship with George as the captain, the 'man' who goes down with the vessel. In this way it creates slippage between signifiers of femininity attached to terms 'token woman' and woman as 'jewel' and the masculinity associated with the role of ship's captain.

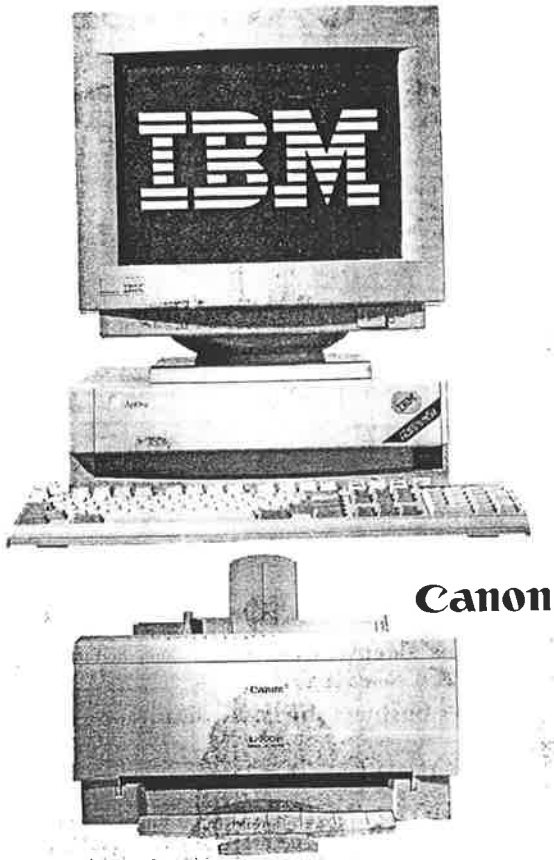
The suggestion that George's election was due to factors other than merit was also evoked through some of the words used to describe the process through which George

[24] Traditionally 'foreigners', those whose ethnicity, language and culture mark them out as different from the Anglo-Celtic Australian norm, have traditionally been presumed to be more/too emotional than the Australian/British norm which maintains a 'stiff upper lip'. Such emotional control and 'toughness' was also manifested in the stereotypes of taciturn Australian masculinity.

Figure 4.2. Sunday Telegraph, 1/10/95, p. 24.

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PIERS AKERMAN

Jennie takes the helm of a listing ACTU

JENNIE George, new head of the ACTU, comes to the task as the latest of a number of women who have been thrust into senior positions within dangerously vulnerable organisations after the men responsible for causing the critical problems have moved on to greener pastures.

Ms George takes the helm of the ACTU as the ship is listing Titanic-like, its traditional blue collar supporters having long been disenfranchised by a politicised agenda totally irrelevant to the needs of Australians in the 1990s.

Her predecessors, Martin Ferguson and Simon Crean, have since, in the words of the old Wobblies' song, been "bumped" into parliament as part of their pay-off for keeping part of the dwindling stream of workers' union dues funnelled into the Labor Party's coffers.

Like Joan Kirner, the former premier of Victoria, and Carmen Lawrence, the former premier of Western Australia, Ms George is being handed a poisoned chalice as the percentage of union members in the work force dwindles to just over 30 per cent, the majority of whom are white collar public sector workers.

Ms Kirner and Dr Lawrence showed themselves to be totally inadequate for their inherited jobs, and despite the claims at the time that both these Labor stalwarts were selected for their leadership positions on merit, it was clear to the most disinterested observer that their appointments were sops to the extremist feminists who have been noisily nominating and proclaiming policy positions in the ALP since the black days of the Whitlam government.

Ms George may well be the most talented person left in the ACTU but the singing, dancing and musical rendition of Ms Helen Reddy's aged hymn to feminism, I Am Woman, left no observers in any doubt that while her mind may be important to Labor, her gender is seen as the real jewel.

The presence of the leaders of the sisterhood in the form of Ms Kirner, Australian Democrats leader Cheryl Kernot and the Prime Minister's former women's adviser, Anne Summers, at the inauguration only confirmed what blue collar unionists deeply feared when Ms George's name was first put forward — that sexual politics would be given an undue prominence under the new regime.

Dr Lawrence was no doubt huddled with the team of high-priced lawyers the taxpayer is still bankrolling as she fights to clear the lingering stains left from her disingenuous days as the nation's most forgetful premier, at least according to more reliable memories.

Logically, Ms George would now see her task as halting the decline in the union movement that has occurred during the ACTU's 12-year Accord with Labor and attracting the former true believers back to the flock.

In this task she will have her work cut out because few genuine Labor supporters could possibly contemplate remaining in a party whose leaders have shown such extraordinary disdain for rank and file branch members.

The job of luring strays back to the fold is as daunting, as it is unlikely that many true believers would return to a party which so obediently rolled over for the anti-Labor, pro-big business policies which have been rolled out by prime ministers Hawke and Keating.

The appearance of Ms Kernot with Ms George may give some hint to future ALP strategy but as the Labor leadership has been as scathing of the minority parties as it has of the Liberal Party, the ALP can only be hoping that those disaffected members of the Democrats and the Greens who might be attracted to Labor are as dumb as Labor has always claimed them to be.


Jennie George: gender's the jewel

> 'Ms George is being handed a poisoned chalice'

Far from being a forward-looking leader for the '90s, Ms George appears to be a graduate of the Eureka Youth League with all the ideological baggage of the class war warriors of the '30s.

Despite the adoration and the gushing that accompanied her endorsement as the first woman president of the ACTU, such scenes of women crying for joy at Labor functions have generally been followed by scenes of women crying after subsequent betrayal.

In interviews she has given, Ms George has shown herself to be locked into a historical perspective of Australia irrelevant to the aspirations of most people.

The fact that she recharges her socialist batteries by visiting the high-rise Housing Development flat in Surry Hills where her mother still lives, as admirable as familial visits are, does not bode well for young people looking for enlightened leadership able to cope with a rapidly changing workplace.

The flats do not, by and large, house people who grapple with the complexities of the economy, discuss the implications of a free market economy or even the partially-free economy Labor has installed over the past 12 years.

Ms George could probably serve the workforce of this country somewhat better if she forgot most of what she has learned during the years she has spent waiting for the top job within the ACTU and started looking at the forces which actually create jobs, provide wealth and support Australian families.

gained the presidency. The use of terms such as 'anointed', 'inherited', 'elevation', or 'ascended', implying that George gained the position of president through patronage, dynastic relations, sexual favours or other means rather than legitimately in her own right.[25] Some reports suggest that George either the puppet of powerful men (Rush 1995, *Advertiser*; Akerman 1995a, *Sunday Telegraph*) or Prime Minister Keating's "not-so-secret weapon" in a larger agenda (Brown 1995, *Courier Mail*). The idea that the woman leader is merely a token or figure-head leader has particular resonance in Australia in relation to the ALP. Reports that mentioned the ACTU and/or the ALP's moves to adopt affirmative action strategies and minimum female quotas to improve women's representation could also suggest George's election was due the ACTU's need to be seen to promote women rather than merit.

Opinion columnists, such as Akerman, may be employed to offer specialist insights into topical issues or may have a brief to be controversial or provocative. However, whilst they may be viewed by some groups of readers as extremist, their views still represent beliefs and opinions held by certain groups within the newspaper readership and may strengthen tentative opinions held by other readers. They certainly add to the media representations of particular issues (in this case the behaviour and qualifications of feminists and women in positions of political influence) circulating in the public domain.

One of these myths is the fear of the power of feminists (powerful women) and in particular, that when working together they may plot and enact takeovers of male domains. The article by Akerman (1995a) played on these fears and prejudice against feminists. It eschews the conventions of first woman narratives by reporting the event as a desperate measure by a flailing union movement under pressure from extreme feminist elements. The article argues George's prime (indeed perhaps sole) qualification for the position of ACTU president is her gender, "her gender is seen as the real jewel" a reference that is emphasised by its repetition in the caption to the photograph. Referring to George's gender as "jewel" might place her within the paradigms of valuable possessions and decorative objects. These are traditional gendered representational repertoires in which the woman is without agency, is the

[25] See Akerman (1995a, *Sunday Telegraph*); Lewis (1995a, *Daily Telegraph*); Norington (1995, *Sydney Morning Herald*); Rush (1995, *Advertiser*); Southorn (1995a, *Courier Mail*); *Sunday Age* (1995).

passive object of the man's gaze and his possession. However, given the contempt for affirmative action and feminism evident in the articles it appears that the use of the term 'jewel' is ironic.

Whilst some other reports also link George's election to that of Joan Kirner and Carmen Lawrence's history as ALP State Premiers, Akerman uses this association to diminish George.[26] He argues the two women political leaders "showed themselves to be totally inadequate for their inherited jobs". The article says that in common with these two women "Ms George is being handed a poisoned chalice", predicting that she, too, will fail as leader. The adjective "inherited" suggests George (along with Joan Kirner and Carmen Lawrence) did not gain her positions on merit. It extends the opposition between the election of these women to promotions on merit, by saying "their appointments were sops to the extremist feminists". In labelling feminists as extremists—that is irrational, undesirable trouble-makers—it raises anxiety about their self-interest, apparent power and the disruptive impact these women will have on ordinary people/readers/us. The article aligns the Labor Left with radical feminism raising fears about the influence of sectional interests on the government of Australia and placing this extremist faction in opposition to ordinary Australians. Akerman argues that the ACTU and the ALP have tokenistically and illegitimately promoted feminists, the "leaders of the sisterhood" to the detriment of blue-collar working-class men. He invites the reader to repudiate feminism and to identify with the men who have been disenfranchised through such tactics. Specifically, Akerman invites the reader to interpellate him/herself in this position through his claim that her election "only confirmed what blue collar [sic] unionists deeply feared when George's name was put forward—that sexual politics would be given undue prominence under the new regime".

In addition to George embodying the threat of the feminist extremist the article also raises the Cold War spectre of communism through references to her previous membership of the Eureka Youth League[27] and the claim that she was still positioned

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[26] See also Brown (1995, *Courier Mail*) and Meade (1995, *Australian*).

[27] The Eureka Youth League was a social organisation for young people established by and affiliated to the Communist Party of Australia that operated over the period 1930s to 1950s in most Australian

in the "class war … of the thirties". It links this historical background to her Congress speech reference to the Housing Commission flats in Surrey Hills. Akerman claims that her reference points for engagement in the contemporary challenges of the changing world of work are inappropriate, "over-protected" and against the interests of both the majority of workers and Australia in general. The article positions George as embodying two kinds of extreme threats to national security and prosperity: feminism and communism.

The whole article has the effect of conflating the ACTU with the ALP and discrediting both organisations and George in particular. George's election in this instance provides a vehicle through which two of a columnist's pet ideological hates, feminists and the union movement, are pursued. However, whilst it may be shrugged off as hysterical or prejudiced, the article was published in the public domain, in an influential capital city tabloid newspaper, and extends some of the strategies of containment which appear as minor themes in other reports. This report, 'Jennie takes the helm of a listing ACTU' provides an important example of the employment of some of the more extreme myths and fears about both feminism and unionism in political news commentary.

Union maid

Five of the reports of George's election figured her paradigmatically as the union heroine, the 'union maid', particularly in their headlines and photographs.[28] This is also a familiar mode of representation for her, and indeed any successful union woman, within union journals and has important, specifically feminine, histories and connotations. Bill Kelty's description of George in his Congress speech extends the paradigm. Hannan (1995a) reports Kelty as saying "she had 'always carried a torch for representing battlers, working people, and women'". This description acclaims her as a particularly *Australian* icon whilst at the same time directly invoking the figure of

states. In addition to the families of CPA members it included children of poor and disadvantaged families in the holidays, social and recreational events it organised.

[28] See discussion of Penberthy's report 'Stemming the flow' (1995, Figure 5.1) in Chapter Five. Other reports to incorporate the references to George as the union heroine are Dolan (1995); Hannan (1995a); Painter (1995); and Southorn (1995b). The term comes from the title of a 1940 Woody Guthrie song about the USA labour movement (Klein 1988).

Liberty, or Marianne, leading the French Revolution, and drawing on traditional labour iconography.

The traditional union maid was a worker herself and therefore a 'sister' or a 'comrade' of male unionists. She played an active (although usually supportive) role in union organisation.[29] Whilst the general population in Australia today would be unlikely to use or recognise the term 'union maid' (especially given 'maid's' common usage in reference to a servant or domestic worker) the song is frequently sung by Australian trade union choirs for its rousing chorus. It remains one of the very few mythic figurations of woman unionist as leader, hero or model. For these reasons the phrase retains some resonance, particularly for a labour audience. Despite the fact that the term 'maid' also denotes a single, young woman, in conjunction with 'union' it connotes a certain image of female union leadership. It is used here to refer to a particular representational figure, an inspirational female activist.

Jennie George, the torch-bearer for the battlers and the modern day Australian equivalent of the 'union maid' is not 'afraid' of the New Right anti-labour rhetoric and strategies of the Liberal Party or its industrial relations policy designed by Prime Minister John Howard and Industrial Relations Minister Peter Reith. Indeed, as a 'union maid', the first woman ACTU president will lead the movement into this battle. Bill Kelty corroborates the expectation both that she will, and lauds George's capacity to succeed. In his speech at her election he says: "Jennie George, we are proud to have you as our president in the future. The battles will be tough. The battles are there to be fought and are there to be won" (Kelty quoted in Hannan 1995a).

The pedestal built for Jennie George also has specific Australian characteristics through its evocations of both the battler mythology and Australian labour history together with the prediction of urgent national political conflicts to be won. These

[29] The union maid has more agency than the passive figure of woman as the symbol of liberty and freedom that has also been used as an inspiration for workers organisation as exemplified by Walter Crane's nineteenth century engravings and banner designs (Gorman 1973; Stephen & Reeves 1984). The union maid of the Guthrie song leads her comrades in the struggle. Her active agency is closer to that of the French revolutionary heroine, Marianne, depicted in Delacroix's painting Liberty leading the people (Warner 1987 pp. 270-281). In some versions of Guthrie's song, especially contemporary versions, she is a worker and a unionist herself. However, one verse added to the original two verse song in 1941 describes her as a unionist's wife joining the ladies auxiliary (see http://www.geocities.com/Nashville/3448/unionm.html accessed 10/2/02).

inter-related frames of representation work to build high expectations of George and to establish particular criteria through which her presidency will be judged.

Feminist Heroine

Over a third of the reports of George's election to the ACTU presidency also portrayed another unusual public representation of a strong woman: this was George as a 'feminist heroine'. Several of these reports associated this image with Helen Reddy's song 'I am woman', that was played at Congress to mark George's election, and its origins in the 1970s women's liberation movement.[30] Others introduced this figure, either directly or implicitly, without reference to the Reddy song, through reference to the presence of other Australian feminists or 'powerful women', to the event being "a victory for all women", and to "women danc[ing] for joy".[31] The colour photographs of George with her mother beside her, other women clearly visible in the background, and purple and green balloons and streamers littering the Congress table all clearly point to an unusual, feminist celebration (see Figures 5.1 and 5.3 next chapter). Likewise the references to George changing the male-chauvinist culture of the ACTU executive (Kelty reported in Hannan 1995a); and Sharan Burrow (then Australian Education Union federal president) saying that "[f]or young women, this is a day that is hugely symbolic" (quoted in Painter 1995), consolidate its significance as a feminist event.

This 'feminist heroine' figure is particularly interesting both for its relative rarity in mainstream media and the complications it introduces to the potential interpretations of the reports of George's significance as ACTU leader. This representation also has implications for how George promotes her performance of that role. It is worth considering the potential meanings evoked by the representation of feminist heroine and the ways both George, and the ACTU, negotiated the representation. They provide

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[30] See Dolan (1995, *Herald Sun*); Hannan (1995a, *Australian*); Painter (1995, *Age*); Rush (1995, *Advertiser*); Southorn (1995b, *Courier Mail*).

[31] See for example Penberthy (1995, *Advertiser*); Southorn (1995a, 1995c *Courier Mail*) and Lewis (1995a, *Daily Telegraph*). Akerman (1995a) also emphasised the feminist aspect of her election but did so disparagingly. In addition to these authors, Amanda Meade in the Australian discusses George's concerns that she may be targeted by "misogynists" in much the same way as she argues Carmen Lawrence was targeted (Meade 1995).

useful insights into the potential negative and dequalifying effects of being reported as a feminist heroine for a trade union leader.

There are very few examples in the mass media of 'positive' reportage of feminists.[32] For Jennie George there are particular dilemmas associated with such public (textual) representations—as feminist heroine—and these are discussed below.[33]

At first sight the frequency of references to feminism and George as a 'feminist heroine' in these reports of her election may appear to mark a watershed in Australian press reporting of women, as feminists and feminism have rarely received positive press in the Australian media. They may also appear to confirm Norris's conclusion that reporting of women's leader's election is largely positive. However, in the context of the reported challenges ahead for the ACTU, the emphasis on George's difference—including upon her feminism—could be taken to underline her lack of the conventional attributes of strong leadership at a critical time. This interpretation is certainly the one that is privileged in the article by Piers Akerman (1995a) in the *Daily Telegraph* and one of the articles by Ed Southorn in the *Courier Mail* (Southorn 1995a see analysis in Chapter Five).

News reports which positioned George as feminist heroine (and a breakthrough for all women) highlighted this tension between the specific expectations of one section of the membership (women) and the anxieties and needs of another, larger section of membership (men). For some audiences the reports of George's election could have transformed their image of the union movement and been a breath of fresh air to the front pages of the newspapers. The election of an unabashed, gravel-voiced feminist—who was known to enjoy a drink, a smoke and a party—to head the perceived bastion of working-class chauvinism was at least refreshing, was potentially transformative and promised interesting developments. Reports which attacked her for her personal life, her politics or her difference could generate oppositional readings in

[32] Baker Beck (1998); McDermott (1995); Rhode (1995); Schaffer (1998); van Acker (1995); Vavrus (2002).

[33] See in particular discussion of Penberthy's article 'Stemming the flow' and accompanying photograph in Chapter Five. This is the only example found in the mainstream press where George is photographed in front of an identifiably feminist backdrop. Indeed, such photographic representations of feminism are generally unusual in the print media.

audiences sympathetic to her or to an increased participation of women in public life. George was a popular figure amongst rank-and-file workers and especially unionists at the time of her election and the high profile she gained from becoming ACTU president extended her recognition.[34] However, representation of her as a feminist 'heroine' also increased the likelihood of her being perceived as an outsider and as an agent of change by different sections of the audience and not all would see these attributes as positive.

Struggles Over Signifiers of Feminism: Representing Events for Different Audiences

In the staging of Jennie George's election at the ACTU Congress in September 1995, the symbols of it being a triumph for union women were marked. These included the prominence of well-known (and non-union) feminists on the Congress stage, suffragist coloured balloons, streamers and rosettes, and the playing of Helen Reddy's song 'I am woman'. This symbolism was accentuated when many of the women delegates left their 'brothers' on the hall floor, and joined the official party onstage to applaud George. It was a historic moment and the physical and spatial signifiers emphasised this, placing the women, symbolically, in the centre of power for once and leaving the men on the outer. The visual signifiers of difference within the ACTU's celebration of George's election to the presidency are emphasised in five reports in both tabloid and broadsheet papers.[35] It was also these unusual and highly telegenic qualities which constituted its appeal for television news.

On this occasion in her speech to Congress George proudly asserted her feminism and its influence on her life. She also interpreted her success as the result of many people's efforts to achieve change for women and noted that it was:

> a shared thing. It's not me, just me Jennie George, that's achieved this very important position in the union movement. I see myself symbolising the aspirations of women and I know that they'll be rejoicing in a collective sense.
>
> (George 1995)

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[34] Her popularity was such that she had been asked by the Party to play a prominent role in the campaign to re-elect the ALP Government in the lead-up to the 1993 Federal election. George toured the country speaking in marginal seats and in workplaces encouraging workers to continue to support the ALP government.

[35] Dolan (1995 *Herald Sun*); Lewis (1995c, *Daily Telegraph*); Norington (1995, *Sydney Morning Herald*); Painter (1995, *Age*); Rush (1995, *Advertiser*); and Southorn (1995a, *Courier Mail*).

This aspect of George's speech coded the event as a collective "victory for women". Whilst the idea of it being a breakthrough (victory) for women was reported in twelve articles, the notion of it being a victory as the result of a *collective* effort, that George could not have achieved on her own was not. Instead, the conventions of personalised reporting led it to be coded as an individual triumph rather than the result of many years of women campaigning for change.[36]

Although certain aspects of the event coded it as a women's victory, in their speeches to Congress and in interviews, both George and ACTU secretary Bill Kelty were careful to try to ensure that George's election (and the victory for union women) was not interpreted as a threat to male unionists. In her election speech George also stressed that she would be taking time to visit worksites, particularly blue-collar worksites, to consult with workers (in such workplaces these would be mainly men) to listen and to learn about their work, lives and expectations of the union movement (George 1995). Such a promise could be seen as an attempt to reassure those men who might feel anxiety that her 'otherness' would prevent her from advocating on their behalf, or may lead her to advocate the concerns of women over and above those of men.[37] She also told ABC Radio National's Geraldine Doogue that she was concerned that men in the union movement remained confident that she was there to represent their experiences (Doogue 1995).

Whilst George acknowledged that the general culture of the "union movement is a bit alienating" for women (Doogue 1995) she consistently refrained from any direct public criticism of union practices or specific unions. In her position as ACTU president, George was required to put her (public) identity as union president ('maid') ahead of her potential identity as a 'feminist heroine'. Although there might have been a few occasions in which the latter role was both possible and appropriate, in general being reported as a 'feminist heroine' risked alienating a significant proportion of her

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[36] Interestingly, none of the reports explored how these campaigns were conducted and *how* this change was achieved. Such feminist organising strategies were not seen as newsworthy or of interest to the presumed audience although they may well have relevance to many readers working in other masculine organisational cultures.

[37] In this context her 'otherness' was a composite of gender and occupational factors as George's background was the white-collar Teachers' Federation. Her ethnic and non-English-speaking background was an additional point of difference.

union constituency. These traditional unions and union members historically experienced unionism as a men's movement and thought of the membership as masculine (Elton 1997; Franzway 1997, 2001). Being hailed as a feminist heroine potentially could inhibit George's capacity to perform successfully and be recognised as the leader of that collective movement. Furthermore, the conventions of newspaper reporting that code feminists as deviant and as opposed to 'ordinary' women make it very difficult for feminist objectives to receive serious discussion in the press. There are rare exceptions where it might seem to be appropriate or 'safe' to project the identity of feminist advocate in public without risk of being interpreted as excluding or disadvantaging men. Such occasions might include those when the event itself was already coded woman-specific such as an International Women's Day celebration, a union women's training program, or the launch of a book or video about the experience of women in unions or particular industries.[38]

A newspaper article by Susan Mitchell, 'Power with passion', the following year, is another important example of a report that directly refers to the dilemmas produced by the election of a feminist to the leadership of a traditional masculine organisation (Mitchell 1996a, *Australian*). Geraldine Doogue's two extended interviews with George on ABC Radio National's 'Life Matters' program also explore the tensions between feminism and union commitment (Doogue 1995, 2000).[39] However, within these reports it is notable that both interviewers place the identities 'feminist' and 'unionist' in opposition rather than allowing the possibility of them co-existing in a state of creative tension.

It seems clear from the examples of their attempts to reassure masculine anxiety that the potential, both internally and in the media, for representing George's feminism as a divisive factor, was apparent to the ACTU leadership. The way the Congress event was staged celebrated women's struggles for equality within unions and the labour

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[38] One article written shortly after her election based on an interview with her at the Women and Labour Conference (Meade 1995, *Australian*) represents her sympathetically as a feminist activist. In this report however, the negative connotations of feminism are also apparent in the headline 'George fears anti-women witch-hunt'. This headline could read as signifying feminists as overly emotional and irrational.

[39] These two interviews were broadcast at the commencement and the conclusion of George's term as president on 4/10/95 and 8/3/00.

movement's achievement in (finally) electing its first woman leader. The ACTU would have expected to gain some positive publicity from this event and it did. However, the day was balanced with George's election in the morning counterweighted by the address to Congress in the afternoon by another labour 'hero', the Labor Prime Minister, Paul Keating. Furthermore, in media interviews, on the day and in subsequent weeks she, and other officials such as Bill Kelty and Martin Ferguson, reminded unions and union members that George, as a skilled advocate, would be representing the interests and experiences of *men* as well as women.

Mediatised Feminism? Negotiating the Reporting of Feminists and Feminism in the Media

An important question that arises through the consideration of the newspaper reportage of George's election is what is *possible* for non-hegemonic groups in mediatised Australian political discourse—what means do they have/can they access to raise their issues and address particular publics that may identify with such concerns, or at least see them as relevant to debate.[40] In what ways, or on what terms, can feminist, refugee and migrant advocacy groups and for Aboriginal rights groups negotiate their place in the news, given that the established hierarchies of news values, the codes and conventions of news reporting, and the shift away from issue-based journalism towards personality-based journalism. Some supporters of tabloidisation and the rise of infotainment programming (such as the popularity of talk shows) argue these trends are a democratisation of the media that allows specific non-hegemonic groups to address particular audience segments in their own terms, and own language (Hartley 1996; Lumby 1999; Rapping 2000). As Elayne Rapping points out, however, such shows are always mediated in a form that suits the conventions of network programming and most importantly the needs of its advertisers, and the investigation of the power dynamics, at the heart of the issues and in the program presentation, are

[40] This question has become increasingly fraught during the latter years of the Howard Coalition Government. During this period, it has been argued, there has been a shift to the right in mainstream media reportage, and a consequent diminution of avenues in which those critical of the government's policies (and the views of conservative elites) on issues such as race, immigration, refugee policy, Aboriginal affairs, social welfare, can argue their case. The Government's policy of making welfare groups that receive Commonwealth funding agree not to criticize publicly government policy is one example of ways in which it is argued public debate is being muzzled. The derisory labelling of government critics and/or left commentators as 'politically correct', as 'intellectual elites', as 'black-armband' historians, and as suffering from 'moral vanity' indicates other ways in which non-hegemonic perspectives are being marginalised and discredited through the mainstream press. For discussion of this trend see, for example, Rundle (2001).

rarely made transparent. Furthermore, the supporters of tabloidisation fail to take into account the high degree of influence, and status, still held by traditional news media which gives little opportunity for interventions by feminists (and other non-hegemonic groups).

In looking at the overall reporting of Jennie George's presidency the few occasions in which her experiences, and aims, as a feminist unionist grappling with an entrenched masculine culture are sympathetically (or intelligently) discussed occur through interviews and articles written by acknowledged feminist journalists. The existence of such articles, by journalists who have, in part, built their reputation and following through the impact of feminism on Australian social and political life, demonstrates that there does exist a public interested in such debates and that there are some vehicles which allow or support such reportage. It should be noted, however, that in the five years of George's presidency only *three* such reports were published in the mainstream press (Mitchell 1996a, Summers 1999, Susskind 2000). There were also two extended interviews with George by broadcaster Geraldine Doogue aired on ABC Radio National's 'Life Matters'. Radio National, however, constructs its audience quite differently to the mainstream press, and 'Life Matters', in particular, prides itself on exploring *in depth* the personal impact of public and professional life. Indeed, it is arguable that a program such as 'Life Matters' is only possible *because* of the impact of feminism on social discourse. Radio National also attracts a very small audience share. So feminist discourse does have a place in the mainstream media (albeit small and some might argue shrinking) and it does have a public life. However, some of the common ways of reporting feminism represents it as being against the interests of ordinary women, men and/or as being riven with internal disputes and personality clashes. The question of the way George's feminism is deployed within reports of her presidency will be a central concern throughout the analysis of media coverage of the key events in the chapters that follow.

Conclusion: Reading the Reporting of Jennie George's Election

This chapter has considered some of the various and repeated reporting strategies in newspaper accounts of Jennie George's election to the ACTU presidency. Through

content analysis it has documented the deployment of gendered news frames, and the most commonly utilised figures, myths and stereotypes of femininity in reports of her election. The chapter has demonstrated that George's femininity was the most remarked aspect of her difference from the traditional mould of ACTU president. Other differences included her non-English-speaking, refugee origins; white-collar, professional occupation; affiliation with the left and communist sympathies.

It examined the prevalence of the gendered news frames identified by Pippa Norris (1997a, 1997b) in the reporting of Jennie George's election and found that all three were evident in nearly all the reports of George's election. It also demonstrated that these were by no means the only news frames at work in this reporting. Additional news frames operating include trade unions as trouble; feminism as extremism; and women leaders as weak. It also identified repeated signifiers of femininity and unionism that lie outside the pattern identified by Norris such as the way Australian myths of the battler were deployed in reports together with the 'union maid' figure. It has situated the reporting within the Australian context of a looming federal election that Labor was unlikely to win and shown how George's election was framed in several papers as the 'colour supplement' to this, the main, political story of the day.

There was no consistent pattern of variations between the reporting of George's election associated with tabloid as opposed to broadsheet papers. Nor was there a consistent pattern of differences evident associated with newspaper ownership. The analysis also highlights the ways in which news reports utilised a number of contradictory signifiers for Jennie George as shifting between categories of masculine/feminine, working class/feminist, insider/outsider, promise/threat, amongst others, that both utilizes international (western) frames and inflects them with a specific Australian valence.

The next chapter employs semiotic methods to perform close readings of four key reports of George's election to reveal some complex and contradictory significations of femininity deployed in accounts of her election.

5 Reading 'Jennie George' as an Ambivalent Sign: Semiotic Analyses of the News Reports of her Election

Introduction

This chapter undertakes a semiotic analysis of four key newspaper reports about Jennie George's election to the ACTU presidency on 27 September 1995. It is the second of two chapters to examine this reportage. In contrast to the previous chapter, this chapter focuses on four reports in-depth. It demonstrates the multiple, complex and contradictory ways that femininity is signified through editorial, rhetorical and layout strategies, particularly within the headlines, images and narrative text of the reports together with the meanings produced through inter-textual relations and page layout. It pays particular attention to image-text relations and to the construction of meanings of not only femininity, but also unionism, the Left, ethnicity and nationalism through the operations of connotation and myth. Having undertaken the analysis the chapter gives consideration to the potential political effects of such reporting for George's presidency in particular and assessments of women political actors in general.

The Newspaper Reports

As noted in Chapter Four, twenty-six reports from twelve Australia daily newspapers were collected covering the ACTU Congress events of 27 September 1995 which specifically made reference to the election of Jennie George to the ACTU presidency. Four of the most prominent reports were chosen to examine in detail because they offer insights into the range of ways such women leaders may be represented in the news and they demonstrate the operations of particular news frames and constructions of femininity in the reporting of Jennie George. Three of these were published on the day following George's election and the fourth was published about a month prior to her election. This report is significant as it sets the tone for subsequent reporting of the event. The ways in which the positive associations of the event were contained by techniques such as the incorporation of the story into the narrative of political electioneering and through the narrative of

feminist plot (both raised through the content analysis of the reports), are also examined in depth.

The first article discussed is David Penberthy's report 'Stemming the Flow' which was published in the Adelaide *Advertiser*, a News Limited broadsheet (later tabloid) about a month before George's election (Penberthy 1995, Figures 5.1 and 5.2). This article is unusual as it appears to construct favourable images of George as both a union and feminist heroine. As both feminist and unionist categories are more usually associated with 'boo' or 'scare' words, this favourable association is unusual and worth examining for that aspect alone. This example is also a feature article which conventionally presents a serious and politically authoritative assessment of key political, industrial, economic or social issues. The combination of the unionist/feminist as heroine within the context of an authoritative political feature makes it a key article for closer analysis.

The second article 'It's my party and I'll sing if I want to', published in the national News Limited broadsheet daily the *Australian*, reports the celebrations associated with George's election to the presidency (Hannan, 1995a, Figure 5.3 and 5.4). It emphasises the event as a breakthrough for all women and positions the election as a media event. It is one of several reports that employ the news frame of celebration and has been chosen as an example of this approach. The discussion of this example also makes some comparisons to the television news coverage which consistently reported the event within the context of public celebration. The analysis of the newspaper report also offers an insight into the way the story of celebration is incorporated into, and contained by another narrative, that of the forthcoming federal election and Labor's preparations for it.

The third example, 'The arrival of George' is a feature article published in the Brisbane News Limited broadsheet daily *Courier Mail* (Figure 5.5 and 5.6). It is one of five reports about George's election published in this paper over three days. This particular report was selected because of its authoritative status as a feature and because it constructs a negative image of both George herself, as new president, and of the trade union movement. It contrasts sharply with some of the other articles

published within the *Courier Mail* itself, and elsewhere. This contrast usefully indicates the range of diversity within the reports of this event.

The fourth article discussed is an unusual one in the context of the overall coverage. It reports George's election to the ACTU presidency through a consideration of her *multiple* differences from the usual presidential incumbent. Published in the Fairfax Press national business (tabloid format) newspaper the *Financial Review* Mark Davis's report 'Dawn of the reign of George the first' does not solely rely a gendered news frame to structure its assessment of the significance of the event (Figures 5.7 and 5.8). The headline and the accompanying photo indicate the continuance of femininity as a key determinant in structuring how the news is presented. However, the narrative text discusses George's status as an outsider and agent of change more in terms of her class, occupation, racial and refugee background than her femininity. This sets the report apart from the majority of articles and highlights the alternative possibilities for reporting such events.

'Stemming the Flow': Introducing a 'Feminist Heroine' and 'Union Maid'.

'Stemming the flow' is a feature article published in the Adelaide *Advertiser*, a News Limited broadsheet, on 25 August 1995 (Figure 5.1). This was shortly after Jennie George was endorsed as the ACTU's preferred successor, and the sole contender, to replace Martin Ferguson and about one month prior to her election. The article is significant, as it is the first feature to examine the implications of George becoming the first woman president of the ACTU. It is also the first to predict the specific challenges she would face. Given the intertextual operations of news media, it helps to establish the context in which her election would be viewed. It also raises a number of complex issues that appear only fleetingly in other articles. In particular, it develops an extended discussion of the challenge of declining union membership and the importance of attracting women members to reverse this decline. In this context George's position as first woman president of the peak union body is crucial—symbolically, strategically and politically. The other significant aspect of the article is that the accompanying photo is highly unusual in the range of press coverage collected on George's presidency. It incorporates both traditional

FEATURES

STEMMING THE FLOW

■ The elevation of Ms Jennie George to the presidency of the ACTU is the latest first for this ground-breaking unionist. But, as Industrial Reporter **DAVID PENBERTHY** reports, the need to make unions more relevant and more popular is her greatest challenge yet.

FORMER New South Wales premier Robert Askin delivered the most famous driving command in Australian history when his limousine — carrying United States president Lyndon Johnson — was mobbed by anti-Vietnam War protesters in Sydney in 1966. Mr Askin was probably unaware that his order to "run over the bastards" could have ended the career of a young woman who was set to profoundly affect industrial relations in Australia.

Ms Jennie George — then known as Jennie Sinicky — was one of the many university students who flung herself at the motorcade in Hyde Park on that October day in 1966. Almost three decades later, Ms George is set to become the first female president of the ACTU. With union membership in dramatic decline — and most unions still dominated by Anglo-Celtic men who have largely failed to adjust to an increasingly female and ethnically diverse workforce — the elevation of an Italian-born woman to the top job in the movement is timely. No doubt there are some on the conservative side of politics who are wishing half-seriously that Mr Askin's driver took things more literally.

Ms George is widely regarded as one of the most astute and innovative unionists in Australia. Her activism began early — while studying teaching at the University of Sydney in the '60s, she was heavily involved in campus politics and devoted much of her energy to the womens' and moratorium movements. Her curriculum vitae is a list of national watersheds. In 1980, she was elected secretary of the NSW Teachers Federation, becoming Australia's first female trade union leader. In 1983, she was the first woman elected to the ACTU executive; in 1991, the first female ACTU assistant secretary. In 1993, she ran the ACTU's marginal seats campaign against the Coalition's Fightback! manifesto, galvanising crucial support for the Keating Government. And with the imminent departure of her predecessor, Mr Martin Ferguson, for a career as a federal Labor MP, she this year scores another first.

Equally significant is the fact that Ms George is also the first ACTU president who is in no danger of tracing her ancestors back to County Cork, Inverness or Yorkshire. Her parents were Russian and met during World War II in a displaced persons camp near Bari, Italy, where she was born in 1948. Three years later, her family moved to Australia and settled in Surry Hills, Sydney. She took the name George following her marriage in 1975 to communist activist Paddy George, who died of cancer in 1987.



Jennie George . . . "the test . . . is whether we can be effective on our own, regardless of what government is in power".

Jennie George is wholly reluctant to paint herself as the savior of the union movement on the strength of her gender or ethnic background. She refuses to level criticism at those easily ridiculed unions who have spent the past 20 years wondering why middle-aged men, speaking impenetrable English dialect, have failed to recruit on shop floors, where the average worker is in her 30s and was born in the Mediterranean, eastern Europe or Asia. What she does acknowledge is that the collapse in membership — roughly 10 per cent in the past decade — is the most urgent issue facing the movement. She is blunt in describing the size of the problem and considered in her analysis of its causes.

"The biggest challenge facing the movement is to reverse that decline," she says. "We are now at a very low point of 35 per cent overall and as low as 26 per cent in the private sector." Ms George says the election of Liberal governments in South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania and Victoria has hit public sector union memberships purely through job cuts. In SA, more than 7000 public servants have left the system — and hundreds who kept their jobs let their union membership lapse when the Brown Government abolished the convenient system of direct payroll deductions for union dues. Another factor has been economic change, with the contraction of traditional union strongholds such as manufacturing.

Beyond that, it comes down to a failure to recruit appropriately and to market unions as relevant and value for money. "In the new growth areas, such as hospitality and tourism, there are a lot of women, part-time and young workers, for whom the culture of the union movement is a bit alienating," she says. "What we have to do is make sure that we are a union movement that relates to the needs and aspirations of a new type of membership. Five years ago, the union movement would have thought that work and family issues were very marginal. But now, with more families having two parents working with dependent children, issues like family leave and child care are seen as important and mainstream." Ms George points to the ACTU's "Organising Works" campaign as another example of how the movement is addressing the membership crisis. Under the campaign, 200 young people — school leavers, uni graduates and workers from the shop floor — have joined the ACTU and paired off with older "mentors" who induct them into all areas of union activity. "Increasingly they are the ones who are going out talking to young people in the language young people understand," she says. The union movement in SA hopes the arrival of Ms George signals the consolidation of this new approach. Interestingly, while she argues that the movement's progress on womens' representation is promising and "light years ahead" of that of the ALP, the rollcall of SA union leaders tells a different story. Of the 45 union and union division secretaries listed in the United Trades and Labor Council's SA union guide, only seven are women. And if you remove the names Gazzola, Navas and Caica from that list, it sounds something like the guest list for a traditional old boys' dinner. UTLC assistant secretary Mr Chris White says the arrival of a high-profile woman is way overdue and hopefully will affect union memberships and leaderships around Australia. "If you look at employment growth in areas like the services sector, women predominate," he says. "Having Jennie George as leader will focus attention on recruiting younger women in such areas . . . she is very much a model for women workers and has campaigned tirelessly against discrimination in the workplace and on family issues such as child care."

UNION MEMBERSHIP 1986 - 1992

	August 86	Aug 88	Aug 90	Aug 92
Proportion of Public Sector Workers	70.6%	67.7%	66.8%	67.1%
Proportion of Private Sector Workers	34.5%	31.5%	30.8%	29.4%
Proportion of Men	50.1%	46.2%	45%	43.4%
Proportion of Women	39.1%	35%	34.6%	34.8%

Source: Aust. Bureau of Statistics

State employers describe Ms George as "an unknown quantity" but view with suspicion both her long involvement with the ACTU and her plans — shelved only a few weeks ago — to run as a left faction member of Victoria's federal ALP Senate ticket. The general manager of human resource management services at the SA Employers Chamber, Mr Adrian Dangerfield, says Ms George must be viewed in the context of a union movement which has lost members and failed to keep pace with the enterprise bargaining culture emerging in the private sector. "It's perhaps ironic that at a time when the union movement has had unprecedented access to and influence over a federal Labor government, union membership has actually gone into freefall," he says. "Non-union workplaces, particularly in the new growth industries of the services sector, are becoming the norm, as more and more workers question the relevance of a movement that has grown too fat, too bureaucratic and too remote from its customer base."

For Ms George, such criticism from employers may serve as a preview of the anti-union sentiment which could be enshrined in law under a Howard Liberal government. But she downplays suggestions that the next election will be any more or less important to unions than the 1993 poll. "Leopards don't change their spots," she says on Mr Howard's status as the architect of Coalition industrial policy for almost two decades. "Obviously, it's much more potentially dangerous for working people because you could have a combination of a conservative government federally with a majority of conservative State governments . . . At the end of the day, the union movement can't rely on government to be supportive or not supportive. The test of our own capacity is whether we can be effective on our own, regardless of what government is in power."

Figure 5.1 Penberthy, (1995), 'Stemming the flow', Adverter, 25/8/95, p. 13, detail.

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labour imagery, which rarely is reproduced in the print media, and also an unusually affirmative feminist image. It is a particularly unusual slant on the election of a new union leader for the *Advertiser*, normally a parochial, conservative local paper. The conjunction of this particular image with an extended article discussing George's role, status and challenges makes it a particularly important text through which to consider how women political actors are represented as feminists and as effective political leaders in their organisations. In this instance the two roles appear to be combined harmoniously within the image which at first glance seems unusually positive to both labour and feminism. These narrative and visual factors make it one of the most significant of all the reports of George's forthcoming and actual election. For these reasons it warrants an extended analysis over other reports of the period.

In the photograph accompanying the article George could be read as a feminist heroine as well as a union heroine as the image positions her within a context of the struggle of women workers for justice within their workplaces and within their unions. The photograph is unusual for its deliberate evocation of feminism, its associations with labour history and with contemporary campaign images. George is pictured in a half-portrait mid-frame slightly turned to the left and looking just to the left of the photographer and viewer. She is posed in front of a large screen-printed 'Women and work' poster. This is a montage of historical and contemporary Australian images about the struggle of women workers and unionists for equality. The poster is one of a series of exceptionally large and complex posters commissioned from Redback Graphix by the ACTU. The poster is worthy of note for two reasons: firstly, for its symbolic significance to women's struggle for equality within the union movement during the 1980s; secondly, for its rarity as an activist and labour arts image reproduced in a daily newspaper.

The historical context of such efforts for change is indicated in the poster through the reproduction of the image of the Eastern Goldfields Amalgamated Tailors and Tailoresses Society banner, one of the very few traditional union banners to give equal prominence to male and female workers (Stephen & Reeves 1984: 82). The inclusion in the poster of two additional but smaller-scale images is worthy of note.

One of them is a photograph of the Female Confectioners Union float at a Melbourne Eight Hours Day procession in the years around the First World War (Stephen & Reeves 1984: 76). The other is a traditional symbol of unity within the labour movement, the clasped hand shake (although in this instance, unusually, the hands were identifiably male and female). The two smaller images also link Jennie George's election to the traditions and history of the labour movement. They situate the struggle of women for equality within the historical union struggles for equality for its male members. They also provide historical evidence of women's presence as active union members, both materially and symbolically, since the early days of Australian unionism.

In the poster contemporary issues are represented through a number of women, of diverse ages, occupations and nationalities marching together for their rights and for change. This diversity suggests the relevance of 'sisterhood' across social, ethnic and political groupings. Specific issues are alluded to through badges drawn on the lapels of the various women marchers. These include land rights, women's liberation, eight hours and May Day symbols. Whilst the pose of lead figure of the march resembles historic images of women from the political poster tradition the other women are more contemporary, ethnically diverse and might have been drawn from photos of actual women in International Women's Day and May Day marches.[1]

The photograph of Jennie George alludes to, and sits within, the social-realist political poster tradition. It would be recognisable to many unionists in style and intent even if they had not encountered it previously. It is a highly unusual image to

[1] The lead woman on the left hand side may owe some inspiration to Eugene Delacroix's famous painting of the French revolution 'Liberty leading the people' (1830). But it also resonates with various reworkings of that image both for subsequent revolutionary causes, the women's suffrage and contemporary women's movement images and also to an 1861 USA civil war poster 'God, our country and liberty' (see Philippe 1982: p 173 & 212). In many historical political posters the female figure is an symbolic or allegorical figure, an inspiration to a male revolutionary movement, this is likewise the purpose of images of women in many union banners. In this instance, however, the woman with the arm raised is accompanied by a diverse range of other *women* marching. Here she is positioned at the forefront of feminist struggle where women are active agents for improvements in their own situation- rather than symbolising the causes of men. For discussions of the traditional imagery and iconography of union banners see Gorman (1973); Stephen & Reeves (1984.)

be printed in a normally conservative, mass circulation newspaper.[2] By incorporating the poster montage of images within the photographic portrait of George, in a feature article which introduces her to the paper's readers, the illustrator allows George to be represented within the terms of specifically feminist labour movement iconography. Whilst readers may read this image in many different ways it is an unusual selection for both a newspaper photographer and editor. The camera angle used for the photograph of Jennie George is such that the audience is positioned as looking up at her and she is placed in the centre of a panorama comprised of the poster. This format gives her authority and legitimacy as well as positioning her in the vanguard of an 'army' of women. Women are rarely depicted as *active* political agents within the news and, when they do appear, are more likely to be shown as individuals rather than as members of a group. In this instance these figurative women are shown campaigning for change through traditional union and political methods of protest; marching, banner, placard and fist-waving in support of their claims. Whilst it may be regarded as an assertive and positive image it also highlights traditional representations of both union militancy and women's liberation in a context in which, the report argues, extensive change is required. In this sense then the image can be read ambivalently as it exemplifies a traditional way of campaigning that might be out of step with contemporary experiences of women workers.[3] It also aligns her with women in the union

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[2] Throughout the period of research on this thesis, some eight years, and in the previous ten years of working within labour and cultural movements, the author has not seen a similar poster or union banner used so clearly as the background for a newspaper portrait, although they frequently are used as background images on television. Periodically, newspapers photographs do show union banners in the background at rallies but not as a central element in a portrait. Interestingly, such affirmative imagery is frequently incorporated in photographs of participants in other social movements— such as in Aboriginal rights campaigns, environment and anti-racism movements (see Muir 1996).

[3] Some Australian unions with large numbers of women members, especially white-collar unions, deliberately avoid using such images because they do not believe visual symbols of militancy resonate successfully with their membership. They believe the negative associations of 'women's lib' or feminism can make male members resistant to recognising the justness of women's claims for equality. They may also alienate some women who, whilst supportive of 'equality' issues, are anxious about being associated with, or labelled as, 'radical feminists'. This poster, whilst it was successful in some contexts particularly those in which feminist ways of organising are accepted or in which there is an appreciation of the political poster tradition, was not widely used by other unions. The author was employed as the Arts Officer for the South Australian United Trades and Labor Council at the time the ACTU commissioned this and the three other commemorative posters from Redback Graphix. She was involved in discussions with unionists, women's committee members and arts officers in other states about the effectiveness of these posters. These comments are based upon those discussions. Another reason the poster may not have been widely 'used' is that it was a limited edition print. Even so it is less often seen than others from the same series.

movement—a position that produces anxiety for some men in the movement who fear that male members may be disadvantaged by the emphasis on women. Finally, George's position in the photograph, turned towards the past (the left) whilst looking almost directly out towards the readers also expresses this ambivalence. The image of the poster, with its mass of revolutionary women, also connotes communist insurrection. This visual link is compounded by the reference in the text to George's marriage to "communist activist Paddy George". Together these elements could position George as a leader firmly aligned with leftist politics, a position possibly welcomed by some readers while also posing as a threat to the established order and to the interests of some others.

The caption to the photograph is a direct quote from George, which summarises and stresses the criteria by which her leadership will be judged. It reads "Jennie George ... 'the test... is whether we can be effective on our own, regardless of what government is in power'". However, in the context of the challenges ("the test" introduced in the headline and detailed in the article) the image could also be read ambivalently to suggest negative aspects of unionism. In this case the image also signals multiple meanings and responses to unionism. Jennie George is prominent, the 'saviour', the women's movement poster behind George is both a potential army of new recruits and also a new alignment of union policy and efforts towards women that may alarm some male members and officials. The particular symbolic form of the political poster with the massed women's march may also suggest organising and campaign techniques of the past that may alienate some women as well as some men. The membership chart beneath qualifies and outlines the 'test' George and the movement faces.

The headline 'Stemming the flow' refers to the flow of membership away from unions. The article discusses declining membership and the need to reverse this trend through recruitment as the major challenge facing George. The phrase is most usually associated with the flow of blood from a wound in medical emergencies. In such situations stopping the life threatening haemorrhage prevents the death of the patient. This kind of procedure is commonly performed in nursing (a feminised profession) and accident and emergency work. The headline clearly evokes a

situation of crisis (a situation the *Advertiser* would normally exploit in pro-management terms) and also brings to mind the association of women as the bearers and tenders of life. In the context of the article George is positioned as the potential saviour of the life of the union movement. This is consistent with frequent representation of the first woman leader as agent of change as observed by Norris. As discussed above, this connotation of saviour can be especially problematic for women for it can "set woman leaders on a pedestal from which they can only fall" (Norris 1997b: 165). The occupation of such a pedestal requires a heroine or mythic figure such as a feminist heroine or 'union maid'[4] and George is positioned through the visual image accompanying the article and within the narrative as both. The reference in the second paragraph to the "dramatic decline" in union membership, visually reinforced by the chart below the photograph, confirms the necessity for her to act as an 'agent of change'; to change the status quo, to reverse the decline in membership and to 'save' the union movement by recruiting women, part-time workers and young people as members. These points are also confirmed as the central issues of the report by the key paragraph in bold and large type

> The elevation of Ms Jennie George to the presidency of the ACTU is the latest first for this ground-breaking unionist. But, as Industrial Reporter David Penberthy reports, the need to make unions more relevant and more popular is her greatest challenge yet.
>
> (Penberthy 1995)

Not only do these elements of the article establish the nature of the challenge and George's exceptional status but, importantly, they also introduce the criteria by which her performance can later be assessed. In this report Jennie George is referred to both by her full name and, most often, by the title Ms George. 'Ms George' aligns her with feminism, signifies both masculinity and femininity and reminds readers of her exceptional and/or anomalous status as a woman leading a man's movement.

'Stemming the flow' introduces George to the reader as the first *female* and first from a *non-English-speaking background* to accede to the office of ACTU president. Penberthy argues that such representation of the diversity of membership is overdue. He gives most recognition to her nomination as president as a

[4] The term 'union maid' comes from a 1940 Woody Guthrie song, called 'The Union Maid' about the attacks on USA labour movement during the period the International Workers of the World were active.

breakthrough for women and also acknowledges it is a breakthrough for non-English-speaking background workers. Though her gender, her ethnicity and her refugee background mark her as an outsider to the masculine leadership model, the article positions George as an exceptional woman who deserves her success. However, it also indicates she is going to require all her skills and experience if she is going to be able to resolve the problem of membership haemorrhage threatening the existence of the union movement.

The narrative strategies within the article emphasise George as an exceptional individual—an exceptional woman and non-English-speaking background Australian, an exceptionally committed activist personally prepared to put herself in the front line of a dispute. Her ethnicity and refugee origins are established early in the article as is her former marriage to "communist activist" Paddy George and his death from cancer. In these ways she is introduced as someone who has succeeded in the face of great difficulties. She is credited as being "widely regarded as one of the most astute and innovative unionists in Australia": a positive endorsement of skills and capabilities which is unusual in the reports examined. Her career is described as "a list of national watersheds" (Penberthy 1995). These descriptions mark her as an exceptional *individual*, and as an exceptional individual (as well as someone with a particularly difficult background) George is set apart from the general experience of women.

The article reinforces this association by noting that "George is wholly reluctant to paint herself as the saviour of the union movement on the strength of her gender or her ethnic background". In this way it consolidates the idea that such an expectation of George exists. However, at the same time it suggests that she, herself, is reluctant to claim or acknowledge a capacity to perform the saviour role, or that her particular gender and ethnic identity qualify her as a saviour or heroine. As women traditionally are expected to be modest such a denial could be expected. It is also appropriate that George would expect her skills and performance to be credited for any success she achieved, not that such success be attributed to her gender or ethnicity. In the article George refuses to acknowledge that the situation requires a miracle or saviour, arguing instead the achievability of increased recruitment when

unions are marketed "as relevant and value for money" and when the new family-friendly roles of unions become better established. Penberthy, however, quotes Chris White, the then assistant secretary of the SA United Trades and Labor Council, who argues that George's election to ACTU president would, "hopefully" lead to an increased number of women members. White is quoted thus:

> [h]aving Jennie George as leader will focus attention on recruiting younger women ... she is very much a role model for women workers and has campaigned tirelessly against discrimination in the workplace and on family issues such as child care.
> (Penberthy 1995)

This quote coming from a senior unionist underscores the hope that George would salvage union membership and that unions intend to employ her appeal to women in their recruitment efforts.

The article canvasses the reasons for declining union membership in considerable depth. It incorporates explanations both from George and from an employer representative. Penberthy notes that George herself is "blunt" in discussing the magnitude of the problem that constitutes the threat to the life-blood of unionism. The article sets up Jennie George as a saviour for unions, expected to turn around their image problem. The line in the key paragraph that "the need to make unions more relevant and more popular is her greatest challenge yet" positions the challenge as a direct one to her as an individual. It implies that the ACTU president and not the complex interplay of factors such as media, liberal politicians, unions, business spokespersons, individual workplace relations, and industrial legislation, decides workers' opinions of trade unionism.

This article also establishes alternative accounts of George's political views and her credentials as a political actor. Narrative strategies include cataloguing her radical, leftist views and behaviour as a former student activist, and an anti-Vietnam, anti-conscription demonstrator who literally "flung herself" at the motorcade carrying US president Lyndon Johnson. It also highlights her status as an avowed feminist, a former communist fellow-traveller (and spouse) and a left-wing trade union leader since 1983, as well as her vehement opposition to Coalition industrial relations policies. As both 'feminist' and 'left-wing' positions collocate antonymically to the term 'moderate', George could be read as an extremist who might pursue her

agendas for women and union issues with an ideological zeal and passion to the detriment of ordinary women and workers. In such a reading the accompanying image could confirm George's preference for radical, old-style solutions and place her out of step with contemporary, mainstream Australian society and politics. Whilst such a reading is not privileged by the dominant metaphors and narrative strategies within the article, it is available and likely to be drawn upon by readers whose industrial and political beliefs are antipathetical to hers. It is certainly present in accounts of her election developed by conservative commentators such as Piers Akerman in his *Sunday Telegraph* column 'Jennie takes the helm of a listing ACTU' (1995a, as discussed in Chapter Four).

Penberthy's report concludes with the prediction of more and greater critical challenges ahead for the union movement, and George in particular, with the likely election of a federal Liberal-National Party Coalition Government. The final paragraph indicates that the stakes are higher even than previously supposed. Here George is cast as the last hope of union survival in the future under hostile conservative government attacks. It casts the problem of the future of unionism as *her* responsibility and personal challenge through the combined circumstances of her particular gender and ethnic identity and her historical role as 'the first woman' leader. A challenge requiring heroic qualities indeed. George is positioned as that force, technique or rescue worker who might "stem the flow" and save the life, in this case of the union movement. She is represented as the inspiration for a revival in a failing movement, as the attraction for new recruits, as presenting a new, modern, sympathetic image of unionism to young people and especially women workers. These representations could be seen as contemporary versions of the 'union maid' and with a long-standing role for women as life giver/saver, and healer, a Florence Nightingale figure. Translated to the cultural milieu and history of unionism she becomes/is a courageous 'union maid' who does not refuse even the toughest challenge for the movement to which she is so committed.

'Stemming the flow' appears on page thirteen of the *Advertiser* opposite the Editorial and letters page in the prime position for authoritative articles (Figure 5.2 shows the entire page layout) The article runs across the whole top half of the page.

It was situated above a smaller, quarter-page, report on the likely development of new copper and gold mines in South Australia, headlined 'Miners in rush for gold'. In the bottom third of the page in the left hand corner is a small report headlined 'Hooray Henry' about the Adelaide Lord Mayor's dislike of the Grand Prix car race. The right hand two thirds are filled with an ad for Taubman's paint that includes in block capitals edged with flames the line "An offer to [sic] hot to miss". All the elements of the lower section of the page link to positive associations of celebration, prosperity and achievement. The historical associations of 'gold rush' connote prosperity, the "offer to hot to miss" is intended to alert the reader to a significant opportunity, "Hooray Henry" in this context is a commendation and these endorsements could transfer up the page to the smiling face of Jennie George signifying approval for her election.[5] Alternatively, they could be read as commercial/business aspects of cultural life in opposition to the union movement and combine with the headline 'Stemming the flow' to position the discussion of the decline in union membership as a trend to be expected and supported, as something natural and appropriate in prosperous economic circumstances.

In relation to the whole page, the article positions George as an agent of change and but also argues that the limitations of traditional unionism are responsible for the decline in union membership. Whilst it appears to celebrate her achievement with George it also offers readings that position both the union movement and her election as president as a threat to the business community and/or to consumers. It could also read as foreshadowing a conflict *within* the union movement between the traditionalists and those who advocate change to more inclusive ways of organising. In associating her strongly, visually, with traditional forms of protest this photo might suggest that she was doomed to fail in her task of changing the culture of the union movement. However, as George herself argues, and Penberthy concurs, recruiting *women* is the key to turning around the decline in union numbers. This message is reinforced by the inclusion of the graphic union membership table

[5] There is another less positive common use of the term 'Hooray Henry'. It is used in the British media to refer to drunken young men, usually upper class in origin, who behave badly assaulting police officers, women and passers by and damaging property on drunken sprees. However, the context in which the term is used would diminish the likelihood of this interpretation being favoured.

Figure 5.2 Advertiser, 25/8/1995, p.13.

FEATURES

STEMMING THE FLOW

■ The elevation of Ms Jennie George to the presidency of the ACTU is the latest first for this ground-breaking unionist. But, as Industrial Reporter **DAVID PENBERTHY** reports, the need to make unions more relevant and more popular is her greatest challenge yet.



Jennie George . . . "the test . . . is whether we can be effective on our own, regardless of what government is in power".

UNION MEMBERSHIP 1986 - 1992

	August 86	Aug 88	Aug 90	Aug 92
Proportion of Public Sector Workers	70.8%	67.7%	66.8%	67.1%
Proportion of Private Sector Workers	34.5%	31.5%	30.8%	29.4%
Proportion of Men	50.1%	46.2%	45%	43.4%
Proportion of Women	39.1%	35%	34.6%	34.8%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

MINERS IN RUSH FOR GOLD

■ Copper and gold are favored to lead South Australia into a new mining era. CHRIS MILNE reports.

SEARCHING THE STATE



HOORAY, HENRY

TONY BAKER

BUY FROM THE SPECIALISTS!
PAINTING?
BUY FROM THE SPECIALISTS!
AN OFFER TO HOT TO MISS!
Your Local paint place
Taubmans
Taubmans ALL WEATHER
Taubmans EASYCOAT
$7.95 VALUE
FREE
Why buy from a Paint Specialist?
FREE 63mm paint brush with every Taubmans Paint purchase!
Only while stocks last! *4 litres or more purchased.
GILLES PLAINS
DISCOUNT CITY PAINTS
595 North East Road
261 2788
POORAKA
DISCOUNT CITY PAINTS
Main North Road
262 5858
SEATON
PAINTMASTA
366 Tapleys Hill Road
235 1499
STEPNEY
PAINTMASTA
57 Magill Road
362 3388
ST MARYS
PAINTMASTA
1239 South Road
374 1899

beneath the photo. In this case the poster with its pro-woman message becomes critical to interpretations of the article.

Did this photograph appeal to the *Advertiser's* female readers? Its multiple modes of address make it the most ambivalent sign within the article, open to a number of interpretations. Readers could associate the image with a form of feminism of which they do not approve, or feel is against their interests, in which case they may feel George does not have the required vision and new approach necessary to win over new members. If they are unconvinced of the relevance of unions then George may have little appeal as the leader of a contemporary workers' organisation. If, however, the reader feels more action is needed to be taken on behalf of women and that feminist and pro-women strategies are useful to improve the position of women in unions and in the workplace, they might be greatly encouraged by the image and feel that George has the necessary skills, vision and support to make such changes. The image could also read as though George were harnessing a great army of women to assist her to save the union movement. Such a reading might seem ironic in the context of the union movement's history as a men's movement and the expressed doubts of many women, including women's unionists, about its capacity to transform itself, but it could appeal strongly to some readers.

'Stemming the flow' positions Jennie George as an exceptional woman with a huge challenge ahead. The report places her in all three of Norris's categories of first woman leader: a 'breakthrough for all women'; 'an outsider'; and as an 'agent of change'. The report both confirms and extends the pedestal effect. By so strongly associating her with women workers and unionists the article and its accompanying illustrations magnify her difference from the masculine traditions of union leadership, and indeed the scale of her 'breakthrough'.

Reporting in a celebratory tone on the election (or achievements) of a feminist politician disrupts the traditional gendered discourse of news, potentially creating anxiety or contradictions for the audience. The link of the high-achieving woman to traditional models and descriptors of femininity, especially in relation to her appearance and her personal relations, may work both to subvert and to reassert the

traditional commonsense of news. Discussing a woman leader in relation to conventional models of femininity such as healer, saviour or last resort in drastic times may be more acceptable (and pleasurable) to mainstream (non-femininist) contemporary Australian audiences. Her 'exceptionalism', along with her association with feminism, activism, and the left, conveyed both through the image and the text, offers a multitude of reading positions. The article magnifies George's difference from ordinary women and the (presumed) female reader, it exults in her success, celebrates her victory, while at the same time offering discursive strategies that signal 'danger' to the non-feminist, non-union aligned reader.

Partying on the Congress Stage: Celebrating a 'Victory for All Women'

Ewin Hannan's report 'It's my party and I'll sing if I want to' (1995a, *Australian,* Figure 5.3) also frames the election of Jennie George in terms of a breakthrough for women. The report is accompanied by a celebratory colour photograph of a triumphant Jennie George with arms outstretched in the stance of singer/entertainer embracing her audience and their applause. The camera angle places her above the audience and enhances the pedestal effect. George stands with her arms extended, hands closed, and her head is canted slightly to the left. Her mouth is open, perhaps in song, and her eyes look out above the audience. Taking into account the position of her head, her slightly raised brows and open mouth, the pose could read as one of surprise at her own achievement or a complicity with the audience—'look what *we* have achieved'. In the photo George is flanked on the left by her mother and on the right by ACTU secretary Bill Kelty. George's mother is turned towards her daughter and is applauding her. ACTU secretary Bill Kelty stands smiling with his hands clasped in satisfaction at the success of his favoured candidate. The rich green and gold colours in the photo connect it to Australia's national colours positively connoting nationalism. These colours, together with the streamers and the green balloon clearly visible behind her, along with gestures of support, smiles and applause of those on stage invite the audience to identify with this victory as celebratory for the nation.

Figure 5.3, Hannan (1995), 'It's my party and I'll sing if I want to,' Australian, 28/9/1995, pp 1-2, detail.

Labor uses industrial relations as 'icon' in pitch for average voters

PM rallies union faithful



Ms George celebrates her official appointment as ACTU president-elect with her mother, Ms Natalie Frodosia, and Mr Kelty — Picture: BRETT FAULKNER

By MICHAEL GORDON and EWIN HANNAN

THE Prime Minister, Mr Keating, yesterday urged the union movement to "keep the faith" after senior ministers targeted industrial relations as the key to clawing back support from the federal Coalition.

Mr Keating said yesterday was the turning point in Opposition leader Mr Howard's "dream ride", but used his address to the ACTU Congress to restate his intention to go to the polls next year.

Confirming a central theme of Labor's re-election strategy, the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Beazley, told Parliament the election campaign, "when it occurs next year", would be about "who offers the greatest sense of security to the ordinary, average Australian".

Mr Howard dismissed the industrial relations campaign as Labor's "last throw of the dice", saying the Government had chosen to run on fear because it could not run on trust or honesty.

It's my party and I'll sing if I want to

By industrial correspondent EWIN HANNAN

JENNIE George yesterday became the first woman to lead the Australian labour movement when she was unanimously endorsed president-elect of the ACTU, to the strains of Helen Reddy's feminist anthem I Am Woman.

As Ms George danced and sang on the stage of the ACTU Congress, she was joined by her mother, Ms Natalie Frodosia, and ACTU secretary Mr Bill Kelty, who sang along: "I am strong, I am invincible, I am woman."

To rapturous applause, Mr Kelty had minutes earlier described her as "simply the best", saying she had "always carried a torch for representing battlers, working people and women".

"Jennie George, we are proud to have you as our president in the future," Mr Kelty said. "The battles will be tough. The battles are there to be fought and are there to be won.

"Women have not had it easy in politics and they have not had it easy in the union movement. When Jennie became the first woman on the ACTU executive (in 1983), it was a pretty old-fashioned male chauvinist show. Jennie changed it. It is not easy being one-out, but at the end of the day, Jennie won her battle and won it convincingly."

Lining the stage were Ms George's "invited guests", as Mr Kelty had called them, some of Australia's most prominent women including Democrats leader Ms Cheryl Kernot, Victorian ALP president Ms Joan Kirner, and Dr Anne Summers, former adviser to Prime Minister Keating on women's affairs.

In her acceptance speech, Ms George tearfully paid tribute to her Russian mother, who she has often called her "best friend".

She pledged to address the needs of working people, said she would always be of the Left, signalled the ACTU would play a major role in the Federal Government's bid for re-election, but cautioned the Government that Labor in power should not take working people for granted.

"I thank you most sincerely for the trust and confidence you have placed in me," she said. "I

Continued — Page 2

And while the ACTU Congress in Melbourne gave Mr Keating an enthusiastic reception, the ACTU's next president, Ms Jennie George, revealed she was moving to strike a deal with the Senate minor parties in the event of a Coalition government.

She is seeking a commitment from the Australian Democrats to obstruct passage of the more hardline aspects of the Coalition's industrial policy.

Mr Keating's address yesterday followed a briefing of the federal ministry by the ALP national secretary, Mr Gary Gray, on Thursday, which identified industrial relations, the economy and health as the focus for Labor in the build-up to the election.

While the meeting did not see industrial relations as an "icon issue", Mr Keating said he had been canvass internal research or election timing, the consensus of ministers was that the industrial relations legislation of the Court Government in Western Australia would be as significant for federal Labor as the changes introduced by the Kennett Government in Victoria ahead of the 1993 election.

Describing industrial Keating asserted that the Accord between the Government and the ACTU had delivered "one of the fairest and most decent wages and social policy systems in the world".

He said the Accord model was still "perhaps in transition" but getting very near to a system where enterprise bargaining was "the order of the day".

saying no to an early election because he wanted "plenty of time to look at Howard", describing the Opposition leader as "weak and sneaky".

"It has never been a better scenario for us and that is why it would be a tragedy to see this scenario darkened by an obscurantist reactionary government that doesn't understand where we are at and has no capacity to keep the cooperation of the kind we have going," he said.

The leader of the Australian Democrats, Senator Cheryl Kernot, said yesterday the minor parties would be compelled to "keep a check on the excesses" of a Howard government if the Coalition failed to secure a majority in the Senate.

The ACTU secretary, Mr Bill Kelty, told the Congress that Mr Howard should understand the union movement was on a "mission" to again defeat the Coalition at the next election.

The Opposition spokesman on industrial relations, Mr Peter Reith, told Parliament it was "an absolute lie" that the federal Coalition would adopt the policy of the Court Government.

Unions' message unheard — Page 2



Unions' message unheard: Ferguson

By industrial correspondent EWIN HANNAN

THE president of the ACTU, Mr Martin Ferguson, yesterday conceded the trade union movement had failed to capture the "hearts and minds of a new generation", urging unions to address the belief that organised labour was "out of touch".

In his final address as president to the ACTU Congress in Melbourne yesterday, Mr Ferguson said the union movement had failed to market its achievements and ordinary workers knew little about the role of unions in society.

"We must show that we stand for real issues, that unions are not just being run by the best technocrats," he told delegates.

"If we have no heart, we are no better than the average salesperson moving from company to company plying our wares, or results based on what has the best selling pitch or the most competitive rate. That's not what the union is about, nor should it be."

In a rallying call to union leaders, Mr Ferguson said unions and workers could not take anything for granted and had to demonstrate that the labour movement was a vibrant and progressive force.

"Unfortunately, we sell ourselves short because not enough ordinary people understand what we stand for, and what we have achieved," he said.

Mr Ferguson said the union movement had not adequately projected its achievements under federal Labor.

"The ordinary worker, the sole parent, the retired worker, the recent school leaver, the new parent, know little of the union movement's role in the improvements in their standards of living," he said.

Mr Ferguson said union research showed the movement had not made headway with younger workers.

It's my party and I'll sing if I want to

From Page 1

hope I will live up at least to half the expectations."

Mr Keating later told the Congress that Ms George "knows all the answers, and she's only limbering up".

"The other thing is Jennie George gave me a kiss because she won't be giving John Howard one."

Mr Keating had his own theme music played to him at the Congress — The Animals' classic, Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood.

The ambivalent headline emphasises the context of celebration while retaining an undercurrent of defeat by changing the familiar phrase (from the popular Leslie Gore song) from 'It's my party and I'll cry if I want to' to 'I'll sing if I want to'. Together with the joyful photograph showing applause and party streamers the headline sets the scene of jubilation. This is reinforced by the caption which reads: "Ms George celebrates her official appointment as ACTU president-elect with her mother, Ms Natalie [sic] Frodosia [sic], and Mr Kelty".[6] This mood is enhanced by the first three paragraphs of the article. They report that "she was unanimously endorsed president-elect of the ACTU", that "Ms George danced and sang on the stage" whilst her mother and ACTU secretary Kelty "sang along: 'I am strong, I am invincible, I am woman'". Furthermore that "rapturous applause" greeted Bill Kelty's description of her as "'simply the best'" (echoing another popular song by Tina Turner, widely adopted by Australian rugby teams). However, despite the joyful nature of the colour photograph and the emphasis on triumphant celebration within the article and caption, the paradigmatic links to 'sing' and 'cry' would not be missed by many readers. The context of celebration is also disturbed by the reference to George's "tearful" tribute to her mother as her "best friend", a reference which could be read to suggest that she is lonely, unpartnered and without friends from her own peer group. The celebrations of public sphere unionism at achieving its new woman-worker-friendly president is also attended by the intrusion of the private realm through the reference to mother-daughter and sexual relationships and by the presence of tears, that signifier of excessively feminine emotion. Not only does the report employ tabloid strategies of referring to the private lives of political figures, it also re-inscribes women within the confines of the feminine as 'other'. As Maurizia Boscagli observes "a man who cries is a human being, a woman who cries is a woman. By crying she loses her humanity only to become gendered and 'particular' again" (Boscagli 1993: 75).

Like the 'Stemming the flow' article in the *Advertiser*, the report appears to privilege the reading of the event as a positive breakthrough for women and something appropriate to celebrate. It also contains elements that counter this reading. In the body of the article the journalist Ewin Hannan repeats Kelty's description of George

[6] There are two errors here, Jennie George's mother's name is Natasha Feodosiu.

as "simply the best", his testimony that the ACTU is "proud to have you as our president" and his acknowledgment that "[w]omen have not had it easy" in the union movement. Kelty's comments are also important in the context of unions seeking to increase their membership and they serve to indicate the high expectations of her within the union movement and generally. Hannan also quotes Kelty's claim that Jennie George had "won the battle" against male chauvinism, thus increasing the cause for celebration and congratulation. This quote also suggests she is 'feminist heroine', and this connection to feminism is emphasised through the reference to Helen Reddy's song 'I am woman' (a popular 1970s song associated with women's liberation) which was played during the ceremony.

The significance of Jennie George's breakthrough is further emphasised by the report of the presence of "some of Australia's most prominent women" as "invited guests". The three women named were Ms Cheryl Kernot, then Democrats leader, Ms Joan Kirner, former Victorian Premier and at this time president of the Victorian ALP, and Dr Anne Summers, well-known Australian feminist author and former women's adviser to Prime Minister Paul Keating. The status of these women as feminists and high achievers in their own right links George to a group of powerful women and emphasises her status as one of a 'special' or elite group. It also serves to mark the event as a *feminist* celebration, which could work to elevate the political image of feminism in the press and to establish identification with certain readers.[7] It also distances her from the union officials and rank-and-file delegates (mainly men) on the floor of the Congress hall. These women guests signify George's commitment to networking outside the labour movement where appropriate. However, their presence may also raise concerns about her loyalties and the impact of her feminist commitments to her 'sisters' as well as/over her 'brothers'. It could read as foreshadowing a possible internal rift. On the jump page of the article, a graphic titled 'The rise and rise of Jennie George'[8] lists eight achievements and key events in her professional life, six of which are 'first woman' breakthroughs. This

[7] The inclusion of women who symbolise the gains the second-wave feminism together with the Helen Reddy song in the ceremony also associates George and those celebrating her election with second-wave feminism and this could potentially narrow her appeal to a baby-boomer audience.

[8] This title links to the idea of 'rise and fall' and could read antonymically as a predictor of George's likely fall, for the convention has it that after the pedestal comes the fall.

list includes four small photographs of her in earlier times. The narrative strategies of the two sections of the report generally emphasise the celebratory aspect of the event and position George as an exceptional woman whose achievements merit acclaim and celebration. Hannan does not, however, quote George's own comment in her acceptance speech that she saw her election as a "victory for all women", a comment which would have expanded the context of the celebration and emphasised its perceived significance to Australian women generally. Hannan emphasises George's gender difference and pays minimal attention to her ethnicity or to her achievement within the frame of ethnic difference, indeed, the misspelling of her mother's Christian and family names signals a particular inattention by the Australian to issues of ethnicity.[9] The report includes a range of ways of referring to Jennie George. Hannan refers to her both as "Ms George" and as "Jennie George". Bill Kelty is quoted referring to her as 'Jennie', whereas Paul Keating refers to her by her full name 'Jennie George'. These various designations increase the slippage between masculine and feminine connotations of her name and increase the sense of ambivalence in relation to her position.

The story and image are situated within a larger story 'PM rallies the union faithful' (Gordon & Hannan 1995:1, Figure 5.4). A related story (Hannan 1995b) sits next to the continuation of the first on the jump page. The larger, page one, report, which surrounds the specific story on George, concerns the future federal election. In this context George is positioned as a labour 'icon', potentially a worker of miracles, who it is hoped will increase (women's) membership, mobilise the support of the labour movement and assist the ALP to retain government. In this context George could be read as an agent of change and a vehicle through which to win (back) the hearts and minds of working people. Alternatively, she might read as a figure-head, a tokenistic appointment chosen for electoral purposes. Her achievement has

[9] The limited attention George's ethnicity has been given in the mainstream press could be interpreted in a variety of ways by readers. George could be read as 'Anglo' in light of her apparently Anglo-Saxon name, her blond hair and her lack of accent, in this context she 'passes' as white and may be read as assimilated. The lack of attention given to her ethnicity could be read as a silencing or marginalising of the battles of migrants for recognition as skilled workers, and as potential representatives of 'mainstream' Australia rather than of their particular experiences. It could also suggest that ethnicity is presumed to have been 'mainstreamed' within a multicultural Australia and therefore is not newsworthy. However, it is notable that the experiences of the 'first Aboriginal' people to breakthrough to positions of power and influence are still regarded as newsworthy and remarkable.

Figure 5.4. Australian, 28/9/95, p.1.

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Labor uses industrial relations as 'icon' in pitch for average voters

PM rallies union faithful



Ms George celebrates her official appointment as ACTU president's elect with her mother, Ms Natalie Prodonik, and Mr Kelty — Picture: BRETT FAULKNER

By MICHAEL GORDON and EWIN HANNAN

THE Prime Minister, Mr Keating, yesterday urged the union movement to "keep the faith" after senior ministers targeted Labor's industrial relations as the key to clawing back support from the Federal Coalition.

Mr Keating said yesterday was the turning point in Opposition leader Mr Howard's prime ministership, and he referred to the ACTU Congress to restate his intention to go to the polls next year.

Confirming a central theme of Labor's re-election strategy, the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Beazley, said Parliament, the election campaign, "what's next year", would be about "who offers the greatest means of security in the ordinary, everyday Australian".

Mr Howard dismissed the industrial relations message as Labor's "last throw of the dice", saying the Government had chosen to run on four issues because it could not run on four or fifteen.

It's my party and I'll sing if I want to

By industrial correspondent EWIN HANNAN

JENNIE George yesterday became the first woman to lead the Australian labour movement when she was unanimously endorsed presidential-elect of the ACTU, to the strains of Helen Reddy's feminist anthem I Am Woman.

As Ms George danced and sang on the stage of the ACTU Congress she was joined by her mother, Ms Natalie Prodonik, and ACTU secretary Mr Bill Kelty, who sang along: "I am strong, I am invincible, I am woman."

To rapturous applause, Ms Kelty had minutes earlier described her as "simply the best", saying she had "always carried a torch for progressive causes, working people and women".

"Jennie George, we are proud to have you as our president in the future," Mr Kelty said. "The battles will be fought. The battles are there to be fought and are there to be won.

"Women have not had it easy in politics and they have not had it easy in the union movement. When Jennie became the first woman on the ACTU executive she took it as a pretty old-fashioned male chauvinist show. Jennie changed it. It is not easy being one-seat, but at the end of the day Jennie won her battle and won it convincingly."

Using the stage where Ms George's elevation ceased, as Mr Kelty had called them, some of Australia's most prominent women, including Democrats leader Ms Cheryl Kernot, Victorian ALP president Ms Joan Kirner, and Dr Anne Summers, former adviser to Prime Minister Keating on women's affairs.

Continued — Page 2

And while the ACTU Congress in Melbourne gave Mr Keating an enthusiastic reception, the ACTU's next president, Ms Jennie George, revealed she was moving to settle a deal with the Senate minor parties in the event of a Coalition government.

She is seeking a commitment from the Australian Democrats to obstruct passage of the more repressive aspects of the Coalition's industrial policy.

Mr Keating addressed yesterday's Congress in a determined mood, declaring "a new era of industrial relations legislation of the Howard Government in Western Australia would be an unmitigated disaster for federal Labor as the Court Government in Western Australia would be an unmitigated disaster for federal Labor as the Court Government in Victoria went out of the 1992 election.

Describing industrial relations as an "icon issue", Mr Keating said he had been saying for as an early election because he wanted "plenty of time to kick Mr Howard", describing the Opposition leader as weak and unlikeable.

"I've never been a better campaigner for us and that is why I would be a tragedy to see this man sacked," he said.

The leader of the Australian Democrats, Senator Cheryl Kernot, said yesterday the minor parties would be compelled to "keep a check on the extension of a Howard government if the Coalition failed to secure a majority in the Senate.

The ACTU secretary, Mr Bill Kelty, told the Congress that the Government understood the issues movement was on a "mission" to again defeat the Coalition at the next election.

The Opposition spokesman on industrial relations, Mr Peter Reith, said Parliament it was "an absolute lie" that the Federal Coalition would scrap the policy of the Court Government.

Union message urgent — Page 2

Lawyers selling their souls: judge

By legal writer JANET FITE-YEOMANS

THE legal profession was in danger of losing its soul to profits and marketing forces, the High Court judge, Mr Daryl Dawson, said yesterday in an extraordinary attack on the Federal Government's competition policy for the industry.

In yesterday's keynote speech to the Australian Legal Convention in Brisbane, Mr Daryl said the policy espoused in the Justice Statement released earlier this year had created widespread dissatisfaction among solicitors and that lawyers were allowed too little marketing themselves to have time to care about the community they were serving.

"The soul of the solicitor who has chosen a community service before profit were near, he said.

"His or her place is to be taken, if it has not already been taken, by the marketer of expertise with a strictly commercial and entrepreneurial approach to the practice of the law," Mr Daryl, a noted conservative on the High Court bench said.

He painted an unreasonably bleak picture of a profession where law firms had increased so big that partners did not always know each other and where loyalty between partners and between lawyers and clients was disappearing.

Lawyers had abandoned less profitable work in favour of work with bigger profits.

He said solicitors previously regarded as incompatible with legal professionalism were now seen as important in fostering competition necessary in a free market.

He said he was concerning an advertising contingency fees, multi-disciplinary practices and the disappearing of the professional partnership.

"All of which are advocated by the Justice Statement."

"All of this tends to produce an atmosphere in which the making of money, far from being subordinated to the notion of service, is the predominant consideration," Mr Daryl said.

"This, in turn, may affect the nature — even perhaps the quality — of the advice which the lawyer can offer.

"Preoccupation with the making of money is not conducive to the giving of the disinterested, yet commercially advice which is associated with the exercise of professional skill.

He said change was inevitable and there were good reasons for regarding some changes as improving the accessibility, efficiency and cost of legal services.

Nor would they mean a drop in income for solicitors.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics totalled solicitors' practices had provided their private profits during the past five years from $2.8 billion to more than $3.6 billion.

"And yet one senses a widespread feeling of dissatisfaction in the legal profession," he said, both around Australia and overseas.

"The issue before us was raised by Mr Stuart Rowley, the president of the Law Council, which has endorsed the competition principles.

Mr Rowley said there was a degree of dissatisfaction among other lawyers who were meeting out of the firms to set up business agencies and pursue their own agendas.

But the law had not lost its professionalism and lawyers still enjoyed a higher community esteem, keeping one hundredth of lawyers and solicitors were through pro bono schemes.

ABC axes State-based 7.30 Report

ABC Television is to dump its State-based 7.30 Report current affairs programs in a news and current affairs revamp.

The 7.30 Report will take on a national format from December 4 and will be anchored by Latelines Kerry O'Brien.

New weekly current affairs programs will be produced for each State and the Northern Territory from February. A 90-minute weekly current affairs show, Australian Gore

soundtrack, will begin in March.

Business program "The Money Line" ends in December and "The Investigators" in November.

Other planned changes include more regular television news updates and three new regional television bureaux, in the north-west of Western Australia, in northern Australia and south-eastern Australia.

Page 2

News accused of blitz attack on ARL

By JODY SCOTT

NEWS Limited had used "a massive warfare operation" including "unnatural harassment and bribe claims" to try to "knock" rugby league and capture the pay TV rights to the game, the Federal Court heard yesterday.

Mr Bob Elliott, QC said the rugby League operation executed by News publisher of The Australian was "rich in cash and meticulously planned".

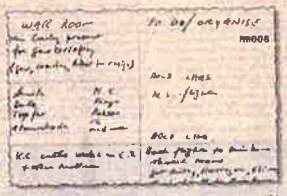
"It had all the tactics of a war game — secrecy, intelligence operations, false names and even a cover line," Mr Elliott told the court in his opening address for the ARL and the NSW Rugby League.

"It even had a war room."

Mr Elliott said News had "infiltrated" coaches with huge sums and had recruited the unsuspecting players" into secret meetings.

"The plunder of players we will submit was predatory in the extreme," Mr Elliott said. Secret meetings between News executives and rugby league teams were held throughout the country and one had even been held in a makeshift room in a hotel, the court heard.

"News attempted to keep under a shroud of secrecy everything it did in relation to clubs, coaches and players, Mr Elliott said.



There were even prepared to encourage the players to lie about what they had done.

The court heard News gave Super League players a script to use during media interviews to avoid revealing they had signed up.

The court was shown a detailed "war room" chart (shown in part above) which timetabled when and where players and clubs were to be targeted by News during a week long "blitzkrieg".

The chart also listed the resources at News Ltd's disposal for the operation, including "a 24 hour war room manned by", fax machines, hotel rooms, hire cars, cheque books and laptops.

Mr Elliott said the Super League proposal had "split asunder" the game, jeopardising old friendships, wrecked and an Australian icon.

"Our objective in these proceedings is to stop the carnage, put the league back together again and to have Your Honour condemn without smoking what we regard as the treachery and artifice of News Limited," Mr Elliott said.

"... Loyalty and friendship may have no place in business but until the pursuit of wealth for its own sake infiltrated it in the game they were fundamental both on and off the field."

Continued — Page 2

US adds muscle to Keating's APEC push

By Washington correspondent PETER WILSON

THE United States has rejected suggestions farm trade should be excluded from the APEC free trade process backing Australia's attempts to prevent the North Asian economies watering down reforms.

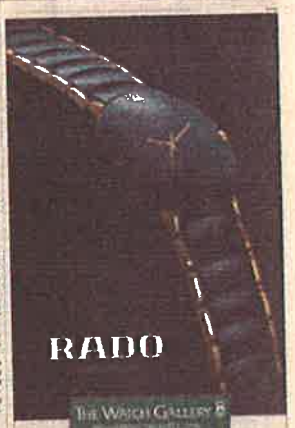
A senior US official said yesterday it was "unconscionable" that the Japanese trade of the past Osaka summit would now try to renege on last years decision to move forward on freeing all trade in the region.

Instead, the 18-nation body was likely to maintain its commitment to free trade by the years 2010 or 2020 but agree within that timetable to refrain farm trade issues slowly than many other sectors of trade, according to the US official, who asked not to be named.

Expressing support for the attack this week by the Prime Minister, Mr Keating, on recent attempts to exclude

Continued — Page 2

Tariff gains gets crucial — Page 2



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LATE NEWS

THAW BURIAL

The remains of Russia's last tsar, Nicholas II, will be buried early next year along with those of his family in the cathedral of the Peter and Paul Fortress in St Petersburg, the mayor of the former imperial capital said last night.

TODAY'S WEATHER		
Adelaide	Fine	29
Brisbane	Fine	28
Canberra	Fine	18
Darwin	Fine	35
Hobart	Becoming fine	17
Melbourne	Becoming fine	17
Perth	Mainly fine	26
Sydney	Mainly fine	24

FULL DETAILS — Page 35

significance in the mainstream political news that surrounds federal elections and is not limited to the more marginal reporting on gender or industrial relations. By positioning George as an agent of change in an election context and in relation to assessments of the Prime Minister and Labor's policies, the report raises the expectations of her performance. Hannan's report emphasises the expectations of George's capacity to succeed in the impending electoral crisis by quoting particular lines from the song: "I am strong, I am invincible, I am woman". Overall, the article presents the theme of overt (feminist) celebration and invincibility, established through the headline, the photo and the narrative. At the same time these connotations are troubled by the likely substitution of the verbs 'fall' for 'rise' and 'cry' for 'sing'. The term sing is necessary for the article to succeed as an account of celebration. The reference to George's emotions and her tearful tribute to her mother also destabilises this scenario of celebration. The pairing of headlines on the jump page 'Unions' message unheard: Ferguson' (Hannan 1995b) and 'It's my party and I'll sing if I want to' also troubles the celebratory meaning of the event. It could suggest George will sing for herself alone and that the audience, or public, is deaf to her (and the unions') attempts to communicate.

Additional counter-discursive elements can be found in the banner that runs across the top of the page that relays the audience's attention to features within the body of the paper. The left-hand image shows a volcano erupting and the title reads 'Volcanoes on the edge'. Given the traditional representations of trade unions as potential trouble and the context of the impending federal election the volcano reference may work to connote industrial conflict ahead and cause concern for some readers. The middle-image, of a rugged, four-wheel drive phallic ute is described in terms sometimes aggressively directed at women as "big, bold and brassy", terms which could be transferred straight down the page to the photo of George directly below. The third image, of "the man who broke the bank" could link metonymically to unions and their perceived effect on the national economy. This link is especially significant at a time when the Australian Government had been trying to get unions to exercise wage restraint whilst aligning the Australian economy to participate in globalisation. It is ironic that real average wages had been falling throughout the ALP Government's term in office and yet this myth of unions (and Labor

Governments) ruining the economy should retain such potency. It was also reinvigorated by conservative politicians who were criticising Prime Minister Keating's arrogance in describing the recession as the one Australia " had had to have". 'The man who broke the bank' links the union and the ALP to economic mismanagement. The banner overall clearly connotes troubled, even 'volcanic' times ahead for the country and the union movement and positions Jennie George as a key player within them.

In the original Lesley Gore song the birthday girl's party is ruined when she realises she has lost her boyfriend to her best friend. The adaptation of this popular title as headline, directly beneath a headline referring to the 'union faithful' introduces the underlying and oppositional connotations of betrayal, tears and despair along with celebration, unity and hope. These connotations are extended in the adjacent report on the jump page where Martin Ferguson is reported as saying "the trade union movement has failed to capture the 'hearts and minds' of a generation", a metaphor that directly relates to the context of betrayal and broken heart in the Gore song. These reports on page two are situated under a set of small photographs the central and largest one being of Bill Kelty and Jennie George arranged as a couple, signifying romance. This paradigm of romance is extended through the article's penultimate paragraph that mentions Paul Keating's reference to Jennie George kissing him and not Opposition Leader, John Howard (a reference which is taken up by other reporters most notably Ed Southorn in the *Courier Mail* (Southorn 1995a) see below). In this way the optimism and praise for George's professional capacities reported within the article is destabilised through the signifiers of romance, tears, doubts about the future and doubts about her capacity to meet the political challenges ahead. Even in the context of women's political victories, the codes of news reporting and the influence of tabloidisation operate to minimise the political achievements of women political actors. In this instance they introduce signifiers from the private realm, feminine themes of emotion, romance, betrayal and familial and/or sexual relationships, together with traditional associations of unions as being 'volcanic', trouble and bad for the economy.

Breakthrough and Containment

The ambivalent reportage which emphasises Jennie George as the first woman leader and an unknown quantity politically, is exemplified by the next feature article chosen for analysis, 'The arrival of George' (Southorn 1995a, Figure 5.5). The conjunction of her surname, George, in bold large font next to a phallic caricature and immediately above another (unrelated) headline 'You have to laugh' makes a mockery of her victory. This report is one of six articles commenting on George's election published by the conservative Queensland *Courier Mail* over a three day period. This report is more overtly marked by ambivalent signifiers of women and leadership than the first two analysed. In particular it utilises a gendered news frame that minimises George's skills and her likely chances of success. As a feature article, the report is allocated particular authority for its analysis of the political implications of George's election whereas the other reports in the *Courier Mail* are news items which highlight particular aspects of George's election and the associated ACTU Congress events.[10] The diversity of these reports demonstrates that variations in the coverage of George's election exist not only between media outlets but within the reports printed in individual newspapers. In part, this can be accounted for through the recognition that such stories highlight different implications of her election, reveal different political and/or marketing motivations in newspaper's appeal to local audiences and address different readerships.

The report appears on the upper left of the features page. The headline, 'The arrival of George', which designates Jennie George as masculine, is placed to the left of, and adjacent to, a line drawing caricature by Brett Lethbridge of her with a phallic head and diminutive body. The caption to this caricature reads "Jennie George ... a hard job in uncertain times". Immediately beneath this caricature and in the centre of the article, a pull quote in large type reads "Put aside all that emotion and flowers

[10] One example of this is the front-page photo of Cheryl Kernot, then leader of the Australian Democrats, embracing George beside a report headlined 'Tears cross party lines'. This report, published on 28/9/95 the day following George's election, emphasised the newsworthy local connection through reporting Kernot's assessment of George. It also presented an unusual image of friendship between two high-profile women from different political parties. Another report 'George tells PM: cough up' published on page 2 of the *Courier Mail* on 27/9/95 presented an insight into the conditions of union support for the ALP. It was newsworthy as it attempted to set the agenda for the PM's address to the ACTU Congress, in this report George was quoted directly and with relative agency although one paragraph was included which detailed her personal circumstances.

Figure 5.5 Southorn (1995a), 'The arrival of George', Courier Mail, 28/9/95, p. 15, detail.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 1995

Courier Mail p15

FEATURES

THE ARRIVAL OF GEORGE



JENNIE GEORGE . . . a hard job in uncertain times.



ED SOUTHORN
Industrial Reporter
In Melbourne

THE Australian Council of Trade Unions is at a crucial turning point in its history.

Union membership is declining while the workforce expands.

It's a point not lost on the nation's trade union bosses. On the first day of its biennial congress in Melbourne yesterday the ACTU distributed piles of documents explaining just that — that union membership needs to be revitalised and new members signed up, and quickly.

For despite all the brave talk there are clouds on the industrial horizon, with opinion polls pointing to the real possibility of a federal coalition government next year, headed by a leader with little time for unions. A leader and a government not about to enter into an Accord with the ACTU on any wage restraint pacts.

And that, in anyone's language, spells potential for conflict.

Enter Jennie George, widow of the communist New South Wales union leader Paddy George, who died 16 years ago.

An ACTU assistant secretary, George yesterday was anointed by the congress — with much emotion and joyful tears, flowers, balloons and streamers — as ACTU president-elect, to take over from Martin Ferguson, who is headed for Federal Parliament at the next federal election.

George came to Australia at the age of three from an Italian refugee camp at the end of World War II.

Her parents were Russian. Her mother Natasha, whom she calls her "best friend", was on stage at the congress yesterday.

Natasha Feodosiu lives on the 16th floor of a Redfern housing commission block in inner-Sydney.

But put aside all that emotion and flowers and balloons at an ACTU congress, and the harsh reality is that Jennie George has a tough job ahead of her.

A former school teacher who enjoys gardening and going to the movies, she now finds herself leading the fight against coalition policies that threaten the existence of the trade union movement, at least in the form in which it has existed for generations.

She is taking on one of the highest-profile jobs a woman in Australia has yet held — the first woman to lead the ACTU — and her success or failure will add fuel to the debate over women's working rights and capabilities.

She has strong career credentials in the union movement, and her presence will boost female membership and interest among younger workers.

She has already had success running the ACTU family leave test case in the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, and is now pulling together a similar case on equal pay for women on over-award benefits.

She is also a "good mate" of Prime Minister Paul Keating, and a friend of Australian Democrats leader Cheryl Kernot.

Kernot yesterday suggested that the minor parties and Labor in any Opposition in the Senate would block the coalition's industrial relations reforms.

BUT the question that has to be asked is this: will George be tough enough in the hard world of union politics to steer the ACTU on a safe path, and carry with her the ACTU's self-appointed responsibility for guarding the conditions of Australia's workers?

National Institute of Labor Studies director Judith Sloan says George will not have an easy time.

"She is very much aligned with the Left and the public sector, but the male-dominated Right is not much interested in maternity leave," Sloan said.

"She gets on well with Bill Kelty, the ACTU secretary. That will be a big help.

"They may end up being a good act. But she will have her job cut out for her."

George refers to herself as a "working-class girl who did well at school" and managed to find a job as a teacher.

But she says she has earned her stripes after 22 years working as a paid union official.

"I'm not a Jennie-come-lately," she says.

"I don't have a blueprint. I'm on a very steep learning curve. But I will get out and around and make up for my lack of knowledge."

Already, says coal miners' boss John Maitland, she has impressed workers by turning up at coal mines.

If Maitland approves of her — and the betting is that he does — then it's a safe wager that she has the calibre to handle the job.

But there are some in the union movement who believe that if the ACTU finds itself in trouble with a coalition government, then Jennie George will prove merely a transitional president.

In such a scenario, she could easily be found a safe seat in Parliament.

She will fill the remaining two years of Ferguson's term, then says she will nominate for the presidency for a full six year term in 1997.

It is ironic that George could win only the precarious third spot on the Victorian ALP Senate ticket early this year, leaving her little choice but to withdraw.

Yesterday in her speech to the ACTU Congress she referred to this, in the context of the debate about the ALP's quota target for women in Parliament.

The ACTU this week will endorse 30 percent of women in its senior official positions, on the way to 50 percent by 2000.

"If we can do it there's no excuse for others not to," she said.

Under a re-elected Keating Government George would be able to push the ACTU's drive on equal pay and a massive recruitment campaign launched at this congress.

On the other hand, a coalition government would have to find a way of preventing a wages breakout in the absence of an Accord.

And that is the challenge for both the coalition under Howard and George: unions might well retaliate against any industrial relations reforms unless the ACTU and the coalition can build a relationship.

There is bad blood between Kelty and Howard, going back to a rejection by Howard of an offer from Kelty in 1983 for what would have become the first Accord.

Put aside all that emotion and flowers and balloons at an ACTU congress, and the harsh reality is that Jennie George has a tough job ahead of her

Howard's poor relationship with Kelty may mean that the coalition leader will look to another union leader to broker a new relationship.

Union insiders are wondering if that person would be George, although yesterday she wasted little time attacking Howard's industrial relations policies.

As president, she will become Kelty's "right-hand woman", while he continues to wield the real power behind the scenes, and shun the role as spokesman.

In the last federal election, George toured the country giving speeches to union delegates, galvanising support for Keating on the ground, as well as financially.

She won over much of the female vote — and in so doing won much credibility within the Labor Party. There is no doubt she will be used in the same manner before the next election.

She handles television well, far better than Ferguson, and presents a warmer image.

As ACTU president, she will chair meetings, handle negotiations during major disputes, and be the public face of Australia's industrial heartland.

Intelligent, pragmatic and articulate, she is well-equipped for that role. Even the coalition would agree with that.

But within the shifting factions of the labour movement, she does not have her own personal power base.

She is from the Left, but not driven by ideology, and importantly, works much better with Kelty than did Ferguson.

The coalition is expected to try to undermine what remains of Australia's union power. But no one is exactly sure how this could be done.

Recent promises to retain minimum standards of employment have been met with scepticism by most commentators.

One move expected from a coalition government would be an attack on the guarantee that unions registered in certain industries cover the rights of those workers.

Removing the rule would allow workers to establish their own small-enterprise base associations, something which would not please the ACTU. Such a move would also pit unions against one another in the struggle for recruitment.

But for now all that is for the future, and as Kelty and Keating indicated yesterday, they are betting on Howard going down at the polls.

Both Keating and Kelty believe that with time Howard will fall in the manner of previous coalition leaders John Hewson and Alexander Downer, unable to stave off the Keating onslaught in Parliament and on the hustings.

Keating was pleased to be kissed by George when he walked on stage to give his address to the congress yesterday. He said Howard would not be getting any kisses from her.

Keating and the ACTU must hope that he will be coming back for pecks on the cheek.

and balloons at an ACTU Congress, and the harsh reality is that Jennie George has a tough job ahead of her". The illustration depicts a small, weak-bodied woman in a spotty dress with a disproportionately large head. It is a phallic caricature which bears similarities to illustrations that would subsequently be deployed to characterise Pauline Hanson.[11] The repetition of this technique with reference to two female leaders suggests a masculine fear of strong women leaders as intruders into traditionally male domains and as potentially castrating figures intent on diminishing or destroying male power. Images of phallic women disturb the law of the father and the authority of the symbolic order. (Creed 1993; Steele 1996) In addition to this signification, and at a more superficial level, the slight body also suggests incapacity to fulfill the tough demands of leadership. The polka-dot dress echoes the frequent cartoon images of Joan Kirner. The polka-dots suggest frivolity, femininity and domesticity diminishing George's authority. The dress links her representationally and intertextually to the firmly established repertoire of images of Kirner as an incompetent and failed leader published during her term as Victorian Premier, suggesting George is unfit to perform the tasks of political leader (Kirner & Rayner 1999).

The narrative strategies employed within the article operate to signal 'hard-headed' journalism, just the 'disturbing 'facts' not the distracting emotion of celebration. They do highlight the significance of George's election as a breakthrough for women but, at the same time, work to limit or contain its significance, and her potential influence, to that characteristic alone. The report employs many narrative strategies that diminish the importance of her victory, cast doubts on her ability and her character. In particular its use of the passive voice rather than quoting George's direct speech; its emphasis on George's femininity; her marriage to a communist; her membership of the Left; her dependence on male approval and endorsement; her support for affirmative action positions; and particularly important, the scale of the challenge ahead, raise substantial doubts about her capacity to be an effective leader. The use of Jennie George's name is another important strategy of containment within this article. Southorn refers to her by her surname, without the title Ms, twelve times. She is also referred to by her full name, Jennie George, a further five

[11] See for example *Metro* magazine Number 109, 1997 page 91.

times. It is significant that the first time she is introduced, in paragraph six, she is introduced as the widow of a communist leader immediately classifying her through her marital status. The emphasis on the masculine version of her name articulates with the report's emphasis on questioning of her toughness. The incorporation of multiple references to her femininity and her status as a widow, increases the doubts that this woman will be able to perform a 'man's job' despite the superficial masculinity of her name.

A number of elements emphasise the toughness of the challenge facing the trade union movement. The caption to the caricature reads "Jennie George … a hard job in uncertain times". The implication of this is to question whether she can manage the challenge. Questioning the woman's capacity to perform successfully and stressing her 'outsider' status, work as techniques to manage possible anxiety raised by her assumption of masculine symbolic authority. The pull quote, emphasised through the use of large type, stresses the size of the challenge. The emotion, the flowers and the balloons are the media event, the window dressing, the curtain-raiser to a real 'Aussie drama'. It is the life and death struggle over old style Australian unionism and work practices versus changing practices and values of entrepreneurial management in a globalised economy. The struggle is likely to be intensified in the year ahead by the predicted election of a 'new right' style conservative Government. In this context the Labor Party, the union movement and George as its new leader are all positioned as unequal to the challenge.

The tone of Ed Southorn's introductory paragraphs forecast doom and gloom ahead for the union movement. He establishes the crisis in membership facing the ACTU and its affiliates over the first five paragraphs and sets the scene with mention of "clouds on the industrial horizon" that links to the characterisation of the times as 'uncertain' in the caption (Southorn 1995a). These 'clouds' appear in the shape of a probable federal Coalition Government led by "a leader with little time for unions". The tone of narrative adopted, extends the prediction of trouble and doubt over George's fitness to deal with such events, through use of phrases such as, "she now finds herself leading the fight against Coalition policies that threaten the existence of the trade union movement". The article predicts that a Coalition Government might

attack the existing arrangements governing union coverage of workers within particular industries. The anticipated result of such an attack would be conflict between unions and the Government and conflict between unions together with competition between unions for membership. Consequently internal union conflict is added to the challenges that lie ahead for the new leader. The authority of the ACTU president to manage affiliates' responses to this issue and the predicted union retaliation against Coalition industrial policies is, in this way, established as another question. News values prioritise conflict as a key ingredient of newsworthiness. Southorn's report establishes the likelihood of conflict between unions and the Government and between unions themselves. Within this scenario of conflict, George's likely capacity to maintain control of the union movement becomes a significant question with implications for national stability, social harmony and economic prosperity. The metaphor of storm clouds then works not only to increase reader interest in the story but also the story's political relevance. The report not only emphasises the scale of conflict ahead and the complexity of the challenge of leading the ACTU but also accentuates doubts about George's capacity to meet this challenge. Doubts about George's fitness as a leader are developed through a range of strategies. These include her association with the Communist Party, her connection to the Left, her lack of a "personal power base", and her position as "Kelty's right-hand woman". The discussion of her within the feminised frames of the personal and the domestic further consolidates these doubts.

The narrative strategies surrounding the introduction of George in the sixth paragraph of the article are particularly salient. The discussion of looming conflict establishes the requirement for a heroic or highly competent protagonist to act for the ACTU. However, George is introduced through her former marital status in a way which effectively dequalifies her. "Enter Jennie George, widow of the communist New South Wales union leader Paddy George, who died 16 years ago." This introduction implies George gained leadership through 'the widow's path' despite the fact that Paddy George died sixteen years previously and, unlike his wife, was never either Secretary or President of a union (Norris 1997b). Readers may well wonder what Jennie George had been doing in the intervening sixteen years since Paddy's death. Had she been at home plotting some revolutionary or

avenging act and waiting for an opportunity to carry out her dead husband's agenda? The collocation of Jennie George as widow of a communist, immediately after the mention of political conflict, also has the effect of positioning her as a potential trouble-maker who might pursue communist-directed industrial strategies which would threaten social cohesion and the Australian economy. Such a signification ignores the material circumstances of her rise to power and plays on associations of mythological and historical women who have avenged their husbands' deaths through cruelty. Whilst the article notes that George was elected from the position of ACTU assistant secretary it does not refer to her own professional credentials and skills until half way through. The use of the term 'anointed' in preference to 'elected' suggests she gained the position through patronage rather than merit and the democratic process.[12] In additional paragraphs her ethnicity and arrival in Australia as a refugee child of three is reported as is her identity as a "former school-teacher who enjoys gardening and going to the movies". The introduction of the domestic, hobbies and the private sphere in the middle of an account of George's professional role provides an example of the application of a "gendered discursive strategy" which operates to minimise or raise doubts about the woman's professional capability in the public sphere (Walsh 1998: 210). Again the incorporation of references to the personal fits the conventions of tabloidisation and its increased emphasis on the personal lives of public figures. Within the article these doubts are compounded by the introduction of the idea that George might be a short-term president "if the ACTU finds itself in trouble with a Coalition Government, then Jennie George will prove merely a transitional president". This comment is not merely an assessment of her skills but is dismissal of her election and serves as a prediction that her tenure in the job may be limited. Most significantly the doubts are consolidated by the eighteenth paragraph where the article poses the classic 'hard' question a gendered frame requires asking of a woman who a achieves a leadership position:

[12] The use of linguistic terms that diminish George's election is common to all three of Ed Southorn's reports. He uses the term 'anointed', in this article and the term 'elevation' in the article 'Union boss "the best"' (28/9/95, p13, Southorn 1995b). In the front-page article 'Tears cross party lines' (28/9/95 p 1, Southorn 1995c) he refers to her 'election' which is a more accurate account of the ACTU process. In the article 'Union boss "the best"' Southorn (1995b) implies that George, herself, used the term 'elevation' by prefacing a direct quote from her speech with his paraphrase of her words inserting the term elevation. "ACTU president-elect Jennie George said yesterday her elevation to the leadership of the union movement 'symbolises the aspirations of women'".

> But the question that has to be asked is this: will George be *tough enough* in the hard world of union politics to steer the ACTU on a safe path and carry with her the ACTU's self-appointed responsibility for guarding the conditions of Australian workers?
>
> (Southorn 1995a, italics added)

As Sherrie Inness observes in her book *Tough Girls*, toughness is considered central to the establishment of authority "and a leader with no authority is not capable of leading, especially in times of great stress" (1999: 26). The article offers an answer to the question of George's toughness from another woman, well known in the field of industrial relations, but one who is strongly opposed to the ACTU and its activities, Judith Sloan, a Professor at the (right-wing) National Institute of Labour Studies. These two women are deeply politically and ideologically opposed but that is not acknowledged in the text which positions Sloan as a disinterested 'expert' commentator. She raises questions about George's ability to deal with the right-wing of the union movement. She predicts that George "will not have an easy time" and "will have her job cut out for her". Despite possible reader presumption of women's mutual support, Southorn's choice of Sloan to comment upon George has a number of effects. The gender of the 'expert' woman commenting on the woman politician works as an editorial tactic to position two women against each other. Sloan's comments emphasise the difficulty of the challenge and constructs as a weakness George's association with the Left, which is traditionally reported as politically limited by its adherence to inflexible ideological positions and idealism. On the one hand, Southorn emphasises the toughness of the job facing George and on the other, diminishes her credentials by pointedly associating her with communism, emotion, and internal patronage. In this way his report produces an impression that George will not be 'tough enough' and that she is in considerable danger of failing to perform well as ACTU leader. Furthermore he implies that any perception of poor performance on her part could risk the acceptance and success of working women in general. This threat is encapsulated in the comment:

> She is taking on one of the highest-profile jobs a woman in Australia has yet held—the first woman to lead the ACTU—and her success or failure will add fuel to the debate over women's working rights and capabilities.
>
> (Southorn 1995a)

This comment also relates to George's direct role as advocate for improvements in the conditions of working women as well as leader of a major Australian institution.

By emphasising the risks and high stakes ahead for George the report restricts the positive implications of George's election. Whilst it superficially reports a breakthrough for all women, the formatting and structuring of voices within the article also emphasises the high risk of failure that could jeopardise not only George's career, or the union movement but the "acceptance and success" of working women in general. George's skills and credentials are acknowledged in paragraphs fourteen and fifteen, as is the support and friendship of cross-factional allies such as Paul Keating, Bill Kelty, John Maitland and Cheryl Kernot. However, this support for George, readers are reminded, was insufficient to win her pre-selection for a safe ALP Senate seat only a few months previously. Through these comments and the suggestion she could be moved out of the presidency into Parliament if trouble arose, the article limits her individual effectiveness, agency and capabilities. It locates her within the murky realm of ALP and union factional power plays as a potential puppet of male factional contests.

This impression is reinforced later in the article where George's significant contribution to the previous federal election campaign is acknowledged and the suggestion is made "she will *be used* in the same manner before the next election" (italics added). The use of the agentless passive voice here further deprives George of agency and minimises her role to that stereotypic one of support personnel (Walsh 1998). Southorn's description of her as "Kelty's 'right-hand woman'" and as presenting the warm "public face of Australia's industrial heartland" leaves Kelty with all the power and positions George in the traditionally feminine public relations or help-mate role. Claire Walsh, in her study of British Labour leadership candidate Margaret Beckett, noted similar tendencies within the media to cast "women in subordinate support roles while men are cast in powerful leadership roles" (Walsh 1998: 208).

The report's strategy of offering limited recognition for George's skill and minimising her agency is compounded by the employment of references to George's private sphere—domestic, personal and/or sexual—relationships to men. These are

emphasised both in the introduction and conclusion to the article effectively framing the political discussion within the confines of the domestic, the private sphere and the myth of heterosexual romance. Whilst in some instances this can be a tactic employed to attract new audiences to political and news reports, in the context of this 'serious' analytical feature the strategy works to diminish George's perceived professional competence and credibility in the context of looming political and industrial conflict.

As discussed above, Jennie George is introduced as the widow of "union leader Paddy George". The report's conclusion emphasises and trivialises her political and collegial relationship with the Prime Minister, Paul Keating, representing it in terms that effectively obliterate its probable basis in mutual respect and substitute connotations of banal and routinised conjugal relations.

> Keating was pleased to be kissed by George when he walked on stage to give his address to the Congress yesterday. He said Howard would not be getting any kisses from her.
> Keating and the ACTU must hope that he will be coming back for more pecks on the cheek.
>
> (Southorn 1995a)

These paragraphs invoke a long-standing Australian political metaphor of the trade union movement and the ALP being partners in a marriage. Frequently, the ACTU is positioned as the reluctant or coy female partner who has to be wooed or bought with political promises and favours by the ALP. In this instance, the warm, mutual admiration between Keating and George, built through common political values, extensive and arduous political campaigning, is trivialised and joked about. Southorn uses Keating's own (unfortunate) joke at Congress that "Howard would not be getting any kisses from her" to extend the low status, private sphere metaphor of George as a wife who pecks her husband on the cheek after a hard day at the office.[13] Southorn's extension of it to a hope of Keating's that he'll be able to return

[13] This joke of Keating's is a classic example of how traditional gender relations are so deeply inscribed that male politicians, who think they are supportive of women's rights and may genuinely admire women colleagues, still manage to confirm and reinforce the position of women as 'other' through the ways they compliment or acknowledge the value of such women. The author was in the hall of the ACTU congress at the time Keating made this remark and noted an audible groan of disappointment amongst nearby women at the remark and its implications, despite the general laughter at the PM's 'gallant' joke.

for more "pecks on the cheek" shifts the attention from the political influence and value that George has as an advocate for working people to a trivial and sterile relationship of domestic mundanity. Traditionally, in such a relationship the female partner is without power and is only able to act as help-mate to her man's political career. The reference to Keating kissing George and the implication of romance is present in some other reports including Hannan (above).[14] However, Southorn gives the greatest space to it and gives it key significance in his article using it as the conclusion and extending the 'joke' with a line of his own.

Another strategy of containment is the lack of reportage of George's direct speech within the article. Within the fifty-seven paragraphs of the text there are only four occasions in which she is quoted directly. The first is her reference to her mother as her "best friend". The second refers to her background, the third is a direct quote from her election acceptance speech where she details her credentials and her intentions to listen and consult with workers on the shop-floor, something the ACTU had been criticised for failing to do. In the context of the article however, these quotes sound defensive rather than expressing agency and power. They combine to increase the effect of doubting her capacity and experience to perform the task ahead.

> 'I'm not a Jennie-come-lately', she says
> 'I don't have a blue-print. I'm on a very steep learning curve. But I will get out and around and make up for my lack of knowledge.'

The fourth direct quote is used in relation to discussion of the ACTU's adoption of a quota of thirty per cent women senior officials, rising to fifty per cent by the year 2000 and the ALP's perceived lack of determination to improve their representation and pre-selection of women. George said, "If we can do it there's no excuse for others not to". Coming in the context of an extended discussion of the likely threat posed to the ACTU by a probable Howard Government, and questions about George's own capacity as 'tough enough' for the job, these references have the

[14] It is also very obvious in the choice of the photograph by the *Age* (28/9/95) for its front-page where Keating and George lean towards each other smiling across the table and the caption reads "Jennie George and the Prime Minister, Mr Keating, enjoy a moment during the ACTU congress in Melbourne".

effect of implying that her appointment is a tokenistic "equality flagship" one (Cockburn 1991: 67).

The combined effect of these strategies of containment and limitation within the article is to 'dequalify' George's leadership capabilities and experiences by emphasising private sphere relationships and gender-based expectations of her performance (Norris 1997a). The suggestions that she is a puppet of more powerful men; that she was only appointed to fill a quota; and that she would be used primarily to perform the traditionally feminine roles of public relations and selling the ACTU to new members also undermine her credentials, her potential contribution and her credibility to the reader. The inclusion of an image that could evoke anxieties related to the power of women might increase readers' desires to find George less powerful and less agentic than generally would be connoted by the frames of 'breakthrough' and 'exceptional' frequently employed in relation to first women leaders.

As was the case in other articles, placement on the page makes other meanings and associations available (Figure 5.6). The headline, 'The arrival of George', sits on the upper left of the features page, it fills about half the page and is located between two stories which have a media focus. On the upper right of the same page is a report on the paucity of Australian drama on commercial television and the potential impact of the commercial television production fund. 'Aussie TV shapes up as drama', by Sandra McLean, has no immediate apparent relevance to the report on Jennie George's election. However, when the whole page is considered, this report and the one on the bottom left hand corner 'You have to laugh', which turns out to be a serious story about British actor Paul Eddington's fight with terminal skin cancer, may suggest certain readings for 'The arrival of George'. The potential, looming conflict between the ACTU, with its newly-elected first female leader, and the likely-to-be-elected Howard Coalition Government might turn out to be a real-life national drama and even a life-and-death struggle for the Australian trade union movement. The headline of the de Bertodano article 'You have to laugh' could also read metonymically to suggest that appointing a woman (or this particular woman) to lead the union movement into these 'uncertain times' is a joke (de Bertodano

Figure 5.6 Courier Mail, 28/9/95, p. 13.

THE ARRIVAL OF GEORGE



JENNIE GEORGE ... a hard job in uncertain times.



ED SOUTHORN
Industrial Reporter
in Melbourne

THE Australian Council of Trade Unions is at a crucial turning point in its history.

Union membership is declining while the workforce expands.

It's a point not lost on the nation's trade union bosses. On the first day of its biennial congress in Melbourne yesterday the ACTU distributed piles of documents explaining just that — that union membership needs to be revitalised and new members signed up, and quickly.

For despite all the brave talk there are clouds on the industrial horizon, with opinion polls pointing to the real possibility of a federal coalition government next year, headed by a leader with little time for unions. A leader and a government not about to enter into an Accord with the ACTU on any wage restraint pacts.

And that, in anyone's language, spells potential for conflict.

Enter Jennie George, widow of the communist New South Wales union leader Paddy George, who died 16 years ago.

An ACTU assistant secretary, George yesterday was anointed by the congress — with much emotion and joyful tears, flowers, balloons and streamers — as ACTU president-elect, to take over from Martin Ferguson, who is headed for Federal Parliament at the next federal election.

George came to Australia at the age of three from an Italian refugee camp at the end of World War II.

Her parents were Russian. Her mother Natasha, whom she calls her "best friend", was on stage at the congress yesterday.

Natasha Feodosiu lives on the 16th floor of a Redfern housing commission block in inner Sydney.

But put aside all that emotion and flowers and balloons at an ACTU congress, and the harsh reality is that Jennie George has a tough job ahead of her.

She is taking on one of the highest-profile jobs a woman in Australia has yet held — the first woman to lead the ACTU — and her success or failure will add fuel to the debate over women's working rights and capabilities.

She has strong career credentials in the union movement, and her presence will boost female membership and interest among younger workers.

She has already had success running the ACTU family leave test case in the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, and is now pushing together a similar case on equal pay for women on over-award benefits.

She is also a "good mate" of Prime Minister Paul Keating, and a friend of Australian Democrats leader Cheryl Kernot.

Kernot yesterday suggested that the minor parties and Labor in any Opposition in the Senate would block the coalition's industrial relations reforms.

BUT the question that has to be asked is this: will George be tough enough in the hard world of union politics to steer the ACTU on a safe path, and carry with her the ACTU's self-appointed responsibility for guarding the conditions of Australia's workers?

National Institute of Labor Studies director Judith Sloan says George will not have an easy time.

"She is very much aligned with the Left and the public sector, but the male-dominated Right is not much interested in maternity leave," Sloan said.

"She gets on well with Bill Kelty, the ACTU secretary. That will be a big help.

"They may end up being a good act. But she will have her job cut out for her."

George refers to herself as a "working-class girl who did well at school" and managed to find a job as a teacher.

But she says she has earned her stripes after 22 years working as a paid union official.

"I'm not a Jennie-come-lately," she says.

"I don't have a blueprint. I'm on a very steep learning curve. But I will get out and around and make up for my lack of knowledge."

Already, says coal miners' boss John Maitland, she has impressed workers by turning up at coal mines.

If Maitland approves of her — and the betting is that he does — then it's a safe wager that she has the calibre to handle the job.

But there are some in the union movement who believe that if the ACTU finds itself in trouble with a coalition government, then Jennie George will prove merely a transitional president.

In such a scenario, she could easily be found a safe seat in Parliament.

She will fill the remaining two years of Ferguson's term, then says she will nominate for the presidency for a full six-year term in 1997.

It is ironic that George could win only the precarious third spot on the Victorian ALP Senate ticket early this year, leaving her little choice but to withdraw.

Yesterday in her speech to the ACTU Congress she referred to this, in the context of the debate about the ALP's quota target for women in Parliament.

The ACTU this week will endorse 30 percent of women in its senior official positions, on the way to 50 percent by 2000.

"If we can do it there's no excuse for others not to," she said.

Under a re-elected Keating Government George would be able to push the ACTU's drive on equal pay and a massive recruitment campaign launched at this congress.

On the other hand, a coalition government would have to find a way of preventing a wages breakout in the absence of an Accord.

And that is the challenge for both the coalition under Howard and George: unions might well retaliate against any industrial relations reforms unless the ACTU and the coalition can build a relationship.

There is bad blood between Kelty and Howard, going back to a rejection by Howard of an offer from Kelty in 1983 for what would have become the first Accord.

Put aside all that emotion and flowers and balloons at an ACTU congress, and the harsh reality is that Jennie George has a tough job ahead of her

Howard's poor relationship with Kelty may mean that the coalition leader will look to another union leader to broker a new relationship.

Union insiders are wondering if that person would be George; although yesterday she wasted little time attacking Howard's industrial relations policies.

As president, she will become Kelty's "right-hand woman", while he continues to wield the real power behind the scenes, and shun the role as spokesman.

In the last federal election, George toured the country giving speeches to union delegates, galvanising support for Keating on the ground, as well as [illegible].

She won over much of the female vote — and in so doing won much credibility within the Labor Party. There is no doubt she will be used in the same manner before the next election.

She handles television well, far better than Ferguson, and presents a warmer image.

As ACTU president, she will chair meetings, handle negotiations during major disputes, and be the public face of Australia's industrial heartland.

Intelligent, pragmatic and articulate, she is well-equipped for that role. Even the coalition would agree with that.

But within the shifting factions of the labour movement, she does not have her own personal power base.

She is from the Left, but not driven by ideology, and importantly, works much better with Kelty than did Ferguson.

The coalition is expected to try to undermine what remains of Australia's union power. But no one is exactly sure how this could be done.

Recent promises to retain minimum standards of employment have been met with scepticism by most commentators.

One move expected from a coalition government would be an attack on the guarantee that unions registered in certain industries cover the rights of those workers.

Removing the rule would allow workers to establish their own small enterprise bargaining, something which would not please the ACTU. Such a move would also pit unions against one another in the struggle for recruitment.

But for now all that is for the future, and as Kelty and Keating indicated yesterday, they are betting on Howard going down at the polls.

Both Keating and Kelty believe that with time Howard will fall in the manner of previous coalition leaders John Hewson and Alexander Downer, unable to stave off the Keating onslaught in Parliament and on the hustings.

Keating was pleased to be kissed by George when he walked on stage to give his address to the congress yesterday. He said Howard would not be getting any kisses from her.

Keating and the ACTU must hope that he will be coming back for pecks on the cheek.

Aussie TV shapes up as drama



SANDRA McLEAN

IT should be the best of times for Australian drama on television.

The commercial networks are in profit — even underdog Network Ten has managed to double its earnings in the past year — and pay TV has created a sense of boundless opportunity for the country's independent production industry.

So why, in July, did the Federal Government set aside $60 million as a gift to commercial networks to — in the words of Minister for Communications and the Arts Michael Lee — "encourage the creation of genuinely innovative and high-quality television programmes"? The answer is simple: channel-surf on a week night and it is apparent that Australian drama and documentary is sorely under-represented as free-to-air commercial television.

Channel 9, the No 1 network, and, therefore, the programming style-setter, led the charge away from drama and into light entertainment television, spending up big on *Don't Forget Your Toothbrush*, *R.F.D.*, *Weddings and Getaway*.

These shows are popular, but audiences don't have much of a choice these days.

Enter Michael Lee with his commercial television production fund designed, he hopes, to put an end to crass TV.

Now the $60 million question is: who will decide how to spend government money improving the product of private enterprise?

Basically, it will be up to the seven people who sit on the panel that manages the fund. At the head of this panel is Sue Milliken, chairwoman of the Australian Film Commission. A respected producer with more than 10 years' experience in film and television production, Milliken said she wanted the fund to inject new life into television drama.

The independent panel consists of producer Steve Vizard, Vicki Jones (former programmer with Channel 9), writer Alison Nisselle, Ted Thomas (former head of Channel 7), actor Sigrid Thornton and Ian Bradley, formerly of Grundys production house.

Over three years, $27 million will be available to the commercial networks ($9 million each); $27 million is unallocated and will be available to independent producers; $6 million will be available to children's drama.

Dividing up the money is the easy part; the hard part is deciding where to spend the money.

Each submission must get the green light from the panel — this includes submissions from the commercial networks.

"The submission has to agree with the spirit of the fund," Milliken said. "And that spirit is to develop quality drama or documentary. If that is the case, then we give the network a green light and they can spend the money how they want, on production or writers or whatever.

"The fund is a flexible arrangement. If they want to use the money as they can be a partner with an independent producer, they can."

Not a cent of the $27 million for independent producers will be spent unless their project comes with a guarantee of network support.

This could prove problematic. After all, a network will not agree to a project unless it believes the programme will attract viewers, which opens up the question of artistic censorship.

Milliken rejects this notion on the ground that the fund has to be realistic.

"I don't think this will filter out many projects," she said. "There really is little point funding programmes the networks won't screen. The fund is designed for the networks to include Australian-made drama in their schedules and this is the most sensible way to go about it. It means we are all on the same side."

When the fund was announced, there wasn't exactly a loud "thank you" from the commercial networks. In fact, they were all oddly quiet about the fact the Government was giving them money to provide what is rightfully expected — quality television.

The Nine Network's head of drama, Kris Noble, said the fund is a way to make more arthouse-style drama. He has already commissioned a series called *Twisted Tales*, created by actor Bryan Brown, on the strength of the fund.

Using public money to pay commercial stations to make good television is not the only irony here. The ABC is at the forefront of Australian television drama and, next week, it launches a new drama series, *Bordertown*, yet it will not benefit from the fund.

This snub has angered Penny Chapman, the new head of television at the ABC.

"I think it is incredibly unfair, but I don't think it was an unfairness brought about by a particular wish to do the ABC in the eye. I think a confluence of circumstances has meant that the commercial networks are in a very fortunate situation.

"I think both we in the ABC and people in the independent sector have to be aware what that will mean for all of us — the difficulties that will continue to be placed on us to make high quality productions for Australian audiences. The fact is we have just got to work harder."

'You have to laugh'

British actor Paul Eddington, the star of such television hits as *Yes Minister* and *The Good Life*, is fighting a life-threatening disease with his characteristic aplomb. Helena de Bertodano reports from London



PAUL Eddington ... one of the best-known faces on TV is now almost unrecognisable

IT is no accident that the first two words of Paul Eddington's autobiography are "My wife".

If he really were prime minister, as his most successful acting role would have us believe, Tricia Eddington would be, in the nicest way possible, the power behind the throne.

Now that he is severely ill with the skin cancer, mycosis fungoides, and every day is potentially a struggle, it is she who keeps the show on the road and helps him confront his illness with courage and good humour.

Playing back the tape of our conversation, I was struck by how much laughter dominated it.

The couple do not ignore his condition — far from it. But they talk about it to such a matter-of-fact way that it is not the burden it might be. They have, after all, lived with it for more than 20 years, and although the cancerous lesions have spread slowly across his body, his face was untouched until recently.

Eddington explains that it is not life-threatening but can develop into a condition which is.

"Unfortunately, once it's done its dirty work on the surface, it migrates inside," he said. "They can't stop it, but they're hoping to delay it long enough for me to die of something else. You have to laugh ..."

He thinks the condition was triggered by deep X-rays he had in his early 30s for an arthritic condition.

When the marks spread to his face a couple of years ago, he was subjected to a cruel media stalking campaign and endless speculation, culminating in his decision to "come out".

"I was very reluctant to let people know. Apart from the fact that I did not want the sympathy vote, I just thought it was no one's business but my own. I was mistaken there, because it has very serious professional implications."

Eddington, 68, still works when he feels up to it, mostly in radio but also the occasional film. He half-sits, half-lies on a sort of elongated armchair, but his tall, thin frame is clothed as impeccably as ever and his voice still has the distinctive resonance of Jim Hacker, the Minister of the Department of Administrative Affairs of Yes Minister fame.

Their flat is in a converted London Docklands warehouse overlooking the Thames in which hangs a portrait of Eddington, looking as he did in *The Good Life*, the series that injected him into the British consciousness.

He had laboured for 25 years as an actor, mostly in repertory, achieving little recognition until the late 1960s. *The Good Life*, in which he played Jerry, the put-upon commuter husband of the impossible Margot, was the turning point. The only downside was that he became defined almost exclusively as a comic actor, whereas he had always been renowned for a remarkable range.

"I did realise early on that if I got labelled for anything it would be for comedy because there wasn't nearly such competition in that department; people don't find it so easy to do," he said.

Or, as he says in his just-published autobiography, *So Far So Good*: "Comedy above all things requires one to dare ... usually to dare to pause."

The need to pause is central not only to his talent as a comic actor but also to his life. He is a Quaker and finds the meetings, which are often conducted in almost total silence, a great solace.

He does not like to talk about it too much. He was initially brought up a Catholic, but when he was 10 his mother, angered by the Pope's support of Franco, decided to send her son to a Quaker school. Here he found a degree of stability after a period of domestic upheaval.

"My childhood was quite awful when I look back on it. There were lots of tensions. My parents were in conflict, my father gambled and eventually they parted. At the time I closed my ears and my eyes to it in the way that children do."

A tendency to edit out unpleasantness seems to have spilled over into his adult life. Describing a disagreement during the production of a play, he says: "The atmosphere could have been cut with a knife, but I am notoriously insensitive to such things."

He became so identified with the role of Jim Hacker that he was given the red-carpet treatment wherever he went. "I threw a great spanner of uncertainty into the works. People abroad tended to play safe and treat me as a minister, just in case. Even here, I remember walking through the House of Lords library one day and an elderly peer actually staggered when he saw me, he probably thought he'd gone mad."

Now, once again, he has become almost unrecognisable. "In a way, it's a relief," says his wife. "Only his voice makes people realise who he is. If we're in a restaurant and he speaks, people have another look and sometimes you see the shock as they turn away. Fortunately, he doesn't see it, but I do."

Since his disease became known, he has received mail from all over the world with suggestions for cures. He took particular notice of a man who had suffered a similar condition and swore by powdered shark.

The man sent him 600 shark capsules and for the past six weeks, Eddington has been taking them.

He says they do not seem to be doing much good, and one gets the impression that he continues to take them simply out of politeness.

At one point he says he does not mind that his health is failing: "In the old days, I mean hundreds of years ago, people wanted to be alerted in very good time about their coming demise so that they could put their things in order. I'm conscious of what is happening and that's okay."

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1995). The photo of Eddington shows a disfigured face with serious eyes in direct gaze. His gaze compels the reader's attention and sends it up the page to the illustration of Jennie George. She is the object to be gazed upon. The remaining corner of the page is taken up with an advertisement for a caravan and camping sale. Caravanning and camping bring to mind holidays, retirement, long service leave (especially for working and middle-class families), change and transience. Ironically, these traditional workers' entitlements and pleasures are what is threatened under the Liberal Party's proposed industrial relations policies. All three boxes frame the Jennie George story in the context of entertainment and recreational pastimes. This formatting of the entire page could read as diminishing her status and her influence as a serious political actor and leader of an important political organisation. The caricature of her as a phallic woman could work to destabilise this containment as it suggests she is an alarmingly powerful figure.

The overall impact of the report exemplifies the practices of containment and gatekeeping of the press. It modifies the usually positive slant on 'first women' (Norris 1997a, 1997b) by emphasising the scale of the challenge, George's 'outsider' status, her personal relationships with men, and her link to communism. It diminishes her perceived capacity to act successfully as an 'agent of change' to resolve the challenge. Whilst it acknowledges her election as a 'breakthrough' for all women, it could be read as implying that she is likely to fail and consequently likely to damage the case for "women's working rights and capabilities" (Southorn 1995a). In the context of the whole page, the report sets the scene for a conflict in which the Australian union movement might be destroyed and in which George's presidency could end prematurely. It privileges the news values of conflict over those of unusualness that are more frequently associated with reports of 'first women' leaders. It also prepares the ground for subsequent criticisms of George's performance. The emphasis on George's personal relationships with men re-establishes a frequently criticised, traditional approach to the reporting of women in public life whilst at the same time conforming to some of the characteristics of tabloidisation. Through the operations of inter-textuality this could have had the effect of reviving this pattern of reporting on the achievements and actions of contemporary women political actors.

The primary conflict within the report is that between the trade union movement and an incoming conservative Coalition Government. However, the report manages to include several other well-established oppositions to maintain reader interest. These include the potential conflicts between unions over issues of union coverage; left versus right-wing factions of the ALP and unions; democracy versus communism; personal versus collective interests; Jennie George versus unions; patronage versus merit; women versus men; wife versus husband; success versus failure; and tough versus weak. These oppositions evoke a number of discursive fields that contextualise the report within well-established codes. The discursive fields include nationalism, politics, domestic life, work, romance and gender. Within these discursive fields several of the binaries associate together to form chains of meanings that reassert the myths about women being unfit for leadership.

Variation on the First Woman Frame: New ACTU President is Outsider and Agent of Change—By the Way, She is also a Woman.

The most distinctive exception to the dominance of first woman news frame of reporting is an article by Mark Davis published in the *Financial Review* (Figure 5.7). This story discusses George's achievement, but is not limited to the traditional approaches to reporting on first women leaders or the boundaries of the gendered news frame. As is often the case with *Financial Review* reportage, unusual illustrations draw reader's attention to news items and work at creating meaning in complex and sophisticated ways. The photograph accompanying the article depicts George as a small figure in the centre of the frame dwarfed by a huge sheaf of flowers. The photo is shot from well below the stage and the extreme upward angle and the cropping of the photo make George appear even smaller. Images shot from below are often used in business and trade journals to signify the stature and importance of business directors and executives (Thwaites et al 1994 and see discussion above of pedestal effect in relation to Figure 5.3). In such images the figure usually dominates the frame and gazes out directly or down upon the reader in a way which emphasises their power and authority. In this instance, however, George is a small part of the image and she is photographed with her head canted significantly to the left and her gaze is directed strongly upwards and outwards to

Figure 5.7 Davis (1995), 'Dawn of the age of George the first', Financial Review, 28/9/95, p.5, detail.

Dawn of the reign of George the first

By MARK DAVIS

JENNIE George, the daughter of Russian emigres who yesterday rose to the top of Australia's union movement, has a ready-made way of conducting a reality check whenever she feels she is losing touch with her working class roots.

She simply visits her mother.

The ACTU president-elect's mother, Natalie Feodosiu, still lives in the Housing Commission flats in inner Sydney where Ms George and her family settled after arriving in Australia as displaced persons in the post-War migration boom.

"When I was growing up in the the high-rise Housing Commission flats in Surry Hills in Sydney I never dreamed I would be a union officer, let alone one day reach the pinnacle," Ms George told the 1995 ACTU Congress yesterday.

It would be an understatement to say the Congress carried by acclamation a resolution endorsing Ms George, a former school teacher and now ACTU assistant secretary, as the peak union council's next president.

Ms George's elevation to the ACTU presidency represents both a break with the past, reflecting fundamental changes in the workforce, and a reaffirmation of the union movement's roots.

The heartland of Australian unionism for decades has been the blue-collar workforce in the private sector, smokestack industries of manufacturing, construction, transport and mining. As a woman from a white-collar, public sector, service industry background in teaching unionism, Ms George breaks the mould of the male-dominated, Anglo-Celtic ranks of union officials thrown up over the decades from these traditional areas.



BLOSSOMING CAREER: Ms George at the ACTU congress yesterday *Picture: DONNA TODD*

But with employment in these sectors of the economy declining, the future for unions lies in representing the workers in the new service industries.

Ms George said yesterday one of the main challenges she would be confronting as ACTU president would be that of recruiting these non-unionised workers, often women, young people and migrants.

But at the same time she reaffirmed the relevance of the union movement's history, culture and values and its role as an independent representative of working people and vowed to spend plenty of time visiting workplaces and talking to those people.

"To be a good spokesperson for the union movement I have to understand how people are feeling, what they are living through, what their aspirations are, what their expectations of the union movement are," she said.

the right perhaps in search of inspiration or strength to help her in the huge task ahead. The pose is significantly more exaggerated than that seen previously in Figure 5.3 and here works, together with the size of the bouquet of flowers in her arms, to make her appear smaller still. This is not an image suggestive of power, control or leadership, instead she could appear to be overwhelmed by the context and the task ahead. The flowers, the balloon floating above them and George's position above the photographer might be construed as success or achievement and they may also imply success won through luck, or success in a field disassociated with any institutional or political power. In the background of the photo some of the 'Sun King' mural from the rear wall of Melbourne University's Wilson Hall is visible. Whilst no details are clearly distinguishable it could be interpreted as some of the motifs and ornate scroll-work from a traditional union banner in which case George might also be interpreted as being dwarfed by, or encompassed by the iconography of traditional unionism. This could be read both positively and negatively depending on how a reader regards such traditions, whether one thinks that change is necessary and how difficult such change might be for George to achieve. The caption to the photograph reads "Blossoming career: Ms George at the ACTU congress yesterday". This represents the event in terms of an individual's career achievement; feminising and thus trivialising it through the emphasis on the feminine floral tribute as the marker of success. Despite the narrative content of the report having broken away from reporting traditions which focus on the *gender* of women rather than their capacities and achievements the choice of headline, the photo and caption reintroduce femininity as a structuring device in shaping the meaning of the event. This is not unusual. The conventions and practices of news and picture editors, and operations of news values and frames, frequently lead to the choice of images and headlines which introduce and privilege women's gender as a dominant theme or frame in establishing meaning of reports.[15]

The headline, 'Dawn of the reign of George the first' indicates, for those readers who know anything of the background to the story, that *Jennie* George is the first

[15] See Allan (1999); Bignell (2002); Fowler (1991); Schaffer (1998).

woman president of the ACTU.[16] However, despite the headline, which suggests a male monarch, George the first, and utilises a masculinised take on Jennie George's name, the text of the article does not privilege the gendered frame over others.[17] The photograph contradicts the masculinised slant in the headline in its subject, her pose and the camera angle. These elements produce an ambivalent context for the report. It could equally well be interpreted as the familiar 'dawn of a new age' frame where new leadership enables a new beginning and, in this case, a new deal for women. Alternatively, it could be read as George: the first non-English-speaking background ACTU president, a theme which Davis emphasises in the body of his report. However, George's name, with its Anglo-Saxon overtones together with the connotations of British monarchy introduced by the term 'reign' makes such a reading a less obvious one. In the headline the leader is established as an agent of change through the term 'Dawn' and its attendant hopes for revival and a new beginning. The 'reign of George the first' suggests the British monarchy and a symbolic rather than an active political power.

The narrative strategies within the *Financial Review* report place more emphasis on Jennie George's immigrant and refugee background than on her status as first woman leader. Whilst the theme of breakthrough is employed, her breakthrough is reported as one of note for its *multiple* differences. The report positions George both as an 'outsider' and as an 'agent of change' but not for reasons of her gender alone. It begins by noting that George is the "daughter of Russian émigrés", a fact which emphasises her 'outsider' status to the mainstream networks of political power and

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[16] Some readers might also associate 'Dawn' with the early Australian's women's paper *Dawn: A Journal for Australian Women,* edited by Louisa Lawson, that campaigned for women's suffrage. It was published from1888 to 1905.

[17] The original King George the first of England was the Hanoverian 'Elector' George who ruled from 1714-1727. He succeeded to the English monarchy after Queen Anne through the 1701 Act of Settlement and because James II's son (the 'Old Pretender') refused to become a protestant. Reports suggested King George was not widely liked and he, himself, preferred northern Germany to Britain (Fraser 1975). Some readers might see a similarity between his 'outsider' status and that of Jennie George however, the circumstances of King George the First's inheritance of the British throne are insufficiently widely known in contemporary Australian society for this to be a readily available connotation.

influence in Australian politics generally and the union movement in particular.[18] It also notes that her origins are working-class, so that although her ethnicity explicitly, and her gender implicitly, position her as an 'outsider' she is still positioned as *belonging* within a most important context, that of class. George's continuing connection to these origins is guaranteed through the person (and presence on stage) of George's mother whom George describes in her acceptance speech as her "best friend". The reader learns that George is actively connected to the daily realities and struggles of working-class people and pensioners and that she is a good daughter. Being a 'good daughter' can be considered important in both class and gender terms. It indicates she remains faithful to her origins and to those who have helped her. Family loyalty is traditionally both a characteristic of working-class life and of the Australian migrant experience. Female family members in particular are expected to care for their extended families. However, 'career women' are frequently represented as (and criticised for) being lacking in family loyalty or failing to make time to care for family members. The reader could also be reassured through this connection that Australia is a land of opportunity where immigrants and outsiders can "reach the pinnacle" through merit, even if they are also women. Alternatively, as van Zoonen argues (1998a, 2000), the reference to family-ties could limit the impression of George's autonomy and agency. Positioning women in relation to marital and family status has been criticised as working to diminish their independent agency. However, in the context of a 'feminist' celebration, paying tribute to one's mother can be seen as an appropriate and important acknowledgement of the undervalued contributions of women, especially mothers. The emphasis on George's relationship to her mother could be interpreted variously by different audience segments. In Davis's report

[18] Russian refugees to Australia were usually 'white Russians' or Russian Jews who wished to escape the communist regime. Jewish immigrants to Australia have not generally played an important role in the development of Australian unionism, unlike in the USA where they have been prominent in both the labour movement and in the Communist Party. The left wing of the Australian trade union movement has had a long association with the Australian Communist Party and for many years several unions were closely aligned with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Australian trade union delegations visited Moscow on education, cultural and solidarity visits from the earliest days of the revolution through until the fall of the Berlin Wall. There have been historically significant and bitter struggles within both the union movement and the Australian Labor Party over the role and influence of communists on labour policies and tactics. Despite these historical links, George's ethnic origins are particularly unusual within the Australian labour movement. An equally unusual aspect of her personal history, particularly given her ethnic origins, is George's own formative connection to the Communist Party of Australia, a fact to which the *Financial Review* does not refer, but many other reports do emphasise.

personal details are incorporated into the report of the election of a public figure however, unlike Southorn's use of personal history it adds to the appeal of George as a migrant and a success, deepening the complexity of the portrait of her rather than reducing it to banal stereotypes.

In a key paragraph Davis notes "Ms George's elevation to the ACTU presidency represents *both* a break with the past, reflecting the fundamental changes in the workforce, *and* a reaffirmation of the union movement's roots" (Davis 1995 italics added). George is described as an outsider to the blue-collar, male, Anglo-Celtic, private sector experiences of most union leaders. Davis argues these experiences and qualities are characteristic of the "heartland of Australian unionism". George "breaks the mould" of union officials through her gender, her public-sector background, her ethnicity and her work in the service sector. Here Davis again refuses the simple application of the gendered frame by reporting on the fact that she is a woman as one of *several* significant factors constituting difference together with occupation, ethnicity and refugee status. George not only personifies change but also has, he suggests, permanently altered the patterns and qualifications of leadership. Despite noting her difference from traditional leadership patterns and symbols, Davis represents George as belonging to, being symbolic of, and reaffirming trade union "history, culture and values and its role as an independent representative of working people". Davis combines direct quotes with an incorporation of George's views and comments into his own reporting of the challenges facing herself and the union movement. This produces an effect of congruence between his views and hers that suggests approval or endorsement.

The article concludes with a quote from George which describes her commitment to visiting workplaces and talking to workers. She says she has to "understand how people are feeling" in order to be "a good spokesperson for the union movement". Such an approach foregrounds feminine qualities of empathy, communication and consultation. These are often regarded as aspects of a feminine style of leadership. These characteristics are increasingly being cited in contemporary theories of management and leadership as advantageous in the post-Fordist work

environment.[19] Many feminist commentators have argued that overturning traditionally masculine models of unionism and leadership is integral to consideration of how the ACTU can better represent union members and recruit non-unionised workers.[20] The report does not comment specifically on these issues but the inclusion of this quote as the final paragraph of the article gives it significant status and allows George, herself, to establish indicators for success as a leader through which her performance might later be judged.

Davis's report, 'Dawn of the reign of George the first' is printed on page five of the *Financial Review* (Figure 5.8). It was placed in the middle of the page, beneath a report of the Prime Minister's address to the ACTU Congress in which he promised to make industrial relations a key election issue. This report was headlined 'PM flexes industrial muscle'. Adjacent to these two reports was another headlined 'Face put on "ripped-off" workers'. It reported a parliamentary speech by Industrial Relations Minister Laurie Brereton in which he provided examples of workers who would be disadvantaged or 'ripped-off' by Coalition industrial relations policies should the Liberals win the next election. These two reports adjoin the report of Jennie George's election and her photo is placed in the centre of the page surrounded by these reports. This layout clearly links her election as ACTU president to the next federal election and to the ALP's campaign to retain Government. The *Financial Review*, like the *Australian* and the *Courier Mail*, situated George's election within the paradigm of the federal election, however, it treats her more seriously within this context. The bottom of third of the page is filled by two advertisements for auctions of Sydney real estate. These ads invoke a unions versus business binary opposition akin to that discussed earlier in relation to the second article 'It's my party and I'll sing if I want to' but is directed at a more affluent and financially knowledgeable audience. They might work to remind readers of the prosperity and stability of the existing financial climate which could be placed at risk in the event of a period of industrial unrest. Such a meaning might raise questions in *Financial Review* readers minds about the kind of leader Jennie

[19] See for example Rosener (1990); Sinclair (1998) and also discussion of the notion of 'feminine leadership' in Wajcman (1998).

[20] See, for example, Elton (1997); Franzway (1997, 2001); Pocock (1997); Shute (1994); Sudano (1997).

Figure 5.8 Financial Review, 28/9/95, p.5.

PM flexes industrial muscle

THE Prime Minister, Mr Keating, vowed yesterday to fight the next election squarely on industrial relations, saying that only Labor could deliver a high-productivity wages system for business, combined with protection for workers without bargaining power.

Addressing the ACTU's biennial congress, he said the partnership between political and industrial Labor would continue to be one of the Government's strongest assets, not only in the electorate at large but also among business.

He said the Coalition could never achieve such a co-operative approach, because it did not see unionists as fellow Australians "but rather as some sort of class enemy".

By MARK DAVIS

"They are always about the same thing, basically cutting people's wages," he said. "What do (they) want – do (they) want the profit share beyond any historic level? Aren't the executives already getting enough out of it?

"What do you want to cut the wages of working people for other than spite and ideological envy?"

He said the business community knew industrial disputation was at record lows and that there was now flexibility in the workplace as a result of the Accord between the Government and the unions.

"They know they are able to drag productivity out of the workplace and sensibly share it between profits and wages," he said. "It's been on for too long now, and it's worked and people have faith in it, not just us but the employers.

"I'm finding as I go around that the endorsements that one would normally expect to see for the Liberal Party are not just there any more."

Mr Keating said the essence of the Accord with the unions had always been a trade-off in which industrially strong workers accepted restraint as the quid pro quo for industrial relations policies to protect the weak, and economic strategies to promote high growth.

"It has always been an internal trade-off for the union movement restraining the top-end power of the ACTU constituency to deliver equity and fairness to the people at the bottom and to give those people employment so we can run a fast-growth economy."

Mr Keating said that with an industrial relations system that combined enterprise productivity bargaining with a safety net for workers not able to negotiate, "we probably have the nearest thing to a permanent wages system that we've had in the 12 years of the Accord."

"We've come through all those wages systems. We've now got low inflation (and) it is much easier to run a wages system on low inflation."

Face put on 'ripped-off' workers

AUSTRALIANS will be hearing a lot more about workers such as teenage fast-food worker "Ryan" and Sydney tradesman "Theo" in the lead-up to the next federal election.

The Minister for Industrial Relations, Mr Brereton, yesterday gave a snapshot of the forthcoming election campaign when he put faces to the workers he said would have their wages ripped from them by a Coalition government.

In Parliament, Mr Brereton made several references to the "Labor way, the award way", when comparing the major parties' stance on wages and conditions.

"I tell you what, I have got a cart full of examples like Ryan and, between now and the election, we'll be bringing them out every day because people in Australia need to know," Mr Brereton said.

He said Ryan, a 19-year-old general hand, signed a West Australian workplace agreement because he was told "sign here or no job".

Ryan now received an hourly rate of $7.16 – with no penalties for weekend work.

"Under the appropriate award he was entitled to $10.27," Mr Brereton said. "That's $3.11 an hour more ripped away by [West Australian Labour Relations Minister] Graham Kierath [and] the system you say you are so proud of," Mr Brereton told the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Howard.

Theo, a former bricklayer and painter who became a tradesman after his job was restructured, was entitled to a total package of $678.55 per week (including some weekend overtime). The "Labor way" meant Theo was also entitled to an annual leave loading of 17.5 per cent, various allowances and 10 days paid sick leave a year.

"Applying the Coalition's industrial relations policy, the Department of Industrial Relations says the builder stands to lose $141.35 per week," Mr Brereton said.

"That is 20 per cent of his weekly income made up of $51.15 in allowances and $90.20 in overtime. The $333 annual leave loading would also go.

"That's what the Opposition would do to someone in that industry."

□ AAP

Dawn of the reign of George the first

By MARK DAVIS

JENNIE George, the daughter of Russian emigres who yesterday rose to the top of Australia's union movement, has a ready-made way of conducting a reality check whenever she feels she is losing touch with her working class roots.

She simply visits her mother.

The ACTU president-elect's mother, Natalie Feodosiu, still lives in the Housing Commission flats in inner Sydney where Ms George and her family settled after arriving in Australia as displaced persons in the post-War migration boom.

"When I was growing up in the the high-rise Housing Commission flats in Surry Hills in Sydney I never dreamed I would be a union officer, let alone one day reach the pinnacle," Ms George told the 1995 ACTU Congress yesterday.

It would be an understatement to say the Congress carried by acclamation a resolution endorsing Ms George, a former school teacher and now ACTU assistant secretary, as the peak union council's next president.

Ms George's elevation to the ACTU presidency represents both a break with the past, reflecting fundamental changes in the workforce, and a reaffirmation of the union movement's roots.

The heartland of Australian unionism for decades has been the blue-collar workforce in the private sector, smokestack industries of manufacturing, construction, transport and mining. As a woman from a white-collar, public sector, service industry background in teaching unionism, Ms George breaks the mould of the male-dominated, Anglo-Celtic ranks of union officials thrown up over the decades from these traditional areas.

But with employment in these sectors of the economy declining, the future for unions lies in representing the workers in the new service industries.



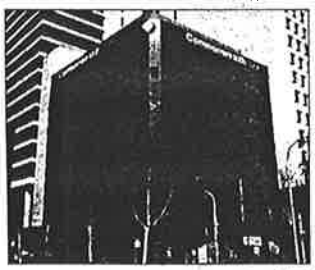
BLOSSOMING CAREER: Ms George at the ACTU congress yesterday. Picture: DONNA TODD

Ms George said yesterday one of the main challenges she would be confronting as ACTU president would be that of recruiting these non-unionised workers, often women, young people and migrants.

But at the same time she reaffirmed the relevance of the union movement's history, culture and values and its role as an independent representative of working people and vowed to spend plenty of time visiting workplaces and talking to those people.

"To be a good spokesperson for the union movement I have to understand how people are feeling, what they are living through, what their aspirations are, what their expectations of the union movement are," she said.

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George would be, would she favour militant action or a consensus style of leadership? How would she handle the challenges ahead and specifically would she be 'tough enough' to restrain extreme union tactics that might damage business profits? Although the question of toughness is not directly raised in Davis's article it is raised in others and the page as a whole works to raise the issue of an uncertain and probably conflict-ridden future should the ALP lose government. The union movement is positioned as a key player in both the election campaign and the aftermath of the election. The adjacent headline references to "industrial muscle" and "ripped-off workers" remind readers of the kinds of responses unions make when workers are disadvantaged or unfairly treated. Jennie George's "reign" is positioned within this context of defence of workers' rights, electoral contest and potential confrontation. These references increase the implied threat of conflict, particularly between government and unions, business and unions and the ALP and Liberal-National Coalition that is discussed within the other two reports on the page. This prediction of conflict increases the relevance of George's election to the ordinary (presumed to be non-unionist) reader. These two elements extend the newsworthiness and political impact of George's election from being mainly of interest through its unusualness, to also fitting the news values of conflict and relevance (Allan 1999). They place it also within the paradigm of women and leadership and that of national politics.

Davis's report situates George's achievement within a complex and intersecting context of gender, ethnicity and class factors. Davis produces a sophisticated and sensitive account of a change in union leadership that is significant for many reasons. It ignores the question, so relished by many other reporters, of whether George would be 'tough enough' for the task. It avoids the usual comments on George's appearance, marital status, dress and personal characteristics. However, it does refer to her personal life through her relationship to her mother and her refugee background. These references work to guarantee her 'battler' status more than marking her femininity. This report provides a useful example of news reporting which refers to gender as *one* aspect of the story among many, and without applying a gendered frame to the entire report. In some ways it represents a kind of 'business

as usual' approach to a potentially gendered event.[21] Despite being accompanied by a photograph and headline that could read as diminishing George's status, authority and as implying doubts about her 'toughness', the narrative of the report provides a respectful and perceptive account of her election. It seems feasible that in the context of the *Financial Review* (which assumes a high level of literacy from its readers, unlike tabloid paper which rely heavily on photos and headlines to convey information) the strength of the narrative influences the meaning made by readers as strongly as the ambivalence in the headline or the connotations of weakness in the photograph. The placement of the report on the page links George's election as ACTU leader to national politics and economic stability and prosperity. Although the elements of potential conflict are introduced through intertextual relations, because George is represented as a competent leader the potential interpretation of her election as increasing militancy and instability—seen in reports such as Southorn's (1995a) and Ackerman's (1995a)—is not privileged. This report then expands the range of available meanings readers could make of George's elections without trying to limit it to one of the three commonly employed frames for representing women leaders.

Contradictory Interpretations—Celebration and Containment Strategies Employed Within News Reports

Many of the reports of Jennie George's election combined contradictory significations of first woman president and reporting strategies that worked to contain the extent of the achievement. These narrative strategies of containment might have had the effect of limiting reader identification with and support for the individual woman political actor. These strategies might also inhibit reader identification with, or sympathy for, her cause.

Such media strategies are significant and influential in situations like that of Jennie George. Her success as president of the ACTU could, in part, be judged on how effectively she raised the profile of the trade union movement and whether, during

[21] Jennie George 'business as usual' is a common way the media report day to day negotiations between the ACTU and government or employers where George happens to be the spokesperson or chief negotiator of the ACTU's case. In such reporting there is no specific personal or feminising reference.

the term of her leadership, the ACTU managed to increase union membership retention and recruitment rates. Indeed, this is one of the key performance indicators established by media reports through which to judge her. Whilst the news media historically have been unsympathetic to trade unions, in an era when people increasingly rely on media reports for their information the tone of such reporting seems likely to be increasingly influential on the viability of membership-based organisations. Furthermore, such reporting strategies might also have the effect of revitalising myths about women being unsuitable for positions of power and responsibility. In a period when women are entering the political arena in unprecedented numbers, such media strategies may be utilised (or quoted) by those opposed to women political actors as evidence to support their case that women do not perform as well as men in political or leadership roles.

The most common of the containment strategies was the expression of doubt as to George's capacity to handle the critical challenges ahead for the ACTU. This was frequently expressed in the form of doubts about her 'toughness'. Related strategies of containment include the incorporation of George's election within the major news story of political electioneering; reporting on George's election as 'soft' news or a 'colour' story (that is one which stimulates reader interest but is about unusual personalities rather than serious events); reporting her election as tokenism; emphasising the expression of emotion at her election; and/or reporting her election as the unmerited result of feminist agitation.

Conclusion: Reading Representations of Jennie George's Election

Content and semiotic analyses of news reports of Jennie George's election have shown that constructions of femininity were critical to the ways news reports made sense of Jennie George's election. The four examples analysed in depth in this chapter demonstrate a diversity of reporting styles and types of femininity despite also conforming to an existing repertoire of representations of 'first woman'. In addition to the three gendered frames identified by Norris, three of the four news reports analysed, contain traditional signifiers of femininity that locate George

within the paradigms of domesticity, family relationships, heterosexual romance, and help-mate of men.

Reportage of George's political and personal history also introduces signifiers of political activism, the left, militancy and communism thus placing her in the paradigm of political extremism and her election within the discourses of business-union conflict and threats to national stability and prosperity. The association of her election as president with the forthcoming federal election, and particularly the predictions of significant conflict between government and unions over industrial relations policies should the conservative Liberal-National Party Coalition gain power, mark her election as an event that has significant ramifications for Australia's political and economic future and for the quality of life of ordinary readers. This categorising of her election within the news frame of national politics also increases its newsworthiness as it brings into play the news values of conflict and relevance rather than only mobilising that of unusualness.

The news frame first woman leader took on additional signifieds than those discussed by Norris through the reporting of George as a feminist. The term feminist signifies variously, depending on the reader's associations and the context in which it is applied, including through its articulation with signifiers of industrial militancy. It can signify as a threat in the sense of a radical 'women's libber', a separatist who is anti-men. In this sense it signifies an extremist and a deviant woman. It can also signify favourably in relation to equal opportunity and support for women's rights to work. Whilst readers themselves would have their own associations with the term, certain connotations are privileged through particular reports. In Penberthy's report the privileged meaning of George's feminism is that it is appropriate for the times and the challenges ahead. However, in the context of Southorn's (1995a) feature, the privileged meaning is as an indicator of her outsider status, of political tokenism in the process of her appointment and one of a variety of weaknesses used to raise doubts about her fitness as leader.

One of the notable characteristics of the reporting of George's election that this analysis of reports has demonstrated, is that news frame first *woman* leader

dominated the reporting. The alternative, readily available news frame, first non-English-speaking background leader and breakthrough for migrant workers, is only a minor theme in a few reports and it is ignored in many others. It does not rate as sufficiently newsworthy in the mainstream Australian press to provide the keystone of a report. In part this may be because George does not assert herself as strongly as an Australian of non-English-speaking background, as she proclaims her pride in her feminism and its influence upon her political development. Whilst in her speech to Congress, George refers to her background in the tributes she pays to her mother's support and the sacrifices Natasha Feodosiu made to ensure her daughter's success, the hardship of the migrant experiences is not explored at length in any article about her election (George 1995). This may also be because the repertoire of stories about first woman leaders have now become a well-established, even dominant, pattern of reporting on women's participation in the public sphere in the 1990s. The 'migrant-makes-good' stories were more prevalent in the reporting on Australia as a 'lucky country' in the context of assimilationist reportage characteristic of the 1970s and early 1980s. The widespread acceptance of the policies and practices of multiculturalism and cultural diversity during the Hawke/Keating Labor Governments perhaps reduced the unusualness and newsworthiness of these stories and the appeal of this aspect of George's election.[22] The combination of George's femininity and her politics as a left-wing trade unionist at a time unions were increasingly under attack proved to be the most newsworthy aspects of her identity for the press, ranking above her migrant refugee background and her potential to be characterised as the quintessential Australian success story.

Whilst many newspapers chose to report George's achievement of the president-elect position within the context of preparations for a federal election it generally was not reported as 'hard news' nor as a politically decisive event in its own right. This situating of George's election as a 'human interest' story, as a 'victory for

[22] This simplistic and paternalistic frame of reporting immigrant Australians has been overturned by the events of late 2001 when the Howard Coalition Government decided to make refugees arriving unofficially by boat an election issue. They labelled them 'queue jumpers' and 'illegal immigrants', terms which were quickly taken up in public debates through talk-back radio and other media (Pickering 2001). The tenor of reporting migrant experiences and issues has changed notably since that time, developing classifications of 'good' and 'bad' immigrants. It remains to be seen how the framing of such issues will be effected in the long-term. See David Marr and Marian Wilkinson's *Dark Victory* (2003) for a forensic examination of the Howard Government's deployment of the Tampa and SIEV 4 incidents in the media particularly during the 2001 election campaign.

women', and as an 'individual's triumph against disadvantage', allows a wide variety of narrative approaches to be employed. It offers readers a range of possible meanings in addition to those which the approaches of the reporter and /or editor privilege. In all but one (Davis 1995) of the examples collected, a gendered news frame dominates the story and the variety exists through the tropes of femininity employed. The numerous varieties of femininity that are paraded in association with George confirm the predominance of gender as the key organising principle in reporting women's achievements and activities. These associations of femininity are most strongly evident in the photographic images chosen to accompany these reports, and in the meanings developed through the relationships developed between the headlines and the images. These various well-known signifiers of femininity also evoke particular discursive fields that influence the likely audience interpretations of this event.

These individual reports' deployment of gender also operate intertextually between different news reports, genres and over time. They contribute to the on-going construction of meaning about the role of unions, the gendered nature of industrial relations discourse, and the capacity of women to perform effectively in the public sphere/political life, but they reveal different narrative strategies and types of appeal that align with other distinctive elements in specific newspapers that enhance their address to particular audience bases. Jennie George's representation in the media, especially through privileged meanings, is always already partially determined through the combined discourses of unions as 'threat to public order', unions as 'masculine territory', women as 'other' to newsmakers and opinion leaders, and feminists as other to 'normal' women.

Part III: Cavalcade to Canberra

Chapter 6
Constructing the Crisis: Representations of Gender, Race, Unionism and Violence in Reporting 'Cavalcade to Canberra'

Chapter 7
Stories Told and Untold: Rhetorical Constructions of the Cavalcade to Canberra as Riot

Chapter 8
Hunting for a Scalp: Gender(in)g Representations of Blame in Reporting the Cavalcade to Canberra

6 Constructing the Crisis: Representations of Gender, Race, Unionism and Violence in Reporting 'Cavalcade to Canberra'

Introduction

This chapter is the first of three that analyse news reports of the events and issues associated with the ACTU's 'Cavalcade to Canberra' rally on 19 August 1996. The Cavalcade to Canberra was the centre-piece of the ACTU's campaign to defeat the recently-elected Liberal-National Party Coalition Government's proposed major changes to industrial relations legislation. It combined a major national rally in Canberra with separate associated rallies in other capital cities and some regional areas. The Cavalcade to Canberra was particularly significant for several reasons. It was one of the largest rallies ever planned for Canberra; it attracted trade unions and various community groups in an alliance against both the industrial relations legislation and proposed budget cuts to community services[1]; and it had status as the first major confrontation between trade unions and the Coalition Government since their defeat of the Australian Labor Party at the March 1996 Federal election. As discussed in Chapter One, the Coalition had pledged to deregulate Australia's industrial system. The rally was also significant as the first major national campaign directed by Jennie George, the ACTU's first woman president. It became the pivotal event in George's presidency.

The ACTU anticipated that the Cavalcade to Canberra rally would be "one of the biggest national union protests ever seen in this country" (ACTU 1996b) and estimated a crowd of between 30, 000 to 40, 000 people in Canberra alone. In addition a petition with the signatures of more than one hundred and fifty thousand Australian workers protesting against the Bill was to be presented to the Senate at the Canberra rally (ACTU 1996b). The organisers hoped that the diversity of participants would demonstrate the range and depth of the opposition to the Workplace Relations and Other Legislation Amendment Bill (the Bill) and turn around the Government's arguments that only narrow sectional interests objected to

[1] The rally included representation from churches, women's, migrant, welfare, youth and student groups and Aboriginal organisations.

the changes. Organisers also hoped that a successful rally would consolidate the ACTU's strategy of building community alliances. The ACTU was pursuing this strategy of 'social unionism' in an attempt to improve their bargaining position, which had been weakened with the election of the Coalition Government. Positive news coverage of the rally would assist credibility of the alliance-building process as well as the specific campaign against the Bill. Success would also neutralise the mistrust of social unionism held by a minority of unions and would also reassure potential community partners that an alliance with the ACTU could assist their cause.

The ACTU's key aim in staging such a large rally was to convince the Australian Democrats and independent Senators to reject the proposed Bill. It anticipated that the unprecedented scale of the Canberra rally and the alliance of diverse groups in a huge peaceful rally, would attract a significant amount of television, radio and print news coverage that would bring the arguments against the proposed changes to a wider audience. News media reportage of trade union protests and campaigns is traditionally produced within the established convention that trade unions are selfish and greedy, that such protests cause disruption and harm and are always potentially violent (Hartley 1989, Philo et al. 1982, Ward 1995). The Cavalcade to Canberra was intended to refute these stereotypes and win public support.

Despite the high participation in the protests (30, 000 people in Canberra alone) the success of the campaign was lost in the intense media coverage of an isolated outbreak of violence that occurred when a small group of demonstrators attempted to force an entry into Parliament House. This violence became the key element of the day. It was extensively reported and described as shameful, disgraceful and 'unAustralian'. The Government was quick to take political advantage of the violence and use it to discredit the whole labour movement and any opposition to the Bill. The media utilised the news frame of 'national crisis' in its reporting of the occasion[2] and the 'marginalizing frames', identified by Douglas McLeod and Benjamin Detenber in their analyses of reports of protests in the USA, of 'riot',

[2] See Allan (1999); Bignell (2002); Gitlin (1980); Hartley (1989) amongst others for a discussion of the news frame of 'national crisis'.

'crime story' and 'showdown' (McLeod & Detenber 1999). News reports declared the events to be an 'outrage', and privileged those accounts that emphasised the scale of the violence, the damage and the resulting injuries. They excluded or discredited accounts which argued that the rally, itself, was successful. This media emphasis developed the attempted forced entry into Parliament House involving some one to two hundred of the 30, 000 people assembled, as a 'riot', a national outrage and a political disaster (for the labour movement). These representations, which capitalised on the symbolic value of an attack on the Parliament building, increased the newsworthiness of the event and the public's investment in the story. Media reports also had the effect of demonising the trade union movement and reviving old stereotypes of unions as 'wreckers', a threat to national security and prosperity (Philo et al 1982; Ward 1995; Windschuttle 1981). Whilst the initial reports of the 'riot' dominated only one day of news coverage, being eclipsed by the Federal Budget the following day, subsequent developments ensured the story ran for almost three weeks, from 20 August to 8 September 1996 creating in Jennie George a 'scalp' or a scapegoat for the violence, a position from which she never fully recovered.

In a process similar to that which occurs in the evolution of a political scandal, political strategies and media practices interacted to increase both the degree of newsworthiness of the story and the political stakes (Tiffen 1999). The possibility that George might be forced to resign became both a story and a media object, for, if she did resign, the news media could claim partial credit for having achieved her 'scalp' (Muir 1997a; Tiffen 1999). One could argue that both the ongoing speculation and any ultimate resignation were sufficiently newsworthy to be presumed to have commercial value in increased newspaper sales. It is also arguable that the damage that the stories caused to the credibility of the union movement would have ideological value to news organisations (particularly News Limited). News Limited, in common with most big businesses in Australia, strongly supported deregulation of the labour market and reducing the role of trade unions. Indeed, many newspaper editorials advocated this position both in the lead-up to the 1996 Federal election and subsequently. The public relations damage to the union movement caused by the riots and exacerbated by the press coverage was,

commentators anticipated, likely to increase public support for the Government's Bill and reduce the credibility of union objections.

Jennie George's personal investment in the rally made it a touchstone for her presidency. This factor, together with the intensity of the media coverage generated by the events associated with it, are so significant that three chapters of the thesis are devoted to analysis of the news reports of these events. The first two chapters deal primarily with the eighty-seven reports, across twelve daily newspapers, of the events of the day of the rally. The third chapter deals primarily with news reports of subsequent, associated events, notably attempts to force George to resign.

News Values and Political Crises: Two Protests But Only One was 'News'

Narratives of violence and disorder have a high news value. It is not surprising, therefore, that the news media privileged the story of the outbreak of violence at Parliament House over the stories of the peaceful rallies. However, it was remarkable that the news universally reported this violence so extensively, in tones of such righteous indignation and to the exclusion of almost any discussion of the nature of the objections to the Bill and/or the components of the peaceful protests. Furthermore, unionists' accounts of the events that gave rise to the trouble are likewise excluded in favour of police and the Prime Minister's versions of events.

The news media plays a crucial role in selecting and shaping which versions of events are reported to the public. In situations of 'political crisis' or 'moral panic' it plays a significant constitutive role in developing the 'panic' or 'crisis' to serve its own ends of audience, rating and revenue raising.[3]

Two newspapers noted that there were in fact two rallies in Canberra: one peaceful and one disruptive (Savva 1996, *Age*; Shires 1996, *Financial Review*). The vast majority of the 30, 000 demonstrators conducted a peaceful rally on the lawns in

[3] See Fiske (1996); Hay (1996); Tiffen (1999); 'Uncertain Eye' (1998).

front of Parliament House from 12 noon to 2.30pm as planned.[4]. They were addressed by a range of speakers, including Democrats leader Cheryl Kernot, ACTU president Jennie George, Australian Greens leader Bob Brown and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) chair Lowitja O'Donoghue, who outlined their objections to the Workplace Relations Bill and their concerns about the Budget. Many thousands more demonstrated peacefully in Adelaide, Brisbane, Darwin, Hobart, Perth and regional centres. These rallies and the speakers' significant objections to the Bill were barely mentioned in the news that night or the following day. Instead, the news was dominated by extensive reporting of a so-called 'riot' that occurred at the doors of Parliament House when between 100 and 200 people attempted to enter the foyer to express their objections to: firstly, police treatment of some Aboriginal demonstrators; secondly, to police blockade of their route (so that they were unable to reach their colleagues in the main rally on the lawn); and thirdly, to the actual Bill itself (Sharkey cited in Bradley, Marris & Windsor 1996, *Australian*).[5] The news reports of the 'riot' focused on the police struggle to regain control of Parliament House foyer, on the scale of the damage to property, the alleged violence of the rioters, on the injuries to police and on the 'outrage' such actions constituted. The reports of these aspects of the event vary considerably in their details.

The news media had been predicting a 'showdown' between the union movement and the Coalition Government from before Jennie George was elected as ACTU president in September 1995, months before Coalition defeated Labor in the March 1996 election. The press pitted the union movement against the Government as if at 'war'. This slant of coverage was fostered by both Bill Kelty's famous pre-election

[4] Estimates of crowd numbers ranged from 15, 000 (Mercury 1996a) to 30, 000 in many reports (including Bradley, Marris & Windsor 1996). The ACTU estimated attendance to be between 25, 000 and 30, 000 people at the Canberra rally, 7, 000 to 8, 000 rallied in Brisbane, 10, 000 in Adelaide, 1, 000 in Darwin and 5, 000 to 6, 000 in Perth and regional centres (George 1996a).
[5] See also, Jeremy Pyner's (1996) unpublished report for the ACTU Executive on the rally and statements by CFMEU officials Stan Sharkey (Sharkey 1996), Rick Fowler (Fowler 1996) and George Wason (Wason 1996).

'symphony of war' speech.[6] It was also intensified by the uncompromising statements by Liberal Industrial Relations shadow minister, Peter Reith and the leader John Howard, that if elected they would 'take on' the unions.[7] The anticipation of serious conflict was also a factor in articles that discussed George's likely performance upon her election as the 'first woman' president of the ACTU (as discussed in Chapters Four and Five). The question of whether she would be 'tough enough' to lead the traditionally masculine trade union movement was frequently linked in the press coverage to the issue of anticipated conflict with an in-coming, hostile Coalition Government. Media assessments generally concluded that the union movement was in decline. It was frequently reported to be losing membership, losing relevance, tied to out-of-date practices of confrontation and politically incapable of change (for example Akerman, 1995a, 1995b). The outbreak of violence at the Cavalcade to Canberra rally and the subsequent speculation about George's continued viability as ACTU leader slotted into an already established news framework.

In addition to fulfilling the demands of the criteria of news value, the reportage of the Cavalcade to Canberra was newsworthy because it gave substance to these predictions and doubts. The selection of images, headlines, story angles and the preferred political meanings that structured media reports of these events not only conformed to the political leanings of particular newspaper's ownership and editorial practices but also conformed to the outcomes the news media had already set up and anticipated. The news reports also contributed to the likelihood of certain of these outcomes eventuating.

Analysis of the reports of the Cavalcade to Canberra brings to light those interpretations of events that were privileged and those which were suppressed or ignored. The dominant news frame of the violent 'riot' of one to two hundred

[6] Bill Kelty introduced the ALP Prime Minister Paul Keating to a hall full of unionists at a pre-election rally on 21 February 1996 with a speech in which he built upon Keating's well-known love of classical music in describing the trade union's willingness to respond to the Liberal and National parties threat of a 'war' with the unions. He said "If they want a fight, if they want a war, then we'll have the full symphony, with all the movements" (Kelty cited in Martin & Painter 1996).

[7] The incoming Coalition Government changed the ministerial title from Industrial Relations Minister, to Workplace Relations Minister.

demonstrators reached the proportions of a media event in itself. It squeezed out alternative accounts of the peaceful rally of around 30, 000 people and the specific fears and concerns that unionists, churches, students, Aboriginal and welfare groups had expressed in relation to both the industrial relations legislation and the federal budget cuts to social services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), education and welfare funding. How the media accomplished this requires attention to reading practices and the effects of aspects of news presentation, including the selection of headlines, photographs and captions and narrative strategies.

In addition, given that the accounts of the Cavalcade to Canberra and the so-called riot at the doors of Parliament House have been highly contested and union accounts have been absent from, or marginalised within, the dominant media, it is useful to compare the published news reports to unpublished union accounts of what happened. The published reports in the mainstream media provide little information about the ACTU's desire, and indeed need, for a *peaceful* rally, nor the efforts that they undertook to achieve this. To demonstrate the effects of the framing of news reports of the event as a 'riot' the chapter provides some additional information covering the ACTU's intentions and plans for the rally. This information is drawn from union sources and epitomises perspectives and contextual information that was omitted from mainstream media reportage. This information is included to demonstrate the availability of perspectives and contributions sympathetic to trade unions that the thesis argues were omitted from mainstream press accounts.[8] Instead, these accounts were ignored in favour of the Australian Federal Police's version of events and the views of the Prime Minister on the nature of the rally and its implications.

The Press Reports

On 20 August 1996 eighty-seven separate reports and articles were published, in twelve daily newspapers, about the Cavalcade to Canberra demonstration and the

[8] Whilst union accounts are inevitably partial, so too are those of the Australian Federal Police that were widely published by the press as a 'truthful' and authoritative explanation of events.

attempted forced entry to Parliament House by a small breakaway group of demonstrators. This story of the forced entry, the physical confrontation between police and protesters, and the associated damage was the most widely reported aspect of the day's events. Seventy-nine reports focused on the Canberra rally whilst eight of the eighty-seven concerned other capital city and/or regional rallies. Thirty-five separate photographs and twelve cartoons were published of the events at Parliament House. Some newspapers also printed old file photographs from previous industrial confrontations to illustrate their articles and additional photographs were printed in several papers of local, associated, peaceful rallies. Three diagrams, which illustrated the layout of Parliament House and the relative positions of police and demonstrators, were also published.

Within these reports there were some significant variations in how the rally was reported. Despite the extraordinary congruence in the focus on the so-called 'riot' over the peaceful demonstration, there were important differences in how particular papers and/or journalists reported how many people attended the rally, how many—and who—were injured, the extent of the damage and the cause of the riot.

The number of demonstrators involved in the struggle varied dramatically between reports. Some reports included in their figures those people milling around outside Parliament House trying to work out what was going on, some referred to the number of people actually at both sets of doors and others referred just to those who managed to enter the building. The *Courier Mail* reported that approximately seventy demonstrators managed to enter the foyer but were removed by police and security staff. Forty-nine of these were arrested at the time but only four were charged, the remainder were released with a warning (Sweetman & Horan 1996). Both demonstrators and police were injured in the struggle. Reports vary between sixty-one (Shires 1996, *Financial Review*) and eighty-nine (Byrnes 1996, *AFPA Journal*) police injured. Although both police and demonstrators sustained injuries, press attention concentrated on the injuries to police and included interviews with a couple of injured officers who required hospital treatment, whereas the demonstrators' injuries were reported in less detail. The *Bulletin* suggested the injured protesters numbered in the 'hundreds' (Martin 1996a) whereas the *Age*

suggested about forty required medical treatment (Savva 1996). According to some newspaper reports the struggle lasted about half an hour from 2.30 p.m. to 3 p.m. (*Courier Mail* 1996a) although Jason Byrnes claimed in the *Australian Federal Police Association Journal* that the struggle lasted "for over three hours" (Byrnes 1996). The reports of the property damage that was sustained to the bookshop, the foyer and main doors of Parliament House also varied widely. The estimated damage bill reputedly ranged from "tens of thousands" (*Mercury* 1996b) to "hundreds of thousands" of dollars (Farr 1996a, *Daily Telegraph*; Taylor & Corby 1996, *Canberra Times*). The final figure seems to have been between $75, 000 and $100, 000.[9] Reports of these events and the various components such as the injury to police and damage to property dominated the radio, television and print news for the following twenty-four hours.

The Causes of the 'Riot'

The 'causes' of the 'riot' were variously reported in the press to be: poor marshalling by the rally organisers; insufficient police and security staff to control the crowd; poor architectural design of the forecourt and foyer; unnecessarily aggressive police treatment of an Aboriginal demonstrator which triggered a protest reaction by nearby unionists; drunken unionists out to cause trouble; 'agents provocateurs' from groups as diverse as 'Melbourne Maoists', 'ASIO' and 'Resistance'; former Builders Labourers' Federation (BLF) members who wanted to promote their own agenda of militant and muscular unionism in the lead-up to an internal union election; and union opponents of the ACTU leadership and of Jennie George, in particular.

The ACTU commissioned its own investigation of events. Jeremy Pyner, the Secretary of the ACT-TLC that was responsible for the planning of the rally, provided a comprehensive report to the ACTU Executive that drew on his own observations and those of other senior unionists present in the area in which the trouble arose (Pyner 1996). This report was not published but was circulated to all affiliates. Jenny George also provided a report to the ACTU Executive which

[9] Johnstone (1996b, *Courier Mail*) and Salom (1996c, *West Australian*) reported $75, 000, whereas Norington (1996a, *Sydney Morning Herald*) claimed it was nearly $100, 000.

likewise was circulated to all affiliates but was not published more widely. Three CFMEU officials, whose members were reportedly to blame for the trouble, issued statements to both the media and the AFP about the problems with police direction and handling of the demonstrators that they argue caused the outbreak of violence. These three officials were national CFMEU secretary Stan Sharkey (23 August 1995), ACT branch secretary George Wason (23 August) and national executive officer Rick Fowler (26 August). The media could have drawn upon these statements to provide an alternative account of events rather than relying on the AFP account that blamed union, Aboriginal and student demonstrators and failed to acknowledge any contribution by AFP officers to the confusion and confrontation. Likewise, Jeremy Pyner could also have been quoted more widely, and more extensively. The only paper to cover these alternative views in any depth was the national Socialist alternative paper, *Green Left Weekly* which has a very small circulation.

In contrast to the published versions of events in the news media, Jeremy Pyner argues that the cause of the 'riot' lay in AFP's re-direction of the CFMEU contingent away from their planned route.[10] As secretary of the Australian Capital Territory Trades and Labor Council (ACT-TLC) Pyner had been responsible for the organisation of the rally including negotiation of an agreement with the head of security at New Parliament House and the Australian Protective Services regarding the number of marshals required and the planning of the rally route (Pyner 1996).

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[10] Pyner was emphatic that the disruption and violence were the direct result of the prior arrangements between the CFMEU, the Australian Protective Services and the New Parliament House Security manager being over-turned by the AFP. He said the AFP re-directed the CFMEU away from their agreed route from their assembly point at Old Parliament House to the rally stage on the Federation Mall. The re-direction had the CFMEU members following the Aboriginal contingent along Commonwealth Avenue and created a severe bottleneck where the buses were also stacked up at Commonwealth ramp. Pyner argued this left thousands of protesters "milling around with no direction" and "police lines stretched from a 90 metre front to one of approximately 300 metres". (Pyner 1996). Pyner's analysis is supported by earlier statements made by three CFMEU officials. National secretary, Stan Sharkey and ACT branch secretary George Wason both made statements on 23 August that AFP officers had directed the CFMEU to change the route of their march and to fall in behind the Aboriginal group along "Commonwealth Avenue and then up the ramp" instead of "just walk[ing] up Federation Mall" (Wason 1996, see also Sharkey 1996). National executive officer, Rick Fowler's statement accords with this version. He explains that he had vigorously objected to the changes at the time because he had previously advised "numerous journalists and photographers of an excellent photo opportunity" along the intended route (Fowler 1996). The change to the route would take the marchers away from the site at which photographers were waiting to take shots of the march.

His explanation of the cause of the trouble was that at the last minute the AFP redirected the CFMEU contingent away from their planned route to march instead behind Aboriginal demonstrators along Commonwealth Avenue and onto Commonwealth ramp (Pyner 1996).[11] This area, he pointed out, had already been designated as the area for bus parking and unloading and the path down to the stage area was consequently obscured and blocked with traffic. He argued that this redirection caused major congestion, confusion and frustration amongst demonstrators who were confronted by police in full riot gear and therefore had nowhere to move. According to Pyner's version of events, some Aboriginal demonstrators, who were prevented from joining the main rally on the lawns, attempted to push through the police lines. Some of these demonstrators were handled roughly by Star Force officers in riot gear triggering a protest reaction from frustrated unionists, Aboriginal demonstrators and students who were now massed in this congested area (Pyner 1996).

A tiny minority of newspapers did give the opportunity to unionists to reject police versions of the cause of the trouble. Sid Marris in the *Australian* newspaper briefly quotes Stan Sharkey the CFMEU national secretary whose interpretation of the cause of the trouble is very similar to Pyner's (Sharkey cited in Bradley, Marris & Windsor 1996, *Australian*; Marris 1996b, *Australian*). The Democratic Socialist Party and Resistance similarly blame police misdirection and provocation for causing the riot in a statement reported in the weekly newspaper *Green Left Weekly* (*Green Left Weekly* 1996). According to these versions of events, when they were unable to reach the main rally on the lawns the frustrated demonstrators turned and ran shouting towards the front doors of Parliament House where they found very few police to prevent them from entering the building.

[11] This last minute change of plan did not please several CFMEU officials who felt that it inappropriately placed them behind Aboriginal demonstrators at a *union* rally (see Fowler 1996; Sharkey 1996). However the CFMEU co-operated, in part it seems because they were told police did not want to have their resources spread over too many sites. The CFMEU left a gap of approximately one hundred metres between their members and the Aboriginal contingent to preserve their distinct entities and maintained this when the Aboriginal marchers stopped to perform dances.

The Australian Federal Police also attempted to promulgate their version of events. Unlike Pyner's version the AFP version receives extensive media coverage with AFP Superintendent Peter McDonald widely quoted in front-page reports including as the lead headline on the *Canberra Times* front page (Gordon & Chan, 1996 *Australian;* Sweetman & Horan 1996, *Courier Mail*; Taylor & Corby 1996, *Canberra Times*). The police point of view was also covered extensively by the tabloid papers in dedicated reports published on inside pages. The *Mercury's* report 'Baying mob kicks woman', published on page three, provides the police with the opportunity to deplore the violence, particularly the injury to one of their female officers (*Mercury* 1996b).[12] This aligns with research that shows police sources are routinely privileged by the news media.[13] The AFP argues that some demonstrators were intent on causing trouble and "had no intention" of joining the peaceful demonstration on the lawns (Bradley, Marris & Windsor 1996, *Australian*; *Courier Mail* 1996d; Molloy 1996a, *Herald Sun*). Some reports say the police found evidence that demonstrators had come 'tooled up' with weapons for a riot (Martin 1996b, *Bulletin*). A number of Coalition Members of Parliament also put forward the view that demonstrators were intent on causing trouble (Penberthy & Sweetman 1996, *Advertiser*).

Both television news that night and newspapers the following day covered the so-called 'riot' extensively and in sensational terms. However, the peaceful protest on the lawns, the demonstrators' specific objections to the Workplace Relations Bill and to the budget, and the speeches made by those who addressed the crowd were ignored by nearly all reports.

Alternative accounts of the events and alternative interpretations of the cause of the trouble—such as it being triggered by police bungling crowd management and

[12] Other similar reports include: 'Police injured in "frightening" demonstration' in the *Canberra Times* in which not only is the Superintendent quoted but also two constables and the AFPA secretary (Corby & Contractor 1996); see also 'Police hold urgent security review' (Horan 1996b, *Daily Telegraph*) which allocates ten of its fifteen paragraphs to police views of the events, and Murray 'Sixty police injured as protest becomes riot' (1996, *Examiner*).

[13] For example, Hall et al. (1978); Ericson et al. (1989, 1991); Hartley (1989); Schlesinger & Tumber (1994) see also Mickler's work on the reporting of Aboriginal deaths in custody in Australia (1998).

violence by Star Force officers towards an Aboriginal demonstrator—were available to the media but received less attention, *less prominent* attention and, when they were included in a report were contested, unlike police accounts which were reported as 'fact'.[14] Media processes of selection, codes of reporting unionists as trouble, and news values of negativity and simplification, amongst other factors, worked to exclude, discredit or minimise the relevance of union views of the events. The versions of the events put forward by the AFP and some other observers were published largely unchallenged and the ideological construction of the event produced by the Prime Minister was adopted by most of the news media.

The next section examines the construction of the day's events presented by different papers in the sample. In particular, it considers the selection of front-page headlines and photographs, pull-quotes and captions. It also examines the frequency of use of particular photographs and what these (most often used) photographs might signify. It is notable that although seventy images were published these comprised only thirty-five *separate* photographs and several of these were used multiple times on front page and in other prominent locations. This multiple use of particular images created a defining effect whereby one or two images came to signify the event. The frequency of appearance and position of these photographs are summarised in Tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 and the issue of congruence is discussed in section 'Frequency of Use of Images' below.

The evidence compiled in the comprehensive research and analysis of eighty-seven different reports (documented below) as to the congruence of representations across and between newspapers demonstrates that the print media constructed two dominant news frames: the threat to national security posed by the demonstrators from Cavalcade who broke into Parliament House; and moral outrage resulting from it. Eleven papers highlighted the Prime Minister, John Howard's, interpretation of events and quoted his comments to set the tone of the news reports.[15] The Prime Minister used this opportunity to make political capital out of the events by

[14] For example Seccombe 'Rioters hand PM Budget-eve gift' (1996, *Sydney Morning Herald*), also on subsequent days, Bradley at al. (1996); Foster & Murphy (1996); Kermond (1996); Marris (1996b).

[15] The *Financial Review* was the exception.

pronouncing his outrage on behalf of all ('normal' and 'decent') Australians at the vandalism of Parliament House, the symbolic heart of the nation. He condemned Bill Kelty and Jennie George, directly, as being ultimately responsible for the 'riot'. The Prime Minister's definition was adopted almost universally by the press. The nature of the events fitted the high news value of both political crisis and violence. In this case John Howard's status, as an 'elite' person, his presence on the spot, and the nature of the events reinforced their newsworthiness. The use of the Prime Minister's perspective as the authoritative version conformed to conventions of news reporting of deviance—of demonstrators, unionists and Aboriginals as 'other' to the state and the presumed reader.[16] It also fitted the convention of finding a scape-goat or 'scalp' in situations of 'crisis' or scandal (Tiffen 1999).

The press coverage did major damage to the credibility of the union movement in general, the campaign to prevent the passing of the Workplace Relations Bill, and to the leadership of Jennie George in particular. It did this through various techniques. These include building a terrifying picture of mob rule through front page images and headlines; through the singling out of a few 'feral' members of a particular union (CFMEU) and making them stand for the union movement as a whole; through the setting up of Aboriginal demonstrators and unionists as enemies of the state and law abiding citizens; by the reporting of Parliament House as a war zone with "blood on the floor", thus connecting the degree of violence to property by demonstrators trying to access Parliament House to the injuries sustained by police officers; by emphasising the injuries to *women* police officers and reporting them in ways which resonated with community concerns and fears about domestic violence and sexual assault; and through creating associations (through editorial devices such as photographs, captions and headlines) between unionists and other deviant and criminal masculinities such as terrorists, communists, anarchists, bikies, and wife beaters. The press coverage was damaging to Jennie George personally through its implication it was her *personal* responsibility to control the demonstrators. Therefore, the news reports suggested it was her lack of authority and failure of

[16] See Gitlin (1980); Hall et al. (1978); Hartley (1989); Mickler (1992, 1998); Philo et al. (1982); Sercombe (1995); and Ward (1995), amongst others, on unionists and Aborigines being represented as deviants as opposed both the state and the presumed reader.

leadership that allowed the 'riot' to occur. The large peaceful demonstration on the lawns of Parliament House was thereby erased and the Cavalcade to Canberra re-positioned as an illegitimate and unjustifiable protest through its substitution in the news by the small, localised and short-lived outbreak of violence.

Front-Page Themes: Damage, Outrage, Condemnation

The complex series of events and interests that made up the Cavalcade to Canberra campaign (including the associated rallies in other capital cities) was reduced to the simple story of the Parliament House 'riot'. The scale and intensity of the riot were sensationalised and exaggerated by eleven of the twelve newspapers examined. The front page of a newspaper functions to attract the attention of a casual browser or passer-by and to convince them they *need* the information within. The headlines and main image, therefore, needs both to compel attention and raise curiosity or a sense of anxiety. Dramatic headlines and photos are the key tools available to secure such attention. Front pages also serve as a cue to the newspaper's editorial position on the major issue/s of the day, flagging to the readers what meaning particular newspapers have distilled from the events of the previous twenty-four hours. By inflating the damage, the violence, the injuries, the political implications and the outrage of the 'riot' newspapers created a media event (Fiske 1996). As a media event it took on a different set of conventions and secondary stories, such as the account of the experiences of tourists in the Parliament House foyer during the demonstration, became newsworthy because of their connection to the major news story of the day, the 'riot'. Such stories alone, without their reference to the 'riot', would not have been considered sufficiently newsworthy to be printed. The status of 'media event' also ensured that the story of the 'riot' would be pursued over subsequent days and weeks. Over this time new angles to do with who was to blame would be pursued. These developments ensured its continued newsworthiness instead of it being abandoned as 'old' news after twenty-four to forty-eight hours. By representing the 'riot' story as compelling news, editors encourage people to buy more newspapers over several weeks. There are, therefore, significant *commercial* reasons that influence newspaper editors' decisions about which headlines and images to use on

their front-page to communicate the news and which stories to run with over an extended period of time (Hollingsworth 1986). These decisions are not based on some transparent and objective professional hierarchy or ratio that measures the newsworthiness of particular events rather, they are commercial and political decisions relating to how best to present stories in ways that will sell newspapers. In this instance—given Australian newspapers widespread support for the election of the Coalition Government in the lead-up to the 1996 election, and their overt, ideological support for the deregulation of the labour market— it is possible to speculate that there may well have been a convergence of commercial and political interests in the construction of the front-page reports of the Cavalcade to Canberra.

Front-Page Headlines

Four tabloid newspapers, *Herald Sun*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Mercury* (all owned by News Limited) and the *West Australian* (West Australian Newspapers) devoted their entire front page to the story of the attempt to force entry to Parliament House and the confrontation between demonstrators and police. The Launceston *Examiner* (owned by Rural Press) was the tabloid exception to this trend. The *Financial Review* (Fairfax) also divided its front page between the Cavalcade to Canberra story and other reports. The tone of its coverage, however, was significantly more understated. The six broadsheet newspapers—*Age*, *Sydney Morning Herald* (Fairfax), *Courier Mail*, *Advertiser*, *Australian* (News Limited) and *Canberra Times* (Rural Press)—placed this story on the front page together with one or more other stories. The broadsheet format newspapers, which had more space to fill and traditionally place a lower emphasis on sensationalism, included news reports of other issues as well as the 'riot' on their front pages. Six of the twelve front pages emphasised outrage and condemnation of the attempted forced entry of Parliament House and confrontation through the large print headlines employing emotive terms such as 'A Disgrace' (*Daily Telegraph*), 'House of Shame' (*Mercury*), Un-Australian' (*Herald Sun*), 'Day of Disgrace' (*Courier Mail*), 'Nation's Day of Shame' (*Advertiser*). The effect of these terms was heightened by prominently featuring the Prime Minister's comment that the actions were 'un-Australian' (see for example the *Herald Sun* front page Figure 6.1 which will be discussed later in

the chapter). Two papers emphasised the violence of the protest in their front page headlines: 'Bloody Protest' and 'Budget-eve violence as Parliament is stormed' (*Canberra Times*) and 'Rioters storm Parliament' and 'Protest turns ugly in rush of emotion' (*Australian*). One, the *West Australian*, blamed the ACTU—'ACTU under fire for violent rally'—and the *Examiner* blended both themes with its headline 'PM condemns riot bloodshed'.

The *Financial Review* (Fairfax) was the exception to this pattern. It gave its front-page headline to the Budget: 'Budget 96: the big test … gets early tick from the markets'. This headline and layout implies the Federal Government is doing the right thing by the nation and this judgement, in the light of other media coverage, would negate the justification for the rally. The *Financial Review's* audience is presumed to be those involved in business and financial worlds and it addresses readers and frames its coverage with reference to capitalism, growth and economic rationalism. Given their business audience, the issue of workers' rights is not likely to be a high priority for their readers. The stock market's approval is regarded by the *Financial Review* as being a litmus test of Government policy, therefore it takes precedence over a public disturbance reported as a national outrage by other newspapers. Although the *Financial Review* included a photograph of banners attached to the coat of arms on the roof of Parliament House on its front page it avoided the sensational tone and imagery of the other daily newspapers.[17] The image was symbolic rather than directly confrontational and used different codes to convey its message of the attempted 'take-over' of Parliament House.

Many of the tabloid headlines incorporated the condemnatory tone of moral judgements that the behaviour of particular protesters was outrageous and so, by implication, was the protest as a whole. The tone of moral outrage also appeared frequently in the editorial and opinion articles and in some reports. This tone of outrage is characteristic of what McLeod and Detenber call the 'riot narrative'. It is one of several 'marginalising' frames applied to news reports of protest (McLeod & Detenber 1999). The effect of these outraged headlines was to deny legitimacy to

[17] The *Financial Review* covered the events through a quarter page story on page 4 and its accompanying photo was very small.

the views of the protesters, not just those two hundred or so who tried to force an entry into Parliament House but also to deny legitimacy to the 30, 000 who were gathered peacefully on the Parliament lawns. As Malcolm Farr concluded in the *Daily Telegraph*: "The violence allowed Prime Minister John Howard to imply all opponents to his Budget and legislative program should be discredited as unAustralian" (Farr 1996a).

The most common front-page images were of men engaged in actions of conflict or force. The great majority of page one layouts sensationalised the conflict through their multiple use of photographs of protesters engaged in acts of violence. These photos showed attempts to smash glass doors, confrontations between police and demonstrators and injuries to both groups. Subsequent pages developed other aspects of the story which are discussed further in the section 'Building a picture of mob rule' below. Symbols of Aboriginality, or the presence of Aboriginal demonstrators, were featured on eleven of the twelve front pages (the exception was the *Australian*). Signifiers of unionism were less consistently visible. However, in the context of the protest as a union rally, the reports and page layout implied that white protesters were unionists. The reverse assumption, that Aboriginal demonstrators were not unionists or workers but protesting solely about the Government's race policies, was also implied through the designation of Aboriginal protesters as a separate and distinct group that had joined the demonstration to protest against cuts to ATSIC.

Front-Page Visuals: Frequency of the Use of Images

The section that follows identifies which images were the most frequently used and most prominently placed and discusses why they may have been selected as the most newsworthy. Each of the photographs has been allocated a number which relates to the details recorded in the Tables. Those reproduced here are identified both by their number from the Tables and their figure number Figure 6.1, 6.2 and so on, thus making it possible to easily refer to details of the content of the photos and the position in which they were published within the papers.

Table 6.1 Cavalcade to Canberra Photos Fairfax and Rural Press

Image / Publication details	Photo grapher	*SMH Fairfax*	*Age Fairfax*	*Fin Review Fairfax*	*Can Times Rural Press*	*Examiner Rural Press*	Times Printed
#1 Protesters pushing at doors, police and staff on other side try to hold closed. CFMEU T-shirts, caps, flags visible.	Andrew Meares	p I col, large	p4 B&W, small				2
#2 Policeman & plainclothes security with Aboriginal protester in headlock.	Andrew Meares	p4, B&W, large	p7, B&W, small				2
#3 Coat of arms on PH roof hung with Eureka (BLF) and Aboriginal flags and public housing banner.	Andrew Meares		p4, B&W, small	p1, (col unknown) med.			2
#4 PM checks injured AFP member with medical attendants.	Andrew Meares	p7, B&W, small	p4, B&W, small				2
#5 Crowd milling around outside of PH.	Michael Bowers	p7, B&W, small	p1, col, small				2
#6 Protesters in foyer with hands extended towards police as though fending them off, one in foreground with cut head (Davie Thomason) has 1 hand on police shoulder, union t-shirt visible.	Michael Bowers	p1, col. small	p1, col, large			p1, col, no attribution - large (slightly diff. Same angle, query next on roll)	3
#7 Wide shot of small crowd of police and staffers from behind as they try to hold doors. Aboriginal flag visible on other side of door.	Michael Bowers	p7, B&W, small	p1, col, small				2
#8 Protesters trying to break down door in PH shop, view of police on other side.	Gary Schaffer				p1,col, large		1
#9 Close-up of bloodied face of male protester (DT*) yelling.	Graham Tidy				p1, col, small		1
#10 Police carry away man wearing CFMEU T-shirt.	Graham Tidy				p3, B&W, small,		1
#11 Police carry injured young man 'fallen demonstrator'.	Graham Tidy				p3, B&W, small		1
#12 Policeman rests head on hand on shield.	Graham Tidy				p3, B&W, small		1
#13 Policeman checks wound on arrested protester's head, (could be male or female in another shot the same person appears male).	Graham Tidy				p3, b&W, medium		1
#14 Crowd of police and staffers try to stop protesters entering through doors, placards and Aboriginal flags visible in distance behind doors.	no attribution					p6, B&W, medium	1
*DT=Davie Thomason							
Source: Compiled by the author							

Table 6.2

Cavalcade to Canberra Photos
News Ltd and Western Australian Newspapers

Image / Publication details	Photo grapher	*Daily Tel. (News)*	*Herald Sun (News)*	*Mercury (News)*	*Australian (News)*	*Advertiser (News)*	*Courier Mail (News)*	*West Aust. (W.A. newspaper)*	Times printed
#15 Man in cap with badges and US style rugby jacket, smashing door with a metal stand of some kind. Aboriginal man on his right cheers. BLF logo at rear.	Lyndon Mechielsen	p1, Col, large		p1, col, small		p1, col, large		p1, col, large	4
#16 Protester with grimacing, bloody face and Aboriginal flag on jacket, being led away by police.	Lyndon Mechielsen		p1, col, large	p1, col, large	p3, col, medium	p1, col, small	p1, col, small	p1, col, small	6
#17 PM Howard in wrecked bookshop.	no credit	p2, B&W, medium	p3, B&W, small		p3, col, med		p5, B&W, medium		4
#18 Protesters photographed from behind at smashed glass door to PH, police visible on other side of glass grappling with protester.	Lyndon Mechielson	p3, col, medium			p1, col, med/large	p2, B&W, small			3
#19 Section of the crowd with banners, red flags, ATSI* outside PH, some on roof and ramp.	Michael Jones	p2, B&W, small	p3, col, med/large	p1, col, small	p1, col, large			p1, col, small	5
#20 Detail of trolley wheels heading towards glass door	no credit	p2, B&W small							1
#21 Female police officer holds hand to head, supported by another woman.	no credit	p2, B&W small	p3,colour, small			p2, B&W, small	p5, B&W, small		4
#22 2 young protesters, (students?) climb through small window.	no credit	p3, B&W, small				p2, B&W, small			2
#23 3 police overpower protester.	no credit	p3, B&W, small							1
#24 Bill Kelty and Jennie George leave Parl. House.	no credit	p3, B&W, small		p3, colour, small	p2, B&W, med/large		p5, B&W, small		4
#25 Man in purple and green jacket, uses metal stand to smash glass door. CFMEU logo at rear.	Lyndon Mechielsen		p1, col, small				p1, col, small		2
#26 Detail of police and PH security staff trying to prevent entry at doors. Red flag.	Lyndon Mechielsen		p1, col, small						1
#27 Police (one woman) grabbing two demonstrators in foyer, fairly empty.	Lyndon Mechielsen		p2, B&W, medium						1
#28 Police (at least two women) in riot shields stand at ease looking at rubbish left in foyer.	no credit		p2, B&W, small						1
*ATSI= Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander symbol									
Source: Compiled by the author									

Table 6.3 Cavalcade to Canberra Photos News Ltd and Western Australian Newspapers

Image / Publication details	**Photographer**	***Daily Tel.* (News)**	***Herald Sun* (News)**	***Mercury* (News)**	***Australian* (News)**	***Advertiser* (News)**	***Courier Mail* (News)**	***West Aust.* (W.A. newspapers)**	**Times printed**
#29 Two arrested protesters, one Aboriginal, other young student? with blood on face, handcuffed, sit in foyer.	no credit		p3, col, small						1
#30 Two protesters, one Aboriginal other young woman (? student), climb through (same) small window into Parl. House.	no credit		p3, col, small						1
#31 Crowd struggling with police as they try to enter through doors.	Ray Strange			p2, B&W, small			p1, colour, med/large		2
#32 Two Aboriginal protesters, one carrying flag, and some other young students?, climb through (same) small window into PH.	no credit			p3, colour, detail, small			p5,B&W, small		2
#33 Police, one in crash helmet and one yelling, surge towards protesters.	no credit			p2, B&W, small					1
#34 Section of crowd with placards and red flags outside PH.	no credit			p3, col, med					1
#35 Closed doors inside PH covered in paint or foam, some graffitied comments, and torn posters.	no credit					p2, B&W, small			1

Source: Compiled by the author

As the tables indicate one photograph was published in six different newspapers (see photograph 16, Figure 6.1). This photograph depicts a grimacing, bloody-faced protester being led away by police. Another photograph, published in five different newspapers (photograph 19, Figure 6.7), shows a section of the crowd outside Parliament House. It features red flags, banners and placards. In two larger reproductions of this image Aboriginal men in traditional dance costume can be seen heading towards Parliament House. Another four photographs were published in four papers each (photographs 15, 17, 21 and 24). In relation to the most widely published image (photograph 16), five of the six were newspapers owned by News Limited and its frequent appearance can, in part, be accounted for through practices of syndication between papers of that group. The sixth paper, *West Australian*, is not a part of News Limited but appears to have had an arrangement to purchase their photographs. This creates an ideological effect of apparent convergence of views between the *West Australian* and News Limited papers. The repetitious use of these few photographs may also have occurred through practical as well as ideological factors. The *Daily Telegraph's* photographer, Lyndon Mechielson, was one of the few photographers present in the Parliament House foyer. The *Daily Telegraph* made some of his dramatic photographs of the struggle available to these other newspapers. The availability and impact of these 'eye-witness' photos is one factor which partially accounts for the frequency of his published photographs. The most important factor to consider for the purposes of this analysis is what message the most frequently published images convey, and how it ties into the newspapers' preferred editorial. News Limited has been criticised, by media scholars and the labour movement, for having an antagonistic attitude to trade unions and for using its papers and editorials to pursue a strident campaign against unions and unionism.[18] This political position of the parent company has been historically associated with the selection of particularly negative images and headlines against trade unions and labor governments in its newspapers over several decades (Windschuttle 1981, 1985).

[18] See for example Hollingsworth (1986); Windschuttle (1981, 1985).

The most frequently printed image (photograph 16, Figure 6: 1) depicts a grimacing, white, male protester with blood dripping down his face, being led away by police, presumably under arrest.[19] This was the main image used on two front pages (*Herald Sun*, *Mercury*), a secondary image on three front pages (*West Australian*, *Advertiser*, and *Courier Mail*) and it was also printed on page three of a sixth paper (*Australian*). All these reproductions were in colour. The man's eyes are shut and blood trickles down his face, over his nose and down his neck from a cut above one eye. A clearly identified policeman, wearing gloves, leads him away with one arm linked through the protester's arm. The policeman is larger than the demonstrator and he is looking out of the frame to the right as he leads the protester away. His body is also turned away from the protester as if in disgust. The viewer cannot see the protester's hands but his posture suggests they are handcuffed. He is wearing a grey woolen jacket with two appliquéd badges one of which is a large Aboriginal flag. His closed eyes, bloodied face, grimace and posture as he is led away signifies defeat and disgrace.

Another widely reproduced image and the most *prominently* featured of all the images was utilised as the main photograph on three front pages (*West Australian*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Advertiser*) and the secondary image on another front page (*Mercury*) (photograph 15, Figure 6.2). It signified the violent destruction that was the main theme in the front-page reports. This image and another (photograph 25, see smaller image in Figure 6.1 and detail 6.3) are discussed as a pair. The second of these images is ostensibly a substitute for the former as they both depict men in the act of breaking the glass doors of Parliament House. These men can be interpreted as representing the lawbreakers, the thugs, hooligans who threaten the safety, prosperity and pride of the nation and the readers.

[19] This man was a South Australian CFMEU official, Davie Thomason. He appeared in three different photographs (illustrations numbers 6, 9 and 16) and his action in demanding access to the main rally stage and brandishing a police shield was mentioned in several reports as being a visible shock to the ACTU officials on stage (see Marris 1996b; Norington 1996b)

Figure 6.1. Herald Sun, 20/8/96, p.1.

Herald Sun

TUESDAY, AUGUST 20, 1996 NEWS PICTORIAL CITY: SHOWERS. MAX. 14. (PAGE 30) 70c

BUDGET-EVE RIOT STUNS THE NATION

UN-AUSTRALIAN



PICTURE: LYNDON MECKESEN



AT least 60 police were injured when an angry mob stormed Parliament House in a bloody pre-Budget riot.

Officers were punched and kicked, and a policewoman had three ribs broken when she was beaten to the ground.

Effigies of Prime Minister John Howard were burned and an Australian flag atop Parliament House was torn down.

The rally by 25,000 people against industrial relations changes and Budget cuts exploded into violence on the eve of the Howard Government's first Budget today.

Mr Howard condemned the riot as "un-Australian" as vandals used a makeshift battering ram to smash glass doors.

Rioters who broke through a police cordon ransacked the Parliament House shop and caused more than $100,000 damage. Two men were charged and 49 arrested.



ACTU secretary Bill Kelty described the protest as "the most successful rally in the history of this country".

But Mr Howard said: "If anyone imagines that behavior of that kind is going to get the government to change its mind on anything, then those people are completely mistaken."

REPORTS, pictures: P2-3



TRIBUNAL CLEARS SUPERSTARS



REPORT, BACK PAGE

20AUG A

Both of these images are powerful and effective for evoking reader response but in different ways. The first (photograph 15, Figure 6.2) was published on the front page of four tabloid newspapers (*West Australian*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Mercury* and *Advertiser*). It was selected as the image which best summed up the demonstration for the papers' readers and as the one which would attract the interest of casual browsers, encouraging more people to purchase these papers. It depicted a white man smashing a glass door with a metal stand of some kind. He is dressed in a cap covered in badges, including ones symbolising Aboriginal land rights and the Aboriginal flag, and he also wears a rugby-style jacket with red sleeves and a red scarf. The left side of his jacket, closest to the reader, has a large letter G appliquéd on it which links him, and his violent actions, intertextually, to ACTU president Jennie George. On his right and to his rear an Aboriginal man stands with his arms raised and mouth wide open in a yell or 'war-cry' (he could also be seen as cheering or giving a 'black power' salute). In addition, clearly visible in three of the four reproductions of this image, another man wearing a T-shirt with a prominent BLF logo stands behind the glass-breaker. This, the lead image for three newspapers, includes all the themes of violence, radical unionism, anarchy, Aboriginal rights and ugliness which combine as the signifier of anarchic radicalism stressed in newspaper reports. The same photographer, Mechielsen, also photographed a different man, wearing a green and mauve track-suit, smashing a door with a metal stand (photograph 25, Figure 6.1, detail 6.3). This image is printed in colour as a small support photograph on two front pages (*Herald Sun* and *Courier Mail*). These two photographs, ostensibly equivalent images, have similar and different features worthy of note.

The second, less prominent image (25 Figure 6.3) lacks the visual references to Aboriginality and radicalism and its references to unionism are less obvious. In this image the angle of the shot positions the viewer in line with the hole in the broken glass and could be seen to invite the viewer into both the fracas and Parliament House itself. It makes the violence more immediate. In both reproductions a CFMEU T-shirt is just visible on another man to the left and rear of the man smashing the door but it is less pronounced and less identifiable than in the more widely published image. In the more prominent image protesters fill the frame, the

Figure 6.2 Daily Telegraph, 20/8/96, p.1.

THE Daily Telegraph

SYDNEY, Tuesday, August 20, 1996 Weather: Showers clearing, 15 degrees Phone 9288 3000 70 cents* S

Siege of Parliament House

A DISGRACE

- More than 60 police injured
- 49 protesters arrested
- Souvenir shop looted
- Thousands of dollars damage

By MALCOLM FARR
Chief Political Reporter

MARBLE floors were stained with blood and police were attacked with sticks, paint and urine yesterday in the most violent mass assault on a parliament house in Australia's history.

The two-hour pitched battle at the entrance of the Federal Parliament in Canberra caused thousands of dollars damage, injured dozens of people — including 60 police officers — and shocked the nation with its savagery.

Protesters tore brass bollards from concrete foundations and used them as battering rams, looted a souvenir shop, and crashed bleeding through shattered glass doors before being finally turned back by police.

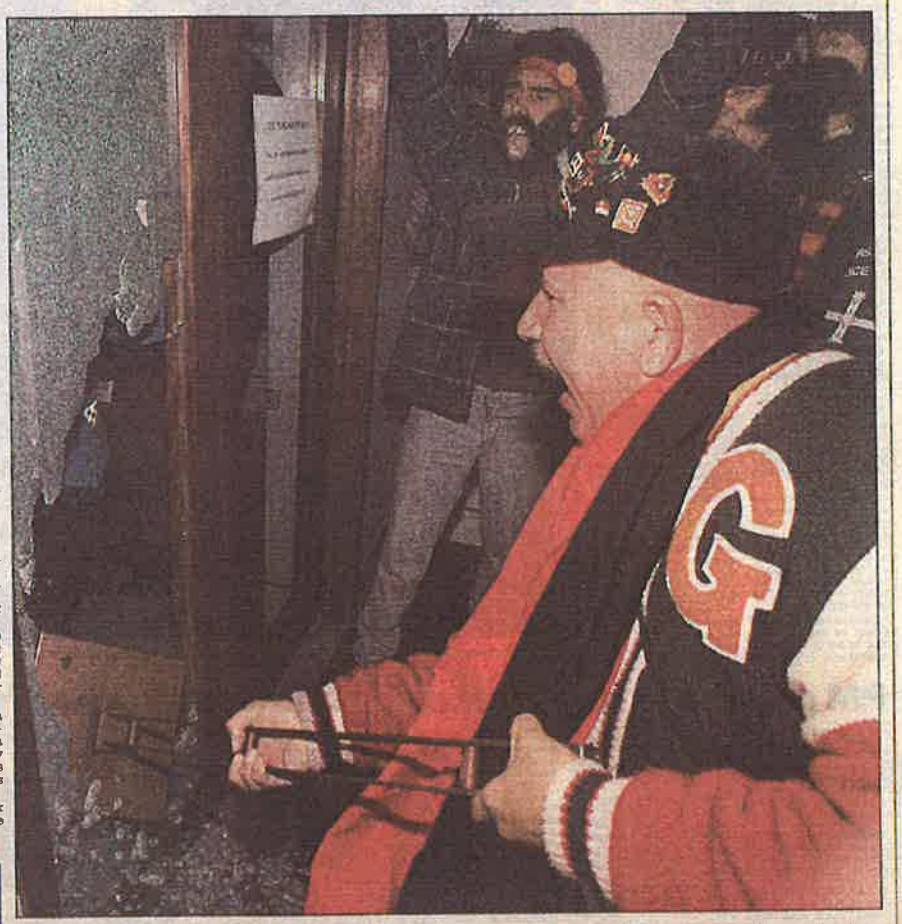
Emerging from his office to inspect the damage after the building had been secured Prime Minister John Howard criticised the protesters, describing their actions as "un-Australian".

The attack was launched by a group of several hundred demonstrators who detached from a larger ACTU organised rally protesting against Budget cuts and industrial relations legislation.

Outnumbered police took almost two hours to clear the

Continued Page 2

More reports, pictures Page 2-3



Protesters smash through a glass door of the Parliament House souvenir shop yesterday

Picture: LYNDON MECHIELSEN

STATE Business: P23; Comics: P36; Crosswords: P32; Lotteries (6037): P46, (6036): P47; Television: P39; Weather: P45

Classifieds P37 (9288 2000)

This newspaper participates in newspaper recycling

Figure 6.3 Herald Sun, 20/8/96, detail, p.1.



action and reaction of crowd members adds to the effect of violence and anger. Also, in this image, the predominance of red in the attire of the door-smasher and his multiple badges suggests a certain kind of radical troublemaker, a communist. The viewer's line of sight is drawn from the act of smashing the door by one protester upward to the open mouth and triumphantly raised arms of the Aboriginal man behind him. The combination of (masculine) violence, radical unionism and Aboriginal anger combines to produce threats of anarchy and revolution both to the nation and the reader. It also carries the implied connection to Jennie George as the cause of the trouble, this fits with the conventions of news reporting of conflict which requires the apportionment of blame.[20]

Crowd Scenes: 'They' Mass for Attack

One image that was widely used by several papers to give a context to the events inside Parliament House features a section of the crowd with banners and flags, milling around Parliament House. Some people stand along the ramp and roof-line trying to get a better view of the main rally, or to see what is going on, or perhaps to find where their union or group is located. In the context of reports of the violent confrontation inside Parliament House and the exaggerated claims of thousands of 'frenzied' protesters converging on the building—"[a]bout 4,000 protesters stormed the building" (Sweetman & Horan 1996, *Courier Mail*)—the image could be interpreted as a large crowd massing to attack. Smoke appears from one section of the crowd and reports suggest this is a burning effigy of either the Prime Minister or the Education Minister Amanda Vanstone. Effigies of both politicians were burnt and were variously interpreted, in some reports as signs of revolutionary tendencies and in others as harmless student pranks. One report, in particular, focussed on this as a 'crowd-pleasing' spectacle.

> With 'Johnny' well alight the hitherto fire-resistant 'Amanda' was pushed up against him and soon, to cheers, her huge paper abdomen caught fire too and up she went. After she had fallen down, charred, an angry young man emerged from the cheering crowd to smash in her smoking wire and paper skull again and again with all his force with his skateboard.
>
> (Warden 1996, *Canberra Times*)

[20] Here one might recall the prominent attention given to her late husband, the communist Paddy George, in the reports of her election to the ACTU election presidency.

This report of the fate of 'Amanda' suggests that students, not unionists, were responsible for the effigy. The burning effigy, on the one hand, is a familiar sight at student and other political demonstrations in Australia, but it also symbolises violent overthrow of governments in other countries.

Other newspapers used this image of the crowd outside Parliament House in ways which increased the effect of mob violence. Some, such as the *West Australian* (Figure 6.4), cropped the photo in such a way that it only showed a small section of the crowd tightly massed around a smoking effigy. In this instance the caption spells out the action "Protesters surround a burning effigy of Mr Howard". This image includes placards protesting against cuts to university funding, red CFMEU flags, a CFMEU Forestry Division banner and a large Resistance banner. The image features a lot of red, both in the clothing of protesters and in the tones of the reproduction, which increases its effect of radical protest.

In contrast, the *Herald Sun* and *Daily Telegraph* printed a wide shot of the crowd scene outside Parliament House. Since the photograph by itself does not provide evidence of the extent of the trouble the page layout is organised to carry the preferred meaning that the crowd is a threat. Smaller images and strong headlines are used to convey the 'consequences' of the confrontation. The section of the crowd featured by the *West Australian* can be seen in the centre of page 3 in the *Herald Sun* (Figure 6.7) and on the upper right-hand side of page two in the *Daily Telegraph* (photograph 19, Figure 6.5). This wide shot includes a large number of people in the foreground who stand around looking towards Parliament House. There is no sense of panic or urgency in the pose of these protesters nor in the demeanor of some twenty police who also stand watching in the lower left-hand side of the photograph. A few people carrying banners can be seen walking towards the front doors of Parliament House, as are some Aboriginal dancers in traditional costume and a man with a bicycle. The people in the middle of the crowd are more closely packed but, although many are turned to look at Parliament House, there is no visual evidence within this image that anything serious is occurring. These demonstrators could just as easily be trying to work out where their group or union is located or how to get to the main rally and stage. Indeed, people who were present

Figure 6.4 West Australian, 20/8/96, p.1.

The West Australian

ESTABLISHED 1833

70 cents* Telephone 482 3111 (Classifieds 13 22 80) PERTH TUESDAY AUGUST 20 1996 88 Pages Including Liftouts STATE



ACTU under fire over violent rally

CANBERRA
BY GRAHAME ARMSTRONG AND CARINA TAN-VAN BAREN

UNION protests against Federal Government spending cuts and workplace reforms backfired yesterday as demonstrators and police clashed violently at Parliament House, injuring more than 40 people.

The ACTU, which organised the 20,000-strong rally, immediately distanced itself from the violence. The public sympathy it sought from the protest appeared to dissipate when it emerged that demonstrators had caused serious injury and hundreds of thousands of dollars damage to Parliament House.

ACTU president Jennie George condemned the violence, saying those responsible were not associated with the ACTU.

But the mayhem played into the Government's hands on the eve of what will be a tough Budget.

Prime Minister John Howard denounced the violence as outrageous and walked out on a crucial meeting with ACTU leaders. He said the Government refused to negotiate under duress but agreed to further talks in two weeks.

Last night, police and security forces were preparing for further trouble today when the Howard Government brings down its first Budget.

Yesterday, demonstrators stormed Parliament House as unionists, students and Aborigines fought police. A section of the rally smashed its way past police barriers and heavy iron doors using a trolley, sledgehammer and weight of numbers.

Security sources said it was the worst violence since miners stormed old Parliament House under the Fraser government in the early 1980s.

Blood was spilled on Parliament House's marble floors. Two police officers, one with broken ribs, and a demonstrator required hospital treatment. Scores of other demonstrators and a dozen police officers were treated for cuts and bruising.

The trouble started when a big section of the rally surged forward to support a contingent of Aborigines grappling with police.

Parliament Shop, which sells souvenirs, was vandalised and looted. Acid and paint bombs were thrown at police and handcuffs were used to try and secure Parliament's main doors.

Police dogs were used to keep the protesters at bay until reinforcements arrived, armed with batons and protected by shields and helmets.

Two men were charged and 38 arrested.

Mr Howard, who inspected the damage, said the rally went beyond the lawful and robust demonstrations that were accepted as part and parcel of Australian tradition.

"What occurred here today was un-Australian, it was ugly," he said.

Federal Opposition Leader Kim Beazley said the violence detracted from the biggest protest he had seen by Australians who felt angry and betrayed by broken election promises.

Australian Federal Police superintendent for the ACT region, Peter McDonald, said the violence had taken security organisers by surprise.

● The Howard Agenda, pages 4-5; Alston, page 13



Fury: A protester, egged on by others, breaks a glass door to gain entry to Canberra's Parliament House.



Message: Protesters surround a burning effigy of Mr Howard.



Bloody: Police take away a protester bleeding from a wound.

Weather Patchy rain near west coast of Gascoyne and South-West division. Moderate falls possible in west coastal parts. Most, PAGE 2

The World Page 16 | Business Page 31 | Television Today liftout, page 12

Get The West and colour your day

in that section of the crowd have said they knew nothing about the confrontation inside and were wandering around trying to work out how to reach the main rally and stage.[21]. A report in the *Age* the following day, which quoted Melbourne participants' experiences of the rally, indicated that whilst people thought that one section of the crowd was noisy they did not realise there was any aggression or violence occurring (Kermond 1996).

Whilst the image as printed in the *Herald Sun* does not offer direct visual evidence of a violent attack on the building the reports and photos surrounding it provide this contextualisation in a connotation process Raymond Barthes termed 'syntax' (Barthes 1977; Figures 6.6 and 6.7). The caption states "Mob rule: an angry tide of protesters storms the front of Parliament House". The overall heading across both pages two and three is 'Violence erupts in mob rampage'. The words 'mob rampage' sit directly above this image which in itself fills about one quarter of page three of the *Herald Sun.* In addition, the article to the immediate right of the photo is headlined 'Blood on the doors' with the subtitle 'Frontline'. It commences "[y]ou could tell this was serious by the trails of blood leading to Parliament House" thus creating the impression that all the people massing outside Parliament House were following these "trails of blood" (Harvey 1996). To the left of the photograph the article subtitled, 'The Riot', commences with a powerful and sensational description of the attempt to force entry into Parliament House. "Rioting protesters tried to smash their way into Parliament House in Canberra yesterday in a brutal and unprecedented display of mob violence ahead of tonight's budget" (Molloy & Harvey 1996). Below the main photograph another article is headlined 'Hotheads play into the hands of Howard', again emphasising the presence of trouble-makers and alluding to the political and public relations implications of the events for the ACTU. To the right is the headline 'Blood on the doors' (Harvey 1996). In this context the photograph—which itself lacks any visual evidence of violence—could read as bearing witness to the 'mobs' converging on Parliament House. It could, however, be interpreted as raising doubts about these interpretations of events as, in

[21] The author has had conversations with two unionists present in that section of the demonstration who have made similar observations. They were Jenny Draddy, Women's Officer, Victorian Trades Hall Council, September 1996 and Anne Skinner, Information Services Officer with the CFMEU, August 1999.

Figure 6.5 Daily Telegraph, 20/8/96, p.2.

9.30am: The first protesters arrive and set up camp on front lawns.

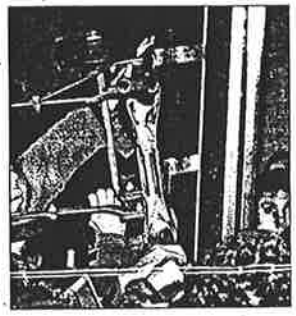
12pm: About 6000 people on the lawns, listening to bands and speeches.

12.30pm: Police stop 2000 protesters from joining those on the lawns. Angry crowd heads for forecourt.



12.40pm: Crowd at door of Parliament grows to 4000. Union leaders' pleas to leave are rejected. Violence begins — a woman officer suffers broken ribs and face injuries.

2.30pm: Attempts to smash the doors begin. Some protesters are already in the building.



2.30pm-2.40pm: Some protesters on glass roof. Brawls break out between police and protesters. Pieces of masonry are ripped from the Parliament building and are used by some protesters as weapons.



A disgrace as rioters attack

From Page 1

entrance to Parliament House, but only after 70 to 100 protesters smashed through a souvenir shop to storm the building's foyer.

About 49 people were arrested during running brawls and several people received medical treatment, including a police woman who suffered broken ribs and facial injuries after being pulled out of a police line and kicked on the ground.

The siege immediately crippled the strategy of the ACTU and the Labor Party to defeat the Budget and the Government's industrial reforms.

The union movement and the Labor Opposition had wanted to marshal a large number of groups, including churches and welfare bodies, into a concerted front against the Government.

However, the violence allowed Prime Minister John Howard to imply all opponents to his Budget and legislative program should be discredited as unAustralian.

The Prime Minister used the attack to reinforce his determination to continue with the Government's program.

And Mr Howard demanded ACTU president Jennie George and Opposition Leader Kim Beazley condemn the violence, and accept responsibility for it.

"I want to make it very clear to those involved in that violence, and to the Australian people, that never under any circumstances will my Government buckle to threats of physical violence or behaviour of that kind," he told reporters.

"If anyone imagines behaviour of that kind is going to get the Howard Government to change its mind on anything, then those people are completely mistaken."

ACTU secretary Bill Kelty tried to isolate the violence by calling the main rally one of the most successful in Canberra.

But Mr Howard, after inspecting damage to Parliament House and thanking police, returned outraged to his office for a scheduled meeting with Ms George and Mr Kelty.

The talks began at 3.37pm and Mr Howard told the union leaders he would not discuss matters while under duress, indicating he thought the ACTU leaders responsible.

At 3.44 pm he said: "This meeting is now terminated."

Ms George said after the encounter she was not aware of the details of the incidents because she had been with the main rally below Parliament House.

"Whatever occurred in Parliament House had nothing to do with the organisers of this rally and the ACTU makes it very clear it does not support any incidents of a violent nature," she said.

Mr Beazley said violence had no place in democracy and expressed condolences to those who have been injured in the confrontation.

"I also point out there effectively were two rallies out there today," said Mr Beazley.

"One was 15,000 people from mainstream Australia who listened quietly and calmly to a group of speakers from the Catholic Church, the Uniting Church, all sides of politics bar the Liberals.

"There's a group of about 500 who moved off and attacked Parliament with such lamentable consequences."

Open up or

By MALCOLM FARR
Chief Political Reporter

THE critical moment during yesterday's riot came during a stand-off between police and protesters inside the Parliament House gift shop.

Facing each other through plate class doors, the protesters issued an ultimatum: "Open the door or we will break it down."

Minutes later the doors were shattered by heavy brass bollards and the siege of Capital Hill had breached the parliament's defences.

About 100 protesters made the first break-in by smashing a Perspex window between the heavy doors at the front of the building.

After scrambling into the shop, their access to the building's main foyer was barred by a set of glass doors and a line of police.

The Daily Telegraph's chief photographer Lyndon Michielsen, who was caught in the crush, said many people were cut during the ensuing conflict.

"They managed to bash out the Perspex so that they they could crawl through the window," he said."They then consolidated for about 20 minutes in the souvenir shop and began negotiating with police.

"The protesters said, 'Look, we're going to smash the doors or you can open them. It's your choice'.'

"After a while they just smashed the doors with big brass bollards. The doors broke into really jagged glass, not safety glass.

"So they sat there for about another five minutes because they didn't want to hurt themselves. They then said, 'Oh bugger it. We'll just do it'.

"So everybody rammed into these doors. People brought out jemmies out and sticks and broke away the rest of the glass.

"That was the first incursion inside. That's where a whole lot of people got cut and there was blood on their shirts, from the jagged glass."

The shop, which had just undergone a $50,000 renovation, was trashed and looted during the break-in. It was due to reopen today after several weeks of refurbishment.

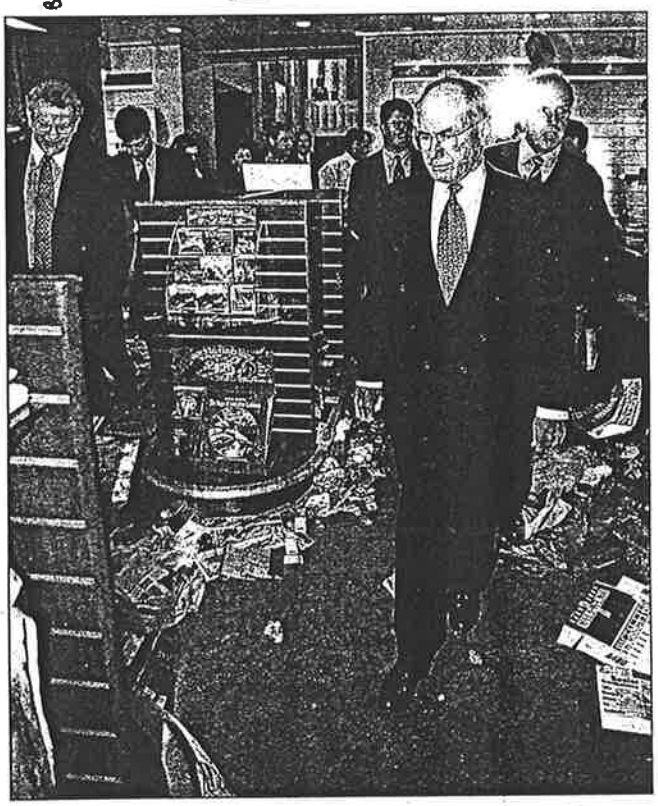
Shop manager Bill Podmore said Japanese customers crouched on the floor during the attack. He said he appealed to the protesters as he tried to protect his staff and stock.

Mr Podmore said some of the protesters appealed for calm within the group, yelling "don't steal anything, we're not thieves".

But the call went unheeded.

Mr Podmore said the chanting protesters were armed with paintbombs and what appeared to be a sledgehammer.

"I tried to placate them, quieten them down, saying that this is



cMr Howard inspects damage to the Parliament House souvenir shop yesterday

PM ordered to stay in office

By CHARLES MIRANDA

PRIME Minister John Howard was given up-to-date details on the state of the riot yesterday as federal police kept guard outside his office.

Mr Howard was told not to leave his office until police had secured the interior of the building fully.

Midway through the parliamentary attack, security officers were told some protesters were believed to be roaming the corridors. Half a dozen protective services officers were posted at each end of Mr Howard's corridor and ordered not to let anyone through.

Mr Howard's office is a considerable distance from the main entrance to the building, but federal police were posted at each entrance into the prime ministerial area.

Mr Howard only left his office to inspect the damage after police and security were convinced it was safe.

Security in the House was doubled last night amid fears of a late night attack by protesters who retired to local pubs after the riot.

Guards were posted on every exit, with pass holders subjected to extra scrutiny.

At the end of the riots, Mr Howard toured the devastation at the front of the people's House.

"I'm sorry we have to meet like this," he said to the manager of the Parliament Shop, Bill Podmore, as they surveyed the ruined business.

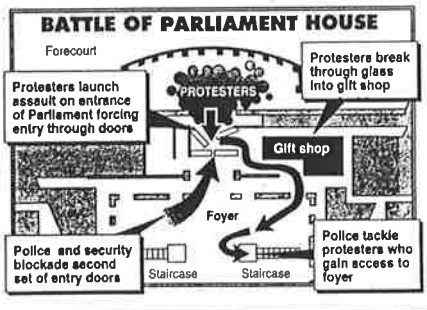


Figure 6.6 Herald Sun, 20/8/96, p.2.

ATTACH TO TALLY SHEET TOKEN
REV. Herald Sun '96 BALL BONANZA
For Bonanza

BONUS token, see P16

ATTACH TO TALLY SHEET TOKEN
REV. Herald Sun '96 BALL BONANZA
For Bonanza

Galaxy future doubt

THE future of pay television service Galaxy and its 117,000 Australian subscribers is in doubt, with crucial refinancing talks breaking down yesterday.

Galaxy's owner and operator, Australis Media Ltd, said talks regarding its financial future had "reached an impasse".

It would continue to try to secure finance but "there can be no assurance that these efforts will be successful".

If Galaxy collapses the future for its subscribers is unclear. Australis' fate also affects more than 100,000 households who receive Galaxy's programming via cable group Foxtel and Australis' regional affiliates, CETV and East Coast Pay Television.

CETV and ECT's owners, US groups United International Holdings and Century Communications respectively, have been talking to Galaxy to ensure they continue to receive programming.

REPORT, Page 27

TV Nanny in charge

WE won't see the proposed V-chip in television sets until at least 2000, but an electronic nanny has been released to restrict children's access to sex and violence.

Parents can program "TV Nanny", from Huge Technology, to regulate the hours children can spend watching TV and which hours they can tune in.



Distress: *Prime Minister John Howard in the wrecked bookshop.*



Aftermath: *police survey the damage after evicting the last protesters.*

Violence erupts

Protesters overwhelm police lines

THE CAUSE

By PAUL MOLLOY

THE first hint of trouble at the ACTU rally came from ACT public service union boss Cath Garvan, who yelled out that police were preventing Aboriginal marchers joining in.

But according to police, the Aboriginal protesters had no intention of joining the 25,000 people on the front lawns of Parliament House.

Instead, hundreds of Aborigines and building workers waving Aboriginal and red union flags sprinted towards a police cordon at the building's front.

Within minutes, the police line was swamped and police retreated into Parliament House as workers, students and Aborigines began banging against the heavy metal and reinforced glass doors.

White paint splattered near the doors and also hit television journalist Laurie Oakes.

Graffiti including the anarchy symbol and the words "Howard Sucks" were daubed on marble and glass.

People yelled obscenities, banged drums and blew whistles while others chanted: "We're coming to get you, Johnny."

Some protesters smashed windows to the parliamentary gift and book shop and about 50 people forced their way in.

Others tried to use a two-wheeled metal trolley from the shop to batter the front doors.

After it failed as a battering ram, it was used to force open four of the Parliament House doors.

The first door gave way and buckled to appreciative roars from protesters after its glass was shattered.

But even with the four doors open, a five-deep wall of police kept most people out despite some of them "crowd surfing".



Inside Parliament House: *police try to round up protesters. Picture: LYNDON MECHIELSEN*

Protesters also climbed to the top of the Parliament entrance and hung Aboriginal and red flags.

Some modified the coat of arms by adding a metal hand "giving the finger" and bearing the word "maggots".

Police reinforcements arrived and, using shields and pushing and pulling the demonstrators, broke up the melee outside the doors.

Blast for renegade group

FEDERAL Opposition industrial relations spokesman Bob McMullan last night said demonstrators who forced their way into the building had nothing to do with the official protest.

"I think it's a great pity that whoever they were took that action but it's nothing to do with the significant and powerful demonstration," he said.

Premier Jeff Kennett declined to comment on the riot but David Edwards, the chief executive of the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said the clash showed extreme union elements remained.

" ... the protest was not about the rights of workers, but had more to do with protecting entrenched union power," he said.

THE REACTION

INSIDE

Herald Sun
VICTORIA'S QUALITY NEWSPAPER

Tuesday, AUGUST 20, 1996

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1.5 MILLION READERS DAILY

NEWS 9



Dead man's terror

MURDERED meat worker Mark Jacobson was in fear of his life when he armed himself with an axe minutes before being killed, his family said. The 24-year-old grabbed the axe after fleeing a pub brawl.

WORLD 24

Sex ring fear

BELGIAN police searching the home of convicted rapist Marc Dutroux for the bodies of missing children fear they may be hunting a murderous gang of pedophiles which extends across Europe.



BUSINESS 29

New focus

KATHY Townsend, Prime Minister John Howard's chief adviser on women's affairs, says a reduction in funding has forced the Office of the Status of Women to re-think its core objectives.



SPORT 66



Still mates

AUSTRALIA'S dual 500cc motorcycle world champion Michael Doohan says there's no ill feeling between himself and Spanish teammate Alex Criville after their dramatic finish in the Czech Republic GP.

RESULTS

TATTSLOTTO: DRAW 1573: 25, 31, 11, 23, 12, 30. Supps: 1, 28. Div 1: (4 winners) $522,049.67. Div 2: $6808. Div 3: $834.10. Div 4: $29.10. Div 5: $13.45. Second Draw: 40, 5, 3, 11, 19, 24. Div 1: (9 winners) $232,022.08.
SUPER 66: 4, 9, 6, 8, 6, 5. No winners. Jackpot: $150,000.
KENO: 7, 16, 21, 26, 27, 29, 31, 33, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 49, 57, 60, 67, 78, 80. Jackpot: $2,126,000.
TATTS 2: 99, 77. Dividend: $638.

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WEATHER

TODAY	TOMORROW	THURSDAY
Clearing: 14	Fine: 16	Fine: 16

The Herald Sun participates in newspaper recycling

Figure 6.7 Herald Sun, 20/8/96, p.3



Sit-in arrested protesters await their fate.



Violence: a policewoman is escorted away in shock.



Smash: a window was broken to provide access.

Blood on the doors

FRONT LINE

By MICHAEL HARVEY

YOU could tell this was serious by the trails of blood leading to Parliament House.

"You just had to go for anyone who wasn't wearing a uniform," said a federal police officer, wiping sweat and blood from his brow.

Another showed me his cracked riot helmet, the legacy of what he claimed was a crowbar attack by a protester.

There, on the marble floor of Parliament House's opulently furnished entrance hall, lay blood-soaked police and protesters receiving first aid and oxygen from harried medical staff.

The events were a dramatic and violent political lesson for a group of frightened primary school children, there for a tour of Parliament House.

The 68 distressed students were ushered away by security staff.

One of the children said she thought some of the protesters wanted to commit suicide by jumping off sections of the building's roof.

The violence flared around the Parliament House gift shop, where the manager faced up to the angry protesters and tried to calm them.

While some listened to his pleas others went wild, "yelling and screaming, ranting and raving", he said. "Then somebody brought out some sort of battering ram and started breaking the glass."

After the mob moved on, the dusty floor was left covered with T-shirts, ripped posters, boomerangs, crumpled flags, Australiana tea-towels, and a forlorn fluffy koala bear.

VOTE LINE

WERE the protesters justified in resorting to violence?
HAVE your say, Page 16

in mob rampage

THE RIOT

By PAUL MOLLOY and MICHAEL HARVEY

RIOTING protesters tried to smash their way into Parliament House in Canberra yesterday in a brutal and unprecedented display of mob violence ahead of tonight's Budget.

At least 60 police were injured and 45 people arrested in scenes of protest attacked by Prime Minister John Howard as "ugly and un-Australian".

Blood was smeared on the marble floors of Parliament House as besieged police struggled for more than two hours to repel up to 2000 frenzied rioters.

The group had broken away from the main rally group of 25,000 people, organised by the ACTU to protest against the Howard Government's industrial relations laws and Budget cuts.

The Parliament House souvenir and gift shop, which was to have reopened today after a $500,000 refurbishment, was last night being patched up after protesters trashed it as they stormed the building.

ACTU leaders, including president Jennie George, denied responsibility for the violence and were angry the mayhem turned their anti-government rally into a public relations disaster.

"Whatever occurred at Parliament House occurred outside the organised auspices of the rally," Ms George said.

But ACTU secretary Bill Kelty last night described it as "the most successful rally in the history of this country".

Australian Federal Police chiefs were considering security options last night amid fears of more angry protests in response to the Budget.

Union leaders predicted further unrest, including a national day of protest on September 10.

The riot cut short a scheduled meeting between Mr Howard, Ms George and Mr Kelty after only seven minutes.

Mr Howard told the union leaders he was not prepared to negotiate under duress.

"Never, under any circumstances will my government buckle to threats of physical violence," the PM said.

Mr Howard said the violence would be "greeted with revulsion" by mainstream Australia.

Opposition Leader Kim Beazley denounced the riot, despite giving his support to the protest organisers' peaceful aims.

"You don't express your anger by knocking over the front doors of Parliament or knocking over policemen," Mr Beazley said.

Australian Federal Police Supt Peter McDonald, who was in charge of the security operation, said police were taken totally by surprise.

"We weren't expecting violence at all, this was supposed to be a peaceful demonstration," he said.

A number of police officers needed treatment to their eyes after being bombarded with a mixture of paint and urine. One officer suffered a dislocated knee.

A female AFP officer was in hospital last night with broken ribs after allegedly being punched and kicked.

EDITORIAL, Page 16



Mob rule: an angry tide of protesters storms the front of Parliament House. Picture: MICHAEL JONES

Hotheads play into hands of Howard

Comment

Tony Parkinson



THE protesters who smashed their way into Federal Parliament succeeded only in strengthening the hand of the Howard Government in the lead-up to tonight's Budget.

The Prime Minister will still have to answer for any broken promises. But, after yesterday's ugly violence, his political opponents in the union movement are having to answer for broken ribs, shattered glass, trashing looting and an affront to democracy.

The yobbo tactics of a minority at the ACTU-organised rally should have caused acute embarrassment to the union leadership and the Opposition.

Instead, ACTU secretary Bill Kelty hailed it as the "most successful rally in the nation's history" — a laughable claim were it not such a sick joke.

While the ACTU bosses and Opposition Leader Kim Beazley cannot be held responsible legally for the actions of a few hundred hotheads, John Howard left no doubt he intended to make them pay politically.

The ACTU leadership tried to wash their hands of the incident but the trouble-makers were in Canberra at the ACTU's urging. A Melbourne union official was seen leading the charge.

The violence was a public relations catastrophe for Mr Beazley.

He had sought to portray the event as a genuine outpouring of community anxiety over Budget cuts and labor market reforms.

In reality, it was a political stunt — an attempted show of strength by organised labor. It backfired horribly.

For nothing could be more calculated to offend middle Australia, the voters Labor must recapture, than blood on the floor, literally, of the nation's parliamentary showpiece.

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itself, it shows no urgency of movement and no action on the part of the police. Three additional, small colour photographs on the page immediately above this large crowd scene increase the likelihood that readers will interpret the image as being consistent with the 'crisis' interpretation of the newspaper. These additional images of arrested protesters, an injured policewoman and protesters entering through a window provide anchorage for the dominant discussion of the protest as a violent mob assault. Images, captions and headlines on page two provide additional evidence to support this preferred interpretation. (This double-age spread is discussed further in Chapter Seven in relation to its narrative construction of events.)

The same image of the protesters outside Parliament House was also printed on the front page of the *Mercury* as an inset into the main image of the policeman leading away a bloodied protester and beside a small headline "Senseless rage that erupted into a riot to stun Australia". The main headline read "House of shame". Here the image works to locate the violence as occurring at Parliament House and to provide evidence of the attack even though the image itself does not show such actions. The *Mercury* also printed another section of the same image, a detail of the crowd at the doors, on page three. This detail of people crowded closely together with placards and banners and others above them leaning out from windows increased the impression of a siege, specifically that Parliament House had been forcibly entered and overtaken by demonstrators.

Eleven out of the twelve major Australian daily newspapers examined, use the news frame of violent riot to organise their front-page reports of the Cavalcade to Canberra. The 'riot' was the leading story in the Australian broadsheets and the sole-front page story in most of the tabloid press. This coverage was consistent across the three news companies—News Limited, Fairfax Press and Rural Press. Front-page photographs featured repeated images of struggle, the threat or act of property destruction, and the result of violence, as in bloodied faces and arrest. The people shown in the major front-page images were almost exclusively male and most photographs contained signifiers of unionism, most notably the CFMEU, and Aboriginality. The *Financial Review* was the exception to this pattern, being the sole paper to give its leading headline to another matter—the federal budget. The

photograph it printed on its front page, whilst it conformed to the pattern of showing signifiers of unionism and Aboriginality, did so in the form of flags over the Australian coat of arms (Figure 6.9 below). It rejected the imagery of physical confrontation preferred by other papers in favour of a cool, but potent, metaphor of a *coup d'état*.

The repeated use of a limited number of photographs means certain images become a synecdoche for the whole Cavalcade to Canberra event. This is particularly so in the instance of photograph 16 and photograph 15 (Figures 6.1 and 6.2). The paradigm of violent destruction into which these images fit was further consolidated by the choice of headlines, sub-headings, captions and pull-quotes. Terms such as 'violence', 'disgrace', and 'un-Australian' were repeated across both broadsheet and tabloid front-pages. The scale of the outrage and its newsworthiness were extended by the repeated use of the Prime Minister's definition of the event within front-page coverage.

Damage Scenes: Evidence of the Extent of 'Their' Deviance

There were another three photographs which were reproduced many times. These three were all printed four times on internal pages to support or document background parts of the story and to indicate the negative effects of the demonstration. They show the Prime Minister in the wrecked bookshop (photograph 17 Figure 6.6), an injured woman police officer being supported by another woman (photograph 21 Figure 6.7) and ACTU secretary Bill Kelty and president Jenny George leaving Parliament House after Howard had cancelled his meeting with them (photograph 24 Figure 6.8). Their content and placement summarise and stress particular story elements. The photo of the Prime Minister in the wrecked bookshop belongs directly in the tradition of heads of state visiting disaster scenes and war zones. These kinds of images indicate the gravity of the situation to the audience and that despite the disruption the head of state is firmly in control, and life will go on pretty much as normal. The personal attention of the leader indicates his compassion, on behalf of all citizens, for those who are suffering loss. It implies a pledge that justice will be done and the perpetrators (if there are any) will be brought

to justice. These kinds of appearances are regarded as good opportunities for such leaders to boost their popularity with locals and with audiences who generally approve of politicians getting out of their well-appointed offices and mixing with ordinary people. In this case the Prime Minister was still in his normal place of work but in other ways the incident provided him with an opportunity to show leadership, responsibility, compassion (to the bookshop owner and staff and the police and security staff who were involved in the defence of Parliament House). He also took the opportunity to strongly condemn the attempt to enter Parliament House as 'bad' and 'unAustralian' thereby positioning himself on the side of 'good' as in the national interest. This opposition also established a political advantage over the ACTU, which had organised the protest, for having 'allowed' it to get out of hand. The newspaper reports repeated these oppositions, extended and consolidated the Prime Minister's interpretation of events with their own, similar, comments in editorials. In the news reports of the events of the day the Prime Minister appears in control, determined that law and order would prevail and compassionate to the victims of violence. He epitomizes the qualities of successful leadership. In contrast the unionists appear out of control and their leaders appear to be weak, irresponsible, unable to maintain control of their members, and to have poor political judgement. The unionists appear to be determined to overthrow law and order and to use violence against anyone or anything in their way.

The photos of injured police officers support the reports of injuries to numerous police with visual evidence and also utilise a gender opposition in addition to the opposition of unionists versus the state. The photos of protesters are overwhelmingly of men and in all the images of violence or direct confrontation the protesters are men (see further discussion on gender below and in Chapter Seven). The photo of the injured police officer that was printed four times shows an injured female officer being supported and led away by another woman (photograph 21, Figure 6.7). This image invokes sympathy for the police in multiple ways. Firstly, it calls attention to their injuries (ignoring those to protesters). Secondly, it shows an injured *female* officer suggesting that the victims were women officers. Thirdly, the violence to women police is alleged to have been caused by male unionists—indeed, there is an allegation that some protesters deliberately targeted women officers

(Martin 1996a, *Bulletin*; also Byrnes 1996, *FPAJ*). This suggestion builds on social fears about gendered violence. Fourthly, in combination with the text, it suggests a mentality of mob violence prevailed which increases the register of horror and aberration attached to the events and therefore its newsworthiness. There were also two more images of injured police published in newspapers.[22] One (photograph 4, printed twice) depicts the Prime Minister checking the condition of an injured male police officer and another (photograph 12, printed once) depicts a male officer leaning his head on his shield.

The other image that was printed four times was that of Jennie George and Bill Kelty leaving Parliament House after the Prime Minister had cancelled their talks (24, Figure 6.8). In this image George has her head bowed as she walks and Kelty is looking past her at someone or something out of frame ahead of them. This image was the only one published of non-violent unionists but it is one suggestive of defeat, shame or a problem still to be resolved. As the ACTU's leaders, the two are held responsible by several editorials and by the Prime Minister, if not for the actual violence then at least for having established the circumstances in which it occurred. The image, as published, works to put a face to the ACTU and provides faces to blame. The captions, such as: "ACTU heavyweights Bill Kelty and Jennie George leave Parliament House after the rally yesterday" (*Australian* 20/8/1996 p.2); and "ACTU leaders Bill Kelty and Jennie George leave Parliament after being told by Mr Howard that he is no longer prepared to hold a scheduled meeting with them" (*Daily Telegraph* 1996c p.3); reinforce the tone of disgrace and defeat suggested in the posture and framing.

[22] A further, and important image of police injuries was featured on the cover of the *Bulletin* magazine. As this was not published in the daily press it is discussed in the following chapter in relation to the narrative construction of male violence (Figure 7.2).

Figure 6.8 Courier Mail, 20/8/96, p.5 detail.

DAY OF ACTION



SURVEYING the damage . . . Prime Minister John Howard walks through the Parliament Shop after it was ransacked by protesters yesterday.



A POLICE officer is moved away from the frontline after protesters breached the cordon and entered the foyer.



ACTU secretary Bill Kelty and president Jennie George leave after the PM cut short a meeting with them.



ENTRY gained . . . protesters climb through a smashed window to enter a corridor in Parliament House.

How rally turned to riot

9.30am: The first protesters arrive and set up camp on the front lawns.

Noon: About 6000 people are assembled on the lawns, listening to bands and occasional speeches.

12.30pm: Police stop 2000 protesters against Aboriginal funding from joining those on the lawns. The crowd becomes angry, chanting "let them through".

12.35pm: The group instead heads up the forecourt, towards the doors. They are quickly followed by another group carrying Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union banners.

12.40pm: About 4000 protesters are now at the doors.

1pm: As more protesters arrive, they become confused as to whether to head for the lawns or the doors. Many head for the doors.

1.30pm: Union leaders addressing the crowd on the lawns begin to urge those at the doors to come back to the lawns. Police are already battling violence and a woman officer suffers broken ribs and face injuries.

Riot police arrive.

2pm: The crowd at the doors burns effigies of Prime Minister John Howard and Employment and Education Minister Amanda Vanstone.

2.30pm: Attempts to smash the doors begin in earnest. Some protesters have already made it into the building, hung banners around the facade and climbed on to the glass portico roof.

Brawls break out between police and protesters as pieces of masonry are ripped from the building to be used as weapons.

Between 2.40pm and 3pm: The doors are smashed and protesters flood into the foyer. Many are cut as they are crushed against broken glass and several pass out from lack of oxygen.

Inside, terrified Asian tourists weep, and Parliament House workers run from the foyer to the safety of other areas.

Police dogs are brought in to help with crowd control.

The Parliament shop is looted and new fights start with police.

Shortly after 3pm: The crowd is finally pushed back by police, who rescure the doors.

Most of the crowd disperses.

'Caught in the Act': The CFMEU and Images of Unionism Gone Feral.[23]

The selection of press images for publication that included CFMEU logos and flags (see Tables 6.1, 6.2, 6.3 photographs 1, 3, 8, 10, 15, 18, 19, 25, 26, 34) is significant in light of the fact that most newspaper reports and the comments by the Australian Federal Police blamed CFMEU members for the violence.

In several of the Cavalcade to Canberra news reports the tactics and culture of the CFMEU have been taken to stand for *all* unionism and *all* unionists. A hierarchy of militant unionism has been constructed, to some extent with complicit CFMEU support, in which the CFMEU is positioned as the *most* dangerous and anti-social of all unions.[24] However, the CFMEU is not typical of all unions, which are quite diverse in their characteristics. Nor are the practices and the culture of the CFMEU synonymous with the style or practices of the ACTU, which as a peak council, represents a wide diversity of unions.[25]

Analysis of the media representations of Cavalcade to Canberra demonstrates that although the press could have offered various images and performances of unionism, in fact it focused on one mode of unionism—that expressed through the actions of the rioters—to the almost total exclusion of all other peaceful demonstrators. The CFMEU was only *one* of many unions that brought a contingent of its members to the Canberra demonstration. However, through the front-page

[23] The front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 31 August 1996 led with the headline 'Caught: union officials in the thick of Parliament riot'.

[24] The Construction, Forestry, Mining, and Energy Union (CFMEU) was formed during the 1980s through the amalgamation of several separate, smaller construction and energy unions, nearly all of which were allied to particular (although different) Left political factions and/or parties. Some of these original unions—such as the Builders Labourers' Federation (BLF) and Building Workers Industrial Union (BWIU)—had a history of bitter rivalry. Each also had their own traditions of militancy and had been, over the years, bitterly attacked by the press, employers and conservatives as 'rogue unions' for their politics and their industrial tactics. The development of a 'super-union' in the construction and energy industries was feared by many business interests because of the power it would wield. The CFMEU was one of the two key targets of Coalition attacks on union power. The other was the Maritime Union of Australia which in 1997-98 the Government argued was the most dangerous union and the most damaging to the national interest. This demonisation was necessary to develop public sympathy for a concerted Government and employer attack on the MUA which culminated when Patrick's Stevedores sacked its entire unionised workforce in April 1998.

[25] Indeed, ACTU senior-vice-president Greg Sword notes that "Union [officials], whatever [faction] [sic] they are, tend to reflect the culture of the unions they represent" (Sword in Marris 1996d). He observes that "the building industry around the world is like it is here", it is a "distinctive culture which demands its own response".

images of CFMEU slogans, banners and T-shirts in the thick of the struggle, and the repeated references to CFMEU banners, flags and caps, the CFMEU became a synecdoche for readers to understand the union movement as a whole. The modes of strategic unionism and social unionism were largely omitted from the coverage of Cavalcade to Canberra. (For example Bill Kelty and Jennie George had previously scheduled a meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss their concerns with the Bill. It was that meeting that Howard cancelled.)

The CFMEU is a blue-collar, left-wing union which is associated with industrial militancy, political radicalism and communism. Union commentators note that both politicians and media commentators invoke the CFMEU to justify the categorisation of unions and unionists as 'bullies' and 'thugs' (see for example Sword cited in Marris 1996d; True 1999). In considering media representations of the CFMEU, and the CFMEU as 'typifying' Australian unionism, it is useful to understand something of the industrial and cultural history of that union and its antecedents. It is also relevant to note that different audiences might read references to the CFMEU in news reports differently. Representations which one audience might see as 'demonising' the CFMEU, another might see as being typical of the obstructionist nature of all unions, and yet another might regard as indicative of their heroic and potent outsider status.

The symbolic linkage of construction industry workers to revolutionary politics, physical violence and other forms of 'feral' masculinities has been used by conservative media journalists and political commentators for political purposes for many decades. At the same time, it is also a representational repertoire employed by these workers and unionists themselves. Men in low status blue-collar occupations, with little control over their work, often develop physical strength and militant unionism as vehicles for an expression of a more powerful and agentic gender identity (Willis 1978). Union commentators have noted that the low status of the work, lack of control over the work, the short-term and often dangerous nature of the work performed by members of this union (particularly in the construction industry) have contributed to an internal union culture of willingness to take swift and direct action in protection of members' rights (Sword in Marris 1996d).

CFMEU members are also seen as taking pride in their physical strength and their willingness to use that physical strength in support of their beliefs and demands. This is reflected in the Builders Labourers' slogan 'dare to struggle, dare to win' and their chant, which was widely used during the Canberra protest, 'we're angry, we're loud, we're union and we're proud'. The pride in militancy and in the union's reputation for industrial 'trouble' is visible also in the way the union frequently marches in solid blocks at demonstrations and rallies wearing T-shirts emblazoned with slogans such as 'Dare to struggle, dare to win'. (One key reason CFMEU members were so identifiable in photographs of the struggle was their custom of wearing the union insignia in various forms.) The union itself and its members (most evidently in its construction division) appear to consciously invoke the connotations of trouble and (industrial) threat in their political demands, industrial actions, and consequent media representations. In these ways their appearance and tactics resonate with historical images of revolutionary marches and demonstrations for justice. In the contemporary Australian context, however, they also resonate with large gatherings of motorcycle clubs or 'gangs' with whom their appearance and behaviour is periodically compared. These characteristics and tactics are repeatedly represented by the media and political opponents of the union as bullying, dangerous, a threat to civic order and as criminal (Ward 1995).

The political and media representations of the CFMEU as 'trouble' and of individual members as 'macho' might be read with pleasure by some members, officials and workers in similar industries. At the same time the implications of criminal, deviant or feral masculinities may cause concern to some officials, within other unions and to the ACTU officialdom, who sometimes regard them as damaging to the credibility and public image of unionism and its goals. As noted below, this disagreement over tactics and modes of negotiation is both a lived political struggle and a representational one, as CFMEU members are reported as feeling that the ACTU and other unions are holding building workers back from achieving improved wages and conditions in the construction industry (*Resist* August 1996).

Similarities and Differences in Reporting Across Competing News Groups

The Fairfax Press newspapers demonstrated similar, although less sensationalised, characteristics in its reporting to those of the News Limited papers. One of its three daily papers, the *Financial Review,* adopted a relatively low-key approach to its coverage of the events and only published one photograph of the event (see discussion above). This approach is consistent with its preferred image as a paper that provides an unsensational and 'responsible' analysis of business and political issues. The *Financial Review* features a contemporary design style including greater use of blank space than the usual busy and cluttered layout of tabloid papers. It reflects the style of magazines aimed at a young urban professional market used to the conventions and techniques of contemporary graphic design. The *Financial Review* has adopted a 'cool' self-conscious graphic design and photographic style which often uses irony and metaphor to communicate its news. Their photographs often utilise the style of contemporary photographic art rather than the 'photograph as evidence' style of the tabloids (an example of what Barthes (1977) termed 'aestheticism'). The design of the *Financial Review* suggests that it assumes its readership to be visually literate and conversant with contemporary design styles as well as financial and political issues. The *Financial Review* is also known for its use of photographs shot from unusual angles, featuring greater detail or texture than is conventional for newspaper photographs. The style of the *Financial Review* indicates that it presumes its audience to have a greater degree of symbolic and cultural knowledge than is assumed by other tabloid and broadsheet papers. It typically shows a detail of the scene and expects the reader to be able to supply the remainder of the information.

The *Financial Review's* selection and framing of photographs frequently reflects the conventions of the photograph as art object rather than as press 'evidence'. The *Financial Review* chose only one photograph of the Canberra demonstrations (photograph 3, Figure 6.9), which it printed on the front-page. This symbolic, politically and emotionally charged image shows banners on the roof of Parliament House hanging over the coat of arms. The position of the banners and flags, which are draped over and hung from the national coat of arms, could suggest a *coup d'état*. The image, which foregrounds the stainless steel structure and infrastructure

Figure 6.9 Financial Review, 20/8/96, p.1.

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FINANCIAL REVIEW

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Australis offer

US-based franchisees of Australis Media have come up with a last-minute $US125 million funding offer aimed at thwarting Mr Kerry Packer. The Australis board was negotiating last night with its franchisees and Mr Packer's Publishing and Broadcasting. *Companies, Page 19.* **Chanticleer,** *Back Page.*

Microsoft hiccups

A bug in its web browser is one of a series of hiccups that have set back Microsoft's bid to dominate the Internet. *Information, Page 37*

The Perot factor

In a tightening two-way race for the US presidency, billionaire Mr Ross Perot's candidacy could split the anti-Clinton vote. **Michael Stutchbury** reports. *World, Page 12*

Small business

The small business sector is still the driving force of the economy. But it feels it has been shunned by a Federal Government which promised a lot in the election campaign. *A nine-page special Small Business report begins on page 27*

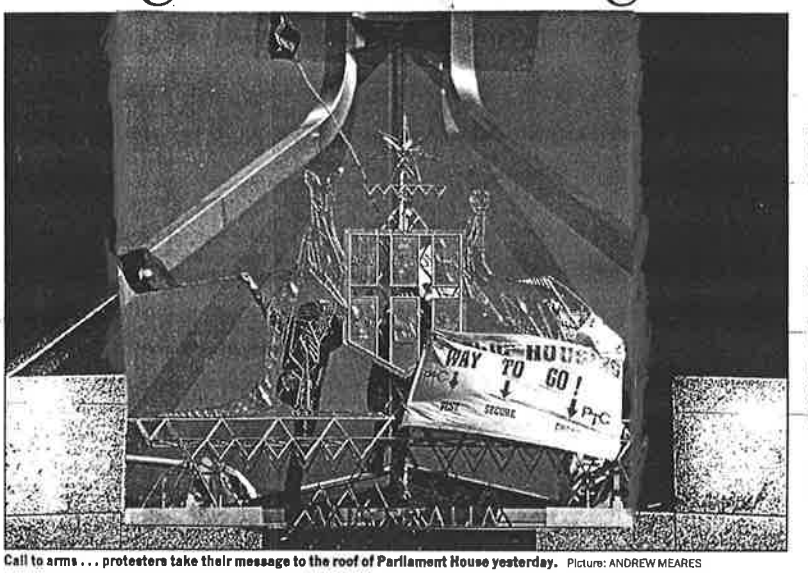
Wavy bottom line

The latest batch of company results yesterday produced a mixed bag. *Companies, Pages 19-23*

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Budget 96: the big test ... gets early tick from the markets



Call to arms ... protesters take their message to the roof of Parliament House yesterday. Picture: ANDREW MEARES

Louise Dodson and Katharine Murphy

The Howard Government today faces its most important test so far as it unveils a Budget that it hopes will deliver a credible fiscal strategy and relief for middle Australia.

The Government's first Budget will not only aim to cut $8 billion over two years, but will be dramatically reformist, designed to bring government services into step with the nation's increasingly globalised economy.

But it is being brought down against a background of growing social division and industrial unrest.

Parliament House in Canberra was occupied for over 2½ hours yesterday in one of the largest and most violent demonstrations ever seen in the Parliament.

Twenty thousand trade unionists and representatives of Aboriginal, student and community groups protested against Budget cutbacks, proposed industrial relations reforms and the likely sale of public assets.

The protest prompted an immediate response from the Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, who declared that the Government would never "buckle to threats of physical violence or behaviour of that kind".

Yet Government advisers are aware of the difficulty of securing public acceptance of the Budget as well as that of the financial markets, and of controlling the political process of negotiating it through the Senate.

"Phase one is over; now we've got the process of getting it implemented,"

Continued page 4

COSTELLO'S BUDGET – YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE

■ Tomorrow's *AFR* will carry Australia's most comprehensive and informed Budget coverage. Our 24-page liftoff will feature a detailed breakdown of the first Costello Budget and analysis of what it means for business, the economy and the nation. It will bring you all the reaction from industry, markets and overseas, including the results of an exclusive survey of 750 senior business people.

■ **Tom Burton** investigates the political impact.

■ **Michelle Grattan** on what the Budget tells us about the Howard Government.

■ **Alan Deans** on the implications for business.

■ **Alan Mitchell** analyses the effect on the economy.

■ Plus: **Robert Haupt, Malcolm McGregor, John Stone, Peter Walsh, Brian Toohey.**

■ *Costello's Budget – reports, page 4*

■ *Editorial, Opinion – pages 16, 17*

Andreea Papuc and Mark Joanes

Financial markets rallied yesterday, thanks to hopes that today's Federal Budget would send a confident signal for long-term growth.

The sharemarket overcame its recent lethargy, the All Ordinaries Index rising 28 points to close at 2261. The Australian dollar climbed by almost three-quarters of a US cent, trading above US79¢ for the first time in about a month. Bond yields fell by about 16 basis points on expectations that the public borrowing program would be cut.

"We are looking at Costello bringing a Budget that overseas markets will view favourably," said Mr Richard Close, head of research at Schroder Investment Management. "Domestic [share] buying was anticipating that."

Money market analysts were reluctant to predict a cut in interest rates, preferring to highlight the long-term potential of policy changes.

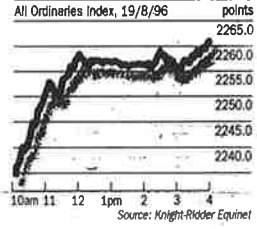
"Investors realise the Budget is not going to be a friendly, fuzzy Budget, but it will attack the problems," Mr Derek Price, corporate foreign exchange manager at National Australia Bank, said.

Mr Andrew Ticehurst, fixed interest analyst at Macquarie Bank, emphasised the potential for lower public borrowing to produce a lower current account deficit and a lower risk premium on Australian assets.

"The near-term implications for short-term rates are minimal from this Budget," Mr Ticehurst said.

■ *Market action – page 41*

THE BOURSE HAS BOLTED



Source: Knight-Ridder Equinet

Asian engagement can end in a messy divorce

Peter Hartcher Asia-Pacific Editor

When Mr Geoff Smith realised that the Japanese buyer of his Gold Coast hotel site was not going to honour the $28 million sale contract, he did something no Australian had done before.

After spending four years winning a Queensland Supreme Court order directing the Japanese firm to pay up, Mr Smith exercised his right to have the judgement enforced in the courts of Japan.

Australians have had this option for over 30 years under government agreements, but the spirited Mr Smith is the first to test it.

"Every client of mine who's thought about it has been put off by the costs I have quoted," says lawyer Mr Mark Chapple of Baker & McKenzie. "Legal costs in Japan are very high."

Mr Smith and his tiny Fernwood Management Pty Ltd would have fallen into this category, too, but for the decision of his bank, Westpac, to help fund the case against a big Japanese house builder, Sanwa Home Co Ltd.

Getting the judgement recognised in Japan should be simple – there is no need for another court investigation of the matter but simply a swift move to enforce the Australian finding against the parent firm in Tokyo.

But after two years in the Tokyo District Court and $300,000 in legal costs in Japan – taking the total delay to six years and legal costs to $1.3 million – the pace of progress is excruciating.

And Mr Smith's Japanese lawyers say that it might take another three

Continued page 11



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of the flagpole and coat of arms, has a cool aesthetic quality that belies the so-called objectivity of the photograph. Metaphorically the image suggests the take-over of Parliament House by the demonstrators. In this representation the *Financial Review* front-page coverage contrasts sharply with other papers. It downplays the physical confrontation, in contrast to all other front-page images, which featured riotous protesters, property damage and violence. Rather than describing it as a 'take-over' by the 'mob' the caption implies acknowledgement of a democratic right to protest, while also marking it as a "call to arms".

The two other Fairfax owned newspapers, the *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, each carried six identical sensational photographs (photographs number 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7) with the *Age* printing one additional image (photograph 3). One of these photographs featured on both front pages. (An almost identical image was published on the front page of the Launceston *Examiner* owned by Rural Press). This image (photograph 6 Figure 6.10) shows protesters in the foyer of Parliament House with their hands extended defensively or threateningly towards police, as though fending them off or alternatively as though the protesters are about to attack. Whereas the protestors in the background have their arms extended towards the police with their palms open in a gesture which seems to maintain distance between the two groups the protestor in the foreground has one hand on the chest of the officer opposite him. The protestor's other hand is drawn back near his own chest in the lower left corner of the photo. It is holding a rag or handkerchief (he has blood dripping from a cut to his forehead). He is the same demonstrator whose face appeared prominently across many newspapers (discussed earlier) as he was led away apparently under arrest. The position of this hand also suggests that a punch might be about to be thrown right across the foreground of the photograph, in front of (our) the viewer's eyes. The officer opposite him, in contrast, appears to have his hands in his pockets or held close to his body, in an image of stoic restraint. The officer in the foreground is the dominant male in the image. He is the largest, he wears the cap of authority and others are watching him. In the light of the headline 'Parliament besieged' he is the protector of the law and holds back the hordes of similar protesters. Thus readers are encouraged to identify with this police officer as the holder of authority and might associate their own civic protection

Figure 6.10 Age, 20/8/96, p.1.

THE AGE

TUESDAY 20 AUGUST 1996

80c



They had come to Canberra in their thousands to protest peacefully against the Howard Government. But within hours an angry mob had stormed Parliament House, leaving a trail of destruction.



Parliament besieged

- Un-Australian, says Howard
- 49 arrested

By INNES WILLOX, Canberra

The Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, has condemned yesterday's storming of Parliament House as "un-Australian and ugly" as union leaders and the ALP disowned themselves from the violence.

Police used batons, dogs and riot shields to turn back hundreds of demonstrators who broke away from a rally to protest against the Government's industrial relations legislation.

Police made 49 arrests and said nine officers had suffered injuries in the fight by demonstrators, who used iron stakes, sledgehammers and metal barricading items to break down two sets of doors in their effort to break through police lines.

Parliament House's foyer was covered with blood, paint, shattered glass and protest signs after police in riot gear quelled the demonstrators' attack following a mob having almost two hours.

About 70 of the 300 police battling with the demonstrators were injured, including two who were treated in hospital for broken ribs.

Parliament's gift shop was trashed when about 50 protesters flooded there was in an effort to outflank police at the front doors.

The violence began when a group of flag-waving Aboriginal demonstrators, joined by unionists, broke away from the main body of about 20,000 being addressed by the ACTU president, Ms Jenny George, and the Opposition leader, Mr Kim Beazley.

Ms George said union leaders were not responsible for the violence, while the ACTU secretary, Mr Bill Kelty, said the turnout meant the demonstration was "the most successful rally in the history of this country".

Mr Howard presided over a meeting with rally leaders after only seven minutes following an inspection of the damaged foyer, where shot frames hung under the protesters' weight.

He said the violence was "un-Australian and ugly" and vowed that his Government would not buckle to the demands of protesters on today's Budget or on industrial relations plans.

"It is a very sad and unhappy day in the life of the Australian Parliament, and those responsible for today's events should feel utterly ashamed of themselves," he said.

"I don't believe for a moment that those people who stormed their way into Parliament House in any way represent the feelings of mainstream Australia. I think what they did this afternoon will be greeted with revulsion by mainstream Australia."

Ms George said she told Mr Howard she resented his interference that the ACTU was responsible for the violence.

Mr Beazley distanced himself from the violence, which he said reflected "real distress, real public anger" at the Government's Budget and industrial plans. "We don't express your anger by knocking over the front doors of Parliament or knocking over policemen," he said.

PAGE A4 More reports





Front line: After smashing through the front doors of Parliament House, angry protesters — some the worse for wear — confront police blocking their path. Picture: NEIL BOWDEN

$1.5b boost for youth jobs

By MARY BARVA and LAURA TINGLE

A $1.5 billion apprenticeship training scheme will be the centrepiece of a package aimed at combating youth unemployment to be announced in today's Budget by the Treasurer, Mr Peter Costello.

The Modernised Apprenticeship and Traineeship System package is one of three initiatives the Government hopes will be seen by the electorate as fulfilling its "core" campaign commitments to families, small business, and unemployed youth.

The youth package, devised by the Minister for Schools, Vocational Education and Training, Dr David Kemp, will also give schools a significant funding boost.

It includes a 5 per cent increase — about $130 million — in funding to schools through specific purpose payments for the 1996-97 financial year.

To end the youth-unemployment treasuries along with education pressures on health and health-assistance tax relief, the Government will announce spending cuts and new revenue measures totalling more than $4 billion in 1996-97, and some measures planned for next year's Budget.

Businesses hit by a collapse of confidence in recent months will look anxiously to the Budget forecast for economic growth which former Treasury forecaster Mr Chris Murphy last night predicted could be slashed from 4 per cent to less than 3 per cent.

The Budget is also expected to outline plans for a big sell-off from the Commonwealth's $30 billion property portfolio as a result of a review of commercial property holdings.

The highly politicised Budget will hit groups perceived to have prospered under the Labor Government. It has already announced cuts to the Aboriginal affairs and ABC budgets.

However, the Government will strongly argue the equity of its cuts by saying that both high-income earners and business groups will be losers from the changes.

The Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, says the Budget "will be about the Australian mainstream reclaiming its right to the concerns and the decisions and the consideration of the Government in this country" and will be an "opportunity to draw a line under the first five months" of government.

The Budget would tackle the country's debt problem, he said, but in a "compassionate way that doesn't undermine the essential social fabric of this country.

"We're not in the business of bashing around the vulnerable. We're also not in the position of unfairly advantaging the greedy," he said.

Mr Howard has already announced the Government will deliver its family tax package and private health insurance rebates.

PAGE A2: More reports.

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

- $1.5 billion apprenticeship scheme
- $150 million extra for schools
- Sale of government properties
- Government delivers promise on family tax package
- Delivers private health insurance rebates
- Government breaks promise by introducing two-tier Medicare levy

Ablett and Carey let off, but a Bear goes

Football superstars Gary Ablett and Wayne Carey were exonerated by the AFL Tribunal last night but Fitzbear, readying for its first home final, had dynamic forward Darryl White suspended for two weeks for kicking.

Adam's Geelong teammate and 1989 Brownlow medallist, Paul Couch, also escaped punishment.

Carey, the North Melbourne captain, took the unusual step of submitting a declaration pleading his innocence to striking Jason McCartney.

Ablett was charged with tripping Robert Powell, but the tribunal accepted his statement that he was attempting to bump the Richmond player.

PAGE C3: Full report

The quest for light.



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with his fate. The image is one of direct confrontation between the intimidating protester/unionist against the Law/police. It clearly positions 'them' (the protesters) against 'us' (the police, the law, the nation). The space between the two sides positions the reader in this 'gap' in the middle of the photo. The gaze of two of the police officers in the background is directed at this central confrontation. The male officer is watching the male protester in the foreground ready to intervene on his colleague's behalf should the need arise. The woman officer in the centre rear of the photo is watching the officer under threat. Her gaze evokes an empathetic response. Will he be all right? Will he protect her? The effect of these concentrated gazes interpellates the reader within the group of police against the protesters (who are threatening 'our' security and 'our' national Parliament). The reader/viewer is positioned in the frontline of the confrontation through this image. A feeling of anxiety for the safety of the officer in the foreground, and for 'our' own safety from the threat of these angry thugs is created by the combination of the photograph, the headlines and the layout. This image emphasises the violence of the event in a similar degree to that of News Limited's coverage.

Another significant common element of the coverage is the presence of the signifiers of Aboriginality. Signifiers of Aboriginality, in the form of an Aboriginal flag on jacket of the protester in the foreground, and of unionism, in the form of badges and T-shirts, can be found on the front pages of both the *Age* (Figure 6.10) and the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Figure 6.11) as well as on the front pages of News Limited's papers *Herald Sun* (Figure 6.1), *Daily Telegraph* (Figure 6.2), *Courier Mail*, *Advertiser*, *Australian*, *Mercury* and *West Australian* (Figure 6.4). These Fairfax papers also conform to the pattern of including crowd shots, visual evidence of attempts to break down the doors to Parliament House, police injuries and Aboriginal protesters (both Fairfax papers printed the image of an Aboriginal protester in a police headlock, photograph 2). Both major news groups developed the theme of community outrage at this 'wanton destruction' caused by anti-social elements of unionists and Aboriginals. Both characterise the actions as 'unAustralian'. However, although the *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* conform to the general pattern of reporting of the New Limited press, there are some significant differences. Both these papers are broadsheets and their convention of including

several stories on the front page introduces some demands on the reader/viewer for rational analysis of this event in the context of other news events. The tabloids, in contrast, (particularly the *Herald Sun*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Mercury*) devote their front pages to extending an invitation to the reader to identify with their simple, emotional headlines ('Un-Australian', 'A Disgrace' and 'House of Shame').

The *Sydney Morning Herald* (*SMH*) downplays the violence of the event in its headlines and concentrates on its political implications (Figure 6.11). Its lead story is 'Govt admits jobless may rise' with the 'riot' story and photograph taking second place under the headline 'Batons used as rioters storm Parliament'.[26] However, the colour photograph of the confrontation spans six of the eight columns across the top of the page immediately beneath the 'jobless' headline. This prominence indicates the high news value of the story. The image (photograph 1 Figure 6.11) depicts the two sides of the struggle to gain control of the front doors of Parliament House with the doors themselves central to the image. The left-hand side of the image shows the demonstrators focussed on attempting to force the doors open. Three CFMEU logos are visible on caps and T-shirts and there are two red flags amongst the crowd. On the right-hand side of the image Parliament House security staff in plain clothes and uniformed police attempt to hold the doors closed. The view of this group is interfered with slightly by the reflections of flash units on the glass but the focus and urgency is clear. The centre of the image is filled with the doors and two rows of hands on either side. Once again the viewer is positioned in the centre of that struggle, 'our' safety and future hinges on that result. The *SMH* also features a small colour photograph of the demonstrators facing a line of police discussed above (photograph 6, Figure 6.11). Overall the story fills less than half of the *SMH* front page.

The *Age*, in contrast to the *SMH*, gives the primary front-page headline to the Canberra demonstration (Figure 6.10). Its front-page composition features two small colour images in the top right and left corners (photographs 5 and 7) on either side of a summary which reads: "They had come to Canberra in their thousands to

[26] A connection could be made between the two stories as a rise in unemployment is often the precursor to increased social discord. The 'riot', a key example of social discord, could be seen as a prediction of increased social conflict to come.

Figure 6.11 Sydney Morning Herald, 20/8/96, p.1.

The Sydney Morning Herald

TUESDAY, AUGUST 20, 1996 — No. 49,559 FIRST PUBLISHED 1831 60 PAGES 80c*

TOMORROW

Budget 96

COMPLETE COVERAGE 16-PAGE LIFTOUT

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COMPUTER LIFTOUT: MICROSOFT v NETSCAPE: THE BATTLE FOR NET SUPREMACY

Govt admits jobless may rise

COLUMN 8

By MICHAEL MILLETT and MARK RILEY

The Federal Government has admitted that a radical overhaul of job training schemes to be outlined in today's Budget may lead to increased unemployment and a higher incidence of fraud.

The frank admissions are contained in a confidential department documents detailing the Government's strategy for selling its labour market assistance reforms.

The overhaul, aimed at saving nearly $1.5 billion on 12 months, will see the 28 existing labour market programs slashed to four.

Other key reforms involve the "making over" of programs, a new job placement market in which private organisations will compete vigorously with the public sector, and a new network of Government one-stop shop offices.

In a major departure, future funding for job programs will be redirected from the soon-to-be-abolished CES to private and public sector case managers.

Each job seeker will be given access to a standard amount of labour market funding, which can be spent through the case manager on job training, literacy courses, transport costs, tools and other job-related expenses.

It is believed the amount will be determined through a new formula, which will divide the total amount of labour market funding — expected to be about $1 billion — by the number of unemployed people entitled to support.

Government and private sector case managers will be given a proportion of that amount as an initial fee, which they can use to buy the specific job training needed for each client.

They will be paid the balance of the entitlement as an "outcome fee" when the job seeker is placed in work.

The document, marked "Cabinet in Confidence" and dated this month, warns that introduction of the reforms would be affected by several factors, including the reaction from clients and possible industrial action.

"Added to this is an external environment which has the potential to become more hostile, disenchanted and destructive as more Government cutbacks and charge are realised and effects felt," it says.

The document, prepared within the department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA), describes the changes to labour market assistance and service delivery as "radical reforms [which] will introduce a completely new Australian employment marketplace".

The document, leaked to the Opposition's employment spokesman, Mr Ferguson, analyses the strengths and weaknesses of the new strategy.

The drawbacks include a potential for unemployment to rise, a fear among Aboriginal and long-term and disadvantaged job seekers that they will be "excluded" by private job agencies and a danger that these changes could lead to higher incidences of fraud.

There was also likely to be some initial "cooling" between employers and job seekers about motivation and "community utility" and specific cost perceived broken promises by the Government".

To counter the rejection backlash, the paper advises the Government to embark on a strong communications strategy.

"The Federal Government and DEETYA will be perceived as assassins and rationalists, with rhetoric seen as a necessary step in guaranteeing a better future for Australia and, in particular, Australia's unemployed."

The Budget, to be delivered by the Treasurer, Mr Costello, at 7.30 pm, will also include:

■ Raising the charge for tourists visiting the Great Barrier Reef from $1 per head to $6 per head, with hikes in entrance fees for other national parks and World Heritage areas.

■ The virtual abolition of the Commonwealth Dental Health program, with only a few limited exceptions to cover Aboriginal dental care.

■ An expansion of vocational education courses for the final years of high school as part of a $187 million package.



Anger on Budget eve . . . Protesters force open the front doors of Parliament House in Canberra before running amok in the front hall yesterday.

Batons used as rioters storm Parliament

By BRAD NORRINGTON

Protesters smashed their way into Parliament House in Canberra yesterday in a riot that marred a huge ACTU rally called to oppose the Federal Government's workplace relations legislation.

About 200 police, many wielding batons and shields, were called to repel demonstrators after they had burst through the doors of Parliament and ran amok in the front hall.

The demonstrators surged after police refused to allow them to cross the forecourt. They forced their way through, ripping a large timesheet off the doors. They then used this as a battering ram to smash their way into the Parliament House souvenir shop, which they ransacked.

They used a trolley and a flagpole as prior items to gain entry to the building's first floor.

Police said 40 people were taken into custody. Four were charged and many charges are expected after police inspect news footage of the incident.

At least 10 police were hurt, including two with back injuries and one with head injuries.



Bloody confrontation . . . the scene inside Parliament House.

The Prime Minister condemned the riot, branding it "un-Australian and ugly".

After inspecting the damage he called on the ACTU and the Federal Opposition Leader, Mr Beazley, also to condemn the violence. "I want to make it clear to those involved in that violence, and to the Australian people, that never under any circumstances will my Government buckle to threats of physical violence or behaviour of that kind," he said.

Mr Howard met short a scheduled meeting with the ACTU president, Ms Jennie George, and the ACTU secretary, Mr Bill Kelty, after just seven minutes. He said he would not negotiate under duress but agreed to meet them again in a fortnight. "This morning, unprovoked," he said there.

Ms George, visibly upset after the riot, said ACTU organisers had nothing to do with the riot.

"I made it very clear to John Howard that I resented any inference that any incidents that may have occurred during the day had anything to do with the ACTU," Ms George said.

Mr Kelty said the riot was unfortunate but prefaced the rally as the biggest ever seen in Canberra and one in which he took great pride.

"This is the most successful rally in the history of this country in Canberra," he said. "I know nothing of the details of [illegible]."

Mr Beazley, who addressed the rally, dissociated himself from the riot and expressed his condolences to the injured.

During rally speeches, the Green Senator Bob Brown said he would vote against the workplace legislation and "dare" it. The Democrats Leader, Senator Kernot, said she would "make it hot" after Senate debate.

PAGE 7: The storming of Parliament — reports and pictures. PAGE 12: Editorial.

Coalition faces break-up as Nationals call for vote

By ROBERT WAINWRIGHT and NATASHA VAGE

The 13-year Liberal-National Party Coalition in NSW is on the brink of collapse.

The leader of the Nationals, Mr Armstrong, last night effectively called an end to the partnership in the wake of the Liberal State executive decision on Sunday to field a candidate in the Fox Macquarie by-election.

And the end could come at tomorrow's emergency National Party meeting. A motion to break away from the Coalition will be put and the indications last night were that it would be accepted by party MPs.

The Liberal Leader, Mr Peter Collins, yesterday proposed unsuccessfully that the National Party merge with the Liberals.

The Coalition has split in 1979, a rift that took four years to heal.

Mr Armstrong, who had earlier attacked Mr Collins's leadership, indicated he was already looking to the party's future free of a formal Coalition agreement. "Operating in an unattached situation would allow the National Party to hone its special policies for country and coastal people and sharpen its focus on the rural purpose," Mr Armstrong said.

"Quite simply, the Nationals should be allowed to concentrate on winning and holding country and regional seats and the Liberals should concentrate on city seats."

"The present tension between the parties has been caused solely by the Liberals looking to damage the National Party over our decision to contest Southern Highlands, a seat we had narrowly failed to win in the previous election."

"It is churlish in the extreme for the Liberals to waste vital resources in damaging us rather than Labor."

Mr Armstrong's statement brings to a head simmering relations since the Southern Highlands by-election in May, and made worse by the Nationals' disastrous performance in the recent by-elections of Cessnock and Orange.

All National Party MPs canvassed yesterday by the Herald believe they had been betrayed by their coalition partners.

One party backbencher confirmed he would move on Wednesday for the coalition to end. Others, including former

Continued Page 4





A loud chorus for Advance Australia Fair

A national survey has found Australians overwhelmingly support *Advance Australia Fair* remaining the national anthem.

A Herald AGB McNair poll conducted at the weekend shows that no matter how much the Premier, Mr Carr, prefers Waltzing Matilda, 73 per cent of people think *Advance Australia Fair* should be left in place.

The survey of 1,004 people found that only 16 per cent of Australians agreed with Mr Carr's musical tastes.

PAGE 3: Full report.

Police Board at war over clean-up

By GREG BEARUP
Chief Police Reporter

A public battle has broken out between two members of the NSW Police Board, with the board chairman, Mr Don Mackay, rejecting a fellow board member's claim that efforts to clean up the service were a "sham".

Mr Mackay said that comments by Mr Clary Sturgess were "unconfirmed and inappropriate". In an article in yesterday's *Herald*, Mr Sturgess said the changes made so far were superficial with little "deep systematic change and the brotherhood culture was "alive and well".

He was critical of a decision to move Superintendent Terry Dawson to the State Command Centre's Office when it was revealed the officer had written a report in favour of the disgraced policeman, Mr Bob Lyneagle.

Mr Mackay defended the decision by the acting Commissioner, Mr Nick Taylor, to move Superintendent Dawson to State Command while an inquiry was conducted, saying the officer could be used supervising duties until a decision was made about his future.

Mr Sturgess said senior Sydney officers should have been transferred to Wreck Wood to send a clear message to other police that things had changed.

Mr Mackay said there were still deep cultural changes that needed to take place within the Police Service. However, many structural changes were being made, or were in the process of being made, aimed at changing the culture.

Among matters being discussed for implementation were moves to make police on contracts to enable easier removal for those who are not perform, and a flattening of the hierarchy.

"If Mr Sturgess had attended the last three board meetings he would be up to date with the many positive developments which are occurring in consultation with the Royal Commission and the Police Service," Mr Mackay said.

If Mr Sturgess had concerns

Continued Page 3

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protest peacefully against the Howard Government. But within hours an angry mob had stormed Parliament House, leaving a trail of destruction." These two small photographs show: on the left, the huge numbers assembled outside Parliament House; and on the right, the small number of police and security staff in the foyer defending the doors. This arrangement of images and headlines links the huge crowd to the siege and the main image (which extends across six of the eight columns) becomes the 'outcome' of this story. This section of two small images and a summary sits above the bold seventy-two point headline 'Parliament Besieged' which runs the full width of the paper. Immediately beneath the headline is a full colour photograph of the demonstrators confronting the police, the same image that is used as a small photo on the front page of the *SMH*. The photograph extends across six of the eight columns. To the left of the photograph are two large bullet points. "Un-Australian, says Howard" and "49 arrested". The story and photograph fill three-quarters of the page. The *Age*'s front page gives similar prominence to the story as the News Limited papers but, despite its prominent inclusion of Howard's judgement of the events as "un-Australian", it emphasises the political and parliamentary impact over the moral outrage preferred by the tabloid and News Limited press.

The *Age's* coverage addresses a presumed readership that is interested in and knowledgeable about industrial relations issues. The *Age*, traditionally, has the most comprehensive industrial relations coverage of all Australian newspapers. This focus has to do with its Melbourne base and the fact that the ACTU and, historically, many major companies have their headquarters in Melbourne. In contrast, the *Sydney Morning Herald* focuses more sharply on Sydney-centred issues. Its presumed readership is concerned with Sydney, international and some national issues (as they relate to Sydney) and engages less with the traditional Melbourne-Sydney rivalry which appears to be of particular concern to Melbourne media and Melbourne audiences. The *SMH* traditionally places lower priority on industrial relations issues unless they occur in New South Wales. In the coverage of Cavalcade to Canberra the *Age's* editorial strategy rates it as the major news item of the day whereas the *SMH* places it in the context of life as normal—just one issue amongst many of interest to its readers.

The *Canberra Times*, another broadsheet newspaper, presents one of the most provocative front-page versions of the Cavalcade to Canberra events. Its front page clearly spells out the relationship of presumed identification between the nation, the Prime Minister and the readership opposed to the participating unionists (Figure 6.12). Being a Canberra-based newspaper the issue had an additional local dimension that was lacking in the coverage of other papers. Parliament House is not just a national symbol but also a local landmark and a major employer of Canberrans, many of whom are the *Canberra Time's* readers. It reports this demonstration as organised by outsiders who brought tens of thousands of people into Canberra specifically to protest. Canberra Chief Minister, Kate Carnell, is reported as saying the "violence was imported" (Nicholson 1996, *Canberra Times*). The demonstrators are positioned as invaders who threaten not only the nation's peace and stability but the safety and well-being of the readers' own local community. This double address invites dual identification with the police and Parliament House staff (potentially friends, relatives or neighbours) and increases the 'scare' value of the 'riot' as being more directly threatening to the *Canberra Times'* readers.

The style and content of the *Canberra Times'* images are similar to the pattern across other newspapers that featured physical confrontation (between groups of men), evidence of violence and property damage. The front page is almost entirely devoted to the 'riot' story (Figure 6.12). Only one small, single-column article on the budget shares the front page. The bold, seventy-two point headline, 'Bloody Protest', extends across the whole page. Above the main headline is a quote from an Australian Federal Police Superintendent "I've been a policeman here for over 32 years and I don't think I've ever seen anything as ugly as this". This inclusion in the quote of the word 'here' has a double meaning for Canberrans. Not only does it indicate the authority of a long-term career guarding Parliament House but it signifies his relationship as a local, a member of the Canberra community, an identity he has in common with the majority of the readers. This quote, the main headline, and two further sub-headings —"Budget-eve violence as Parliament is stormed" and "I won't be intimidated says angry Howard"—firmly establishes the story as one of exceptional, excessive and unacceptable violence. The main colour

Figure 6.12 Canberra Times, 20/8/96, p.1.

PROUDLY AUSTRALIAN OWNED

The Canberra Times

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'I've been a policeman here for over 32 years and I don't think I've ever seen anything as ugly as this'

— Australian Federal Police Superintendent Peter McDonald

BLOODY PROTEST

Budget-eve violence as Parliament is stormed

By MIKE TAYLOR and STEVE CORRY

In the most violent scenes witnessed at Australia's new Parliament House, doors were smashed, police injured and walls damaged and smeared with blood and paint as Budget-eve protesters stormed the main entrance as part of an ACTU-backed demonstration against the Howard Government.

Damage estimates stood at hundreds of thousands of dollars after the melee. Forty-nine people were arrested and 47 police and parliamentary officials were injured as they tried to keep the protesters from breaking through the front doors with battering rams and placards.

Later, the Prime Minister, John Howard, refused to hold discussions with trade-union delegates. He described the behaviour of the protesters as "absolutely outrageous".

"It's a very sad and unhappy day in the life of the Australian Parliament, and those responsible for today's demonstration should feel utterly ashamed of themselves," Mr Howard said.

The prime minister said the demonstration had been organised by the ACTU and it had "obviously got out of hand".

ACTU chief Jennie George dissociated her organisation from the violence.

Originally aimed at the new Government's industrial-relations laws, protesters also targeted Budget cuts, some already announced, the rest to be unveiled by Treasurer Peter Costello tonight.

Australian Federal Police Superintendent Peter McDonald, praised the 300 police who held back the surging crowd. "I've been a policeman here for over 32 years and I don't think I've ever seen anything as ugly as this," he said.

Continued on Page 8

More stories, pictures — Pages 2 and 3
Pryor's View: Editorial — Page 10



Protesters use a hand trolley in an attempt to force open the front door of Parliament House. The battle eventually worked, despite police standing five-deep inside.

Picture: GARY SCHAFER

I won't be intimidated, says angry Howard

By ROSS PEAKE
Political Correspondent

Prime Minister John Howard said his government would never be intimidated by threats or physical violence.

After visiting police officers and security guards involved in the wild scenes, and inspecting damage from the rampage through the Parliament House shop, he delivered an angry but measured response.

"What occurred here today was un-Australian, it was ugly," he said.

"It is a very sad and unhappy day in the life of the Australian Parliament, and those responsible for today's demonstration should feel utterly ashamed of themselves."

Mr Howard suggested the ACTU which organised the rally must share some of the blame for the violence and he later cut short a scheduled meeting with ACTU president Jennie George.

Ms George said the union movement did not condone violence and could not be blamed for the riot.

"Whatever occurred in Parliament House had nothing to do with the organisers of this rally and the ACTU makes it very clear that it does not support any incidents of a violent nature," she said.

Mr Howard said anyone who thought crowd violence would change the Government's mind was mistaken.

"I want to make it very clear to those who were involved in that violence and to the Australian people, that never under any circumstances will my government buckle to threats of physical violence or behaviour of that kind," he said.

When asked who was responsible for the violence, Mr Howard said he could not make a judgement but added pointly: "It was organised by the ACTU, you can go to them.

"Those people who were responsible for it getting out of hand, I hope are properly brought to account by those who can bring influence to bear upon them," he said.

The riot overshadowed media coverage of the anti-government rally and gave Mr Howard the opportunity to force Opposition Leader Kim Beazley to disassociate himself from the violence.

Continued on Page 8



The bloodied face of one of the demonstrators. A number of police were also injured in the melee.

Picture: GRAHAM EDDY

Budget: after previews, the whole picture

By PETER COLE-ADAMS
Political Editor

Meanwhile, back in the Treasurer's bunker, as several rioters were trying to storm Parliament yesterday, Peter Costello was practising his lines for the most thoroughly previewed Federal Budget of recent times.

Even Mr Costello recognises the general architecture, and the many measures, in his fiscal statement are now known.

However, the detail, both in terms of the fine expenditure proportions and the finer points, can have a massive some surprises.

The Government is seeking up to $8 billion, mainly in expenditure savings, but with some fiddling on the revenue side, over the next two years. However, Mr Costello has said that not all of the two-year plan will be announced today.

The Government has promised to honour its "core" election promises (as opposed to its pledges not to cut funds in some areas). There will be $1 billion worth of income-based family tax cuts from January next year, and increased incentives, from July 1, to lure people to private health insurance.

It has also pledged not to abolish the Howard/Keating scheme for farmers in times, although it is expected to tighten up on eligibility and rorts.

Continued on Page 2

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Chance of rain 5 per cent
Winds: W, 20-30km/h
Outlook: Fine, cold nights
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photograph depicts protesters trying to break down the Parliament House door. Central to the image is a trolley which is being passed over the heads of protesters to be used as a lever to force open the doors. The trolley is marked with a sign indicating it belongs to the Parliament House shop, which on the one hand indicates that the protesters grabbed whatever resources were at hand and on the other reminds viewers again of the location of this outrage. The photograph positions the reader behind the protesters and looking directly at the trolley prongs engaging with the door-frame. The multiple gazes of several protesters, camera operators and police are also focussed on the use of the trolley as a lever. Once again, the familiar signifiers of Aboriginality and the CFMEU are present. In this equally powerful crowd photograph, taken just before the doors give way, the designated protesters are present among the 'guilty' rabble opposed to the 'innocent' suits of authority on the other side of the doors.

The *Canberra Times'* second front-page colour image is a close-up of the bloodied face of protester Davie Thomason, who is featured in other papers (photograph 9, Figure 6.12, see also photograph 16, Figure 6.1). In this close-up profile Thomason's face fills the frame, with blood smeared down his cheek and neck. He has an earring in his ear and his mouth is open in an angry war-cry. This portrait is clearly coded as 'intimidating protester', a thug intent on violence, imported from outside to stir up trouble. We presume he is a unionist as he does not appear to be Aboriginal, these being the two categories primarily blamed for the violence. (He also appears too old to be a student radical, the other group who were also alleged to have contributed to the violence). Thomason's face is the symbol of the violence and anger that directly threatens the safety of *Canberra Times'* readers and the staff of Parliament House. Consistent with the nature of support images in other papers, internal images show injured protesters, exhausted police and a man wearing a CFMEU T-shirt being carried away by police (photographs 10, 11, 12 and 13). All major daily newspapers, with the exception of the *Financial Review*, privileged the story of the 'riot' on their front page. This was consistent across broadsheet and tabloid newspapers, and across publishing houses. The *Sydney Morning Herald* was the only newspaper other than the *Financial Review* to give the lead headline to another issue, however, it published two dramatic images of conflict on its front

page that emphasised the story of the conflict over the story featured about unemployment, and indeed, worked to associate the two reports. The most frequently used images were those that included blood, physical struggle and signifiers of unionism and/or Aboriginality. These choices were common across all newspapers.

Twin Threats: Images of Violent (Male) Unionists and Aborigines

There are several additional patterns in the selection and publication of newspaper images that can be observed across media organisations. Violent acts or confrontation (by and between men) are depicted in photographs used on the front page of eleven of the twelve newspapers printed. (The exception is the *Financial Review*.) This emphasis on visual signifiers of violence is one technique the press used to represent the union protest as an illegitimate and violent riot. The press, not Jennie George as the ACTU president, assumes authority to articulate the unionists' position but presents only one image of the protest, that of a small minority of the crowd. Through these images, together with the comments of the Prime Minister, John Howard, the press speaks for 'us' the readers, as to the 'outrage' such a riot constitutes. The protesters are given no opportunity to speak for themselves. The one attempt a union official (Bill Kelty) made to defend the intention and achievement of the main part of the rally was later savagely ridiculed as being out of touch with reality.[27]

The Colour Red: Signifying Trouble

One of the common elements that is particularly evident in the visual representations of the event is the presence of the colour red. Red, which is traditionally associated with trouble, revolutionary politics, communism, and the ALP, features prominently in many of the newspaper photographs printed in colour. Red is also the colour of blood and several of the reports talked about "trails of blood" leading to Parliament

[27] Kelty's point of view was reported in two separate articles in the *Australian,* (Marris 1996e) 'Kelty steers ACTU clear of riots storm' and 'Rioters storm Parliament' (Gordon & Chan 1996). His claims of the rally's success were initially made before he was aware of the degree of damage at Parliament House. He tried to make a point about the unprecedented size of the rally however his attempt to focus attention on the rally's achievements and his claim it was the "most successful Canberra rally ever" was politically naïve and it was ridiculed in several reports: see for example Oakes (1996b); Savva (1996); *West Australian* (1996b).

House (see discussion in Chapter Seven). In Australian unionism (and media representations of unionism) red is particularly associated with the CFMEU who regularly carry large plain red flags in demonstrations. This chapter has already discussed how in several reports the CFMEU was made to stand for unionism as a whole. By the emphasis on red in narrative accounts and the selection of images in which red is a dominant colour the press accounts of the rally imply that CFMEU members and communists were at the centre of all the trouble and violence. The colour red becomes a shorthand cue for the reader/viewer who is invited to make an instant assessment of the scene from the images presented: the chain of meaning runs something like this: red flags and clothing equal violence, injuries, trouble, communism and unions (or building workers). The iconic image could be the one where the grimacing and bleeding unionist wearing a land rights badge is led away, apparently under arrest, by police (photograph 16, see Figure 6.1) It was used six times, five of which were on newspaper front pages. This could be seen to be the inevitable consequence of trouble, to stand for the culmination of the crisis. This is the consequence (for all parties) of participating in union demonstrations. As such it could offer the reader/viewer satisfaction at seeing order restored and wrong-doers being punished for, as Keith Windschuttle notes (1985: 298), this is the "underlying emotional appeal of stories about deviance".

Gender

Another common pattern is that women are not shown as actors in the day's events. The one woman publicly associated with the rally and the union movement, who played a central role in its conception as a *peaceful* and alliance-building event, is (in a bitter irony) held politically and morally responsible for the injuries and damage to Parliament House. Jennie George is alleged to have contributed to the rally's disintegration into violence through poor judgement; incitement of the crowd, "whipping up a mindless fervour" (*Daily Telegraph* 1996a); and by lacking the necessary leadership authority over those of her rebellious male members who set out to sabotage the event she so energetically promoted. George is positioned as an irresponsible, weak and incompetent leader (these judgements are discussed further in Chapter Eight).

It is notable that the demonstrators were almost universally presumed to be men. This is consistent with widespread representations of trade unions and unionists as masculine.[28] Despite significant numbers of women in the crowd on the lawns, the reports of the demonstration and photographs of the 'riot' portray it as an almost exclusively male event. Women appear in only seven separate photographs out of a total of thirty-five separate photographs published on the day after the rally (photographs 6, 21, 24, 27, 28, 30 and 31 see Tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3). One of these is the image of Jennie George and Bill Kelty leaving Parliament House (photograph 24, Figure 6.8). Women police officers appear in four separate photographs. Two of these (27 and 28) are only printed once but one, which depicts an *injured* woman police officer, is printed four times, once in colour (photograph 21, Figure 6.7). This image reminds readers of the violence perpetrated by the male protesters and indicates that the victims are women. The fourth instance is the woman police officer who can be seen apprehensively viewing the confrontation (photograph 6, Figure 6.10). There are only two photographs (one printed once, the other twice) of identifiably female protesters. One woman is shown climbing through a window (photograph 30, Figure 6.7) and one in a crowd shot near the doors of Parliament House that includes one recognisably female protester in the crowd as well as one female staffer on the other side of the doors (*Courier Mail* and *Mercury* photograph 31). The gendered nature of these representations of the protesters and injured police sets up the opposition of (violent) male trade unionists opposed to *all* women readers and citizens.

Aboriginality

No photographs show Aboriginal people committing any violent acts despite violence clearly being associated with Aboriginal people in the narrative accounts. Identifiably Aboriginal protesters are clearly visible in seven separate photographs and fourteen printed images (photographs 2, 8, 15, 18, 29, 30, 32). In one of the widely printed scenes of the crowd outside Parliament House a small group of Aboriginal men in traditional dance costume is visible, in the larger reproductions of this photograph. They are shown heading towards the building (photograph 19,

[28] See Cockburn (1983); Franzway (1997, 2001); Muir (1997b); Pocock (1997a, 1998); Sudano (1997).

Figure 6.7). In addition, Aboriginal flags, badges, logos and colours appear frequently—in another six photos. Aboriginal-related imagery appears in thirty-one of the seventy published images of the events in Canberra, greatly increasing the implied association of the trouble with Aboriginal protesters despite the fact that Aboriginal demonstrators were a minority of less than ten percent of the crowd of thirty thousand. One report suggests three thousand Aboriginal demonstrators had assembled outside old Parliament House prior to the rally (Windsor 1996) whereas another report puts the number of Aboriginal demonstrators at two thousand (Sweetman 1996). This prominence given to Aboriginal demonstrators within the crowd is consistent with Australian research into the media that demonstrates the pattern of associating Aboriginal people with trouble and disorder.[29]

In contrast, CFMEU or BLF logos, badges and flags are visible in ten different photographs and twenty-one printed images. These images are among those printed in the most prominent locations. Almost all front-pages include a photograph with some visual signifier of unionism, although in some (*Age* and *Herald Sun*) they are included as small details. The *Examiner* is the sole exception to this pattern. Unionists are most frequently blamed in the narrative accounts as the cause of the violence. However, a higher number of published images include signifiers of Aboriginality than of unionism suggesting that Aboriginality is coded to register even more strongly with trouble than unionism. The combination of the two together has additional powerful associations of deviance. They connect to the old Australian myths about Aboriginal people, particularly part-Aboriginal people representing all the negative qualities of humanity. White people who 'hung around' Aboriginal people were considered misfits and morally inferior, capable of gross immoral acts (Hamilton 1990). They also connect to myths of trade unionists as bullies and thugs (Ward 1995) and media representations of union strikers as "criminals, kidnappers and terrorists" (Windschuttle 1985: 332).

[29] See for example Goodall (1993); Langton (1993); Meadows (2001); Mickler (1998); Sercombe (1995).

Some reports directly blame Aboriginal protesters for the riot whereas others leave it to visual inference. "[A]ccording to police Aboriginal protesters had no intention of joining the 25, 000 people on the front lawns of Parliament House" (Molloy 1996a, *Herald Sun*). The national secretary of the CFMEU, Stan Sharkey, stated that unnecessary force by police in restraining one Aboriginal protester triggered an angry response from building workers and the rush to Parliament House (quoted in Bradley, Marris & Windsor 1996, *Australian*). This is consistent with subsequent internal union investigations (Pyner 1996). Whilst Aboriginal and union associated images feature prominently in the *number* of photographs printed it is also particularly notable that they are the photographs considered *most newsworthy*. They are printed in the most prominent locations and come to stand for the day's events.

In summary, the overwhelming *visual* impression of the events of the Cavalcade to Canberra on 19 August is of a bloody riot by predominantly older male unionists and young Aboriginal men whose irresponsible actions caused violence, confrontation, property damage and injuries. Mick Counihan in the *Bulletin* describes the visual impression of news reports as "all Australians on their television news programs saw was a bunch of fat, ugly men behaving badly" (Counihan quoted in Murphy D. 1996: 18). In the absence of accounts from demonstrators as to why they were protesting and reports of the actions of the 30, 000 or so peaceful demonstrators these visual and narrative accounts offered by newspaper reporters and editors come to speak for the whole day's events. There is no visual documentation of the peaceful rally of 30, 000 people or of the speakers who addressed the crowd. News and picture editors selected images which fitted their primary and preferred account of the events. This is, that violent unionists, anarchists and Aborigines, many of whom were drunk, had descended on Canberra to cause trouble and had rioted, risking lives, injuring police, destroying property and damaging the nation's symbol of democracy. The secondary news accounts are that these events confirmed society's worst fears about such groups. Other angles to the story were that they delivered a political gift to the Prime Minister and presented a serious public relations disaster for the labour movement and Labor Party.

Building a Picture of Mob Violence: Congruence in Photographs, Headlines and Comments

The Prime Minister as Arbiter of Meaning

The Prime Minister's political interpretation of the events as 'un-Australian' and morally outrageous is the frame around which much of the news media organise their reports. Such statements by Prime Ministers are newsworthy in their own right and have the symbolic weight of statements in the national interest, made at times of national emergency, disaster, trauma or triumph (Allan 1999). Five newspapers (*Courier Mail*, *Advertiser*, *Age*, *Canberra Times* and *Herald Sun*) use prominent quotes from the Prime Minister on their front pages. In addition, the *Examiner* uses the Prime Minister's act of condemnation as its headline 'PM condemns riot bloodshed' and a seventh paper, the *Australian,* includes a smaller headline on its front page 'Angry PM scraps talks with unions'. These prominent references to the Prime Minister add authority to the way the papers address their readers in tones of horror and moral outrage. They also inflate the seriousness of the 'riot' from an outbreak of bad behaviour by a small group to a national political and security issue and deny legitimacy or credibility to Jennie George and Bill Kelty's accounts on behalf of the union movement.

The representation of crisis adopted by the Prime Minister is that the actions of protesters attempting to force entry into Parliament House were 'ugly and un-Australian'. The *Canberra Times*' front page report 'I won't be intimidated, says angry Howard' [sic] (Figure 6.12) quotes the Prime Minister as saying:

> 'What occurred here today was un-Australian, it was ugly.' he [sic] said. 'It is a very sad and unhappy day in the life of the Australian Parliament, and those responsible for today's demonstration should feel utterly ashamed of themselves.'
> (Peake 1996)

These three themes iterated by the Prime Minister: unAustralian-ness, ugliness and shame are repeated in various forms across the banner headlines, article headlines, sub-headings and are included as key points in editorial comment throughout most Australian dailies. The *Herald Sun* uses the term 'Un-Australian' as its main headline in 350mm bold capitals spread across page one (Figure 6.1). The

Advertiser sets the Prime Minister's quote above its headline and accompanies it with a photograph of him (Figure 6.13). Utilising these features to dramatise its layout, the *Advertiser* adopts the Prime Minister's account of events as its own to organise coverage of the events and their implications. Its page one report is headlined 'Nation's day of shame'.

The *Courier Mail* (Figure 6.14) also adopts the Prime Minister's version as its own including his quote in large print above its headline, placing it between one small colour photograph of a protester smashing a door (watched by another man in a CFMEU T-Shirt) and another of a protester with blood streaming down his face being led away by police. The *Age* (Figure 6.10) uses "'Un-Australian' says Howard" as its first bold bullet point under its main front-page headline 'Parliament Besieged'. Through such editorial techniques the Prime Minister's political interpretation of the events becomes the official 'truth' of what occurred, adopted by the news media as their own. The news media employ the Prime Minister's ideological interpretation of events to add authority to their own assessment and to serve the requirements of news values.

'If it Bleeds it Leads': The Privileging of Violence in the News

The impact of the visible presence of blood in many of the front-page photographs is extended through references to blood in captions, headlines and narrative accounts. The iconic image of the bloodied protester being led away by police (photograph 16, Figure 6.1) features on five front pages. Blood on the faces of protesters is featured on the front pages of nine of the twelve papers. The exceptions are the *Financial Review*, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Australian*. Instead the *Australian* and *Daily Telegraph* chose images that accentuate violent confrontation and property damage. In addition to image sixteen, several other photographs of bloodied faces were published (photographs 6, 9, 13 and 29).

This visual evidence of a bloody struggle and the resulting injuries is emphasised through the narrative of mob violence. It is commonly expressed through the phrase 'blood on the marble floors' of Parliament House. Variations of this phrase are used

Figure 6.13 Advertiser, 20/8/96, p.1.

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"What occurred here today was un-Australian, it was ugly . . . It's a very sad and unhappy day in the life of the Australian Parliament, and those responsible for today's demonstration should feel utterly ashamed of themselves"

The Prime Minister, Mr Howard

Nation's day of shame

By Chief Political Writer DAVID PENBURTHY and KIM SWEETMAN in Canberra

Police were kicked, bashed and sprayed with acid as Chinaroads of union activists besieged Parliament yesterday in an ugly protest against the Coalition's industrial laws.

In a day of shame, about 50 police and countless protesters were injured as more than 15,000 unionists converged in Canberra for what was meant to be a peaceful rally.

Parliament was under siege for more than two hours, with a cordon of about 300 police struggling to hold back the mob.

But hundreds broke through the lines, smashing glass doors and forcing Parliament's security staff to retreat — many in tears — run for cover.

Several MPs also witnessed the scenes as the violence was unconstrained.

Some protesters came armed only with a sledgehammer and others carried flasks of paint, acid and even urine which they hurled at police.

Last night, a House official remained in hospital under heavy sedation after sustaining injuries in the riot and two Senate staffers were kept in overnight.

Senior police riot officers were kept in overnight.

The Prime Minister, Mr Howard, said shell-shocked police and staffers before addressing a news press conference to "utterly condemn" the protest.

"What occurred here today was un-Australian," he said.

"It was ugly. It endangered the physical well-being of many hundreds of the Australian Federal Police, Parliament House staffers and Protective Services who were forced to the pursuit of their duty to safeguard democracy, health, physical attacks and all sorts of abuse.

"It's a very sad and unhappy day in the life of the Australian Parliament, and those responsible for today's demonstration should feel utterly ashamed of themselves."

His comments came as ACTU president Ms Jenny George rejected any suggestion the union movement was to blame for the violence.

ABORIGINAL leader Mr Gatjil "Bay" Wuktanan, president-similar scenes at the 1988 Sydney Olympics, a scheduled meeting between the Prime Minister and Ms George was cut short to just seven minutes, with Mr Howard telling Ms George the Government "would not negotiate under duress".

The Opposition Leader, Mr Beazley, said "violence has no place in democracy" but blamed the Coalition for dividing the nation by breaking election promises.

© Continued Page 3
© PAGE 8: EDITORIAL: Atkinson's view



A policeman escorts a bloodied demonstrator away from the violent protests at Parliament House yesterday.



Protesters smash through a glass door of the souvenir shop to get access to the inside of Parliament House. Pictures: LYNDON MECHIELSEN

HECS changes to be blocked

By DAVID PENBURTHY

The cornerstone increases in HECS have emerged as the key battleground in the Howard Government's first Budget, with the Opposition pledge confronting yesterday that they would block the changes.

The increases — announced 11 days ago by the Education Minister, Senator Vanstone — have been condemned by students, academics and vice-chancellors.

But increases and cuts in other areas of today's Budget are likely to pass the Senate unchallenged, with the Australian Democrats and Labor vowing not to block supply.

The expected increase in the Medicare levy for high income earners is one measure which is likely to survive in the Senate.

The Government yesterday seized on new figures showing a further decline in the number of people with private health cover.

The Health Minister, Dr Wooldridge, again refused to rule out the introduction of a two-tiered Medicare levy, in which people without private cover and earning more than $50,000 a year would pay a 2.5 per cent levy — compared with 1.5 per cent for lower paid Australians.

Figures released by the Private Hospitals Association yesterday show that 31,000 people have abandoned private cover in the past three months.

They also show the number of people with private cover has fallen from 13 million in 1995 to 8.1 million this year.

Dr Wooldridge said the figures showed the need for action and that the Budget would include "measures which are designed to stem the tide".

The Budget also will include health insurance rebates of up to $450 a family — another measure to encourage people into private cover.

But it is also likely to include increases in the case of prescription rates and cuts to childcare subsidies.

The Prime Minister, Mr Howard, yesterday repeated his vow that the Budget would be "strong but fair".

© Continued Page 2

Ecstasy claims new victim

A 22 year-old Royal Park man is believed to be the State's third death this year from the designer drug Ecstasy.

A woman, 19, apparently suffering from an overdose of the drug, is in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital's intensive care unit.

© PAGE 3: Full report

Queen's royal revolution

The Queen has startled Britons with a five-point plan to ensure the beleaguered monarchy survives. Among her revolutionary proposals is breaking the monarchy's ties with the Church of England and ending the bar on royals marrying Catholics.

© PAGE 2: Full report

Cameron acts on factions

Liberal Party president Mr Martin Cameron says the time has come to step into a looming factional row in the party and discipline a few senior members who see politics as a game instead of bidding on to government and winning seats.

© PAGE 5: Full report

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Figure 6.14 Courier Mail. 20/8/96. p.1.

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The Courier-Mail

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BUDGET 96

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A PROTESTER smashes a glass door of the souvenir shop at Parliament House during the wild protest.

It is a very sad and unhappy day in the life of the Australian Parliament and those responsible for today's demonstration should feel utterly ashamed of themselves.

– Prime Minister John Howard



BLOODBATH ... an injured man is taken away by a police officer during the Canberra melee.

DAY OF DISGRACE

By RIM SWEETMAN and MATTHEW HORAN

MORE than 40 police officers were injured — three seriously — when the Federal Parliament was stormed yesterday in Australia's bloodiest political protest.

About 4000 protesters stormed the building during a union rally of 15,000 against the Coalition's proposed industrial relations legislation. The protest widened into a general demonstration against planned Budget cuts.

Police were kicked, punched, abused and had urine thrown in their eyes after being caught by surprise when the huge protest, held on the eve of today's Budget, turned violent.

Prime Minister John Howard angrily blasted the protesters last night, describing the violence as "ugly and un-Australian".

Police rescued Mr Howard's office, where he was meeting ACTU president Jennie George, ACTU secretary Bill Kelty and other union leaders, fearing the protesters might try to storm his office.

Mr Howard abruptly ended the meeting after just five minutes when he was told of the rioting. He has refused to negotiate further with the ACTU on industrial relations for two weeks.

Union leaders said the ALP last night distanced themselves from the violence, saying they had planned a peaceful rally.

Police said 40 protesters had been arrested, four charged and the rest released with a warning.

During the melee, several thick glass doors were smashed, the marble foyer was damaged, a souvenir shop raided, paint bombs were thrown at police and protesters scaled the roof, threatening to bring down the glass ceiling on the people below.

Police and security guards retreated, staff, visitors and journalists inside the building to press against the glass doors in an unsuccessful bid to stop the protesters storming through.

Several people who were crushed in the crowd near the doors fainted and were passed to safety over the heads of the crowd.

Some of those caught in the crush said they feared for their lives.

The marble floor inside the foyer was smeared with blood as the people being pushed forward were stabbed by glass spears hanging from the door frames.

It is the first time an Australian Parliament has been stormed. The damage bill is expected to total tens of thousands of dollars.

A young police woman, who was kicked by protesters during the rioting, was in a serious condition in hospital last night.

The constable, in her early 20s, was dragged from the police line by the angry mob, who kicked her with heavy workboots. She was treated for concussion and facial injuries.

Another officer had a mixture of urine and paint thinners thrown in his face.

Sixty-one police officers were injured and at least 20 protesters were treated at a makeshift first aid station.

The Australian Federal Police will review Parliament House security.

AFP Superintendent Peter McDonald said: "We weren't expecting violence at all, this was supposed to be a peaceful demonstration. It's unbelievable, all totally unexpected and unnecessary.

The rally began peacefully enough but turned violent after midday when a crowd of about 3000 people protesting against Budget cuts to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, were stopped by police from entering an area where other protesters were gathered.

Dozens of terrified tourists, some with small children, huddled together as the angry crowd burst through the glass front doors.

The Parliament House Shop was looted after more than 100 protesters smashed its glass doors with a sledgehammer.

Souvenirs were scattered over the floor, many of them covered in paint from paintbombs.

Mr Howard said his Government would never be intimidated by violence, and condemned the protesters who wrecked the building's foyer.

"It is a very sad and unhappy day in the life of the Australian Parliament, and those responsible for today's disgraceful demonstration should feel utterly ashamed of themselves," he said.

"But more importantly, they should take a message from me on behalf of the Government and I know the people of Australia, that violence will get nowhere in Australia."

Opposition Leader Kim Beazley and Ms George also condemned the violence, saying it was not a legitimate way to fight the Government.

"You don't express your anger by knocking over front doors of Parliament, or knocking over police," Mr Beazley said.

"I'm very sorry that that situation took place.

Ms George said she regretted Mr Howard's implication that union leaders had encouraged the violence.

She said she had no personal knowledge of any planned violence during the rally.

Mr Beazley, Australian Democrats leader Cheryl Kernot, Ms George, and Greens senators Dee Margetts and Bob Brown had earlier told the protesters the proposed industrial laws would divide Australians.

The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union last night repeatedly denied that its members let the violence happen.

CFMEU national president John Maitland said: "Certainly our members went up on the front of Parliament House, but people have to understand that this is no more than has been very divisive, we're talking about issues which are going to divide the whole of Australia.

Labor and unions the big losers

COMMENT



CRAIG JOHNSTONE

PRIME Minister John Howard takes his role as a champion for mainstream Australia a little too far at times, but in angrily condemning yesterday's violence at Parliament House he truly spoke for most of the country.

"This meeting is terminated," he told union leaders at a meeting called to discuss the Government's industrial relations reform soon after the storming of Parliament House.

The big losers out of yesterday's events are the ACTU and, by association, the Labor Opposition.

It will now be harder for Labor to mount a strong campaign against the Government's labour market reforms, because you can bet that many TV reports on the debate over industrial relations will now include footage of yesterday's bloody melee.

For its part, the Government will be in an even stronger position to negotiate its industrial relations reforms through Parliament.

The union movement lost a lot of political ground yesterday.

And in his quick, angry response, Mr Howard made sure everyone knew it.

In the political stoush for the support of middle Australia, John Howard was in danger of going into today's Budget behind on points.

But yesterday's events might have given him the knockout blow.



CRUSH ... angry protesters force their way through the glass doors of Parliament House yesterday.

Picture: RAY STRANGE

Wide power urged for police

By RORY CALLINAN and JOHN LEHMANN

POLICE officers would be able to tap phones, secretly enter homes to install bodies eavesdrop and trace and demand access to documents in relation to terrorist crimes if the Government adopts recommendations in the Gibbons report.

The comprehensive review of the Queensland Police Service also suggested the service lacked strategic direction and vision, suffered from bureaucratic overstaffing and pockets of poor morale and needed to improve its approach to community policing.

It identified high levels of sexual harassment complaints within the service and called for an improvement in its relations with indigenous communities and more open relationship between the union, commissioner and police minister.

Despite the criticisms, former Criminal Justice Commissioner Sir Max Bingham, who headed the eight-member review committee, stressed the service had made "tremendous progress" since 1989 when Fitzgerald inquiry reforms shook the service.

But he said the service's staffing model should be "based on its head" to get officers into the field rather than being stuck in headquarters and regional offices.

The report said police officers had suggested poor morale could stem from a lack of faith and confidence in the service's leadership, a promotion system perceived to reward on the basis of cronyism and a lack of autonomy and responsibility.

After the report was made public yesterday, Police Minister Russell Cooper reaffirmed his commitment to Commissioner Jim O'Sullivan that he would be reappointed when his four-year contract expired in October.

"This report is certainly critical in many respects but it gives us hope for the future ... a blueprint for the future," he said.

Mr O'Sullivan said the report was an endorsement of the service's progress.

While the report, which contained 187 recommendations, was welcomed by the CJC and crime prevention groups, its plan for increased police powers was condemned.

Australian Council for Civil Liberties president Terry O'Gorman said the recommendation was an invasion of people's privacy and safety.

Opposition police spokesman Tom Burton said the report was a "damning indictment" of Mr Cooper's "secret pre-Mardi Gras deal" with the police union.

He described the report as contemptible and said it was crucial more police were sharken out of administrative positions into operational duties.

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MT ISA: Dry. Cool gusty SE winds. Max 20.
Full details: Page 27

TIDES

Brisbane Bar: High: 1.03pm (1.31m), 1.06am. Was (1.66m) low: 6.51am (0.43m), 7.15pm (2.51).

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in almost every newspaper across headlines and within reports, opinion and editorial columns. The idea that Parliament House symbolises a pure essence of democracy and the national spirit seems to be reflected in some of the comments. This association emphasises the magnitude of the outrageous attack on both the building and the nation. For example from the *Herald Sun:* "There, on the marble floor of Parliament House's opulently furnished entrance hall, lay blood-soaked police and protesters receiving first-aid and oxygen from harried medical staff" (Harvey 1996). Here the selection of the term "opulent" furnishings deepens the opposition between the building and the presence of "blood-soaked police and protesters" and creates the picture of a disaster or war zone. Another report employs high-blown rhetoric to describe the foyer as "the holy marble parapet of the Great Verandah" (Warden 1996).

The repeated use of phrases connecting blood and marble convey outrage that the sanctity of this place should be violated. Marble signifies history, culture and permanence. The spilling of blood in such a place connotes revolution, invasion and/or desecration. These phrases also communicate indignation that such expensive, taxpayer-funded, fittings should be damaged or spoiled with blood spilled through acts of violence. The images of bloodied, screaming, scruffy protesters covered in badges and dressed in t-shirts and jeans heightens the opposition between the cool, elegant, marble building and the hordes of violent thugs. It deepens the sense of violation expressed in the Prime Minister's comments and developed further in the headlines, editorials and reports. Through interpellation the readers are invited to share this outrage and indignation. Indeed, the editorials and many of the reports are written in a way that *presumes* these sentiments are already shared and that outrage is the 'commonsense' reaction to these events (Hay 1996; Windschuttle 1985).

The picture of the seriousness and newsworthiness of the violence is also established in several papers by the publication of a series of related reports, in some cases by the same reporters, which outline particular aspects of the events. These are usually placed under a banner headline and, in some instances, a row of small photographs. One large colour photograph sets the scene. One example of how these reports are

organised can be seen in the *Herald Sun* (see Figures 6.6 and 6.7) The format adopted by the *Herald Sun* is identical to that of all three Murdoch owned tabloid papers (*Herald Sun*, *Daily Telegraph*, and *Mercury*). It devotes almost all of pages two and three to coverage of the events. Beneath a banner headline 'Budget eve riot', and around one central bold headline 'Violence erupts in mob rampage', it places five separate reports, which give the day its meaning through a series of plot-like scenarios. These reports are labelled 'The Cause', 'The Reaction', 'The Riot', 'Frontline', and 'Comment' ('Comment' discusses the political implications of the events). These titles structure the *preferred* meaning of the events into the riot, its cause, its effect and the implications of these events. The *Herald Sun* also arranges five photographs across the top of the double page spread (those on page two are in black and white images 17 and 28, and those on page three are all printed in colour photographs 21, 29 and 30). These images, headlines and labels to the articles create a composite story for the reader. The two larger photographs, which are placed centrally on each page, establish the scene of a mass demonstration and the arrests. The large photos depict, on page two, about eight police and security staff tackling two protesters in a relatively empty foyer (photograph 27); and on page three a colour photograph of a large crowd, with banners and flags, milling casually around the Parliament House entrance (photograph 19). In this photograph whilst there appeared to be a movement towards Parliament there is no evidence of a violent assault on the building, rather people seem to be trying to see what is going on around them. In the small images starting from page two on the far left (photographs 17 and 28): the Prime Minister is shown inspecting the damage to the gift shop; and police in riot gear stand recovering in the empty foyer after evicting the protesters, they are surrounded by torn paper and rubbish. On the right hand page, reading from the left, the colour images (21, 29 and 30) depict: two arrested protesters, one Aboriginal and one injured young white man, who sit waiting to be taken away; a woman police officer is shown with her head in her hands being led away by a

female staffer; and two protesters, one white woman and one Aboriginal man, are shown entering a window; all these protesters shown on these pages are young.[30]

The reader is shown the damage, the arrests, the injuries, the breach of security and the crowd milling outside. Readers are directly interpellated into the scene through the invitation to call the paper on its 'Vote Line' to "have their say" on question "Were the protesters justified in resorting to violence?" This opportunity to vote offers readers the important role of judging the question: Was the violence justifiable? The framing of this question invites a populist response that directs readers' attention to the issue of violence and away from the issues which the event was organised to protest against (and, depending on one's point of view, may have been a successful demonstration). In the context of the reports and the front page images and headlines the common sense response the readers are invited (and presumed) to share is that the violence was *not* justifiable. Indeed, this is the only *possible* response established through the meanings developed in and relayed through the reports and photographs.

The *Herald Sun*, like most other newspapers, ignores the peaceful demonstration of some 30, 000 people and the issues that had brought them to Canberra. This story is excluded from the accounts of the day's events. Likewise, this paper, and several others, does not report on the *peaceful* state based rallies—in Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Hobart and Darwin—which involved an additional 25, 000 people (George 1996a). The words of the speakers who addressed the Canberra demonstration, and issues they identified as being dangerous or damaging to the interests of ordinary working Australians within the Workplace Relations Bill, are largely unreported.[31] In the absence of news of the rally and the issues that motivated it the 'riot' comes to stand for all of the events of the day. The reports define the violence as the sum of

[30] The photographs chosen by the D*aily Telegraph* for these pages were less ambiguous than those of the *Herald Sun*. The Prime Minister is shown inspecting the wrecked gift shop in one large image (on the left hand page) and the other (on the right in colour) showed a detail of broken glass and protesters giving police 'the finger'. The small images across the top included a photograph of trolley wheels being thrust at the doors and in another three police overpowering a protester (Figure 6.5).

[31] Two reports in the *Australian* (Marris 1996a) and the *Age* (Willox 1996c) were the exceptions which covered some of the comments made by some of the speakers to the rally. There were also two reports which noted that there were, in effect, two different rallies (Savva 1996; Shires 1996).

the events in Canberra. This is the common effect of the emphasis on the 'riot' as opposed to the rally, it redefines the event within the news conventions of disorder and criminality and discredits the reason for the protest.

Conclusion: Constructing Cavalcade to Canberra as Crisis

The Cavalcade to Canberra was to be the key public event in the ACTU's campaign to defeat the Government's proposed Workplace Relations Bill. It was intended to symbolise united opposition to the Bill as an unfair and 'un-Australian' proposal that would disadvantage all working people and especially those with the least bargaining power. The central aim of the rally was to demonstrate to the Australian people, the media and political parties, the united opposition of Churches, community groups and unions to the legislation. Through the rally and other lobbying the ACTU hoped to convince the minor parties, who held the balance of power in the Senate, to vote with the ALP to defeat the Bill. Instead, the actions of a small minority of the protesters in attempting to force entry into Parliament House became the sensational event of the day. The story conformed to existing media conventions of reporting on trade unions and industrial relations. It also fitted news values of negativity, conflict, relevance, simplification, unexpectedness and reference to elite persons. It provided dramatic photographs of confrontation and acts of violence that dominated print (and television) reports of the day's news. The reasons for the protest and the specific objections to the Bill were ignored in press reports as were the views of the majority of peaceful protesters unaware of the confrontation up the hill at Parliament House.

The primary themes which were reported on 20 August 1996 (the day after the protest) include: the extent of the damage to the building, gift shop, and to people; the cost of the damage; attempts to explain, including through the use of diagrams, how the 'riot', or the attempt to enter Parliament House, occurred; security issues, both for Parliament House and for the Prime Minister; the intensity of the confrontation and its impact on those caught up in it, such as staffers, tourists and visitors; and the view of the Australian Federal Police that it was the 'ugliest' incident they had seen. The *cause* of the 'riot' was also a major focus of reporting.

The reportage of the investigations into the cause of the 'riots' privileges the explanation that it is the fault of the union movement and includes discussion of its implications for union credibility.

The dramatic front-page photos and layouts, the highly charged and emotional tone of the headlines, the editorials and the Prime Minister's comments interpellate the reader as outraged citizen. The effect of this interpellation is to discredit and obscure the actual political issues the rally sought to bring to the public attention and into debate and in particular their objections to the Workplace Relations Bill. The union movement itself is not given the opportunity to articulate these concerns nor are the points made by speakers to the crowd reported. The day's events are reduced to the 'riot' and the Prime Minister, Federal Police and newspaper editorials speak for the public, and, by default, for the protesters, in providing the authoritative accounts of the day's main events.

News reports utilise particular categories of deviance to heighten the dramatic impact of reports of the day's events and their significance. They employ language which categorises unionists within the paradigm of extreme deviancy as violent criminals, terrorists or hostile invaders. Aboriginal demonstrators are also categorised as deviants and the reporting of them draws on historical conventions of racial difference that position Aboriginal people as intrinsically untrustworthy and as being other to white Australians. Gender differences are also employed to heighten the sense of outrage at the damage caused by the rioters. Whilst the protesters are positioned as particular types of violent men, women are largely absent from reports as actors. However, they are prominent in reports as victims as injured police, fearful staff and terrified onlookers. These strategies extended the repertoire of associated meanings available to the reader and consolidate the preferred interpretation of the Cavalcade to Canberra as a violent outrage. Politically, the confrontation provided the opportunity for the Prime Minister to discredit the Bill's opponents as violent thugs, themselves 'un-Australian'. In this situation the Prime Minister developed a politically strategic account of the events which resonated with news values of violence and existing conventions for reporting political protests, trade unionism and Aboriginal issues. The Prime Minister invoked

the discourse of nationalism against the protesters and specifically against unions and the media adopted his definition of the events as their own. News reports present the demonstrators as opposed to the presumed readers, the state, the national interests and democracy, itself. The intersection of political strategies and media practices combined to increase both the intensity of the reporting and to narrow the range of accounts of the day's events. The effect of this was to minimise the opportunity for reader identification with alternate explanations of events such as: the purpose of the rally, the effort people made to attend, their concerns about the Bill (and Budget) or with the cause of the riot or with the union cause.

The next chapter analyses the ways in which the narrative strategies privilege the story of violence and situate it within the contexts of 'unAustralian' activities, violence towards women, anarchy and left-wing political agitation. It examines how Jennie George and the ACTU are positioned as being to blame for the violence. These questions are taken further in Chapter Seven which analyses the reporting of political attacks on George in the days and weeks following the 'riot'.

7 Stories Told and Untold: Rhetorical Constructions of the Cavalcade to Canberra as a 'Riot'

Introduction

This chapter is the second to focus on the reporting of the Cavalcade to Canberra, leading to analysis of how coverage irrevocably damaged Jennie George's presidency and the standing of the union movement. Whereas the previous chapter analysed the use of photographs and the role of page layout, especially in front pages, to construct meaning, this one concentrates on the narrative and rhetorical constructions of the 'riot'. In particular it calls attention to the representation of the 'riot' as 'unique' in Australian history and the ways it was represented as specifically 'unAustralian', thus tying the reportage to a larger discourse on Australian nationalism. It calls attention to how that discourse is gendered, racialised and normative, not only of white male but also middle-class values despite the egalitarian ethos of the Australian tradition.

In common with Chapter Six, this chapter primarily focuses on the reportage in two national and ten city daily papers published on 20 August, the day following the rally. It also examines the reporting in one weekly current affairs magazine, the *Bulletin*, published the following week.

The reports are analysed for common rhetorical patterns across the twelve papers. The chapter investigates how these stories are fitted into pre-existing news frames and how news values affect how the material is organised into particular, and familiar, narratives for the (presumed) reader. The narrative strategies considered include consideration of whether there is a dominant paradigm (or repertoire) for the reports from which the descriptive metonyms, metaphors, and similies are drawn; whose accounts are given prominence over others; who is quoted directly; whose comments are paraphrased; which accounts of the events are omitted altogether; and the relationship between story, headlines, captions and photographs.

Rhetorical Strategies

Criminality and Hooliganism

The Prime Minister, John Howard, declared the attempt by a small group of demonstrators to force entry into Parliament House to be 'unAustralian' and 'shameful'. As discussed in the previous chapter, his rhetorical and political use of the riot as an illegitimate, unpatriotic, *criminal* act was adopted by the press as the news frame for their reports. Repeated use across all newspapers of the terms 'violent', 'thugs', 'mobs', 'un-Australian' and 'criminal' in association with the protesters who tried to enter Parliament House places them far outside the boundaries of 'legitimate' peaceful and orderly protest and, therefore, outside the 'legality threshold' of civilised society (Hartley 1989: 85; Hall et al. 1978). The strategy of discussing the protesters as criminals is employed by all papers and closely links to the discussion of their actions as morally repugnant, outrageous, 'un-democratic' and 'un-Australian'.

Several reports argue that this was the *most* violent demonstration in Australia's history and that it was the *first time* Parliament House had been stormed (*Mercury* 1996a; Sweetman & Horan 1996, *Courier Mail*). Other reports note that Parliament House has a history of protests in which the protesters breached security. These include the Port Kembla miners and steel-workers demonstration in 1982, an incident in which a man with a sawn-off shotgun drove his four wheel drive vehicle through the doors of Parliament House in 1992 and the 1994 Queensland coal-miners demonstration (*Canberra Times* 1996b; McNicholl 1996, *Australian*). The claim that this event was the *first* time such an event had occurred adds to its significance and emphasises the union protest as being more extreme than anything which had previously occurred. "In the *most violent* scenes witnessed at Australia's new Parliament House, doors were smashed, police injured and walls damaged and smeared with blood and paint ..." (Taylor & Corby 1996, *Canberra Times*, italics added). This report, like several others, substantiates the claims to the degree of violence (the greatest) through an emphasis on the alleged weapons the protesters carried with them in apparent preparation for a confrontation. The allegation that the

protesters were armed increases the outrage of the events as premeditated violence (see 'Political Revolutionaries' section below).

'Un-Australian' Actions

The categorisation of the attempted forced entry as an outrage is developed through several themes. In the first instance through the narrative that violent demonstrations are anti-democratic and violence is widely abhorred as an illegitimate form of protest. Australia is one of the few western nation states that has no (acknowledged) history of violent civil unrest or war, outside the violence of settlement and colonisation.[1] Hence its proud and consistent claim to be a peace-loving country. In these reports the logic extends from the premise that political violence is outside the traditions of Australian political life to the proposition that even vigorous public protest is unacceptable, rather than viewing it as an indication of a healthy democracy (Ward 1995). The logic of this belief operates to interpellate readers, who consider themselves to be peace-loving Australians, to join with the Prime Minister, newspaper editors and talk-back hosts in condemning the protesters as 'un-Australian'. John Howard called upon audiences to reject the protesters' action, "I think what they did this afternoon will be greeted with revulsion by mainstream Australia" (quoted in Willox 1996a, *Age*). Violence is intrinsically linked to criminal behaviour and is outside the boundaries of civil society (Ericson et al. 1987, 1991; Hall et al. 1978; Hartley 1989). Violence in the vicinity of Parliament House also carries connotations of civil war and terrorist actions. In media reports, crime is frequently seen as something that can be prevented or overcome by a return to family morality and the imposition of law and order (Wykes 2001). Frequently the "body of crime" is feminine (Young 1996: 19). Reports of male violence in public sphere contexts of political protest can work syntagmatically to raise women's (personal and private sphere) anxieties of domestic violence and child sexual assault. Such violence has frequently been condemned by women as unacceptable

[1] Although some might argue that the Eureka Stockade in 1854, the confrontations between the striking shearers, state troopers and pastoralists in the 1890s, and the Vietnam Moratorium demonstrations could be classified as such.

tactics in political demonstrations as it reflects badly on the protest aims and can make women participants feel unsafe.

The fact that the target of the limited, extremist violence was Parliament House, the symbol of both the nation and of democracy added to the outrage for many commentators, particularly in newspaper editorials. For traditionalists this added injury related to the affront it gave to national identity. A few examples illustrate this indignation:

> Their violence against the principal democratic institution in this country—violence that saw blood spilled on the marble floor and walls of Parliament House—certainly shows a frightening disrespect for the national symbol of democracy and a disregard for the result of free and fair elections.
>
> (*Australian* 1996a)

Another example is the editorial of the *Daily Telegraph* which states: "The vandals who so disgracefully trampled on accepted freedoms of protest and defiled our most important national building have no place in political debate" (*Daily Telegraph* 1996a).

These actions can be read as 'un-Australian' not only because they contravened Australia's peaceful and democratic traditions (it being one of the very few nation states which has not suffered a civil war) but also because they physically damaged a key symbol of the nation—its house of democratic government. Some of the protesters (and perhaps some readers) argued it was the 'people's house' and they had a right to put their case in it [see protester Davie Thomason's comment "100 of us got into *our* House" quoted in Marris (1996b, *Australian*, italics added)]. However, most commentators conclude it was particularly shameful that the house of the people should have been 'violated' by the actions of a small group of thugs. Tony Parkinson, writing in the *Herald Sun* argues the protesters' actions were an "affront to democracy" for "[n]othing is more calculated to offend middle Australia ... than blood on the floor, literally, of the nation's parliamentary showpiece" (Parkinson 1996). Several other reports also employ the conjunction of blood and marble as one technique for demonstrating the newsworthiness of the events through the extent of the violence. The Tasmanian *Mercury* is responsible for two of the most notable examples of such techniques. "With its walls and floors splattered with

blood, its doors smashed and splintered, its defending police bruised and battered, the Federal Parliament building became a House of Shame yesterday." And later in the same report "[a]fter a fierce battle, they forced their way inside Parliament, wrenching pieces of marble from the walls to use as weapons" (*Mercury* 1996a: 2). In these reports a highly sensationalist style of reporting is employed to engage reader interest and concern and to attempt to direct readers' interpretation of the events. Here the marble has shifted from being the passive and inappropriate receptacle of blood to a potential weapon "wrenched from the walls", thus providing evidence of the strength and ferocity of the protesters' rage. The degree of the force used by protesters is also indicated by reports of the use of various objects as 'battering rams'.

Historical colonial and state discourses presumed that the role of civilised male citizens was to protect the vulnerable, emergent (feminine) nation from the depredations of Aborigines, convicts, the yellow-peril and other uncivilised threats. The representational repertoire employed in news reports of the Cavalcade to Canberra 'riot' draws upon these traditional discourses in its positioning of the protesters as betraying democracy, Australia herself, law and order, and their own proper role and responsibilities as male citizens. The themes of violation of the nation, through the attack on her symbolic heart (Parliament House), betrayal of democracy, and of trust, through unlawful expressions of male violence and criminal actions run parallel to the horror/fear of male violence against women in the private sphere. These protesters who "stormed the nation's seat of democracy in Canberra—punching, kicking, smashing, ransacking and looting" (*Mercury,* 1996a), could be regarded as having the potential to commit the worst kinds of criminal abuse to individuals and to property.

The construction of the struggle as unAustralian had an additional, and embarrassing, layer of meaning for the ACTU. In the early stages of its campaign against the Bill the ACTU had labelled it 'an unAustralian Act' (ACTU 1996a). A media release it distributed in July argued:

> [t]he proposed legislation significantly reduces fairness in the workplace, leaves the weakest in the most vulnerable situation, erodes established practices and values supported by the community and will inevitably lead to a widening of income and social inequalities.
>
> (ACTU 1996a)

The ACTU argued that the Bill was 'unAustralian', against the national interest and the tradition of a 'fair go' because it would disadvantage those in the most vulnerable and precarious employment positions (George 1996b). This argument engages with popular beliefs about Australia as an egalitarian country with a strong commitment to fairness. It also directly challenges John Howard's election promise that "no Australian worker would be worse off under a Coalition Government". By emphasising the unfairness of the Bill, its impact on those in the weakest position, and invoking the national mythology of the 'fair go', the ACTU hoped to convince the Australian Democrats and Independent Senators that they should reject the Bill. The Australian Democrats, historically, have positioned themselves as the moral conscience of the Parliament and as standing for fairness over the ideological extremes of the two major parties. The ACTU's tactics included emphasising the negative impact of the Bill on those who were least able to protect themselves (women, part-time, casual, young and non-English speaking background workers), and its impact on the least well-off, arguing it was a breach of Howard's election promise. When the ACTU introduced nationalism into the debate early on in their campaign against the Bill it engaged in an on-going rhetorical and political struggle for moral and nationalistic superiority. The operations of the oppositional frameworks of both political processes and media reporting then positioned this struggle as a key symbolic one in the debate and one which was readily available to be reversed when the rally went wrong.

The Narrative of Violence Against Women

Several reports made the connection between the property damage and violence to women more or less explicitly. The *Mercury* (1996b) in 'Baying mob kicks woman' reported that:

> A young policewoman was in a serious condition last night after being brutally kicked at yesterday's Parliament House riots [sic]. The constable in her early twenties was dragged from the police line by the baying mob, who laid into her with heavy workboots.

This description of the crowd likens the unionists to gangs of jackbooted fascists and bovver-booted skinheads and distances them from categories of acceptable working-class dissidents implying that they are capable of fascistic violence and destruction.

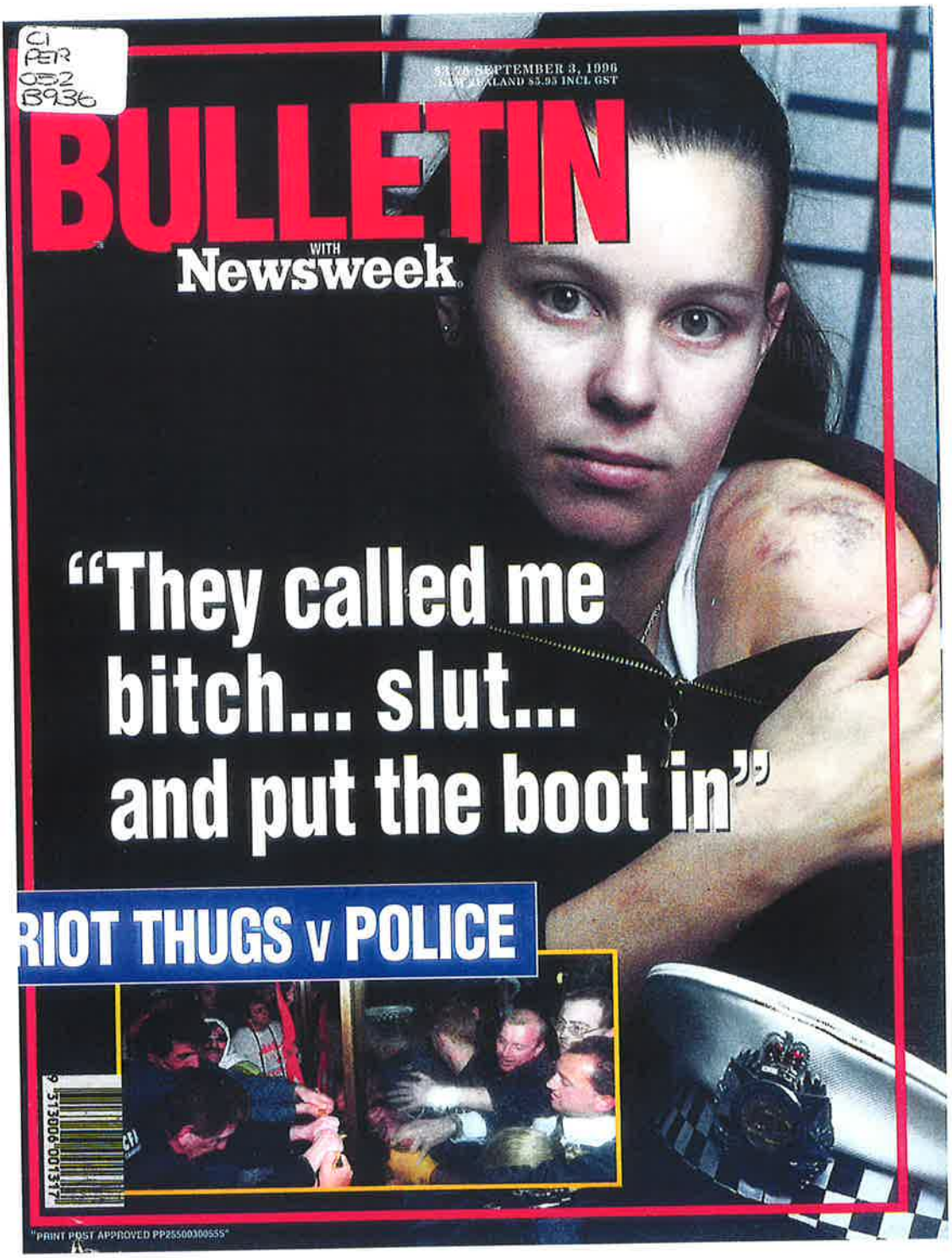
The *Advertiser* reports the same incident in almost identical terms. It is the *Bulletin* magazine (a weekly current affairs magazine dating back to the 1890s and linked to an 'authentic' populist nationalist tradition), however, which makes the most explicit connection between the 'riot' and gendered domestic violence and egalitarian ethos of 'fair play'. Its edition of 3 September 1996 includes three separate but linked reports on the Cavalcade to Canberra demonstration and the following day's separate demonstration against cuts to ATSIC. It is the way the *Bulletin* reports on injuries received by two women police officers that utilises this register of domestic violence most obviously.

The front cover (Figure 7.1) of the magazine features one of the officers staring directly at the camera with her bruised left shoulder bared and turned towards the reader. Her right arm is extended across her body and she holds her left arm protectively just below the bruised area. This arm forms a shield between the reader and herself. Her appearance is vulnerable, defensive and accusatory. It is an image which bears strong similarity to campaign posters calling upon people to report and/or prevent domestic violence. A quote in large print, presumably from the pictured woman, is placed across the centre of the cover and partly across her body. It reads: "They called me bitch … slut … and put the boot in". Underneath this headline is a boxed title 'Riot thugs versus police' that sits above a smaller photo of police and demonstrators struggling to gain control of the Parliament House doors.

The *Bulletin's* reports of the experiences of the female police officer are overlaid with other nationalistic and anti-communist discourses. The experience of the woman officer registers through a variety of discourses. At one level it suggests two competing associations with domestic violence. She is both a victim of unprovoked male abuse and also labelled 'bitch' and 'slut', common terms of abuse used by men to suggest that the woman victim 'deserved what she got'. The construction of her as a victim of male violence, and the verbal abuse of her as 'bitch' and 'slut', invites

Figure 7.1 Bulletin, 3/9/96, front cover.

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female (and feminist) readers to identify with her trauma and to feel horror towards the perpetrators. This links her to victims of domestic violence in a chain of signification that invites readers to reject unionists as violent women-beaters (and could taint their demands as likewise unreasonable and lacking in credibility). In this way the conservative discourse of anti-unionism underlying the *Bulletin's* reportage is transformed for possible reception by a liberal feminist audience in ways that invite a reading of the (left-wing) demonstrators as fascist. There is considerable slippage between the signifiers within this article and the *Bulletin's* coverage in general. The emotional and sensationalised tone of its language and the rhetorical strategies on the cover and in the headlines invite readers to respond at an emotional rather than a rational level to the reports.

At another level the woman officer can be seen as an instrument of oppressive state power preventing access to the seat of democracy and thus a trigger for the confrontation. She can be seen as a symbol of the extreme acts of violence carried out by undemocratic and anarchist trouble-makers. She could also be seen to stand for Australia itself (herself) its democratic traditions bruised and battered by an onslaught of feral unionists and Aborigines. She could even be seen to be a casualty of equal opportunity, inappropriately placed at risk in a frontline confrontation between heavier male combatants, targeted because she was a woman, was lighter, offered least resistance, and/or was an outsider in a masculine domain.

Indeed, in the related article, 'Two against the tide' (Martin 1996a: 21) the officer pictured on the front cover, Constable Bentheim, is reported as claiming "protesters targeted her *because* she was a woman" (italics added). "They came at me, called me a bitch and a slut, threw me down the stairs and put the boot in." The article then reports that this assault occurred at the separate Canberra demonstration held to protest against cuts to ATSIC on 20 August, at Old Parliament House, not in confrontation with the break-away group of Cavalcade to Canberra demonstrators the previous day. However, the placement of this article next to another by Martin ('Free Radicals' Martin 1996b), which discusses who was responsible for instigating the violence at the first (ACTU) demonstration, blurred the two dates.

In 'Free radicals' (a pun that draws attention to the so-called radicalism of the protesters' political philosophies) Martin (1996b: 20) argues that it was

> a volatile mixture of alcohol, anger and anarchy that led sections of the crowd, most of them dupes but some of them willing agents provocateurs, to throw themselves on, and past, police and smash their way into Parliament House last week.

The article commences with the claim that "[t]he beer was free and carried an incitement to riot". The close proximity of these two articles adds alcohol, anarchy and communism to the story of the injuries to the two women police officers and their injuries become the result of the mix of alcohol and 'riot fever' or blood lust. Historically in Australia the close connection of alcohol and masculinity has been opposed by 'respectable' women who have acted as 'God's police' in campaigning for temperance and chastity (Summers 1975). These women have been positioned in opposition to those who share a taste for alcohol and sex, who have been positioned as whores. The rhetoric in Martin's two reports resonates with, while at the same time compromising, feminist analysis of the positioning of women in Australian history (Martin 1996a, 1996b). As Ann Summers (1975: 341) argues, "God's Police and Damned Whores were seen as polar opposites". Women's suffrage campaigns in Australia were closely linked to their campaigns for temperance.

Alcohol is the most common ingredient in situations of male to male violence and is also common in situations of domestic violence. The *Advertiser* also reports that demonstrators "were observed drinking cans of VB beer throughout the day" (Sweetman 1996). Despite reports of some sixty-one police having been injured in the confrontation at Parliament House on 19 August and several hundred protesters being injured[2], the *Bulletin* selected the stories of these two *women* officers and presented them in this particular way (Martin 1996a). The syntagmatic effect of combination of damage to property, personal assault and domestic violence is a narrative strategy which invites women readers (particularly) to condemn the male unionists' actions as outrageous and violating behaviour.

[2] The *Financial Review* reported that 61 police were injured "an official tally" (Shires 1996), other reports put the numbers as high as over 100 police and several hundred protesters injured (Taylor & Corby 1996). The *Canberra Times* reported that 67 police and parliamentary officials were injured. The *Bulletin* reported that "more than a hundred police were injured and several hundred protesters received medical attention in the two incidents" (Martin 1996a).

Aborigines 'On the Warpath'

The construction of indigenous Australians as a threat to safety and prosperity of the white colonial settlers and as an object of fear dates from the earliest days of white settlement. The persistence of this representational repertoire of Aborigines as a threat in contemporary media—especially in relation to populist law and order issues—has been well documented.[3] The previous chapter revealed the disproportionate inclusion of signifiers of Aboriginality in front-page photographs the day following the rally. Rhetorically, Aboriginal demonstrators were constructed as single-issue protesters intent on causing disruption and trouble. Paul Molloy, writing in the *Herald Sun*, claimed "the Aboriginal protesters had *no intention* of joining the 25, 000 people on the front lawns of Parliament House" (1996a italics added). The *Advertiser* strengthened and sensationalised the association of Aboriginal demonstrators with trouble by including in its front-page report the prediction, by Aboriginal leader Sugar Ray Robinson, that similar scenes would occur at the 2000 Sydney Olympics (Penberthy & Sweetman 1996).

The Aboriginal protesters were represented visually and rhetorically as 'single issue' protesters, concerned only about race relations and ATSIC's funding (*Mercury* 1996a; Molloy 1996a). They were differentiated from the unionists (workers). As such media representations provide only a single identity to subjects, readers are not invited to think of them as more complex identities, for example Aboriginal workers or unionists. Therefore they could be read as *non-workers* or as the recipients of some form of unemployment or welfare benefit. As benefit recipients, Aboriginal demonstrators (and, indeed, student demonstrators) could be read in opposition to, and a burden on, the productive Australian taxpayer and presumed reader. This opposition magnifies the outrage of the damage. In the news reports of the rally and especially the 'riot', the demonstrators were positioned in opposition to the reader who was presumed to have taken no part in any form of protests on 19 August against the Government's policies. The Aborigines, unionists and students who participated in the attempted forced entry into Parliament House were represented as deviant criminals. In a couple of reports they were also seen to have betrayed the majority of peaceful demonstrators and the ACTU who organised the rally. Whilst

[3] For example see Goodall (1993); Meadows (2001); Mickler (1992, 1998); Sercombe (1995).

nearly all reports that mention the participation of Aboriginal demonstrators in the trouble focus on their alleged role in triggering the confrontation, one report differentiates between groups of Aboriginal demonstrators noting that some "Aboriginal families protesting the cuts to ATSIC fled from the protesters who were using a metal pylon as a battering ram" (Windsor 1996, *Australian*). Despite this exception, the dominant interpretation of Aboriginal participation in the rally reported in the newspapers is that Aboriginal demonstrators were 'on the warpath' determined to confront police and vandalise Parliament House.

Political Revolutionaries

The themes of the protest being un-Australian and anti-democratic are reinforced by references to communism and anarchy. Both the *Mercury* and the *Daily Telegraph* report that:

> many looked on in awe as an old Communist soviet flag raised above the House. 'I never could believe Australia was like this', said one tourist from Germany. 'We just want to get out of here.'
>
> (*Mercury* 1996a; Horan & Miranda 1996).

Reports such as this revive cold war anxieties of the threat of communism to democracy and of trade unions as being the incubator for the communist threat. The *Canberra Times* reports that 'Eureka and Aboriginal flags even hung across the nation's sacred stainless steel coat of arms', thus drawing upon powerful Australian nationalist protest mythologies and fears (Warden 1996). The *Financial Review* features an photograph of the Eureka and Aboriginal flags hanging from the coat of arms as its front-page image. The Eureka flag's origins lie in the 1854 building of Eureka Stockade by rebel Victorian gold miners at Ballarat in protest at high license fees, repressive policing practices and court decisions that favoured the propertied class over the miners. The miners' rebellion was crushed within minutes, twenty-two miners were killed and thirteen were committed for trial on charges of high treason, all but one were acquitted. Since then the Eureka flag, which was made by the miners and flown over the stockade, has come to symbolise independence from colonial rule, the courage and resilience of the battler, and an anti-authoritarian spirit.[4] During the 1960s and 1970s the flag was adopted by numerous progressive

[4] The flag design features five white stars from the Southern Cross star formation arranged on a white cross against a dark blue background.

and leftist organisations seeking a symbol of Australian independence. However, its association with the left and its role as a signifier of an independent and progressive Australia has been seriously contested by its adoption by the neo-Nazi, anti-immigration group the National Front. In the context of a union protest, however, the flag indicates the presence of builders' labourers and other construction workers and the practices of industrial militancy.[5] In the context of these reports the draping of the communist, Aboriginal and Eureka flags over the coat of arms reads metaphorically as a symbolic victory. In association with headlines such as 'Bloody Protest' (*Canberra Times* 20/8/1996 p. 1) it could suggest that revolutionary unionists and Aborigines attempted a *coup d'état.*

Many other references are made to "red union flags" (for example Molloy 1996a, *Herald Sun*) and "Aboriginal flags, red CFMEU flags and the Eureka flags of the old BLF" (Taylor 1996a, *Canberra Times*). The red flags suggest both soviet style communism (with which one building union, the Building Workers Industrial Union, was associated until the late 1980s) and also Maoism, with which the Builders Labourers' Federation (BLF), particularly, has been associated. These associations are strengthened by the use of the terms 'revolutionaries' (Cole-Adams 1996, *Canberra Times*) and 'mobs' in relation to the protesters (see for example "mob rampage" and "brutal and unprecedented display of mob violence" in Molloy and Harvey 1996, *Herald Sun*).

The Eureka flag has become widely associated with forms of radical industrial militancy as practised by the BLF during the 1970s and mid-1980s, which were outside the boundaries sanctioned by the ACTU. The BLF was also subject to many allegations of corruption within its Victorian branch and federal union leadership during the period of Norm Gallagher's presidency. It was alleged to have been

[5] The Eureka flag was adopted by the Builders Labourers' Federation as their symbol in the 1960s. It still flies from cranes on many city building sites despite the union's deregistration in 1985, and the members subsequent absorption into the mega-building union the CFMEU. Although workers from other blue collar unions, such as the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union or the Maritime Union, sometimes carry the flag (and it was widely used on the pickets in the 1998 Maritime Dispute) it is primarily associated with construction workers. The design also features on dark-blue singlets and t-shirts worn by construction workers and can be seen in several photographs of the demonstrators within Parliament House (see Chapter Six).

involved in intimidation and corruption in relation to demarcation disputes over coverage of members on building sites with another building union, the Building Workers Industrial Union.[6] During the 1970s, the NSW branch of the BLF pioneered the use of 'green bans' to protect heritage and environmental sites. These tactics won the NSW branch of the BLF a considerable amount of public support (and a legendary status amongst some sections of the left) but made them some significant political enemies amongst developers and some politicians (Bergmann & Bergmann 1998). Their conservation and other social campaigns were matched with very assertive industrial campaigns for improved wages and conditions. These tactics were likewise employed by the BLF in other states although no other state branches adopted the green bans with as much dedication or effectiveness as the NSW branch. In Victoria, during the 1980s, there were several violent clashes between BLF members and police and many arrests when police were brought in to clear picket lines. This history goes some way to explain consistent government, police and media characterisations "of the BLF as a rogue union" (Baker 1999: 16).

Since that time the media have used the Eureka flag and the name of the BLF variously as signifiers of Australian egalitarianism and of extreme industrial militancy, 'far left' politics and both political and industrial 'trouble'—including corruption. In the aftermath of the deregistration of the BLF this media signification encompassed not only radicalism but also connotations of criminality. The use of the term 'rebel' in some reports brings to mind both the BLF and the original designers of the Eureka flag, the rebel miners who defied the state at Eureka Stockade (see for example *Mercury* 1996a). The association of the protesters with communists, anarchists, rebels, union militants and corruption paradigmatically evokes images of

[6] The BWIU was one of several building unions that amalgamated to form the CFMEU and, after the BLF were deregistered, builders labourers also became covered by the CFMEU. Prior to amalgamation the two unions had experienced several instances of conflict over competing claims to cover workers on large industrial disputes. This merging of political opponents of long-standing has led to some subsequent internal friction particularly around the time of internal union elections. One of the explanations put forward to possibly account for the lapse in discipline at the Cavalcade to Canberra was that former builders labourers used the occasion to demonstrate different and militant tactics as a strategy to win support from disaffected rank and file building workers in the lead up to CFMEU elections later in the year. "[F]ormer BLF officials … are trying to regain power through national elections for the CFMEU. According to construction industry sources, the Canberra violence was a deliberate strategy by BLF sympathisers to garner support for a radical, aggressive approach to unionism" (Synnott, Cuming & Dasey 1996, *Sun Herald*).

political revolutionaries, extremists and terrorists who attempt the overthrow of democratically elected governments. These terms also employ the paranoid rhetoric of the Cold War era, which has continued to characterise much industrial relations reporting even though the Cold War context has long since passed (Ward 1995; Windschuttle 1981).

Across many newspapers anti-democratic, un-Australian, revolutionary, violent, drunken and thuggish characteristics are consistently attributed to the protesters. Whilst some reports make a distinction between the *peaceful* demonstrators and these *dangerous extremists*, the latter come to stand for *all* the demonstrators in the majority of discussions of the day's events. This occurs because the peaceful demonstration of 30, 000 protesters received very little news coverage. In the selection and editorial processes that produce the news both journalists and news editors chose to report the attempted forced entry of Parliament House over the peaceful protest on the lawns. Few papers report the speeches of *any* of the speakers to the rally and only one makes reference to a few of the points made by several speakers (Dodson & Murphy 1996, *Financial Review*). There are no photos published in any newspapers of the peaceful rally in Canberra and only two stories of 20 August cover the main peaceful Canberra rally (Marris 1996a, *Australian*; Willox 1996c, *Age*). Clearly the proud, democratic history of resistance to authority in this instance becomes characterised as a fascistic, unAustralian demonstration of radical politics gone wrong.

Omissions From the Main Story

These omissions produce an effect of erasure whereby it is as though the peaceful protest had not occurred. This serves both the requirements of news as spectacle (infotainment) and produces an ideological effect of discrediting the opponents of both the Workplace Relations Bill and the Budget. As the only opponents of these two legislative agendas who are reported in most of the news are reported for 'criminal' and 'un-Australian' behaviour the reportage implies they are typical of the demonstrators as a whole. The implicit corollary is that the commonsense response of rational and patriotic Australians would be to reject not only the

demonstrators' actions but also their *cause* as being against the interests of both the individual reader her/himself and the nation. That it is assumed that readers will follow this chain of meaning can be seen in one editorial: "[a]n inevitable consequence [of the riot] is that the issues which the ACTU and the ALP wanted to champion will be discredited along with the protest" (*Daily Telegraph* 1996a).

The media application of the news frame of violent riot to their reporting of the Cavalcade to Canberra led to other possible accounts and story angles going unreported as they did not fit the dominant, conservatively inflected definition of the event (Allan 1999; Gitlin 1980). The narrative accounts of the events of the day emphasise the presence and actions of a small group of between seventy and one hundred protesters, almost all men, some Aboriginal, some unionists, some students and some others. Many of these accounts seek to establish the essentially violent and troublesome nature of male unionists and Aboriginal protesters, and also argue that such mass demonstrations are *always* potentially violent and are an outdated political strategy (Cole-Adams 1996; *Daily Telegraph* 1996a; *Sydney Morning Herald* 1996a).

> [P]eople who organise mass demonstrations should know that opportunists with anarchic agendas may try to take over the show, and that others will be angry, gullible or drunk enough to follow their lead.
>
> (Cole-Adams 1996, *Canberra Times*)

This emphasis on the violent behaviour of a minority erases the presence of a far wider diversity of people amongst the crowd of over almost thirty thousand and takes these few demonstrators, who became involved in a physical confrontation, to stand for the whole event.

Alternative narrative themes that are not addressed in the reportage include: the reasons for the rally and the detailed objections to the Bill; specific objections to cuts to funding which were to be handed down in the Budget the following day; the diversity of community groups and unions which made the effort to come to Canberra; the extent to which the protest was thoroughly Australian (in the tradition of Eureka); how far people had travelled; and what organisational effort it had taken to get them there. The peaceful protesters were also without identity in the reports. Had there been profiles of some of these demonstrators, including elements such as

their age, gender, occupation, and ethnicity, readers would have had some sense of the diversity, and representativeness of the crowd. This would have provided alternate images of protesters that would have contested the dominant image of ugly, angry, violent men. One newspaper (*Age*) subsequently published interviews with female demonstrators who had travelled to Canberra but that report was not published until 21 August (Kermond 1996). As this report was published a day after the majority of the coverage it could not challenge the dominant definitions of the events in reports published on 20 August. The protesters who were involved in the confrontation at Parliament House were also not interviewed although their alleged actions filled the newspaper pages. It is a news convention not to give alleged offenders a platform to speak, however, it is notable that only accounts from some police, the gift shop manager, some members of Parliament, a few news reporters and photographers and several bystanders to the conflict were published. Alternative accounts of what people experienced in the crush and confrontation inside Parliament House are totally absent from the 20 August news reports. Comments from a few participants are included in reports published in subsequent days but they are rare and often serve to extend the quest to allocate blame to the unions. One example is a very brief (less than 200 words) report on protester (and CFMEU organiser) Davie Thomason, who featured widely in front-page photos of the riot[7] In 'Bloodied face of parliament tells of peaceful intentions', published in the *Courier Mail* on 21 August, Thomason is quoted as saying he was frightened as he was aware of the push from the crowd behind him (Hackett 1996). This brief report mainly functions to personalise the adjacent reports of the review of security in the wake of the protest. It reinforces and extends the dominant motif of the events as 'blood on the marble floors' pointing out that whilst onlookers were 'appalled' by the sight, Thomason was even more appalled, as it was *his* blood. The report also works to increase the scale of the confrontation by here claiming that not a few hundred but "*4, 000* people [were] involved in the violent confrontation at the doors of Parliament" (Hackett 1996, italics added). In another report South Australian CFMEU state secretary Martin O'Malley is reported as saying "the rally was a great success" (Synnott, Cumming & Dasey 1996, *Sun Herald*). The quote from O'Malley

[7] Photographs 6, 9 and 16 and see Figure 6.1.

works to increase the likely indignation experienced by readers at the irresponsibility of unionists.

Out of a total of eighty-seven reports on the day's events there are only two published reports that name some of the key speakers that addressed the peaceful rally, or that report the content of their speeches. They are Marris (1996a) in the *Australian* and Willox (1996c) in the *Age*. There are only seven reports of state-based rallies in only four newspapers (three reports in the *Courier Mail* and one each in the *Age*, *Australian*, the *West Australian*, and the *Mercury*). A single daily newspaper (*Canberra Times*) printed a brief report (about one quarter of a column) on the arrest and subsequent release of student demonstrators. In this report one demonstrator said police had used unnecessary force in arresting protesters and that "many female protesters had received quite bad bruises" (Macdonald 1996). The issue of protesters' injuries is otherwise absent from reports.

The selection of the narrative theme of outrage excludes several alternative definitions of the events of the day. Narratives of violence and disorder are generally perceived as having high newsworthiness. What is remarkable about this coverage is not that the narrative of violence is preferred in newspaper accounts of the events but that it is run to the *exclusion* of any other story lines and that it is reported in such highly consistent ways across eleven of the twelve newspapers. The exclusion of alternate accounts of the events and those participating establish highly polarised oppositions between criminally violent and anarchic protesters (unionists and Aborigines) and responsible citizens/readers, Parliament House staff, visitors and police. The peaceful protesters are almost entirely absent in these accounts but when mentioned they are placed in opposition to the violent protesters (who were seen to have betrayed their peaceful colleagues). In some accounts they are also placed in opposition to the locals, readers and responsible citizens who are presumed *not* to participate in such political events. One example of reporting that acknowledges the peaceful nature of the majority of the demonstration but opposes this group to the violent minority is Niki Savva's column in the *Age* newspaper (Savva 1996). She makes the point that there were effectively two rallies. However, she makes this observation in between two other points that throw the responsibility back on the

ACTU and that deride Bill Kelty's assessment of the day. The dominant message of this report is not that there was a large, peaceful, democratic protest in Canberra but that the ACTU is being disingenuous, hypocritical or even dishonest in failing to accept responsibility for the violence.

> The ACTU organised a mass rally in Canberra yesterday to protest against Howard Government policies, then refused to accept responsibility for the consequences. Life is not that simple. The demonstration was a good idea, the violence totally counter-productive…
> There were in effect two rallies. The one that Mr Kelty, Ms George and others, including Kim Beazley, addressed from the back of a truck, and the one that stormed Parliament House.
> Oblivious to the dimensions of the disaster that had occurred, Mr Kelty told reporters repeatedly it was "the most successful rally in the history of the nation" ever held in Canberra. Come again?
> Forty-nine people arrested, 70 police injured, 40 others hurt, the gift shop looted and doors smashed hardly qualifies for that accolade.
>
> (Savva 1996)

Who Speaks for Whom?

In considering the reporting of Jennie George and Bill Kelty's comments on the rally it is useful to remember that they were asked for comments just after the Prime Minister, John Howard, had cancelled his scheduled meeting with them. This was before they had had a detailed briefing on the violence that had taken place at Parliament House.[8] The first comments made by the ACTU leaders on the day's events attempted —unsuccessfully—to distance the ACTU from the violence and liability for the damage. Bill Kelty also attempted to challenge the media focus on the violence and to inform reporters and the public of the *success* of the main part of the rally.

[8] The location of the stage was a considerable distance from the entrance to Parliament House and the ACTU officials there were unaware of the attempted forced entry and associated violence. Their first inkling of the trouble was when one of the demonstrators—Davie Thomason—appeared with a bloodied face and demanded to address the crowd. Jennie George says that she immediately sent for John Maitland and Stan Sharkey (from the CFMEU) and said there was obviously some trouble and could they try to sort it out (George in interview with Laurie Oakes on 'Sunday', Oakes 1996a). Even at that stage they did not understand the extent of the confrontation or the damage being done to the union movement's credibility. George says it was not until she saw the television news that evening that she became fully aware of what had happened (Oakes 1996a). The transformation of the Cavalcade to Canberra from triumph to total disaster must have been difficult to grasp and come as a huge shock to officials, particularly because they were nowhere near the action and instead were presiding over an orderly and peaceful rally of some 30, 000 people.

Speaking after the aborted meeting, [with the Prime Minister] Mr Kelty told reporters he knew nothing of the details of the riot.

> 'I find the fact that we have had the biggest-ever rally in the history of Canberra to be a matter of, I think, great pride to the union movement,' he said.
> 'It is unfortunate that apparently something has happened of which I don't know anything about.
> 'Why don't you concentrate on the issue of the rally. Or perhaps you are too scared to concede this is the most important and significant rally in this country in Canberra.'
>
> (Marris 1996e)

Bill Kelty was interviewed before he understood the scale of the damage. Never regarded as a skilful media performer, his reported comments suggest both frustration at the hijacking of the rally but also naïveté in relation to the ways they would be reported. His hopeful attempt to redirect the attention of reporters to the success of the peaceful rally backfired as his remarks were widely reported as a callous disregard for injury and property damage (Bailey & Iveson 2000). They were also subsequently used in reports (and by political opponents) to demonstrate that the ACTU was 'out of touch' with public opinion. As Tony Parkinson reported in the *Herald Sun*:

> the union movement are having to answer for broken ribs, shattered glass, trashing, looting and an affront to democracy.
> The yobbo tactics of a minority at the ACTU-organised rally should have caused acute embarrassment to the union leadership and the opposition.
> Instead, ACTU secretary Bill Kelty hailed it as 'the most successful rally in the nation's history'—a laughable claim were it not such a sick joke.
>
> (Parkinson 1996)

The media rhetoric that framed the event was clearly a public relations disaster for the union movement but Bill Kelty's comments were uninformed and unstrategic and provided more fuel for the political and media attacks. His comments fitted the predominant news media account that the ACTU was out of step with public opinion and outdated in its use of mass rallies. The comments were widely reported, often as 'evidence' of the ACTU's attitude problems. Kelty was not only called a "liability" for the union movement (Oakes 1996b, *Bulletin*) but even referred to as one of the Prime Minister's "main assets" (*West Australian* 1996b). Kelty was also attacked by other union leaders such as NSW TLC secretary Peter Sams who was quoted in the *Australian* as saying Kelty's comments were "absurd" (Marris & Windsor 1996).

Jennie George also attempted to distance the ACTU from blame for the riot and to protect the union movement from damaging publicity.[9] Her first reported response was defensive but more careful than Kelty's. In all subsequent interviews, as in the following example from the *Australian*, she made the point of condemning the violence as well as asserting it was not the fault of the ACTU.

> The president of the ACTU, Ms Jennie George, condemned the violence but criticised Mr Howard's decision to terminate the meeting, [with herself and ACTU secretary Bill Kelty] describing it as a slight against union officials who had no involvement with the violence.
> "I made it very clear to John Howard that I resented any inference that any of the incidents that may have occurred during the day had anything to do with the ACTU," she said.
> "And while he did not directly attribute those incidents to the ACTU, I am concerned that he acted in a manner to cancel that meeting, leaving the impression still in my mind of some doubt as to whether he believes the genuineness of what I'm saying"
>
> (Marris 1996e)

However, despite George's attempts to carefully distance the ACTU from blame, most newspapers argued that the ACTU could not distance itself from the violence. Many argued that it had to bear at least some responsibility for the section of the crowd that committed the damage. Jennie George, and Bill Kelty to a lesser extent, were specifically blamed by the media for lacking the foresight to prevent the violence, inciting the crowd's emotions and lacking the authority necessary to control their (essentially troublesome) members. Indeed, as early as 1.51pm on 19 August a male talk-back caller to two Sydney radio stations 2UE and 2GB was blaming Jennie George. By 3.46pm announcer Brian Bury was directly blaming Kelty and George on air by asking "[w]ell, who organised the rally and whipped people up?" (Bury 1996). Some other union leaders were quoted as warning that there was considerable anger in the community with the political direction of the Howard Government and that this might result in more violent confrontations ahead

[9] George was clearly aware of the damage to the ACTU and union credibility, of the media reports of violence. She undertook numerous television, radio, talk-back and press interviews immediately after the rally, the following day and then in the days before the ACTU meeting in Lorne. Brad Norington, in his biography of George, comments on the strain it placed on her to have to deal, almost alone, with the intense media criticism (Norington 1998). On Channel 9's 'Sunday' program George referred to the "intense vilification" of herself and Kelty and the pressure they were under (Oakes 1996a). Norington asks, as others have wondered, why the ACTU did not organise other senior officials to share the load and to deflect the focus of the attacks. The event was clearly a public relations disaster for the union movement but Bill Kelty's comments were unstrategic and provided more fuel for the political and media attacks.

(see for example Australian Manufacturing Workers Union national secretary Doug Cameron reported in Marris 1996e). The CFMEU national president, John Maitland, was quoted in several reports denying his members were to blame for the violence and arguing they had cooperated with police directions (Penberthy 1996b, *Advertiser*; Shanahan 1996, *Australian*; see also Stan Sharkey's statement of 23 August, Sharkey 1996). However, Maitland's remarks were usually included in the context of reports that emphasised the visible presence of building workers in the midst of the foray. In the *Advertiser's* reporting one small report headlined 'We're not to blame, say union leaders' (Penberthy 1996b) is situated towards the bottom of a page of reports and photographs that emphasise the scale of the violence (Figure 7.2). Above and to the left of this report is another that is headlined 'Many feared death as mob surged forward' (Sweetman 1996). John Maitland's rejection of suggestions that his members were to blame for the violence in David Penberthy's report was contradicted by the claims in Kim Sweetman's adjacent report.

> A core of about 100 people led the final storming, which saw the worst violence of the day.
> Many of those wore CFMEU T-shirts and had been observed drinking cans of VB beer throughout the day.
>
> (Sweetman 1996)

The news frame of unjustifiable 'riot', originally established through the Prime Minister's comments, and pursued to the exclusion of other issues in headlines, images, reports and editorials, meant that the union leaders' comments were edited only to relate to the 'riot'. Within the dominant narrative news frame of riot their reported responses are limited to dismay at the violence and denial of responsibility. They were given no opportunity to explain to readers/the public the aims of the rally, their objections to the Bill or to predicted Budget cuts. The effect of the dominant framing of the rally as a disaster and a violent riot was that the press and the Prime Minister, to a large degree, spoke in place of the unions. In the absence of any accounts by unionists of their concerns and their purpose in organising a peaceful rally, a traditional expression of democracy, attended by so many thousands, the space was taken up by critics who detailed and condemned the violence. Union leaders themselves were restricted in their ability to speak to the

Figure 7.2 Advertiser, 20/8/96, p. 2

Adv p2 20/8/96

THE STORMING OF PARLIAMENT

Officer 'serious' after kicking

By MATTHEW HORAN
in Canberra

A young policewoman was in a serious condition last night after being brutally kicked by protesters at yesterday's Parliament House riot.

More than 40 police were injured during the violent scuffles with protesters who stormed the building. Blood was smeared on the walls and doors and five police officers were treated after a mixture of urine and paint thinner was thrown in their eyes.

The constable, in her early 20s, was dragged from the police line by the baying mob, which laid into her with heavy workboots. She suffered several broken ribs and facial injuries before she could be rescued.

"She's pretty heavily sedated right now," a police spokesman said.

Her attack was the most shameful part of the riot, which ended with more than 40 of the 200 police officers involved nursing injuries.

Most were punched or kicked by thugs who orchestrated the riot, although many suffered from the intense pressing at the front of the police line.

It is unknown how many protesters were injured, but at least 20 were tended to at a makeshift aid station inside the doors of Parliament.

One struggling male protester cracked his head on the marble floor as he was thrown to the ground by arresting police.

Police made 49 arrests, with two men still in custody charged with assaulting police.

Most of the protesters were arrested for disturbing the peace and were released at the scene after they gave an undertaking not to return.

Five women who were charged with breaching the peace were taken to the Canberra watch-house before being released.

Two men were charged in the Canberra Magistrates Court with trespassing on Commonwealth property and were released on bail.

The cost of the riot will run into tens of thousands of dollars. Several thick glass doors were smashed and almost ripped off their hinges, while the marble foyer was heavily scarred.

The Parliament House Shop, which bore the brunt of the rioting, had just been reopened after a costly refurbishment.

More than 100 screaming protesters battered down the glass doors to the shop with a sledgehammer before looting the shelves.

In other protests around Australia, up to 30 demonstrators stormed the DARWIN electorate office of Northern Territory federal MP Nick Dondas after a peaceful but noisy demonstration in the civic square. The group left after about 10 minutes.

In ADELAIDE, the national protest at planned Budget cuts and workplace reforms brought an angry crowd of up to 10,000 people into King William St.

The rally started in Victoria Square at midday and finished about 1.30pm outside the Commonwealth Parliament Offices in King William St, where police guarded the locked glass doors.

Workers, students, Aborigines and community groups voted unanimously to maintain a campaign of resistance "using whatever political and industrial means at our disposal".

In BRISBANE, 10,000 workers hoked inner-city streets in Queensland's biggest union rally and march in more than a decade. Police said the huge crowd was generally well behaved.

In PERTH, more than 3000 people marched peacefully to the steps of Parliament House, where they heard speakers condemn the Government.



Protesters smash through a glass door of the recently refurbished Parliament House Shop during yesterday's riot.

Many feared death as mob surged forward

By KIM SWEETMAN
in Canberra

People inside the crush at the doors of Parliament House yesterday thought they were going to die.

As an estimated 4000 people rushed towards the building, hundreds were crushed between riot police and protesters.

Others were trapped behind the police, against the glass doors of the House.

The violence began when police stopped about 2000 protesters against Aboriginal funding cuts from joining the rest of the 15,000-strong crowd on the lawns in front of the building.

The Aboriginal protesters instead headed up the forecourt towards the front doors, and were quickly joined by another 2000 people carrying Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union banners.

As more protesters arrived on foot and by bus they became confused as to whether to head for the lawns or the doors.

Thousands ended up in the forecourt, pushing the crowd against the glass doors.

For two hours, those at the front battled police, with occasional fights breaking out.

A core of about 100 people led the final storming, which saw the worst violence of the day.

Many of those were CFMEU T-shirts and had been observed drinking cans of VB beer throughout the day.

For those near the doors, the crush was terrifying. Several people passed out from lack of oxygen and were passed over the heads of the crowd.

A television reporter slipped in the crush and was carried along, screaming, for metres.

She said later she feared for her life.

Many of those who fell were kicked or trampled by others.

A woman caught between a riot shield and a protester was bashed as a protester mistook her blue jacket for a police uniform.

Dozens were caught in brawls as angry and excited protesters began hitting police.

Parts of the marble facade and concrete posts were torn off and used as weapons.

One officer was hit by what police believe may have been acid, but was not seriously injured, while several paint bombs were also thrown.

Some people waved stumps of wood, broken from protest banners.

As the crowd smashed through the first set of glass doors, people were swept forward into the second, internal, set which were not made of safety glass.

The marble floor was smeared with blood as those being pushed forward were stabbed by the glass spears still hanging from the door frames.

As many in the crowd realised the extent of the injuries, they allowed police to push them back.

Those who were still being pushed forward through the broken glass wept with relief as the crush was relieved by the crowd dispersing inside the building.





ABOVE: Protesters climb through a window to gain access to a corridor.

LEFT: A shaken police officer is assisted after the attack.

BELOW: Graffiti and damage inside the building was extensive.



Gift shop man pleaded with mob of looters

The manager of the Parliament House gift shop pleaded with angry protesters yesterday as they ransacked the newly renovated establishment with a battering ram and paint-bombs.

The Parliament Shop, which sells souvenirs, books and Australiana, had been due to reopen today after several weeks of closure for refurbishment.

But about lunchtime protesters thundered into the shop — which is next to the building's front entrance and leads into the main foyer — smashing doors and windows.

Shop manager Mr Bob Podmore said the chanting protesters were armed with a big blunt object like a battering ram or sledgehammer and paint-bombs.

"I tried to placate them, quieten them down, saying that this is just a shop, this is not politics," he said.

While some listened to his pleas others went wild, "yelling and screaming, ranting and raving".

"They weren't going to give up and started pushing on the doors. Then somebody brought out some sort of battering ram and started breaking the glass," he said.

"I in fact saw a sledgehammer, or what I thought was a sledgehammer."

He said that after about 20 minutes the protesters moved out into the Parliament House foyer.

Mr Podmore said the damage and loss of stock was worth many thousands of dollars, but the shop was not fatally destroyed.

After the intrusion the dusty shop floor was covered with T-shirts, ripped posters, boomerangs, crumpled mini Australian flags, Australiana tea-towels, scattered rulers and a forlorn fluffy koala bear.

The remnants were covered by shattered glass and ripped boxes, along with a splattering of green from paint-bombs.

Mr Podmore said most stock was either stolen, broken or sprayed with paint.

The most expensive losses were marquetry (wooden inlay) panels depicting Australian scenes, worth up to $1275.

"It's just a total mess."

Violent riots day of shame for Australia

From Page 1

The Democrats Leader, Senator Kernot, said she would raise six "problem areas" with the Government over its industrial bill.

The Australian Federal Police announced a review of Parliament House security.

At one stage of the protest, some participants penetrated the ministerial wing of the building and were apprehended near the Prime Minister's office.

Several South Australian MPs witnessed the violence and helped nurse those who were injured.

Liberal MP and former nursing sister Ms Trish Worth, who spent about 90 minutes helping the Parliament nursing team, said she was "terrified". "There was plenty of blood flowing," she said.

Mr Chris Pyne said he was appalled by the injuries sustained by both police and protesters, while a fellow Liberal MP, Dr Andrew Southcott, described the protest as "the full symphony the ACTU promised during the election".

The protest has jeopardised relations between the Coalition and the union movement. It is likely to strengthen the Government's determination to push its industrial bill through the Senate.

At least 40 people were hurt, along with hundreds in the crowd, while 49 protesters were arrested.

Mr Howard abruptly terminated a meeting with Ms George and union leaders after stating the riot was absolutely outrageous.

He said there would be no further discussions with the ACTU for two weeks.

Ms George said she resented Mr Howard's implication that the union leadership had encouraged the violence.

It was the first time an Australian Parliament had been stormed.

Mr Beazley said it was unfortunate the violence had been allowed to overshadow the point of the rally.

Mr Beazley, Senator Kernot, Ms George and Greens Senators Dee Margetts and Bob Brown had earlier told protesters the proposed industrial laws would divide Australians, and repeated their vow to block the bill in the Senate.

We're not to blame, say union leaders

By DAVID PENBERTHY
in Canberra

Key players in the labor movement tried to wash their hands of any responsibility for yesterday's ugly scenes.

The president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, Ms Jennie George, said she was on the lawns outside Parliament when the violence erupted at the doors.

She said the violence had nothing to do with the ACTU's campaign against the Coalition's industrial bill.

"Whatever occurred at Parliament House occurred outside the organised auspices of today's rally," she said.

She attacked the Prime Minister, Mr Howard, for cutting short his meeting with the ACTU in the wake of the violence.

"I made it very clear to John Howard I resented any inference that any of the incidents that may have occurred had anything to do with the ACTU," she said.

The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union national president, Mr John Maitland, rejected suggestions his members were to blame for much of the violence — despite the fact many of those who smashed the doors and looted the souvenir shop were wearing CFMEU T-shirts.

"Certainly our banners went up on the front of Parliament House, but people have to understand this is an issue which has been very divisive," Mr Maitland said.

"We're talking about issues which are going to divide the whole of Australia, so there was always going to be some enthusiasm."

The Opposition Leader, Mr Beazley, said while the violence "shouldn't have happened", most of the protesters had acted peacefully.

"It's also nothing to do with the organisers of the demonstration, which was a very strong stand for ordinary, mainstream Australia," he said.

Mr Beazley said the "distress" and "public anger" was a result of the Coalition's failure to honor its promise that no worker would be worse off.

HECS changes to be blocked

From Page 1

While the Opposition parties maintained their attacks on the Government's $8 billion savings strategy yesterday, they also vowed not to take a wholly obstructionist stance.

But both the Labor Opposition and the Democrats confirmed they would block the HECS increases.

The Government already has announced a new three-tiered HECS structure which charges graduates who earn more, such as doctors and lawyers, at three times the existing rate.

The Government has incorporated most of its cuts into appropriation bills which the Democrats and Labor have promised to pass.

Cuts to welfare, childcare, labor market programs and other government schemes would be protected through inclusion in these bills. But the radical HECS changes — which, along with cuts in grants to the universities, will save the Government around $1.3 billion — are not included in those bills.

Calls from Tasmanian Green Senator Bob Brown for the Opposition parties to block supply, as happened before the Whitlam government's dismissal in 1975, were rejected yesterday by the Democrats and Labor.

The Opposition Leader, Mr Beazley, said Labor would not block any measures included in appropriation (supply) bills.

"(It's) hard to do it on appropriation bills," he said.

But he promised to combine with the Democrats to block the HECS increases in the Senate.

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public through the press and the demonstrators (both peaceful and violent) were given virtually no opportunity have their accounts of events reported.[10]

What Went Wrong? The Hunt for the Cause and Someone to Blame

Press coverage of the events which occurred in Canberra on 19 August 1996 combine editorial, visual and narrative strategies to create a tapestry of male violence and community outrage. After the initial reaction of shock and horror the next logical questions the media ask on behalf of its audience are *why* the 'riot' happened and *who* was to blame. Both long and short answers are provided to these questions in different types of reports and in different kinds of news media.[11] The short answer, which is implied in most news reports and stated directly in several editorials, is that the rally got out of control—or more precisely that the organisers *lost* control of the protest. Reports claim that not only had organisers planned the event poorly but also that they directly contributed to the outbreak of violence by the way they consciously raised the level of emotion of the crowd (*Daily Telegraph* 1996a).

Many individual reports examine in more detail the factors which contributed to the confrontation. Various views are put forward on the contributions of such elements

[10] One exception to this was the alternative weekly (Socialist-aligned) newspaper *Green Left Weekly* 28/9/96, which published accounts and quotes from several protesters (some anonymous) who participated the struggle to enter Parliament House. However, although *Green Left Weekly* has a national distribution system in major cities it has a very small circulation.

[11] Talk-back radio, and to a lesser extent radio current affairs shows, broadcast on the afternoon of 19 August and subsequent days had a simple answer to what went wrong. The majority of callers and announcers blamed the ACTU unequivocally for inflaming the crowd's emotions and not controlling the demonstrators. Prominent amongst these critics of the ACTU was Alan Jones, a highly influential, and high rating, conservative Sydney talk-back host and television presenter. On the morning following the rally he appeared on Channel Nine's 'Today' show arguing that "ACTU president, Jennie George and the ACTU secretary Bill Kelty organised this demonstration and provided the language and emotion which ignited yesterday ... they have absolute responsibility" (Jones 1996a). He went further on radio saying, on his nationally syndicated show on Sydney station 2UE, that Jennie George "can't handle the job" and that "there is no longer room for Bill Kelty or Jennie George in the ACTU" (Jones 1996b). In light of the intertextual workings of the media and the symbiotic relations between public opinion and politicians it is possible that talk-back attention to the question of blame contributed to the Prime Minister's decision to purse that as an issue over the forthcoming weeks.

as the marshals, alleged 'agents provocateurs' and the police. One account, published in the *Australian*, includes the explanation offered by some unionists that police officers in 'SWAT gear' had assaulted an Aboriginal demonstrator and that this had led to nearby building workers going to his aid. They asserted that it was the reaction to this assault that caused the run on Parliament House by a nearby group of Aboriginal demonstrators and unionists (Bradley, Marris & Windsor 1996). Other factors such as the adequacy of rally planning, the effectiveness of Parliament House security and the effects of alcohol on crowd members are also considered. The consistent factor within most accounts is that Bill Kelty and Jennie George, as organisers of the rally, (or more accurately the public office bearers of the organisation which called the rally, as it was the ACT-TLC that was responsible for operational matters) must accept responsibility if not direct blame. In these accounts, the narratives of the editorials, opinion columns and news reports concur with, and reinforce, the position of the Prime Minister. In a strategic political move, John Howard cancelled his planned meeting with George and Kelty on the afternoon of the riot and then said at his press conference that "those responsible for today's demonstration should feel utterly ashamed of themselves" (quoted in Taylor & Corby 1996, *Canberra Times*). The reportage, itself, reveals the power of the Prime Minister and his advisers to influence the news and project their interpretations of events as 'the' authoritative accounts and for news reportage to privilege this perspective. Over subsequent days the accusations that the ACTU should be held responsible for the damage to Parliament House increased. Whilst John Howard did not *at this time* directly blame the ACTU or its leaders for provoking or causing the violence several newspaper reports did blame the ACTU leaders, at least by implication.[12] The *Sydney Morning Herald's* editorial clearly directs blame at the ACTU in its headline: 'The ACTU's responsibility'. It goes on to say, "[i]t is disingenuous of the ACTU to attempt to distance itself from responsibility for yesterday's riot" (1996a). The *Daily Telegraph* also directly blames the ACTU leaders for the violence. Their editorial is the most pointed.

[12] Howard and his Workplace Relations Minister Peter Reith did subsequently demand the ACTU and its leaders Jennie George and Bill Kelty accept responsibility for the riot, see Chapter Seven.

> ACTU president Jennie George and secretary Bill Kelty, and leaders of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy union cannot avoid recriminations.
> They helped organise the march to Parliament House and provided much of the emotion which fuelled it.
> They must take responsibility for that organisation and that emotion being perverted into violence.
> ... this morning the bulk of Australians will not be convinced easily that organisers of the protest could not have kept it under control.
> Or they will believe that the organisers whipped up a mindless fervour without considering how they would channel it.
>
> (*Daily Telegraph*, 1996a)

Liberal Senator, Sue Knowles, went further when she argued "Jennie George and the ACTU should take full responsibility for the protesters' actions by accepting the cost of the damage" (Knowles 1996). Her letter to the *Australian* is printed in a prominent position under a large headline 'Union-organised thugs in Canberra'. This headline and the letter oppose the restrained tone of the *Australian's* editorial, on the same page, which separates blame and responsibility.

> The rally was part-organised by the ACTU, so they did have some responsibility for controlling the behaviour of participants. However, that does not mean the ACTU should be blamed for the riot.
>
> (*Australian*, 1996a)

Through this layout the *Australian* offers readers an alternative, stronger view to identify with than its own, more rational, editorial and invites them to agree with Knowles and demand a penalty from those responsible.

The issue of blame and the argument that the ACTU should accept responsibility became the key theme developed in the press over subsequent weeks. Discussion revolved around a question of leadership and the opposing constructions of it advocated by (and, arguably, also embodied by) John Howard and Peter Reith, on the one hand, and Jennie George and Bill Kelty, on the other. (This is taken up in the next chapter). Whilst the reports on 20 August—the first day after the rally—focus on the scale of the disorder they also ask questions about the cause of the violence. Subsequent days' reports had to develop the story further to retain news value. If the damage-toll did not continue to rise (as it might have in a situation of natural disaster, civil war or terrorist attack) the news value needed to be sustained by developing the reports along alternative story lines (Allan 1999; Hartley 1989). The story of the damage had been extensively covered, indeed almost exhausted, in the

first twenty-four hours of reporting the events. Only the *Bulletin* magazine of 3 September 1996 continued to report this angle after the initial two days.

By the second day after the rally newspapers turned attention to other events such as reporting the first Costello budget and Senator Mal Colston's defection from the Labor Party. However, there were both political as well as media advantages in the continuance or revival of the story. The conventions of news discourse demonstrate the benefits of extending stories with such high news value especially those involving so many traditional media 'villains' over several days or weeks if possible. The reasons to extend the story were increased by the attempts by conservative politicians and business leaders to keep it in the news. There were clear political benefits to be gained for these groups by extending the story's life. Firstly, continued coverage of the riot and damage could maximise the political damage to unions and the ALP. Secondly, it could increase the likelihood of the minor parties in the Senate agreeing to support the Government and pass the Workplace Relations Bill. Thirdly, it boosted the Prime Minister's authority and leadership credentials. Several conservative politicians and business leaders made statements over the following weeks calling upon the ACTU to condemn the protesters and take responsibility for the damage to Parliament House. The Australian Federal Police were known to be investigating both the cause of the riot and the adequacy of their own preparation for the rally. Their comments on aspects of the riot including injuries to police officers were widely reported and made headlines, as in 'AFP alleges riot attack was planned' (Bradley, Marris & Windsor 1996). This combination of value for both the media and political vested interests in perpetuating the story, particularly while it continued to focus on the issue of blame, led to the development of the reporting repertoire this author has called 'Hunting for a scalp' (Muir 1997a).

Magnifying the Horror: Unionists and Premeditated Violence

As well as emphasising the degree of force employed by the protesters to break into Parliament House and the extent of the damage they caused, news accounts also use the discussion of the violence to argue, without any factual foundation, the assault

was pre-planned. A pre-meditated attack on Parliament House and police and security staff protecting it is far more shocking, and therefore more newsworthy, than a spontaneous outburst of anger in response to some provocation. Opportunistic violence is often associated in the news with juvenile gangs and groups of youths (Hall et al. 1978; Hartley 1989; Wykes 2001). Pre-meditated violence is associated with political terrorism and extremist fanatical or criminal groups. If the news reports established the protesters as having planned the assault on Parliament House they would link them, and through them the whole trade union movement, with terrorist actions and a threat to national security. Having once been placed in this relationship unions would continually be vulnerable to further allusions to their actions as being against the national interest.[13]

Several reports claimed that some of the protesters had come armed for trouble and carried "sledge-hammers", "wheel braces" and a "crowbar" (Martin 1996b, *Bulletin*; Seccombe 1996, *Sydney Morning Herald*; and Willox 1996b, *Age*). The *Advertiser* reported that "[s]ome protesters came armed—one with a sledge-hammer and others carried flasks of paint, acid and even urine which they hurled at police" (Penberthy & Sweetman 1996; also Farr 1996a, *Daily Telegraph*). The reference to urine is included in several accounts and functions to arouse more than the simple condemnation of violence on the part of the reader. It pushes the protesters into the realm of the abject and magnifies reader horror at their actions, the most sensational version was a reference to "urine bombs" (Martin 1996b). Support for the suggestions that the violence was pre-meditated also comes through comments from the gift-shop proprietor. However, some of these accounts are juxtaposed with

[13] Strike action by trade unions has frequently been reported as being against the national interest (Philo et al. 1982). The *Daily Express* in Britain and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher both used the phrase 'the enemy within' in relation to the National Union of Miners in relation to the extended Miners strike in the mid-1980s (Webster 1990). Thatcher frequently used this theme of unionists as being dangerous and against the national interest claiming "striking miners, like foreign enemies, were men of violence" (Webster 1990: 159-61).
This history is pertinent to Australia and the way in which the Prime Minister and Workplace Relations Minister consistently position trade unions as exercising excessive and anti-social power in contrast to their own 'reasonable' and commonsense approach to curbing workers' rights and modifying industrial legislation. It became evident in the weeks following the Canberra demonstration and was most obvious in the highly charged political struggle over meanings during the 1998 Maritime Dispute. It has subsequently been used in relation to construction unions in justifying the establishment, in 2001, of the Royal Commission into the Building Industry headed by Commissioner Terence Cole.

photographs which create an ambivalence in the meaning of the event. (See for example the photograph on the front page of the *Canberra Times*, that clearly indicates that the protesters grabbed the gift shop trolley on the spur of the moment as they passed through the shop, photograph 8, Figure 6.12).

> Shop manager Bob Podmore said the chanting protesters were armed with a big blunt object like a battering ram or sledge-hammer, paint bombs and anger at the Government's proposed new workplace legislation.
> 'I tried to placate them, quieten them down, saying that this is just a shop, this is not politics,' he said . . .
> Mr Podmore said: 'They weren't going to give up and started pushing on the doors, then somebody brought out some sort of battering ram and started breaking the glass.
> 'I in fact saw a sledge-hammer, at least what I thought was a sledge-hammer'.
> (*Mercury* 1996c)

And from the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

> [I]t was clear a small section of the crowd had come prepared to make trouble. The manager of the Parliament House shop—which bore the brunt of the damage—Mr Bill Podmore, said he saw one man wielding what he thought was a slegdehammer. Other rioters had brought paint, with which they spattered police and property. Crowbars, flagpoles and wheelbraces were used.
> (Seccombe 1996)

Security staff and Australian Federal Police also argue that the violence was premeditated.[14]

> Australian Federal Police said Monday's riot, which was followed by more violence yesterday, was premeditated.
> AFP Assistant Commissioner Bill Stoll said a small group of protesters went to Parliament House intent on causing damage.
> "People don't go to exercise their democratic right to protest, as they're quite entitled to … armed with wheel braces and sledgehammers" he said.
> (*Courier Mail* 1996d)

If the violence was pre-meditated, and this is highly questionable, then the question arises as to what sort of people would plan such an attack? The popular answer was that *unionists* planned this attack. Union "thugs" (Horan 1996a), "goons" (*Daily Telegraph* 1996a) and "bully boys" (Cole-Adams 1996) equipped themselves with weapons and set out for the Canberra demonstration intent on causing destruction. The implication is that unionists were not only capable of such behaviour but that it is *characteristic* of unionists (*Daily Telegraph* 1996a, *Canberra Times* 1996a). A

[14] In addition to the *Courier Mail* see also Bradley, Marris & Windsor (1996, *Australian)*; Martin (1996b, *Bulletin*); also Byrnes (1996, *AFPAJ*).

few reports question why a minority of unionists would want to undermine the success of their own organisation's rally and their movement's credibility in the process (*Canberra Times* 1996a). Some see the pre-meditated violence as the work of agents-provocateurs from far left or anarchist organisations, whilst others blame ASIO, for having taken advantage of the opportunity provided by the rally to create disruption (Corby & Contractor 1996; Martin 1996b; Seccombe 1996).

The *Bulletin* carried a report that presents itself as an 'exposé' of the shocking tactics of the radical element of the crowd. Titled 'Free radicals' it links alcohol, Aboriginals, anarchy, Maoism, unionism and violence. It also predicts that this violence heralds "a new and dangerous watershed in Australian politics" and is "likely to be repeated" (Martin 1996b, Figure 7.4). In this way the magnitude and newsworthiness of both the event and 'exposé' of crowd behaviour is increased as it becomes a predictor of a new pattern of violent union protests under the Coalition Government.

> The beer was free and carried an incitement to riot, a printed wrap-around which read: 'time to fuck the system that's been fucking us.' The wraparound went on: '... after consumption this can should be crushed and thrown at anyone who represents the system, so please show your support and aim carefully'...
> The beer can was part of a volatile mixture of alcohol, anger and anarchy that led sections of the crowd, most of them dupes but some of them willing agents provocateurs, throw themselves on, and past, police and smash their way into Parliament House last week. Most in the crowd were unarmed but some had come prepared: with hammers, wheel-braces, paint and urine bombs and syringes full of diluted acid, weapons readied before the event in anticipation —if not outright hope of confrontation...
> Hardline Left insiders scoff at the idea that resistance was behind the attack on Parliament House. 'They haven't got it in them—they are soft,' says one. 'If anyone was going to be involved, it would be the Maoists from Melbourne— they have a hard edge. And as for distributing free beer with your name on it, that is a very primitive attempt by police or ASIO to dissemble. If you are looking for agents provocateurs in this whole episode, look at ASIO.'
>
> (Martin 1996b)

Several reports recognise the occasion provided a valuable political opportunity for the Government (*Canberra Times* 1996a; Farr 1996a, *Daily Telegraph*; Savva 1996, *Age*) and "a heaven sent photo opportunity" for the Prime Minister (Bachelard 1996, *Canberra Times*). However, no newspaper or individual report suggests that the Prime Minister was cynically magnifying the scale of the 'riot' to suit political or ideological purposes. The media definition of the event and the Prime Minister's are

important thing is mobilising people; television coverage is simply the icing on the cake. "We know we'll probably get a run if we demonstrate against the fascists on Saturdays, because there is no news on Saturday except sport," he says.

Australia rediscovered public protest in the 1970s with the Vietnam moratoria and against the Whitlam and Fraser governments, but leftist dissent faded when Bob Hawke won power in 1983. The various flashpoints – unions, social movements and students – were elements a Labor government could assume were "on side". There was an era of industrial calm. The Accord agreement reduced strikes, but essentially it was an arrangement between the government and the union leadership elite – a strategy that came to denote the Hawke, and later Keating, government dealing with troublesome youngsters of the Left.

Gradually the federal Labor government co-opted the leadership of various protest movements, the issues themselves becoming almost secondary to the exercise of power: peaceniks and anti-uranium types were sedated by United Nations ambassador Richard Butler's work as the unofficial "Ambassador for Peace"; conservationists were compromised when the Australian Conservation Foundation's Philip Toyne posed with Hawke for television news cameras against a Queensland tropical rainforest backdrop during the 1987 election campaign; women's issues were smothered in bureaucracy, and the point of Aborigines' and Islanders' problems blunted by the failure of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission leadership to address financial mismanagement.

Concerted: There were violent Left demonstrations opposing former Queensland premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen's sacking of power workers in 1984; against the AIDEX defence exhibition in Canberra in 1991 and former US president George Bush in Melbourne the following year. There were also concerted protests about Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett's industrial relations reforms in 1992 and the opening of a new runway at Sydney airport in 1995, but most marchers during those Labor years seemed to be disenchanted country Australians.

Lately, farmers and gun owners have taken to the streets to get their message across. Rural protests peaked last year when timber workers blockaded parliament with 300 trucks, but now the national assistant secretary of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, John Sutton, has promised bad times for everyone: "This will not be the last confrontation," he says of the parliament riots. "Under John Howard's rule, the whole nation will be increasingly divided..." ■

Free radicals

Charged particles: What began as a day of union action was ultimately hijacked by splinter groups

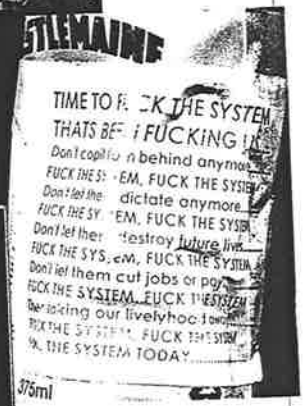
BY BRETT MARTIN

THE BEER WAS FREE AND CARRIED AN incitement to riot, a printed wraparound which read: "Time to fuck the system that's been fucking us." The wraparound went on: "...after consumption this can should be crushed and thrown at anyone who represents the system, so please show your support and aim carefully." Centrepiece of the incendiary message was a picture of John Howard, an axe buried in his head.

The beer can was part of a volatile mixture of alcohol, anger and anarchy that led sections of the crowd, most of them dupes but some of them willing agents provocateurs, to throw themselves on, and past, police and smash their way into Parliament House last week. Most in the crowd were unarmed, but some had come prepared: with hammers, wheel braces, paint and urine bombs, and syringes full of diluted acid, weapons readied before the event in anticipation – if not outright hope – of a confrontation. Rocks, bottles and cans were also thrown.







LEFT: Paul Matters (right) with Peter Reith BELOW, BELOW LEFT: One of the polemical beer cans used last week

Australian Federal Police Assistant Commissioner Bill Stoll is adamant elements of the crowd were ready and spoiling for violence: "A small percentage of the crowd went there with the intention of causing trouble, otherwise why did they take sledgehammers, tyre levers and other weapons?" The violence is likely to be repeated as radical elements take advantage of public anger over a range of issues – from unemployment to the environment to airport noise. Some union officials predict a new, dangerous watershed in Australian politics, arguing that the fact radical elements were able to hijack a peaceful protest and turn it into a bloody brawl proves these groups, with small but committed memberships, are willing to play hard. Police and many union officials (off the record) identified elements of the old BLF (Builders' Labourers Federation), the radical socialist youth organisation Resistance, and militant Aboriginal groups as fomenting last week's violence.

Third force: According to Aboriginal spokesman Charles Perkins, a third force was definitely involved in the clashes between Aborigines and police: "Obviously we have some very militant activists, I can't deny that, but what puzzles me is that on both the Monday and Tuesday, there were whites involved – men I had never seen before, who were stirring our people up. After the violence they just disappeared; we went looking for them, but couldn't find them."

Stan Sharkey, national secretary of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), whose members were photographed wearing distinctive yellow T-shirts in the front line of the violence, blames members of the nationwide socialist youth organisation, Resistance, for manipulating a volatile situation. "It got out of hand when some police in full battle dress assaulted a young Koori," he says. "CFMEU members intervened to defend him and from that point it got out of control. I tried to get my members out of there but I was bogged down by sections of the crowd – there was a woman from Resistance there with a megaphone urging the crowd on, taking advantage."

Wendy Caird, joint national secretary of the Community and Public Sector Union, claims Resistance and similar groups make a habit of trying to hijack demonstrations, and says union organisers had to take some of the blame for not providing adequate security. "We recognised people at that rally who we have seen at many other events," she adds. "I recognised a number of people from fringe political parties in Sydney who I have seen at airport rallies, for example, doing very similar things – like kicking in doors."

Small beer: Militant "rent-a-crowds" have been at the forefront of several violent protests in the '90s – all brutal incidents, but small beer compared to last week's storming of parliament.

Rattling the doors of Parliament House has been a catchery of the trade

[illegible]

Two policewomen in the front line of last week's violence at Parliament House described events over the two days as the most terrifying in their police careers.

Both suffered injuries: Constable Corey Heldon was badly bruised during Monday's attack on Parliament House, and Constable Rachel Benthien was concussed and badly bruised when she was thrown down the steps of Old Parliament House and kicked during Tuesday's battle between police and Aborigines.





ABOVE: Const Heldon says last week "was the worst I've seen." RIGHT: Const Benthien ... "they threw me down the stairs"

According to Benthien, protesters targeted her because she was a woman: "They came at me, called me a bitch and a slut, threw me down the stairs and put the boot in," she says. "If my people [fellow officers] hadn't come after me, I could have been seriously injured."

More than 100 officers were hurt in the two incidents, and hundreds of protesters also received medical treatment; nine of them have been charged with assault or criminal damage.

Benthien says the protesters she faced intended violence: "Most of those involved in the assault weren't there to demonstrate against John Howard – they were there to cause destruction and, on the second day, to have a conflict with police."

Heldon says she was part of the police group swept away by the initial charge toward Parliament House on Monday: "We ended up pressed up against the wrong side of the front doors. The mood was very aggressive, very angry. The crowd were unwilling to take direction; they were taunting us, abusing us, accusing us of being lackeys of the state.

"I have never seen anything like it. We backed up the next day – on the steps of Old Parliament House – and that turned violent as well. They tried to pull me into the crowd but I was pulled back by fellow officers, otherwise I might have been swallowed up by the crowd."

Brett Martin

Figure 7.3 'Free radicals', Bulletin, 3/9/96, pp. 20-21. 'Two against the tide',

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synonymous. The issue of what happened to trigger the attempted forced entry into Parliament House and the violent confrontation becomes a significant political question. The struggle to fix the blame for this spanned the next few weeks and had serious implications for the credibility of Jennie George and the ACTU. This struggle for meaning and its implications is analysed in detail in Chapter Eight.

Whilst many reports argue the violence was premeditated other evidence, including photos, and the subsequent investigation by the ACTU, indicates the protesters used whatever was at hand. The photograph of protesters passing a trolley (labelled 'the Parliament shop') overhead towards the doors was one such example (Figure 7.4). Two separate photographs of men in the act of smashing doors with some kinds of metal posts or bollards also suggest that protesters opportunistically employed whatever was at hand (photographs 15 and 25). However, the narrative and rhetorical strategies emphasised the accusations of pre-planned and intended violence. The photographs of protesters in the act of smashing doors or windows and the references to weapons, instruments of forced entry and pre-meditated violence increased the register of horror and outrage attached to these events.

Conclusion: Constructing Cavalcade to Canberra as a Riot

This chapter has argued that the news reports of Cavalcade to Canberra collapsed the peaceful rally on the lawns into the attempt to force entry into Parliament House. It has shown that the dominant news frame applied to the Cavalcade to Canberra was that of a violent riot, that threatened the safety and security of the nation, but was successfully overcome by the forces of law and order.

Within this news frame trade unionists are shown as violent men who came prepared to cause damage rather than participate in a peaceful protest. The charge that the violence was premeditated associates them with political revolutionaries and criminals and clearly distances their actions from the valorised protest actions, like Eureka, that have become part of the Australian ethos of egalitarianism. These unionists assaulted police and parliamentary staff and most despicably they assaulted female police officers attempting to uphold law and order. The reporting

of the injuries to women places the actions of the protesters within the group of most deviant transgressions of law and order. These men are shown to have no respect for women, for law and order, for their country or democracy itself. These multiple transgressions establish the union, student and Aboriginal protesters who attempted to enter Parliament House as extreme criminal deviants, in polar opposition to the good, loyal police and parliamentary staff who withstood their attack on democracy and were injured in the process.

The lack of any reports about the peaceful rally on the lawns, or coverage of the points made by speakers about the purpose of the rally results in only one profile of the demonstration being offered to the public. This is the account of the demonstrators as angry, violent (and in some cases drunken) blue-collar unionists and Aboriginal men intent on causing trouble. The majority of the crowd of 30, 000 is rendered faceless and voiceless by the focus on the rioters. Furthermore, the purpose of the rally, the significant and valid objections unionists had to the Workplace Relations Bill and concerns community groups had with the Budget cuts went largely unreported. The established conventions of news reporting of deviance, and the high news values of conflict, negativity, timeliness, proximity and unexpectedness ensure the 'riot' saturation press coverage as a media event.

The reduction of the rally and the objections to the Bill to a meaningless display of anarchic violence through news reports have significant political implications. The employment/mobilisation of myths of class, race, national and gender identities in the representations of unionist and Aboriginal rioters, police, politicians and on-lookers established categories of difference along the reason versus chaos divide.

The Prime Minister's statement is integral to the organisation of five front-page layouts and the summaries of the meaning of the day's events in many newspapers. His political interpretation of the events is newsworthy in itself, due to his status as an elite person. However, it is used as the defining account of the events because it coincides with—indeed, it is arguable, that Howard deliberately employed—the traditional conventions of reporting both on trade unions and law and order issues. The events themselves and the Prime Minister's definition of them also conform to

the high value news frames place on conflict, negativity and unexpectedness. Howard's authority as Prime Minister was boosted by his decisive condemnation of the violence and his refusal to meet with union representatives. His agenda to reduce trade union power and influence through the Workplace Relations Bill gained credibility through the congruence between his own and the newspaper representations of the riot as a national disgrace and specifically the characterisation of unionists as thugs and bullies. ACTU president Jennie George's strategy of presenting an unprecedented, united and peaceful community-union front against the attack on workers' rights and unions' capacity to represent their members was stymied and the ACTU's reasons for holding the rally became irrelevant.

Not only were the unions' arguments against the Bill not reported, but the representation of the rioters corroborated the exaggerated stereotypes of unions as undemocratic bullies on which the Government had built their case for legislative change. These events and (the reporting of) the Prime Minister's response to them consolidated his authority at a crucial early stage in his office with the help of the media. Both the events and the reports also decisively marked the trade union-ALP Accord as an historical relic. The riot was used to justify ideological arguments that the degree of trade union power and influence under the previous Government was inappropriate in the Howard Government's vision for Australia's future.

ACTU leaders Jennie George and Bill Kelty were at least partially blamed for the riot in several of these initial reports and condemned by several papers for not accepting responsibility. Whilst John Howard did not directly blame them or the ACTU at this stage he implied culpability both through his statement and his refusal to meet with them. He established a strategic political contrast between strong responsible leadership under pressure (exemplified by himself) and weak, irresponsible leadership exemplified by Jennie George and Bill Kelty. The drive to find the cause of the riot placed Kelty and George in the frame for the blame. As the next chapter demonstrates this question of blame became the focus of intense political and media attention over the subsequent weeks significantly contributing to the demise of Jennie George's leadership.

8 Hunting for a Scalp: Gender(in)g Representations of Blame in Reporting the Cavalcade to Canberra

Introduction

This chapter is the third of three that analyse news reports of the Cavalcade to Canberra demonstration and the unplanned attempt to force entry into Parliament House. It analyses news reportage in the weeks following the demonstration focussing on how ACTU president Jennie George was represented and, in particular, how political attacks on her were waged through the press. In this reportage, political objectives of allocating blame for the violence and gaining a 'scalp' (Tiffen 1999) aligned with media news values and the management of stories to increase their 'newsworthiness'. This alignment of political and media interests, combined with the traditional reporting conventions that cast trade unions as 'bullies' and women as outsiders to political leadership, resulted in a serous and sustained attack on the credibility of Jennie George and upon the viability of her leadership of the ACTU. This chapter examines how her femininity was employed in these accounts and in the attempts to achieve her resignation. It argues that, in this instance, political strategies and media practices intersected to increase the speculation over George's leadership and that her femininity was a key ingredient in these representations of her leadership as having failed (Tiffen 1999). This chapter also considers the question of what effects such representations might have upon the assessments some readers make of the reported experiences and performances of women in leadership positions in public life.

Hunting for a Scalp

The reporting of the Cavalcade to Canberra and its aftermath demonstrates several conventions of news reporting that are common to the reporting of crises and scandals. In particular, the hunt for someone to blame for the violence and the targeting of Jennie George by both news reporters and politicians as the most appropriate candidate to blame, demonstrates the competitiveness of news media and the practices of 'pack journalism' in 'hunting for a scalp'.

The term 'pack journalism' is used to refer to "practices in news production" that lead to similarity in news stories, frames, angles, photographs and sources (Ericson et al. 1991: 45). As Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch (1995) note, journalists and their editors are not only highly competitive but also very concerned not to miss any stories, or any angles to stories, that their competition may cover and this increases the effect of congruence in the news. The term 'pack journalism' derives from the packs of dogs (particularly hounds) used in hunting, especially fox hunting, in Britain. It has passed into common journalistic parlance with both news commentators and news professionals using multiple metaphors from the hunting paradigm to describe particular news gathering practices. British print journalists are commonly referred to as 'the hounds of Fleet Street' and the Australian parliamentary press gallery are often referred to as 'the pack'. The metaphor is extended through the use of terms such as a 'nose for a story', 'scenting' or 'sniffing' out the news, and 'running a story to earth'. Journalists' tendencies to follow each other's lead, go after the same story and develop similar interpretations of events are likewise referred to as 'pack mentality'. Furthermore, when big political stories break, or a crisis develops, news media tactics include the practice of running 'hard' on a story to force or provoke follow-up events. These routines can include subjecting the quarry to a barrage of reporters' questions every time they appear in public. It can also involve printing stories critical of their actions and questioning their ability to survive the episode on a daily basis. The most pertinent example, which relates to the Cavalcade to Canberra, is the practice of putting pressure upon public figures and politicians, particularly Ministers or party leaders, to accept responsibility when things go wrong and to do the 'honourable' thing and resign. This is popularly known as 'getting a scalp' and if a particular newspaper or journalist considers it has been instrumental in gaining such a scalp through its relentless ('dogged') reporting it is a matter of considerable professional pride. These conventions, together with the competitiveness of the media industry for scoops and ratings, have led to the phenomena of the media 'feeding frenzy', the 'scrum' and the 'stake-out' in pursuit of stories when a subject is perceived as vulnerable (Tiffen 1999: 91; Sabato 1993). These processes came into play in reporting the aftermath of the Cavalcade to Canberra and particularly Jennie

George's leadership of the ACTU. This chapter refers to this repertoire of reporting practices as 'hunting for a scalp' (Muir 1997a).

Patterns of Reporting

The print news media was saturated with reports of the so-called 'riot' on August 20, the day following the Cavalcade to Canberra rally. The number and frequency of reports on matters relating to the rally dwindled between 21 August and 29 August and was revived over the period 30 August to 8 September. Seventy-nine news reports were collected from ten city and two national daily newspapers published over the period 21 August and 8 September 1996. A few of these add information to the accounts of the riot published on 20 August and are discussed in relation to these reports in Chapters Six and Seven. The remaining reports are analysed for patterns in the way in which they reported issues arising out of the Cavalcade to Canberra demonstration, particularly the questions of who was to 'blame' for the riot and what consequences, if any, should result to atone for the violence.

By 23 and 24 August, the weekend after the 19 August (Tuesday) rally, some newspapers, such as the *Australian*, published analytical features examining a range of possible causes for the outbreak of violence at the doors of Parliament House during what was intended to be a peaceful demonstration (Marris 1996b, *Australian*). Similar accounts appeared in other newspapers over subsequent weeks along with attempts to expose (alleged) union orchestration of the violence by identifying union officials photographed in the midst of the confrontation (Norington 1996b, *Sydney Morning Herald*). Reporters argued that these officials should be sacked. In their search for a cause of the rally, some reports called upon the ACTU to apologise: some blamed Bill Kelty, others blamed Jennie George. Additional reports examined internal union divisions around industrial and political strategies and explained the 'sabotage' of the Cavalcade to Canberra rally as the result of internal union factional conflict (Cumming 1996, *Sun Herald*; Martin 1996b, *Bulletin*; Synnott et al. 1996, *Sun Herald*).

The Evolution of the Issue

Media interest in events related to the Cavalcade to Canberra was dramatically rekindled on 30 August by three reports which suggested George might not continue as ACTU president (Molloy 1996b, *Herald Sun*; Norington 1996a, *Sydney Morning Herald;* Painter 1996a, *Age*). The most damaging of these was a front-page report in the Melbourne *Age* (Painter 1996a, Figure 8.1). Joanne Painter, a well-respected industrial relations journalist, considered to be close to the ACTU, alleged George could not stand the pressure and that key affiliates no longer supported her as president because she had twice 'broken down' in response to the trials of the previous week. The report also speculated that George would be sacrificed to assuage political and media criticisms of the union movement and because affiliates perceived her authority and capacity to command respect had been terminally damaged.

> [A] key section of the union movement is questioning whether (George) is *tough enough* for the job after she wept openly at a private union function and again at a public gathering in Canberra last week.
>
> (Painter 1996a, italics added)

Ironically, (and perhaps inevitably) Painter's prediction of George's demise utilises the script the media had created to encapsulate her presidency, the script so commonly applied to women leaders, the doubts as to their requisite 'toughness' (see Chapter Four). This report raised the sensational possibility that Australia's first woman head of the trade union movement would become the first 'scalp' taken from the Cavalcade to Canberra debacle, achieved through the relentless pursuit of her by the media and her political opponents.

The report's newsworthiness was increased by its apparent 'revelation' that George's internal union critics had come to agree with media observers' earlier predictions, that she might not be 'tough enough' to handle the challenge of leading the ACTU under a hostile Liberal Government. If George was to resign or was forced to leave at this time, some news reporters would have the satisfaction of being able to claim they had predicted such events or that they had had a hand in making them come to pass. Indeed, it could be argued that these reporters had constructed such a scenario from the outset. This may have provided an incentive to some reporters to pursue the angle of her possible demise.

This development transformed the story from one about the cost and scale of the damage in an event that was now past, into one of speculation that a major public figure may be forced to resign over a political crisis. This development led to the application of the journalistic conventions of reporting political crises and scandals (Tiffen 1999). Speculation and rumours about George's future were newsworthy due to her position as the head of the peak union body but doubly interesting due to her high profile as the 'first woman' to hold such a position. In the first few days after the rally the stories about its aftermath primarily complied with the news value of continuity and as such were of relatively minor importance. This new development meant that the stories now met multiple news values including meaningfulness, consonance, unexpectedness, and reference to elite persons as well as negativity and continuity.[1]

The Role of Myths of Femininity in the (Reporting of) Attacks on Jennie George

Sixty-eight news reports about the aftermath of the Cavalcade to Canberra were collected from daily papers over the period August 30 to September 8 1996 (the period in which George's survival as ACTU president became a matter of media focus and political attention). Amongst these, eighteen headlines specifically implied criticism or condemnation of Jennie George and another fifteen had negative connotations for the ACTU itself. Examples of the headlines featuring George's name or directed at her through their relationship to an adjacent photo or illustration include:

> 'George finds top job no labor of love' (Painter 1996a, *Age*)
> 'By George, it's Carmen's script' (Akerman 1996, *Daily Telegraph*)[2]
> 'Support for leadership as defiant George digs in' (Murphy, M. 1996b, *Advertiser*)

[1] See Allan (1999); Bignell (2002); Galtung & Ruge (1965); and Hartley (1989) amongst others.

[2] The 'Carmen' of this headline was former West Australian Premier Carmen Lawrence who transferred to Federal Parliament after Labor lost the WA election. She was subsequently the victim of a witch-hunt in the form of the Marks Royal Commission over whether she had misled Parliament in relation to a parliamentary petition that led to the suicide of Perth lawyer Penny Easton.

'Knives out for George after rally' (Southorn & Egan 1996, *Courier Mail*)
'George fights quit rumours' (Molloy 1996b, *Herald Sun*)
'ACTU boss dodges call to sack rioting officials' (*Daily Telegraph* 1996b)
'The lonely leader' (Charlton, 1996, *Courier Mail*)
'The plot to dump George' (Cumming 1996, *Sun Herald*)
'George won't accept protest blame' (Southorn & Franklin 1996, *Courier Mail*)

The concentration on George in the headlines indicates that the media saw her as more newsworthy than Kelty. Her media profile had been high as the ACTU's public spokesperson and as their first woman leader. This high profile, together with the pedestal effect, ensured that her potential fall from grace was 'big news' and, at some point, to be expected. In these examples, signifiers of femininity are present through puns such as 'labor of love' and the connotations of absent romance in 'the lonely leader'. There is also the association of her with former West Australian Premier Carmen Lawrence, a 'failed' female leader whose reputation had been severely dented by the Marks Royal Commission and claims she had misled Parliament. George was associated with the political failures of Lawrence and is seen as under attack in phrases such as 'defiant George digs in'; 'knives out for George' and 'plot to dump George'. Phrases such as 'defiant George' and 'George won't accept protest blame' work together with the discussion of women's leadership responsibility, to suggest she, like her female political associate Lawrence, is evading proper accountability.

In contrast only five headlines implied failure on Bill Kelty's part:

'The saga of the disappearing man' (Norington 1996c, *Sydney Morning Herald*)
'Labor has a Bonaparte to pick with Napoleon' (Oakes 1996b, *Bulletin*)[3]
'Kelty's unions at the crossroads' (*West Australian* Editorial 1996b)
'Future is shaky for ACTU's secretary' (Taylor M.1996b, *Canberra Times*)
'Kelty bruised but not beaten' (Molloy 1996c, *Herald Sun*)

[3] One of Bill Kelty's nicknames is the 'little general' or Napoleon after Napoleon Bonaparte. Like the famous French General he is of short stature. Also in common with Napoleon, Kelty was regarded as a brilliant strategic leader.

Bill Kelty, the ACTU secretary, was the target of significant criticism in eight articles and the prime or sole target in only five. In some others a negative comment or minor criticism of Kelty was included but the most extensive criticism was directed at George. In George's case however, several articles with headlines which implied criticism of the leadership *team* directed the majority of their criticism specifically at *her*.[4] The attacks on George included attacks in newspaper editorials, by columnists and political reporters. [see for example Akerman (1996, *Daily Telegraph*); Charlton (1996, *Courier Mail*); and *Daily Telegraph* (1996b)] as well as reports of the criticisms made by politicians, mainly the Minister for Workplace Relations, Peter Reith, and the Prime Minister, John Howard [see Marris & Gordon (1996, *Australian*); Painter & Willox (1996, *Age*); Willox (1996d, *Age*)]. She was also attacked by radio journalists and talk-back hosts such as the conservative radio and television commentator Alan Jones (Jones 1996a, 1996b) and television reporters such as Laurie Oakes (Oakes 1996a). Their attacks included criticism of the way George handled the rally, the ACTU's refusal to accept responsibility for the 'riot', George's inability to discipline union officials involved in the 'riot' and her statement that she did not know who was involved—this was labelled a 'pretence' by the Prime Minister (Denholm 1996, *Advertiser*; Marris & Gordon 1996, *Australian*). Many reports also quoted attacks on George by un-named union officials or Labor politicians (Norington 1996a, *Sydney Morning Herald*; Painter 1996a, *Age*; Taylor, L. 1996, *Financial Review*). These included criticisms of her performance, integrity, judgement, leadership qualities and authority. Frequently the news reports which covered George's rebuttal of attacks on her as 'scuttlebut' also *repeated* some of the accusations or un-sourced comments from previous reports thus perpetuating and compounding their impact (Charlton 1996; Norington 1996a; Taylor, L. 1996). In these attacks on George, femininity was associated as being without agency. Just as George had been deemed powerless to control the rebel protesters so, subsequently, she was represented as being powerless to stop the undermining of her authority and credibility within her own organisation and its parliamentary wing. (This point is discussed in more detail in relation to individual reports below.)

[4] See for example Salom (1996c, *West Australian*) 'ACTU chiefs on notice after riot'; and Synnott et al. (1996, *Sun Herald*) 'Kelty, George should apologise: Howard' (1996).

Not only was George attacked far more frequently than Bill Kelty, but the *way* she was attacked differed significantly from the criticisms of Kelty. Kelty was not attacked in terms which demeaned his masculinity or featured his gender as a key organising part of the criticism. Criticisms of him included comments that he had "become accident-prone", that his "political judgement is woeful" and that "he is a liability and should be unloaded" (Oakes 1996b); that "he has been one of Prime Minister John Howard's main assets in the past eight months" (*West Australian* 1996b). He was criticised for having "poor judgement", an "arrogant and stubborn approach", for "failure to publicly support" the ACTU president, and his "network of influence" was assessed as fading in the post-Accord era (Norington 1996c). He was described as "media-shy" and "close to despair" in the wake of the Canberra 'riot' (Molloy 1996c). However, he was still perceived as holding power, even if his influence was fading, and critics were said to be "loath to speak out publicly against him" as they feared the consequent retaliation especially the "personal abuse" (Molloy 1996c). Despite occasional references to his "small stature" (Oakes 1996b; Taylor M. 1996b), his authority and identity as a *man* was not called into question by the nature of the criticisms. As Kelty was renowned for being extremely shy and retiring (highly unusual for a man in a leadership position) it would have been possible to discuss his performance as a leader in terms that reflected upon his difference from conventional public masculinities. However, the style of criticism applied to Kelty by political opponents and media commentators alike, during this period was not organised around gender related aspersions.

In contrast, Jennie George was not only represented as a failed leader but it was suggested that she had failed *because* of her femininity. Criticisms implied that it was (aspects of) her femininity—her essential difference from the masculine model of leadership—that had undermined her authority and control over the rally. In the depth of this political crisis, George was represented as an outsider (despite her years of union leadership and activism) without the power to command respect, loyalty and discipline from her members. She was portrayed as being dependent on male allies and mentors to impose discipline and restraint upon their rebellious brothers and to protect her from the effects of their attacks. George was criticised for

having broken down and wept in public. These claims were repeated in numerous reports.[5] (The issue of tears is discussed below.)

Reports claimed that key unions were questioning "whether she was *tough enough* for the job after she reportedly broke down at a private union function and again at a public gathering last week" (*Canberra Times* 1996c italics added). The most damaging of these reports was Joanne Painter's front-page story in the *Age* on 30 August. Painter (1996a, Figure 8.1) reported George as having complained to a colleague that "last week was the worst of my union career". Painter's report not only suggested sections of the union movement were on the verge of dropping their support for George but that her reaction to the breakdown in union discipline was inappropriate. The division within the union movement over actions of some unionists and the way union spokespeople dealt with criticisms was exacerbated by factional differences. However, Painter's report emphasises not the divisions within the labour movement but the gendered implications of criticisms of George. The headline to the report 'George finds top job no labor of love' places feminine emotion as the key to the interpretation of the issue. In the small accompanying photograph George's head is tilted and she gazes slightly upwards towards the viewer, possibly in appeal. The accompanying caption reads "A testing time for the ACTU's Ms Jennie George". The test refers not just to the credibility of the union movement but to George herself, and her capacity to conform to the established expectations of the (masculine) leadership model. The headline also plays on the double meanings of the term labor as in the labor movement and the birth labour process—the original labour of love. Painter quotes two critics of the ACTU (and of Kelty in particular)— New South Wales Trades and Labor Council secretary Peter Sams and Transport Workers Union federal president Steve Hutchins—as saying there "were major differences in the union movement about how the ACTU should be conducting its campaign against the new industrial laws". It also quotes unnamed 'other' officials as arguing the ACTU should 'expose' members of the CFMEU and AMWU involved in the violence. In the context of this report he question of George's 'toughness' also becomes one of her capacity to

[5] See for example *Canberra Times* (1996c); Lyall (1996, *Australian*); Norington (1996f, *Sydney Morning Herald*); Painter (1996a, *Age*); Salom (1996a, *West Australian*); Seccombe (1996, *Sydney Morning Herald*); Southorn & Egan (1996, *Courier Mail*).

Figure 8.1 Painter (1996a) 'George finds top job no labor of love', Age, 30/8/96, p. 1.

THE AGE

FRIDAY 30 AUGUST 1996

142nd Year No. 44,061

80c



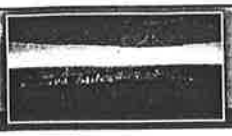
Now, it's **Wogs** at work

EG



Independence Day: how good is it?

Metro



Hawthorn's **glory** days

Sport



A testing time for the ACTU's Ms Jennie George.

Howard to vet health fees

By KAREN MIDDLETON, Canberra

The Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, yesterday moved to minimise political damage from the controversy over private health insurance costs, saying he would personally vet future applications by funds for premium increases.

But, in a further embarrassment, the Government may have to approve more increases to save some health funds' financial reserves from falling below the minimum required by law. Mr Howard yesterday failed to rule out further rises.

"I have never said, and nobody in their right mind would ever say, that there will never be increases in health insurance premiums," he said. "That is plainly ridiculous."

Mr Howard's intervention yesterday followed rises in some funds' private insurance premiums, which are threatening to swallow any benefit to consumers from tax rebates offered in the Budget.

He also faced threats that the Democrats and one of the Greens may move to block the rebates in the Senate unless further rises were prevented. The Opposition spokesman on health, Mr Michael Lee, indicated he would urge his party to do likewise.

Mr Howard said that instead of bureaucrats examining and approving health funds' price-rise bids, he would personally vet applications along with the Treasurer, Mr Peter Costello, and the Health Minister, Dr Michael Wooldridge.

Up to nine health funds are believed to have had rises approved in the past two months — some as much as 17.5 per cent — in a move that undermines the Government's efforts to pull more people into the private health system.

Mr Howard's intervention in price-rise approvals, which won support from the Australian Health Insurance Association, politicises a process that has previously been administrative.

It also amounts to a rebuff for Dr Wooldridge, who has already attracted criticism for embarking on a two-week official overseas trip immediately after the Budget.

Under the current system, health funds must seek Government approval to make any changes to their schedules or structures, including price rises. They submit their bids to the Health Department, which passes them for scrutiny to an advisory body, the Private Health Insurance Administration Council.

Provided they can show they need the money to keep reserves above the legal limit — two contribution months or $1 million, whichever is greater — rises are usually approved.

Mr Howard yesterday blamed public servants for approving the funds' premium increases and only informing the minister in "an ad hoc way" after the decisions had been taken.

But the department is not required automatically to inform the minister of the hundreds of applications for changes to rules, fees and packages by the nation's 48 health funds. The minister is able to veto any decision.

It is believed to be routine for funds to apply for premium rises at the end of the financial year. But Dr Wooldridge's spokeswoman said he had been unaware of the applications.

The Opposition Leader, Mr Kim Beazley, said Dr Wooldridge already had the power to deal with "a fee grab like this".

PAGE A4: Nikki Savva comment.

PAGE A10: Editorial.



George finds top job no labor of love

By JOANNE PAINTER, Industrial reporter

The ACTU is enduring one of its most testing periods as Ms Jennie George contemplates her long-term future as president, amid persistent criticism of the leadership's handling of last week's bloody riot at Parliament House.

As she prepares to mark her first year as ACTU president, Ms George has told ACTU insiders and trade union leaders that she may not recontest the presidency when her term expires in September next year.

Ms George has been under intense pressure to account for the ACTU's role in the riot, in which 80 police were injured and 40 protesters arrested.

She confirmed last night that she would reconsider her position at the end of her term, but scoffed at suggestions that she planned to enter Federal Parliament. She lashed out at her critics, saying she believed there was a campaign to destabilise the ACTU leadership.

"What I have said is that I have a term to go, I have another year to go, and I will make a judgment about what I do in a year's time. But whatever I do in my life after the ACTU, I have absolutely no interest whatsoever in a federal Labor seat," she said. "So I say to all those people who are so worried about my well-being, don't bother."

But a key section of the union movement is questioning whether she is tough enough for the job after she wept openly at a private union function and again at a public gathering in Canberra last week. She later told one official: "Last week was the worst week of my union career."

While speculation has focused on Ms George contesting the Melbourne seats of Lalor and Melbourne Ports — held by the ALP president, Mr Barry Jones, and Clyde Holding respectively — she has said she wants to return to her home town of Sydney. She recently bought an apartment in Sydney and divides her time between her Melbourne and Sydney offices.

The speculation over Ms George's future comes at a time of renewed attacks on the leadership of the ACTU secretary, Mr Bill Kelty, and on the council's direction.

The general secretary of the National Union of Workers, Mr Greg Sword, dismissed the criticism, saying Mr Kelty's leadership was "rock solid". "Bill Kelty is the most important union official that we have had in the last . . . 20 years. Bill has the job as long as he wants and the only thing that will stop him being secretary is when he decides to step down."

But the secretary of the

Continued: PAGE A2



Tough lesson: *Police struggle with students at yesterday's anti-Budget rally in Melbourne. The demonstrators stormed the offices of BHP Petroleum, smashing a window and scuffling with television camera crews.* Picture: JASON SOUTH

Student rally over Budget turns violent

By ALEX MESSINA and GABRIELLE COSTA

A student protest in central Melbourne became violent yesterday when about 200 demonstrators stormed the foyer of BHP Petroleum's offices.

One student was arrested after smashing a window and a fight broke out when demonstrators tried to stop television crews filming the protest.

Later, students clashed with police outside the Oxford Scholar Hotel in Swanston [illegible] students said up to 10 police removed identification badges before the confrontation.

Police last [illegible] issued a statement sayin[illegible] "Users were not wearin[illegible] or they had been r[illegible] jackets during th[illegible] struggle.

A police spokesman said officers went to the hotel after a report that a police hat was being thrown around by the students. Police denied a claim that a student was kicked.

Five people are expected to be charged over the hotel incident.

The violence began after about 1200 tertiary and secondary students gathered in the city in protest against higher tertiary fees and tougher Austudy rules.

They marched through the city and held a brief sit-in at the intersection of Exhibition and Collins Streets. Students at the head of the rally surprised police when they streamed into the foyer of the office tower at 120 Collins Street, where BHP Petroleum has its headquarters.

Mounted police struggled to cut off entrances and sliding doors were eventually locked, but a student threw a bicycle against a window. He was arrested.

Inside the foyer, organisers told the students to eject media representatives and police. A fight broke out when students tried to stop camera crews filming.

Acting Superintendent Doug O'Loughlin, who was in charge of the police operation, said there were no injuries.

The president of the National Union of Students, Ms Lori Lucanie, said she supported the occupation but not the violence. She said the move against the film crews reflected students' fears that police would subpoena videotape and use it as a basis to lay charges.

BHP's media relations manager, Mr Michael Spencer, said he had not been told why the students chose the company's offices, but he said there seemed to be a misconception among students that the Budget benefited big business.

Hundreds of secondary students, who will be hit by the rises in HECS fees, were among the protesters. Lisa Dyson, a year 11 student from Bayside Secondary College in Altona, was at the occupation with her mother, Sue. She said: "I am here because I want a right to an education." She wants to study engineering, like her brother, but now faces twice his HECS debt.

Fischer makes Tibet a new Hollywood drama

By BEN MITCHELL, Canberra

He may be an officer and a gentleman, but what the actor Richard Gere knows about China's occupation of Tibet wouldn't fill a home movie, according to the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Tim Fischer.

Gere, one of Hollywood's leading men and a close associate of Tibet's spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, has been criticised by Mr Fischer during a trade tour of China.

"Being one of the few Australian MPs who have spent one week in Lhasa, Tibet, looking in a very careful way at all the dimensions and complexities of Tibet . . . it's wrong to say that Gere has got it entirely right and Beijing has got it entirely wrong," Mr Fischer said.

Gere has been a regular critic of China's Communist Government, which sent troops into Tibet in 1950.

Earlier this year, he accused China of using promises of access to its lucrative markets to muzzle criticism of human rights abuses in Tibet.



Richard Gere *Tim Fischer*

"What I find bizarre is that wealthy Western countries like Australia and the United States listen to this," Gere said. "We can afford to do the moral, right thing and that is to speak out against China in favor of the Dalai Lama and Tibet."

Mr Fischer, while acknowledging some human rights issues in Tibet, said the Chinese had done a great deal to improve the health and education of Tibetans.

"We call a spade and spade, which is one of the penchants of the National Party, and it was the assessment of others that we saw good and bad (in Tibet). I just don't think that Richard Gere has it totally right."

A spokeswoman for the Australia Tibet Council, Ms Alex Butler, said Mr Fischer's attacks on Gere were "unfair and unfounded".

"I have no doubt that Richard Gere would have gained a more accurate impression of the situation in Tibet than Tim Fischer and his colleagues, none of whom spoke Tibetan and who were on an official visit accompanied by Chinese minders," Ms Butler said.

The Federal Opposition's foreign affairs spokesman, Mr Laurie Brereton, said Mr Fischer's "crazy" comments would further damage Australia's international reputation.

Mr Fischer's comments come as the Dalai Lama prepares for a two-week visit to Australia, starting on 14 September.

Kelly slips back into title form

Manchester, Thursday

Another cycling world title win put a smile back on Shane Kelly's face today, but the Australian will start laughing again only after he wins Olympic gold.

In a popular win, Kelly defended his 1000-metre time trial title on the opening day of the world track championships.

A month after a pedal slip cost him an Olympic gold medal, Kelly partially made amends, winning in one minute 2.777 seconds — just 0.018 seconds ahead of German Soren Lausberg.

"A lot of people were saying this is the one that's going to make up for Atlanta, but I don't think anything will make up for that," Kelly said.

"Probably the only thing that will make up for it is winning in Sydney in 2000."

PAGE C7: Full report.



OMEGA

ROD DAVIS' CHOICE

Omega Seamaster Professional chronograph.
Self-winding diver chronometer.
Swiss made since 1848.



Ω OMEGA
The sign of excellence

Weather

Victoria: Mainly fine, chilly early fog, then mild. Expected top 17. Yesterday 17.1. Detailed Page A12.



Tomorrow: Fine, about 16. Sunday: Mostly fine, about 16. Monday: Shower or two, about 15.

Odd Spot

A suspected Dutch smuggler whose fingertips was bitten off by a man he allegedly tried to rob was identified by a print taken from the digit and then arrested.

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The Age

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enforce internal union discipline and the code of solidarity upon factional opponents.

George acknowledged that she had felt the events 'personally' but contested the reported version of events, stating that she had "never wept in public" (Molloy 1996d; Murphy M. 1996b; Norington 1996d; Oakes 1996a). The *Courier Mail* reported Jennie George as saying that:

> she had been subjected to unacceptable vilification, even for a public figure. She said she had 'felt it personally' but denied that she wept in public the night after the rally.
>
> (Southorn & Franklin 1996)

The issue of which contexts count as 'public' and which as 'private' appeared to be a matter of dispute between the accounts (Southorn & Franklin 1996). In several reports the attention shifted from the cause of the violence at the rally to the question of George's alleged emotional weakness—signified by crying—and her capacity to hang onto the ACTU leadership in the face of criticism. Other reports implied Jennie George was politically naïve. Both her response to the crisis and her original strategy of holding a mass rally on industrial relations issues in association with protests against the Budget were criticised as being politically naïve and inept [*Advertiser* (1996); Gray (1996, *Herald Sun*); Johnstone (1996b, *Courier Mail*); Molloy (1996b, *Herald Sun*); Taylor M. (1996c, *Canberra Times*)]. These suggestions of naïveté also allude to the representational convention of women as immature, irrational and weak. In times of crisis weak leaders are regarded as a handicap and as disposable. News reports such as these are evident across tabloid and broadsheet papers and amongst papers owned by all publishing groups; News Limited, Fairfax, Rural Press and West Australian Newspapers. They establish the possibility of George's demise, suggesting she "would become a 'sacrificial lamb' by standing aside" (Molloy 1996b), *before* the politicians had publicly started their personalised attacks. The conventions of pack journalism, of industrial relations reporting, of political crises and the precariousness of women's leadership tenure all combined to make George's position as ACTU leader vulnerable.

One of the notable features of this wave of speculation about George's potential loss of the ACTU leadership was the numerous sources and angles of attack on her as a woman. Newspaper columnists, editorial and feature writers, senior Government leaders and other political opponents and members of her own side of politics from both the Labor Party and the union movement, were variously involved in attacking her performance, credibility and capacity to lead the union movement. As Rodney Tiffen has pointed out in his analysis of the reporting of political scandals, such multi-pronged attacks are very difficult to handle.

> The cross-fire of frontal and flank attacks makes defence doubly difficult. The diversity of political purposes puts the scandal's development beyond the control of any single participant. In the process the public focus is often transformed, and what began as side-issues become new points of contention.
>
> (Tiffen 1999: 75)

So it was for the reporting of the aftermath of the Cavalcade to Canberra. What began as a repudiation of the violent tactics of a small group of men in the crowd, transformed into an attack on the woman who it had been hoped would transform the culture of the trade union movement and build new social alliances. In a significant irony she was attacked, variously, for displaying her difference in the face of old-style masculine protest tactics, for personally being unable to control the entire crowd, and for seeming to condone "old-fashioned union thuggery" (Gray 1996, *Herald Sun*)

In this context, the media conventions of 'hunting for a scalp' and the feeding frenzy of the media pack hoping to topple a besieged leader (Tiffen 1999), were magnified by the added impact of the 'pedestal effect'. George's welcome as a 'potential saviour' of the union movement, her celebration in the media, in her first weeks in office, as a 'breakthrough for all women' meant very high expectations of her had been established less than a year previously. Her potential fall off the pedestal, therefore, was more newsworthy than it would have been if her predecessor Martin Ferguson had been removed in a similar situation. The conventions of gender reporting articulated with those characterising reporting on political crises or scandals to make the story highly significant and more valuable in terms of its newsworthiness.

From this time onwards, the story retained currency through the reduction of a complex political event into the issue of who was to blame for the confrontation at Parliament House. News value was also sustained through the pursuit of political gain by senior Government figures directing blame at the ACTU, Jennie George and, to a lesser degree, Bill Kelty. The ACTU waited to see if the Federal Police investigation would exonerate their leadership and result in charges against individuals. Meanwhile, behind the scenes, the ACTU Executive members and officers devoted substantial effort and energy attempting to work out what went wrong and how they could minimise the damage (George 1996a). However, whilst some other ACTU executive members and national union secretaries did attempt to engage with the media and divert the heat from Jennie George, it was she whom the media were interested in talking to and in blaming for 'losing control' of her members.[6] Even CFMEU officials, whose members were popularly accused of being the triggers for the attempted forced entry of Parliament House, received relatively little media attention.

Politicians Scent Blood

Another factor compounded the media's interest. The Prime Minister, John Howard, and Workplace Relations Minister, Peter Reith, acted quickly to capitalise upon and fuel this destabilisation of Jennie George's leadership credibility. Howard's act of walking out of his meeting with the ACTU leaders after the rally and his statement that "those responsible for today's demonstration should feel utterly ashamed of themselves" had set-up the potential for the ACTU to be blamed for the damage (Peake 1996). The direct first moves to blame the ACTU, and specifically Jennie George and Bill Kelty, for the riot had occurred on talkback radio on the afternoon of 19 August immediately after the rally (Bury 1996). The pattern of blaming the two leaders for the violence was well established on the electronic media by the following day, whereas print media did not pursue this angle to the story until several days later, at the end of August. This difference in reporting styles

[6] Despite a few media appearances and interviews by other officials and executive members—such as Peter Robson, Wendy Caird, Tim Pallas and Greg Combet amongst others—the impression remained that Jennie George had been left un(der)supported by her ACTU leadership group. Indeed, some officials, such as Leigh Hubbard, secretary of the Victorian Trades Hall Council, made exactly that criticism of the ACTU's response to the problem (Hubbard cited in Charlton 1996).

demonstrates the conventions of talkback radio (to which Howard is attuned) to focus on the sensational and the populist aspects of events. By the time the print media did take up this angle to the story, talkback radio, which had laid the ground for media coverage, was largely disinterested in it.

Immediately after the publication of reports that George was under attack within the labour movement and the ALP, Howard and Reith mounted a renewed campaign of attack on the ACTU, and on George in particular. Their criticisms focussed on what they called its 'lack of discipline' and her failure to take responsibility for the 'riot'. The political benefit of these tactics was obvious and was acknowledged in some reports (*Canberra Times* 1996c; Willox 1996d, *Age*). The Government hoped to discredit the ACTU and Jennie George, neutralise their campaign against the Workplace Relations Bill, and promote the view that unions were irrelevant to contemporary workplaces. The media, whilst recognising the political motivation for the attacks on George, still perceived the attacks as newsworthy due to the 'elite person status' of the players involved, the intrinsic fascination in the issues of blame, the conventions of pack journalism and the high degree of interest in George's capacity to survive the campaign to discredit her. It is arguable, too, that some news organisations' support for the deregulation of the Australian labour market, including a diminished role for trade unions, may have been a factor in their decision to report events the way they did.

Whilst John Howard had initially refrained from directly blaming the ACTU leaders for provoking or causing the violence, he had used the political opportunity the rally presented to demonstrate his own leadership capacities and cast doubt on those of the ACTU. In appearing in the damaged bookshop for a photo opportunity and an interview, Howard displayed the traditional leadership style of a political statesman in response to a crisis: tough, firm, comforting those injured, denouncing those who had caused the damage and promising they would be brought to justice. At the same time he demonstrated significant political cunning through his capacity to turn the situation to his political advantage. In contrast, Jennie George and Bill Kelty were caught off-guard, in the invidious position of having what should have been a success blow-up in their faces, not being fully aware of what actually happened and

being unable to accept responsibility for the demonstration getting out of control.[7] Jennie George and Bill Kelty, therefore, appeared as weak and failed leaders who had lost control of a major public rally, been defied publicly by their own members, and in some accounts were even accused of having incited the crowd to riot. Most reprehensible of all, they were failing to do what leaders are expected to do, that is take responsibility when things go wrong. Taking responsibility became cast as a pivotal criteria of leadership by both politicians and reporters. The political and media struggles came to be centred around whether or not the political leaders, John Howard and Peter Reith, and/or the media, could force either (or both) Jennie George and Bill Kelty to face up to this alleged responsibility of theirs and/or resign from office. In the weeks following the rally John Howard went on the attack. Together with Peter Reith, he intensified his criticism when he sensed George was becoming vulnerable. At that point he aligned himself with media opinion that George was unlikely to survive as president and actively contributed to the pressure upon her. George's vulnerability became a matter of public debate and media obsession following Painter's report on the *Age's* front page and two others published on the same day in the *Herald Sun* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Molloy1996b; Norington 1996a).

These reports revealed George's vulnerability to media attacks together with internal union and ALP criticism and the in-fighting which had developed in the wake of the Canberra disaster. They created an opportunity for George's political opponents, in both her own organisation and the Government, to capitalise politically, on her plight. The Workplace Relations Minister, Peter Reith, immediately took advantage of this opportunity. The *Canberra Times* reported him the next day (31 August) as saying "speculation over Ms George's future reflected tensions within the ACTU leadership and its failure to accept a new Government and changing economic circumstances" (*Canberra Times* 1996c). The headline to this report 'Reith stirs the pot on ACTU leadership' makes the political intention behind his comments

[7] This was not only because they believed they *had* put in place adequate measures to control the crowd, had fulfilled the requirements of the Parliament House protocol for demonstrations and also those requested by the police, but also because they would be crucified politically and in the media if they acknowledged fault. Furthermore, the ACTU would lay itself open to legal claims for the financial cost of the damage and any subsequent legal actions arising out of injuries or damage (Pyner 1996).

transparent. The Government continued to take advantage of the ACTU and George's dilemma with either or both the Prime Minister and Workplace Relations Minister issuing press comments *daily* over the following week. Their strategy conformed to a well-recognised formula for scandal and crisis 'management'. It was to intensify the pressure in an attempt to precipitate the crisis. This political strategy articulated with the established media practices of increasing pressure on, and speculation about, vulnerable public figures in the hope that they might resign (Tiffen 1999).

The story was also kept in the news by related events. The ACTU national council meeting was due to be held in Lorne[8] that week and it was expected that the ACTU would issue some statement about the responsibility for the 'riot'. Over that same weekend respected political commentator Laurie Oakes interviewed Jennie George on the influential Channel 9 'Sunday' current affairs television program and he pressured George to take responsibility for the riot ('Sunday' 25/8/96).[9]

Oakes also put George in a very difficult position in his questioning of what action she would be taking over the participation by state officials from ACTU-affiliated unions in the riot. He grilled her over whether she would ensure the officials photographed in the frontline of the disturbance and Parliament House were dismissed.

> (L.O.) But why are you asking the union? You're the president of the ACTU, the leader of the entire union movement, why can't you be proactive and do something about this? If they are, if they are [paid officials] should they lose their union position?
> (J.G.) Well, under the Act, anyone charged with criminal offences is not allowed to continue to hold a union position.
> (L.O.) But again, you're saying they've got to be charged, *You're not going to do anything*. You're leaving it to the police.
> (J.G.) Well, I think the due process of the law has to apply, Laurie. I can't determine guilt or innocence. All I can say is that I view very seriously anyone that works full time for a union, being involved in activities and actions of wanton destruction that reflects badly on the movement that I head...
>
> (Oakes 1996a)

[8] A Victorian seaside holiday town.

[9] The 'Sunday' program is regarded by news professionals as one of the most influential news sources in the country, partly because of the professional respect in which Oakes himself is held and also because of its Sunday morning timeslot (Pearson & Brand 2001).

George attempted to explain that, as a peak body, the ACTU did not have authority over affiliates' appointment of officials but Oakes implied that the ACTU should expel unions that did not sack officials involved in the riot. Oakes' interview techniques had the effect of making George appear to be weak or to be dodging the question, or both. Oakes did not report, or allow George to explain, that the ACTU's capacity to act in the way he was proposing was not possible under their rules. Rather, Oakes created an impression that George, as ACTU president, could act more firmly to ensure the sacking of such officials. Oakes, a highly experienced political reporter, could have chosen to explore other aspects of the issue, including the question of whether the ACTU felt limited by its powers in relation to affiliates since the amalgamation of unions into 'super unions'. Or he could have chosen to explore other implications of these events. Instead he chose to question George in a way which implied she was either impotent or unwilling to act, and/or that the ACTU was a captive to particular affiliates and had no real power, or even that it was aware of and supported radical unions' actions in forcing entry into Parliament House.

On the same day, in the lead story on the front-page of the *Canberra Times*, the Workplace Relations Minister was reported as having "stepped up the pressure for an apology from the ACTU leaders" and as demanding "that the ACTU take disciplinary action against paid officials identified at the front of the violent protest" (*Canberra Times* 1996d). That this was in response to a front-page story in the *Sydney Morning Herald* the previous day, which identified some CFMEU officials in the frontline of the conflict, indicates the degree of inter-dependence between the media and political criticisms (Norington 1996b). These political attacks and the media coverage of them increased George's vulnerability and therefore the possibility that she might be forced to resign. George's own public call on the Leader of the Opposition, Kim Beazley, to stop the attacks on her from within the ALP was also widely reported (Taylor L. 1996, *Financial Review*; see also Charlton 1996, *Courier Mail*; Cumming 1996, *Sun Herald*; Taylor M. 1996c, *Canberra Times*). Whilst this increased the perception of her as weakened, it did force both key figures in the ALP and the union movement to publicly endorse her and

indicated to both the media and opponents of all sides that she would resist any attempt to remove her.

The Prime Minister also increased his political criticism of George and the ACTU. His criticisms were reported in the *Sun Herald* on the same Sunday 1 September (Synott et al. 1996). "Prime Minister John Howard last night accused 'senior union people' of orchestrating the violence at the Parliament House protest last Monday week." They were repeated in the *Age* on Monday 2 September under the headline 'Pressure on ACTU to take the blame' (Willox 1996d, Figure 8. 2):

> The Federal Government last night moved to increase the pressure on the ACTU president... with the Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, saying she could not escape political responsibility for the violence.
>
> (Willox 1996d)

The Workplace Relations Minister, Peter Reith, also intensified his attacks on her. He was reported on 2 September as having "said that it was little wonder there were rumours about her leadership and that her inadequate response highlighted the abject failure of the ACTU to confront the ugly reality" (McPhedran 1996, *Canberra Times*).

Various other reports printed on the same day also reported the Prime Minister's and/or the Workplace Relations Minister's attacks on the ACTU president [see for example Foster and Denholm in the *Advertiser* (1996); Johnstone in the *Courier Mail* 1996b; Malakunas in the *Herald Sun* (1996); Tan-Van Baren in the *West Australian* (1996)]. The attacks were also the subject of further reports across the nation on 3 September in the *Age* (Painter & Willox 1996), the *Australian* (Marris & Gordon 1996), the *Canberra Times* (Taylor & Peake 1996), the *Daily Telegraph* (Farr 1996c), the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Norington 1996f), and the *West Australian* (Salom 1996c). The pressure applied to George through these media reports deepened her vulnerability and created a 'feeding frenzy' effect, whereby both politicians and news media organisations escalated their efforts in order to be 'in at the kill'.

Figure 8.2.

A 6 — THE AGE MONDAY 2 SEPTEMBER 1996

Pressure on ACTU to take the blame

By INNES WILLOX, Canberra

The Federal Government last night moved to increase the pressure on the ACTU president, Ms Jennie George, over last month's Parliament House protest, with the Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, saying she could not escape political responsibility for the violence.

As Ms George yesterday again tried to distance the ACTU from the protesters who tried to force their way into Parliament during the 19 August demonstration, Mr Howard said Ms George's failure to control the crowd allowed a "riot" to develop.

In comments designed to take advantage of deep strains in the union movement over its response to the protest against their industrial proposals, Mr Howard and his Minister for Industrial Relations, Mr Peter Reith, condemned Ms George's stance on the violence.

"As the ACTU organised the rally and a riot was the product of the rally, Jennie George must take political responsibility for her failure to control it," a spokesman for Mr Howard said.

Ms George yesterday defended her reluctance to accept blame for the protest violence and said she would comment fully after the ACTU council analysed union and police reports of the incident at its meeting tomorrow.

"I was not going to accept responsibility for actions and behavior that have nothing to do with the mainstream of the union movement," Ms George said.

Mr Howard said Ms George should not hope to use the reports to the ACTU council to escape responsibility for the protest in which 49 people were arrested and more than 70 police injured.

"A finding that she was not personally involved in the riot, which has never been alleged, would not absolve her of political responsibility for the riot," Mr Howard's spokesman said.

Mr Reith demanded that Ms George immediately apologise for the protest violence and discipline any union officials, especially from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, found to have been involved.

Ms George yesterday told Channel 9's *Sunday* program that she did not have the power to take action against individual union members. She said some union leaders had tried to quell the protest, but those convicted of criminal offences would be disqualified from retaining their positions.

"I view very seriously anyone that works full-time for a union being involved in activities and actions of wanton violence and wanton destruction which reflect badly on the union movement," she said.

In a clear sign that the ACTU-Government relationship has deteriorated badly after the protests, Ms George said she had no intention of seeking more talks with Mr Howard over his industrial relations legislation.

Talks between Mr Reith and the Australian Democrats, who are also consulting the ACTU, continued last Friday on the details of the industrial package, with the Democrats retaining concerns about the protections for workers in weak bargaining positions. More talks will be held this week.

On another front yesterday, Ms George said she had called on Labor Party faction leaders to stop speculation that she was seeking a federal seat at the next election. She said the speculation was "absolutely disgraceful" and "absolutely malicious".

She said there was "obviously a campaign" to destabilise her, but she retained the overwhelming confidence of the union movement.

Innes Willox's 2 September article in the *Age* is the first time Howard is reported as specifically targeting the ACTU president through his criticism that "Ms George's failure to control the crowd allowed a 'riot to develop'". Willox (1996d, Figure 8.2) notes that the criticism of both Mr Howard and the Minister for Workplace Relations, Peter Reith, were "designed to take advantage of deep strains in the union movement over its response to the protest". Although the reporter makes it clear the media are aware of the tactics being employed by the politicians and communicate these to the readers, they still report the issue within the frame established by the politicians and do not attempt to investigate what possible alternatives were available to the ACTU.

This report, 'Pressure on ACTU to take the blame', provides a striking example of the ways in which the reporting of criticisms of George created an impression that she was impotent (Willox 1996d). The report opens with the statement that the Government was increasing the pressure on George to take the blame for the riot and the Prime Minister's argument that "she could not escape political responsibility for the violence". It includes Reith's point that George should not only apologise for the protest violence but should also "discipline any union officials, especially from the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, found to have been involved". This is a reiteration of Oakes' argument on the 'Sunday' program that likewise ignores the reality of the ACTU's lack of authority over affiliated unions. Reith's criticism is disingenuous and mischievous as, in his capacity as Workplace Relations Minister, he would have been aware of the independence of affiliated unions from the ACTU. Indeed, any experienced industrial journalist would also know it and could have explained that such a demand that George, or the ACTU, intervene in the affairs of member unions was impossible to fulfill. However, no report chose to support George's statement and explain the political and legal limitations of the ACTU's capacity to act.

Reith's pursuit of this issue and the media reporting of it implies that George was both impotent and ineffectual as a leader. Although Willox does report George's statement from the 'Sunday' interview, "that she did not have the power to take action against individual union members", it is included as a bald rebuttal of Reith's

(apparently reasonable) demand and the report does not provide information to assist readers to judge the credibility and accuracy of her statement. The resulting impression is one of George's weakness and unwillingness to act firmly. This is reinforced by the reporting of both the Prime Minister and the Workplace Relations Minister's attacks on her. Willox includes a quote from George indicating how seriously she regarded union officials' participation in violent actions which brought the union movement into disrepute, however, the overall impression remains that George was not doing all she could to condemn the riot and punish those involved (Willox 1996d). The report also incorporates George's response to speculation that she would be seeking a seat in Parliament, thus reinforcing the idea that she might be forced to leave the ACTU. The comment by the Prime Minister that George "could not escape political responsibility for the violence" was repeated *three* times within this report firmly privileging the Prime Minister's account over that of Jennie George and the ACTU and positioning this as the commonsense interpretation of the events.

Willox's (1996d) report paints a picture of the ACTU leader as being under attack from all sides. It implies that her defence of the ACTU is weak and evasive. Jennie George is shown as being under political attack not only from her political opponents but also from within her own party and unions themselves. She is positioned as having to defend her own "reluctance to accept blame" and the ACTU's decision to wait for analysis of union and police reports before commenting in more detail (Willox 1996d). She is also reported as having to appeal to Labor Party faction leaders to stop 'disgraceful' and 'malicious' "speculation that she was seeking a federal seat at the next election" (and therefore abandoning the ACTU presidency early). George is reported as saying "there was 'obviously a campaign' to destabilise her" but that "she retained the overwhelming confidence of the union movement" (Willox 1996d). This discussion of the alleged campaign of destabilisation is placed at the conclusion of the report and reinforces the impression that she is living on borrowed time as leader. The political attacks by the Prime Minister and the Minister for Workplace Relations are phrased as a demand for an apology but it is implicit in the report that should George acknowledge any personal responsibility the next step required of her would be her resignation. George's

struggle for survival in the face of concerted political attacks had been largely created by the media and became a media event in itself.

The *Australian* on September 3 reports that:

> Mr Howard also launched a scathing attack on Ms George, accusing her of 'pretending' to him that she knew very little of what had occurred when they met immediately after the riot.
>
> (Marris & Gordon 1996)

The term 'pretending' is synonymous to a straight-out accusation of lying, but it also suggests immaturity, childishness and unwillingness to deal with reality. The Prime Minister's use of it in this context could work to remind the audience of traditional myths about the 'intrinsic' untruthfulness of women and women's (in general and George in particular) lack of suitability for leadership. The use of the term 'scathing attack' and his challenge to George's veracity demonstrate the intensification of the Prime Minister's criticism. This article also includes the statement from Minister Reith denying that the Australian Federal Police report would be made available to George and the ACTU. This denial operated to justify and reinforce the Prime Minister's attack on George's credibility. Australian Democrat's leader Senator Cheryl Kernot, a personal friend of George's—who sat on the ACTU Congress stage as a special guest on the occasion of George's election as ACTU president—is also reported as "saying it was time for the ACTU, and organisers of the rally, to 'accept political responsibility'". The indications in this report are that George was under attack from all sides, including her women supporters, increasing the impression that she was at significant risk of being pushed into resignation.

Throughout the reporting of these attacks from the Prime Minister, the Workplace Relations Minister and from unidentified Labor Party factional opponents, George is made to appear seriously compromised and in a precarious position. The techniques of repeating criticisms several times within the one article, the suggestions of her unwillingness and powerlessness to act (Willox 1996d), together with implications that she had lost the support of her own side of politics (Norington 1996a; Painter 1996a), combine to create an impression that George's position was not only vulnerable but probably terminal. These reports contributed to the development of a 'feeding frenzy', inviting the application of more pressure on the besieged public

figure in order to achieve a 'result'—in this case George's resignation from the presidency. This reporting convention focuses on the performance and characteristics of the individual as the key to the problem, rather than encouraging a consideration of all the factors involved. The focus on the individual implies that the situation would be resolved by the individual's triumph over the odds or their removal from office. The political and media challenge is to force that removal.

The *Financial Review* features the internal ALP and labour movement attacks on George on its front page on 2 September (Taylor, L. 1996, Figure 8.3). Its report 'George to Beazley: stop the plotters' constructs the events as occurring in the context of factional struggles and tactical differences within both the ALP and the union movement. Lenore Taylor reports that George had personally appealed to "the leader of the Opposition to put an end to the campaign of destabilisation she believed was being waged against her from within the Federal ALP". Taylor quotes sources in the ACTU and ALP as agreeing that there was "no substance in the stories circulating about Ms George". However, her own report and its positioning on the *Financial Review's* front page fuels the speculation about George's future. Furthermore, by reporting George's appeal to Beazley to intervene, Taylor adds to the impression that George lacked the authority necessary to command the loyalty and support of key Labor Party and movement figures and needed male ALP patronage to survive.

Taylor also reports that there were widespread criticisms "that the ACTU bungled its response to the Budget week riots at Parliament House, damaging the ALP's Budget response in the process". As George was responsible for handling that response this is a criticism of her performance. On the same day the *Financial Review* included a second brief report quoting key figures from major unions as publicly supporting the ACTU leadership (Davis 1996). The paper printed a file photo on the jump page of Taylor's report to accompany both her and Davis's articles. The photo was originally published at the time of George's nomination as the ACTU's preferred successor to Ferguson as president (Figure 8.4). The photo, shot from above, shows George—seated with her legs crossed in a wicker chair with her hand bag—surrounded by four former ACTU presidents, Cliff Dolan,

Figure 8.3 Financial Review, 2/9/96, p.1.

Monday, September 2, 1996 THE AUSTRALIAN Price $1.50

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Chips freeze

The dramatic slump in prices for computer memory chips early this year has persuaded Taiwan's chip makers to put major expansion plans on hold, reducing the chances of another supply glut. *Page 28.*

Wallis on mergers

Chairman of the Federal Government's inquiry into the financial sector, Mr Stan Wallis (pictured),



said yesterday a merger of two major banks would not necessarily create an entity dominating the market because of the diminishing share of savings held by banks. *Wallis inquiry round-up, Page 30*

Profits 96

Brambles Industries promises to return to double-digit earnings growth, while MIM cuts dividend in half to pay for future projects. *A full profits wrap-up, Pages 19 to 27*

IR re-regulated

Against the national trend, Labor-controlled NSW today ushers in a new industrial relations act which beefs up the arbitration powers of the State Industrial Relations Commission, regulates part-time work to protect employees and gives strong legal recognition to unions. *Page 5*

FIRST PERSON

Phil Crabb has had more than his share of ups ... and down-and-outs. Now the Comeback King is pondering what to do with tens of millions of dollars, from the takeover of his company, **Gasgoyne Gold Mines.** Today, he talks to Mark Dixon. **First Person – page 22**

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Under pressure ... Ms George has looked to the highest levels of the ALP for assistance. Picture: ANDREW TAYLOR

Telstra: it's all got to go

Alston describes full sell-off as 'inevitable'

Steve Lewis

The Federal Government is likely to seek a mandate at the next election to sell the remainder of Telstra, with the Minister for Communications, Senator Richard Alston, yesterday declaring full privatisation "inevitable" and "highly desirable".

As the Senate prepares to debate the Telstra sale bill, Senator Alston said there was "quite a possibility" the Government would seek electoral support for full privatisation of Telstra at the next poll.

But such a decision would depend on the Government receiving solid market support for the first tranche of Telstra shares, which the minister said the Government still hoped to have on the market by July 1 next year.

"If it goes down well, if investors are happy, if the company's performing and we judge that it makes sense, we give ourselves that option [of full privatisation]," Senator Alston said.

FAIRFAX BREAK-UP?

"I don't think you can just judge these things simplistically. I mean, the Fairfax organisation, for example, consists of The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald and The Financial Review. Now, one could envisage the scenario in which those were owned by separate players."

Senator Alston yesterday – report, page 7

The minister tried to deflect union concerns that more than a third of Telstra's workforce will be cut within three years, claiming that this would be to the "consumer's advantage" because costs would be lower.

Senator Alston acknowledged that the change in the dynamics of the Senate, following the defection of Senator Mal Colston from the ALP, had increased the likelihood of the Government going to the next election with full Telstra privatisation as one of its main policies.

Before Senator Colston's defection two weeks ago, the Government gave itself little hope of securing parliamentary support for the partial privatisation of Telstra.

But Government officials are now increasingly confident of winning enough votes in the Senate to pass the Telstra sale bill before the end of the year.

Asked whether he was now more confident of passing the Telstra sale

Continued page 7

■ *Editorial Analog madness – page 16*

George to Beazley: stop the plotters

Lenore Taylor

Ms Jennie George phoned Mr Kim Beazley on Saturday to make a personal request for the Leader of the Opposition to put an end to the campaign of destabilisation she believed was being waged against her from within the Federal ALP.

Mr Beazley said he would try, assuring the president of the ACTU that she was held in high regard by the Labor Party leadership.

But after the appearance of a series of stories alleging that Ms George planned to resign to seek preselection for parliamentary seats, that she had broken down publicly – and one even quoting an unnamed ALP staffer saying she put insufficient time and effort into her job – it was obvious something was going on.

Mr Beazley assured Ms George that he would look into it. In fact, his shadow Minister for Industrial Relations, Mr Bob McMullan, already had those wheels in motion.

Mr McMullan had phoned Ms George on Friday, after she first publicly stated her belief that her anonymous detractors were in the Federal Parliamentary ALP.

Ms George has not publicly named those she believes are behind the plotting.

But over the weekend Mr McMullan contacted Opposition frontbencher and former ACTU president Mr Simon Crean, who in turn called Ms George to assure her that she had his full support.

Mr McMullan also spoke to another Opposition frontbencher and former ACTU president, Mr Martin Ferguson, but was unable to contact Mr Beazley, who was visiting his father.

Mr Ferguson has repeatedly said that it would be unfair to pass public comment on his successor, but he and his support base on the left of the NSW ALP have long had a strained relationship with Mr Bill Kelty, the

Continued page 4

■ *Unions support leaders – page 4*

Why our exports are losing the race to Japan

Tony Boyd
Tokyo

Australia is one of the few countries to have a trade surplus with Japan, but it is fast losing market share in a market for imports worth a total of $590 billion a year.

In 1995 Australia's market share in Japan slipped from 5 per cent to 4.3 per cent, the fifth successive year of decline.

Yet since 1991 the US, China, South Korea and Taiwan, the four biggest exporters to Japan (Australia is fifth), have either increased market share or held their ground.

Australia's relative decline is likely to continue this year because the beef market is intensely competitive, exports of minerals, fuels and ores are static, and sales of automotive parts are falling.

And the position is almost certain to deteriorate further over coming years as Japan increases the amount of manufactured goods it imports.

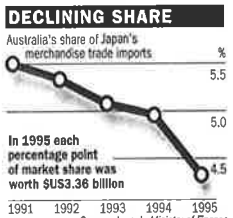
The previous Federal Government and Austrade tended to downplay the decline in Australia's market share in Japan by concentrating on statistics showing a growing share of exports to East Asia. Between 1980 and 1994, the share of Australian exports going to Asia (excluding Japan) more than doubled from 17 per cent to 35 per cent, according to Nomura Research Institute.

Austrade has helped engineer some export successes to Japan over the past few years, but the present

Continued page 10

■ *Tokyo Observed – page 11*

DECLINING SHARE



Source: Japan's Ministry of Finance

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Figure 8.4. Financial Review, 2/9/96, p.4.

ACTU struggles to come to terms with new order

From page 1

secretary of the ACTU, to whom Ms George is close.

By the end of the weekend – and after the flurry of telephone calls – ALP officials were promoting the view that any rumour-mongering was emanating from some federal ALP staff members and not from the senior levels of the party. The issue, they said, had been blown out of proportion.

Sources in the ACTU and the ALP agree there is no substance to the stories circulating about Ms George last week. These included that she was seeking a Melbourne seat – despite the fact that she has moved her party membership to Manly, a suburb of Sydney, the city where she now spends half her time – and that she was seeking to enter the Senate in place of former ACTU senior vice-president, Mr George Campbell.

The substance lies in two underlying criticisms: that the ACTU bungled its response to the Budget week riots at Parliament House, damaging the ALP's Budget response in the process, and that its Senate tactics on the Workplace Relations Bill were likely to give the Democrats, not the ALP, the primary place in the political sun.

Most in the ALP privately agree the ACTU handled the riots badly.

When Ms George yesterday maintained her position that the union movement would accept no responsibility until the involvement of members was proved by a police report, the Prime Minister, Mr John Howard, leapt back into the debate. He said she had to accept political responsibility for failing to control a rally she had organised and that no-one had ever suggested she was personally involved in the violence.

The ALP could only pray that the issue will be put to rest when the ACTU finally issues a formal response from its council meeting this week in Lorne in Victoria.

But the relationship between the ACTU and the Democrats is something which observers agree could continue to cause tensions between the ACTU and the ALP.

With the Workplace Relations Bill dealing the ACTU out of most direct industrial bargaining and the new Government systematically removing (or ACTU representatives voluntarily leaving) positions of influence from the Reserve Bank to the Australian Tourist Commission, the ACTU is trying to carve out a new role by transforming itself into an effective peak lobby group voice.

This transformation makes political brokering with all parties a necessity, no matter how uncomfortable that may be for the ALP, even if it accelerates the trickle of donations beginning to flow from unions to the Democrats' coffers.

The transformation is also causing debate within the union movement – particularly Ms George's push to link the union movement's voice with other groups such as the Australian Council of Social Service, women's groups, youth groups and the churches.

Elements like the NSW Labor Council don't like the loss of control that comes with being part of such a coalition. This issue will be also be hammered out at Lorne.

But the changes the ACTU needs to make to adjust to the new political environment, combined with the long-term difficulties of declining membership and an inability to effectively unionise the growing service sectors of the economy, mean the calm is unlikely to last for long.



Happier days . . . ACTU president Ms Jennie George with former presidents Mr Cliff Dolan, Mr Martin Ferguson, Mr Bob Hawke and Mr Simon Crean in February this year. Picture: WARREN CLARKE

Unions back leaders

Mark Davis

Despite the speculation over the future of the ACTU leadership in recent days, there has been no shift in the cross-factional support base of the Kelty-George leadership.

Leaders of several of the country's biggest unions – including the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, the Maritime Union of Australia and the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers Union from the Left and the National Union of Workers from the Right – yesterday publicly declared support for the ACTU leadership.

The national secretary of the AMWU, Mr Doug Cameron, said: "People engaging in any attempt to destabilise the ACTU should take a close look at themselves and certainly no one engaging in that sort of activity should, in my view, have any prospects of leadership of the labour movement."

General-secretary of the NUW Mr Greg Sword, said: "Jennie George is there as long as she wants it."

The main opposition to the ACTU's Centre-Left leadership in recent years has come from the right-wing NSW Labor Council, which has been highly critical of the leadership style of the ACTU secretary, Mr Bill Kelty.

But the NSW Labor Council grouping has not been able to win any significant support in the Victorian Right or from Centre unions.

Quinn trial delayed again

The trial of former Coles Myer chief executive Brian Quinn has been delayed until next year after his barrister said he could not be sure the case would be completed by Christmas. Mr Quinn's trial on allegations of conspiring to defraud Coles Myer of about $4.5 million was adjourned in September last year due to publicity about the controversial Yannon deal, and was to have commenced at the end of October. Mr Justice Eames adjourned the trial hearing until February 4, 1997.

Bill Pheasant ■

RTA in safety breach

The NSW Roads and Traffic Authority has been fined $150,000 by the NSW Industrial Court for a safety offence. Chief Justice William Fischer said the RTA's failure to provide adequate safety precautions during road works near Wollongong in May 1993, leading to the death of a motorist, fell into the "worst case" category. The fatality occurred when a contractors' truck made a U-turn and careened into an approaching vehicle. Justice Fischer said the RTA's failure to equip road works trucks with flashing revolving lights, erect warning signs, close the fast lane in which the accident occured or use stop signs for approaching traffic was "performance very much below any acceptable standard".

Stephen Long ■

Nationwide News fined

Nationwide News Pty Ltd, publisher of Sydney's *Daily Telegraph* newspaper, has been fined a total of $120,000 for misleading the public over a "free" mobile phone promotion, following Federal Court action by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. The front-page advertisements on the then *Telegraph Mirror* promised a "free" mobile phone but the conditions attaching to the offer meant readers had to pay more than $2,000 in related charges.

Staff Reporter ■

$50m storms damage

Damage from weekend storms could cost more than $50 million, according to the NSW State Emergency Service. The service responded to 7,000 calls, many of them involving houses damaged by trees or other falling debris.

AAP ■

Holden Engine employees win pay increases

Stephen Long

Holden Engine Company's 2,500 employees will gain pay rises of between 5.2 and 5.4 per cent a year under a new enterprise agreement, according to the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union.

The settlement follows an agreement last week for 15.5 per cent over three years at Toyota Australia Ltd, which was reached after a two-week strike. It cements annual pay rises of just over 5 per cent as the benchmark for the industry – well down on the outcomes in the previous bargaining round.

The national secretary of the AMWU vehicle division, Mr Ian Jones, said the new Holden Engine Company deal introduced long service leave after 10 years' employment and six weeks' paid maternity leave – now standard conditions in the vehicle industry.

The agreement also improved redundancy benefits, giving employees an entitlement to three weeks' severance pay and three weeks for each year of service.

Mr Jones said it was the first stage of integrating employment conditions at Holden Engine Company and General Motors-Holden's Automotive Ltd. Employees will vote tomorrow on the agreement.

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CSIRO tells of billion-dollar bonanza

Ian Porter

The CSIRO has launched a national awareness campaign with the release of a study which shows that the commercialisation of three CSIRO breakthroughs has the potential to be worth up to $1.6 billion to Australia.

The study shows that CSIRO's investment in the basic research which led to the discoveries, plus investment by CSIRO's partners, amounted to $98.1 million.

The projects cited in the study led to the development of the GG167 anti-influenza drug in company with Biota Holdings, the Smart Test car battery analyser and the SIRO2 high-temperature oxygen sensor.

Releasing the study, one of CSIRO's deputy chief executives, Dr Colin Adam, said that within about five years each of the 1,000 or so projects under way within CSIRO would be studied to determine what value they delivered to Australia.

"The studies that are being publicised in this booklet reflect a number of changes that have been under way in the organisation for almost a decade, starting with the McKinsey restructuring of 1987 and 1988," Dr Adam said.

When working days saved are tallied up with royalty incomes and other factors, the study shows deployment of the GG167 drug would save Australia between $291 million and $1,509 million as a result of Australian outlays of $66 million.

Taking into account savings made by not discarding good batteries and avoiding breakdown costs, the battery analyser will save between $25.5 million and $68.4 million for an outlay of $2.5 million.

The SIRO2 oxygen sensor, released in 1977, is used to control the mix of gases in furnaces and boilers. Development costs, inflated to 1994-95 dollars, were $29.6 million. Estimates of savings ranged from $31.2 million to $57.9 million.



Dr Colin Adam released the study. Picture: GILLIANNE TEDDER

Martin Ferguson, Bob Hawke and Simon Crean, all of whom are standing. The photograph has the effect of marking her difference and diminishing her authority and stature. Reprinting this image in the context of the attempts to destabilise George and force her resignation link such opposition to her gender rather than factional issues. Dolan, Ferguson, Hawke and Crean held different factional and state-based alliances but their gender difference forms a powerful visual commonality. Furthermore all these men were regarded as being successful leaders. George, however, is differentiated visually through the photograph's composition and the inclusion of signifiers of her femininity. It constructs her gender as her primary distinguishing characteristic. In the context of the report, George's gender is consistently implicated as inferior to the men positioned in the photograph and the primary reason for her problems in establishing her authority.

Femininity in Crisis

Aside from the coverage of Jennie George, the consideration of how gender is represented in news reports of the Cavalcade to Canberra and the associated 'riot' raises some general questions about the representations of women unionists, their actions and aspirations in a masculine movement. The experiences of various groups of women unionists may not fit the representation of conventional unionism and many women unionists do not recognise themselves in the media representations of trade unionists. This section reflects upon the contradictions and complexities of these matters and the questions they raise for future research both into media representations of women as political actors and of women's experiences within trade unions.

Political and Industrial Arenas are Still Presumed to be Masculine Territory

As discussed in Chapter One, most analyses of media coverage of industrial disputes or strikes make no reference to gender as an analytical tool or category. Studies of media representations of industrial issues, which presume the territory to be masculine, include the work of Greg Philo, and others from the Glasgow University

Media Group, whose research on industrial news problematises 'reasonable' and 'responsible' in relation to news reporting but leaves the category of gender unexamined (GUMG 1976: Philo et al. 1982). Likewise, work by Len Masterman (1985) on media reporting of industrial action and Nicholas Jones's (1986) examination of *Strikes and the Media* also pay no attention to the gender of the media commentators, the union spokespersons, the union members, or the presumed audience. Todd Gitlin's groundbreaking analysis of media reporting on left political action *The Whole World is Watching* also omits gender as a possible axis for analysis (Gitlin 1980). Ian Ward's work on politics and the Australian media discusses the feminine gaze in the chapter on advertising but does not extend the gendered critique into his discussion of the reporting of political protest, moral panics or industrial relations (Ward 1995).

In these accounts the trade union movement itself and the members within it are presumed to be male. The public sphere activities of political debate, campaigning and protest are likewise taken for granted as traditional spheres of masculine expression, dominance and male-to-male contestations. Women (still) are presumed to be absent (at home, keeping the children clean and fed and the fires burning), disinterested, in the galleries cheering, or taking lessons in how to practice politics in a masculine environment (through mentoring and support networks such as Emily's list). The strategies adopted by women who want to take up public office within political organisations (not only political parties), or improve the policies and practices which determine the nature of that representation, have received little media examination[10]

Framing Gender in Relation to Cavalcade to Canberra

As indicated above in the analysis of the reports of the Cavalcade to Canberra demonstration and adjacent 'riot', women are largely absent from these news

[10] The recent debates around the publication of Joan Kirner and Moira Rayner's (1999) *Women's Power Handbook* and Anne Henderson's (1999) *Getting Even* about the experiences of Australian women politicians are two of the few examples of media attention being paid to these issues. The nature of much of the media commentary in these instances, however, itself provides an example of dismissing the attempts by women to organise for improvements in their representation as 'whinging', 'political correctness', paranoia, or hatred of men.

reports. Women do appear as injured police officers, "brutally kicked ... by a baying mob" (Horan 1996a; Sweetman & Horan 1996) who were allegedly targetted *because* they were women (Martin 1996a). Women were amongst the "very, very frightened" staff of the Parliamentary Gift Shop (Farr 1996a), the "terrified tourists" and staff who "wept" (*Courier Mail* 1996b) and "feared death as the mob surged forward" (Sweetman 1996). They were also amongst the peaceful demonstrators 200 metres away who "did not know about the violence until [they] heard about it on talkback radio in Melbourne the next day" (Kermond 1996). Only the *Age*, which was the sole daily paper to present the view of the peaceful protesters, chose three *women* to speak for the legitimate and peaceful demonstration.[11] This more authoritative position nonetheless reinforced the association of women with peaceful protest and placed them in opposition to the male violence. Beatrice Faust, writing in the *Weekend Australian*, argues along similar lines that one of the contributing factors to the riot was that there were *too few* women present at the rally.

> Women don't riot as easily as men and their presence has a calming effect. The absence of women is not anyone's fault but unions are responsible for not making enough effort to enrol them.
>
> (Faust 1996)

Faust's observations raise a number of questions and potential explanations. The first question would be what proportion of women to men actually participated in the rally? There appears to be no analysis of the crowd that could answer such a question and confirm her observation about the lack of women participants. If Faust's observations are correct, there are a number of possible explanations including: that unions concentrated on encouraging male members to attend; or that it was mainly unions with predominantly male memberships that put the greatest effort into ensuring large membership contingents attended. One could also interpret the predominance of men as an indication that insufficient support was given to enable women (who might have had child care or other domestic responsibilities) to attend; or, perhaps, that women are less likely to participate in mass rallies than men because such protests are associated with traditional masculine unionism. Another interpretation might be that women workers are less likely to attend because they are

[11] *Green Left Weekly* of 28 August 1996 also included the views of several demonstrators, including women, although their report presented a different perspective.

more likely to work in casual or part-time jobs, with a lower level of unionisation, and therefore have less protection should they wish to take a couple of days off to attend an industrial protest. In thinking about the relative participation of women and men in the Cavalcade to Canberra demonstration the absence of media accounts that remarked upon the composition of the crowd was notable.

It is not possible to know on what basis Faust made her assertions, however, her article reiterates a common myth about the essential peacefulness of femininity and the aggressiveness of masculinity. It is a well accepted convention that the traditional and contemporary practice of public protest is a masculine one (although to equate violence with all male protesters also invites stereotyping), just as all public sphere activity is traditionally assumed to be masculine. However, there are so many well-known examples of women taking their political and social concerns to the streets that this myth should not be given too much weight in explaining the events of 19 August.[12] Furthermore, Jennie George's strategy in planning the Cavalcade to Canberra reflected a conscious attempt to alter the potentially aggressive style and male dominance of traditional trade union demonstrations by broadening it to a wide community alliance or coalition. The ACTU invited participation from church, women's and welfare groups, Aboriginal groups and students. This strategy was acknowledged by several reports most notably in an editorial in the *Australian* (1996b).[13] These groups also had concerns about the Howard Government's policies and proposed budget cuts to the community sector. The coalition strategy was opposed by some unions that were variously concerned about the unions' message being diluted, about unions losing control of the agenda and/or about peaceful protest being a 'tame' response compared to their preferred alternative of a national strike (Marris 1996d ; Salom 1996b).

Whilst women speakers (such as Democrats leader Cheryl Kernot and ATSIC head Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue, in addition to Jennie George) addressed the official rally,

[12] Including, for example, the demonstrations of the Women's Suffragists of the 1900s, the Union of Australian Women in the 1950s, the Save Our Sons anti-conscriptionists during the Vietnam war, Greenham Common peace camps, and the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s and subsequently, to name just a few.

[13] See also Farr (1996b); Marris (1996b); and Taylor L. (1996).

and women were apparently well represented amongst the participants, the news accounts overwhelmingly focussed upon the violence at the doors of Parliament House. This emphasis had the effect of erasing the presence of women. Women demonstrators were visible in only two photographs of the 'riot' and were not depicted in any conflict or violent actions. Women were discursively positioned in opposition to the rioters, as victims, as shocked and terrified observers, as peaceful protesters whose cause and efforts were betrayed by the irresponsible rioters. Through the person of Jennie George—who less than one year previously had been seen to symbolise the aspirations and achievements of all working women—*women as a group* could be seen to have been betrayed and defied by these renegade men, perhaps by the union movement, and even, perhaps, by George, herself.

Jennie George was represented as a leader defied, and therefore humiliated, and also as the 'bad mother' who had lost control of her charges, 'delinquent boys' whose act of rebellion reflected upon her incapacity to both discipline them and maintain appropriate moral standards. At the time of her election to the presidency, George was widely portrayed as the future of the union movement, its agent of change, its potential saviour, and, through her position as leader, its public face. This symbolic role, its authority, public relations value, and George's hard work to construct a new, more inclusive image of unionism, was undermined and severely damaged by media images of an unexpected and forceful performance of *one* of the masculine traditions of protest—that of vigorous and direct physical confrontation in response to a perceived offence. The concurrent representation of George at the time of her election—the doubts as to whether she would be 'tough enough' to succeed in a masculine environment and in a masculine role of leader—reverberate throughout these attacks on her performance. The media constructions of her as potentially too weak to succeed, are here revived to account for her failure and likely early retirement.

The style of political protest characterised by direct political action is by no means limited to, nor intrinsic to, trade unionism. However, it is frequently represented by the media and political opponents as being an *essential* component of unionism, never far from the surface, despite the fact that Australia has far less prolonged and

less violent picket lines and other demonstrations/industrial actions than comparable countries such as Britain, Canada or the USA (Philo et al. 1982; Philo 1990; Ward 1995). This kind of reporting suggests that unions are a perpetual threat to the order, stability and prosperity of the country. It ignores the evidence of thirteen years of relative industrial harmony under the ALP-ACTU Accord from 1983 to 1996. Ian Ward suggests that through this kind of reporting unions are positioned as 'folk devils' (Ward 1995; see also Hyman 1972). The ideological message drawn from the riot by both politicians and many of the news reports was that the "ugly face of trade union power" (*Canberra Times* 1996a) is *always present* waiting for the opportunity to exercise its industrial muscle through bullying in support of its selfish interests. Indeed, direct industrial action is usually represented as the exercise of excessive and illegitimate power. Ward, commenting on Goldlust's (1980) findings on news reports of industrial disputes, argues that the repertoire of news reporting upon industrial disputes and strikes establishes "a 'commonsense' view of strikes as selfish, irrational, unnecessary and disruptive demonstrations of excessive union power" (Ward 1995: 265).[14] This firmly established convention of news reporting, which foregrounds protest as deviance and industrial action of almost any kind as inexcusable militancy, continues to influence contemporary interpretations and reporting of industrial issues. This is despite the impact of the Accord in Australia in establishing unprecedented restraint by unions and co-operation between the union movement and the Government. This reporting repertoire continues to presume that industrial actors are men and that men's industrial issues and demands encompass and are inseparable from those of women.

In the aftermath of the Canberra demonstrations some politicians and media commentators argued that no matter what union leaders said the movement could never control this element, the "thugs and boofheads" (Farr 1996b, *Daily Telegraph*). The implication of this warning could be that 'you' (the audience and voters) should not trust them. "After years of relative industrial peace it stood out in the minds of the Australian public as perhaps a return to the bad old days of protest

[14] Richard Hyman (1972) argues that this is the dominant sociological interpretation of strikes (see also Windschuttle 1985).

and confrontation" (Taylor 1996c, *Financial Review*).[15] This so-called 'element' encompasses both a particular tradition of political protest and a particular expression of hyper-masculinity.[16] This form of masculinity is most commonly associated with working-class occupations and blue-collar unionism. In the context of the traditional class oppositions of the interests of manual labour and the capitalist 'bosses', the willingness of blue-collar workers to defend their industrial rights with the very physical strength their employer purchases and seeks to control for his (employers are also presumed to be masculine) productive and profiteering interests is a matter not only of pride but also of asserting independence. It is an expression of independent (and class) agency that one uses one's physical strength, indeed one's labour power, in direct support of one's interests rather than to produce profits for a 'boss' in exchange for a wage. The pride and sense of community inherent in the public assertion of physicality, masculinity, strength and class interests against the interests of the employer or the state is expressed through various traditional union slogans such as: "Dare to struggle: Dare to win", which is the motto of the former Builders Labourers Federation, and "we're angry, we're loud; we're union and we're proud". Both of these slogans were audible and visible in the attempt to force entry into Parliament House (Bachelard 1996, *Canberra Times*).

In the reporting of the Cavalcade to Canberra the representational scenario was one of feral union militancy. Within this scenario femininity was present through the images of women, not as agents, or unionists, or political actors, but as victims: as the victims of masculine violence in the reports of the injuries suffered by women police officers and in the representation of Jennie George as the victim of male power struggles. In some accounts, George was shown to be the victim of a power struggle inside the CFMEU, as their former BLF members used the Cavalcade to Canberra rally to impose their preferred style of union protest over the ACTU's intended peaceful rally, which had been supported by their incumbent CFMEU leadership team. This was reported as a tactic to win the former BLF faction support from disaffected members in the lead up to national union elections (see for example

[15] See also the *Daily Telegraph* (1996a); Farr (1996b); Gray (1996);*West Australian* (1996b).

[16] R. W. Connell (1983: 78) attributes expressions of 'macho militancy' in class combats to a form of 'hyper-masculinity'. He argues that "tough management styles in business" are equally expressions of hyper-masculinity.

Martin 1996b; *Resist* 1996; Synott et al. 1996; Taylor M. 1996c). George's own strategy, for the ACTU to develop community coalitions, was initially opposed by some unions and ultimately she was portrayed as not having sufficient authority and power to make it stick, as her strategy was overthrown by the actions of a dissident minority, which included CFMEU members and officials. These actions call into question the credibility and authority of the entire ACTU leadership team and executive, not only that of Jennie George.

George was also portrayed as the casualty of power struggles between former ACTU president Martin Ferguson and Left factional opponent George Campbell, and between Ferguson and ACTU secretary Bill Kelty (Cumming 1996; Norington 1996e, 1998). She was represented as having been betrayed by Kelty and other ACTU executive members who left her to face the public outrage and political attacks, alone (Charlton 1996; Cumming 1996; Murphy M. 1996a). She was also positioned as a loner by reports which commented on her lack of a personal powerbase or faction and in stories which represented her as being caught between opposing forces (Charlton 1996). This idea of aloneness or alienation from a power-base is visually conveyed through a series of photographs of her walking alone on a empty and windswept beach (see *Advertiser* 4/9/96 p5; *Herald Sun* 4/9/96, p12; *West Australian* 4/9/96, p6; and *Courier Mail* 4/9/96, p5; Figure 8.5). She is walking with her head downcast, vulnerable to the elements and metaphorically to her political enemies. These photographs were taken during the ACTU national council meeting that focussed on what went wrong at Cavalcade to Canberra and how best to deal with the political damage caused by the so-called 'riot'.

She was also positioned as a casualty of the ACT-Trades and Labor Council's poor planning and event management strategies and the under-preparation of the Australian Federal Police. George was to be the 'sacrificial lamb' offered up to appease a hostile public, media and government (Molloy 1996b, *Herald Sun*). In a bitter irony for the ACTU, their most acclaimed recruit, their first woman president, and the visible symbol of the changing face of trade unionism, appeared to be headed for crucifixion to atone for the sins of male union members. These members,

Union denies role in riot

Protesters 'misdirected by police'

By MICHAEL FOSTER
and MIRANDA MURPHY
in Melbourne

Unionists and Aboriginal groups involved in last month's bloody protest in Canberra were directed to Parliament House by police, a key unionist claimed yesterday.

Construction, Mining, Forestry and Energy Union national secretary Mr Stan Sharkey acknowledged there was a large number of CMFEU members in the Parliament House forecourt but claims they were directed there by police and the "vast majority" withdrew when violence erupted.

It is understood the ACTU will ask the Australian Federal Police to investigate why the group was directed through a union "no go zone" between the rally and Parliament House.

> "The council has condemned in the strongest terms the violent actions of the small monority of protesters at the rally."
>
> —ACTU president Ms Jennie George

An ACTU source told *The Advertiser* it appeared the group responsible for the riot was directed to the rear of the rally by federal police ignoring arrangements made by the unions and authorities before the rally.

"It should never have happened that way. They should never have got close to Parliament," the source said.

In response to the suggestion that police may have been partly responsible for the riot, Australian Federal Police Association national secretary Mr Chris Eaton, said: "I can't see how that explains violence. Even if it were true it doesn't justify the violence."

Mr Sharkey said any guilty official would lose their position, but the CMFEU had no intention of a "McCarthyite witchhunt" into the riot.

The ACTU president, Ms Jennie George, said she expected Australian Federal Police investigations would take another six weeks and she expected them to clear the ACTU from any participation in the violence.

ACTU

At its annual conference yesterday the ACTU condemned the violence but steadfastly refused to take responsibility for the actions of rioters.

In what she described as the ACTU's final statement on the matter, Ms George expressed regret for the August 19 incident and for injuries caused to 60 police and Parliament House staff.

"The council has condemned in the strongest terms the violent actions of the small minority of protesters at the rally," Ms George said in a statement.

"(But) the union movement cannot and will not ever take responsibility for the actions of individuals who have their own agenda to take action outside the collective framework and who do harm and damage to our cause."

In MELBOURNE, the Industrial Relations Minister, Mr Reith, launched a blistering attack on the peak union body's response to the violence.

And the Democrats' Leader, Senator Kernot, backed the Government's call for the ACTU to accept "some political responsibility".

But the Opposition Leader, Mr Beazley, defended Ms George, saying she was doing a good job and would make an effective politician.

Mr Reith said it was "not good enough" for the ACTU to condemn the violence without accepting responsibility for it.

He accused Ms George and the ACTU of adopting a "policy of denial", which would be condemned by Australians.

The row came as a police taskforce investigating the riot charged a man after studying TV film of the incident.

Australian Federal Police charged the 26-year-old New South Wales man with four counts of assaulting police and four counts of assault while participating in a public assembly.

● PAGE 12: Editorial



Jennie George takes a walk on Lorne beach during a break at the ACTU conference.

Support for leadership as defiant George digs in

By MIRANDA MURPHY
in Melbourne

ACTU president Ms Jennie George said yesterday she felt secure in her job and lashed out at the "innuendo and rumormongering" questioning her leadership.

Soon after the ACTU Council gave a unanimous vote of confidence in its leader, Ms George moved to quash media speculation that union officials had questioned her strength for the job.

The vote of support included the New South Wales Trades and Labor Council, which last week criticised the ACTU leadership over its handling of the Canberra riot outside Parliament House on August 19.

"It is true I felt it (the Canberra riot) personally," Ms George said at the ACTU conference in Lorne.

"But let me also say on the record I have never wept in public.

"I do not intend to allow anybody from the media to take action which puts my integrity and credibility as a leader of the union movement on the line."



From "The Advertiser" on August 20.

Ms George was referring to reports that she wept at a private union function and again at a public gathering in Canberra two weeks ago.

She also slammed speculation that she was considering entering federal politics and that cross-factional wrangling over the ACTU's handling of the riot was threatening her job.

"People in public life should not be subject to the kind of political innuendo, rumormongering, vilification and hearsay evidence that I have been subjected to in recent times," Ms George said.

The ACTU closed ranks behind its leadership yesterday, releasing a statement on its unanimous support for Ms George and secretary Mr Bill Kelty, and gagging officials from commenting further on the issue.

ACTU vice-presidents Ms Wendy Caird and Mr Greg Sword said the council had agreed unanimously to support Ms George and Mr Kelty.

"Today during the debate, every union made a positive statement about their support and full confidence in the leadership of the ACTU," Mr Sword said.

Brown 'can' stand up' to Kennett

By Chief Political Writer
DAVID PENBERTHY
in Canberra

The Premier, Mr Brow has been accused of not sta ing up to his interstate co terpart, Victoria's Mr Kenn

In an interview with *The Ad ser*, the Opposition Leader, Beazley, said Mr Kennett seen to enjoy "booting" Mr Brown.

And he suggested Mr Brown unable to compete with Kennett's aggressive style.

"Jeff Kennett is sporting minc and he needs his Friday soc ball," Mr Beazley said.

"He goes out to see if he can b a few into the net but he t different soccer balls.

"Every now and then he deci to boot Dean."

Mr Beazley described Mr Bro as "an extraordinarily use safety valve for Jeff Kennett's t temper".

Mr Brown and Mr Kennett h clashed publicly in the past o Adelaide's loss of the Formula C Grand Prix to Melbourne a most recently, the backro machinations over the Comm wealth Games bids.

Mr Kennett has suggested several occasions that South Au ralia lost the Grand Prix a missed out on the Games t through its own incompeten and not through any wrongdo on Victoria's part.

Mr Beazley also attacked Brown over what he claimed a failure to deliver on jobs.

He questioned Mr Brown's peated claims that SA was set an information technology led covery. "It's actually reached point where Mr Brown ought announce the jobs that have be created," he said.

"It was fair enough a couple years ago (to promise jobs) b now, the time has come to say look, here they are."

Mr Brown is on an overs trade and investment tour s could not be contacted to respo to Mr Beazley's remarks.

But a spokesman for the Pr ier said Mr Beazley's comme "do not even warrant a reply".

● PAGE 13: Banking on Bud backlash

Man 'raped girl took her dog'

A man raped an 11-year-old g on the side of the road and la drove off with her dog, a Distr Court jury heard yesterday.

The man allegedly took the g with him to a store, where bought petrol, and drove off w the dog after the girl refused to back into his car.

Philip John Webb, 33, of Kadi has pleaded not guilty to one co

Figure 8.5 Advertiser, 4/9/96, p.5, detail.

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moreover, were men who broke ranks and performed an old-style and unauthorised protest action that exemplified some of the most stereotypical aspects of working class masculine aggression that George had been campaigning to change. Some of the reports that speculated that she would be forced to step down, also questioned how much she had achieved for women workers in her time (less than a year) in the position.

One of the most notable examples of this was a report by Paul Gray 'Still on the back foot' published on the *Herald Sun* editorial page. It was placed beside an editorial 'Hussein at it again' and a cartoon about the USA election contest between Bob Dole and Bill Clinton that makes reference to their respective war records. This positioning links George, and the ACTU, intertextually to the undemocratic and reviled Iraqi regime and its brutal leader (Figure 8.6). The phrase 'at it again' echoes comments made after the attempted forced entry to Parliament House, that implied union thugs were 'at it again', and would continue to behave badly until forcibly restrained. The report, 'Still on the back foot' included a small photo of Jennie George with an adjacent pull quote that said "Ms George has been a loud supporter of the cause of women in unions. But how much has she achieved?" The report by Paul Gray focussed on the issue of George's credibility as an alternative, progressive leader and an 'agent of change' for women. He questions not only George's management of the demonstration and its aftermath but also her capacity to change the culture of the union movement to one that better represents women.

> Ms George's early reluctance to condemn the violence unequivocally—at first she said she understood the demonstrators' anger—suggested an inappropriate tolerance by her of old-fashioned union thuggery …
> For Jennie George, there is a special irony in that among the victims of the Canberra violence was a female police officer who got broken ribs at the hands of demonstrators.
> That's because Ms George has been a loud supporter of the cause of women in union movement …
> And then comes this outbreak of extremism at the Canberra demo. Labor moderates are entitled to ask: when will we get progress at the ACTU?
> (Gray 1996)

In the aftermath of the Canberra riot the attacks on George deployed not only the acknowledged problems with the conduct of the demonstration but even her previously acknowledged strengths.

Figure 8.6 Herald Sun, 4/9/96, p. 18

Herald Sun

Hussein at it again

'The feeling at the White House ... is quite strong if you let Saddam get away with this he'll keep on going. This is another test and any time we don't meet his tests we pay for it.'

— US Senator Joseph Lieberman

SADDAM Hussein has got it wrong again. As US missiles rock Iraq, his people have cause to reflect on the price of having a leader whose brutality is rivalled only by his dangerous capacity for miscalculation.

In 1991, the Iraqi dictator's Kuwait incursion ended in disaster as Operation Desert Storm sent him packing home to a shattered Baghdad.

After the defeat, Hussein's people endured crippling sanctions. The UN was about to ease these by allowing Iraq to sell $2.5 billion of its oil over six months to buy food.

But the UN has suspended that deal because Hussein, displaying grotesquely bad timing, has sent troops against the Kurds in northern Iraq.

Moreover, he has done so in the lead-up to a US presidential election — a time when President Bill Clinton could not afford to appear weak in the face of Baghdad's effrontery.

Those who argued that Desert Storm blew itself out too soon — before Hussein himself fell — are now saying with justification: "We told you so."

Since the Gulf War, the US, Britain and France have nominally sought to protect Iraq's 3.5 million Kurds against further atrocities by Baghdad forces.

The allies have barred Iraqi aircraft from flying above the 36th parallel. Curiously though, there are no such restrictions on ground forces.

The situation is further complicated because the Kurds themselves, after an attempt at democracy in the wake of the Gulf War, have lapsed back into tribal and political divisions.

Hussein claims he was invited to send his tanks north to help the Kurdistan Democratic Party which is locked in an internecine struggle with a rival group, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, which, Baghdad points out, is Iran-backed.

President Clinton's choice was to do nothing — with the certainty that the Butcher of Baghdad's megalomania would lead him to strike again in the region — or to teach him a swift and salutary lesson.

That lesson has come much sooner than President Clinton's critics had expected.

Twelve good men and women

TRIAL by jury is a vital part of the checks and balances in our justice system.

Juries date back to Norman times in England and took their present form in the 18th century.

Today, the system is that until a panel of our peers finds us guilty, we are presumed innocent.

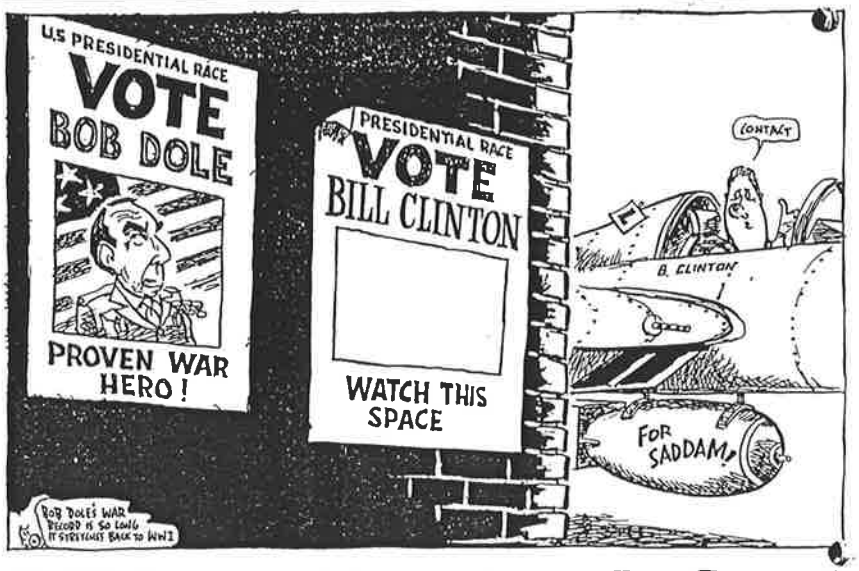
Requiring that our guilt must be decided beyond reasonable doubt by a randomly selected group of our fellow citizens is a precious safeguard against abuse of our liberty by the state.

Attorney-General Jan Wade wants to ensure that fewer people are exempted from jury service. This, she says, would make juries more representative of the population than they are at present.

Mrs Wade also believes jurors should be better paid.

She deserves support in her attempt to make the system work better.

Like democracy itself, trial by jury is not perfect. But it is an important safeguard of individual freedom.



Still on the back foot

Paul Gray



TRAPPED in the Age of Dinosaurs — that seems the sad fate of Australia's top two trade union leaders, Jennie George and Bill Kelty, in the midst of continuing furore over the violence that marred the big ACTU protest in Canberra recently.

The ACTU bosses, although now condemning the riot, continue to deny that they should be held personally accountable for the unauthorised actions of a violent few.

But for moderate unionists dismayed at the further bad publicity for the labor cause that inevitably followed the violence, serious questions must now be asked about the political judgment of the ACTU's leaders.

In Mr Kelty's case, such questioning dates back at least to February. Then, the ACTU secretary delivered his famous speech warning of industrial war if a Liberal government won office.

February too saw Mr Kelty in another major lapse of political judgment, writing to a significant Japanese customer for Australian coal, the Chubu Electric Power Company, telling it to be wary of ordering coal from CRA because of a dispute.

Fortunately for Mr Kelty, news of that particular gaffe did not leak out until after federal Labor was dead and buried at the March 2 poll, so he could not be further blamed. But it was a bad sign of backward attitudes from an ACTU boss.

A further sign has been the reluctance of ACTU president Jennie George in the past two weeks to accept responsibility for the Canberra violence where hard-line elements took over the event and caused injuries to 60 police.

In particular, Ms George's early reluctance to condemn the violence unequivocally — at first she said she understood the demonstrators' anger — suggested an inappropriate tolerance by her of old-fashioned union thuggery.



'Ms George has been a loud supporter of the cause of women in unions. But how much has she achieved?'

More recently she has sought to distance herself from the rioters.

According to an eyewitness I have interviewed, on the day of the riot Ms George was seen in close conversation with one wounded demonstrator behind the platform that had been set up as the official stage for speeches at the protest. I don't know what they were talking about, but soon afterwards the demonstrator, who was bleeding from the head, got on to the stage, where he held aloft a police riot shield and boasted to the crowd how "we got it from the coppers".

Ms George has since said she couldn't stop him.

Full details of who was responsible for the violence on the day may only be known when the matter comes to court. But television footage has already shown men wearing logos of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Engineers Union attacking Parliament House doors during the riot.

This is not the only evidence to tarnish the ACTU's image. Police officers at the "front line" have reported that some demonstrators reeked of alcohol — so much so, one officer told colleagues of almost passing out from the smell.

Other sources who were present at the ACTU's demonstration but were not involved in the violence reported seeing members of extreme revolutionary groups distributing literature in the area of the demonstration.

These included the International Socialists Organisation.

There is no suggestion that the ACTU's top leaders condoned all these activities — or were even aware of them. But they are further evidence of how poorly planned and controlled the entire event was.

For Jennie George, there is a special irony in that among the victims of the Canberra violence was a female police officer who got broken ribs at the hands of demonstrators.

That's because Ms George has been a loud supporter of the cause of women in the union movement. But on the score, how much has she achieved?

In 1993 Ms George was a major force behind the ACTU committing itself to ensuring women made up 50 per cent of its ruling executive by the year 2000.

Yet according to the 1996 National Union Directory published by the ACTU, still only nine out of 36 on the ACTU executive — 25 per cent — are women.

And then comes this outbreak of extremism at the Canberra demo. Labor moderates are entitled to ask: when will we get progress at the ACTU?

HEAD TO HEAD: *Is the level of foreign ownership in Australia too high?*

Senator CHERYL KERNOT
Leader of the Australian Democrats



Yes FOREIGN investment and ownership is really about the sale of Australia.

The Democrats support foreign investment if there is a net benefit to Australia. But most foreign investment does not create new export opportunities, introduce new technology or create new jobs. More than 80 per cent of it involves buying up existing businesses. The fastest-growing negative on the current account has been profits paid to the army of foreign owners of Australian assets. Foreign equity is about 50 per cent more expensive to service than foreign debt. Unlike interest on debt, which is eventually paid out, profit payments on foreign-owned assets go on forever. Where's the sense in that?

Senator JIM SHORT
Assistant Federal Treasurer



No IN GENERAL, foreign investment allows Australia to take advantage of greater investment opportunities, meaning more jobs and better living standards.

Foreign investment also allows us to benefit from foreign technologies and increase our export opportunities. Government policy therefore generally welcomes foreign investment. But in some cases it can be contrary to the national interest and there are provisions to prohibit proposals in such cases.

More generally, we should be concerned about our excessive reliance on foreign savings and the massive increase in our foreign and government debt levels under Labor.

Tears, Speculation and Rumours

The issue of tears has been a burden for many women political figures.[17] Whilst it has been publicly argued by two Australian Prime Ministers that it is acceptable for men to cry in public it apparently remains an unacceptable reaction in a woman political figure. Labor Prime Minister Bob Hawke cried in public on several occasions during his term of office and John Howard is on the public record as saying it is acceptable for men to cry (Phillips 1997, *Advertiser*). When men "transgress their gender roles" and cry in public, it is argued that news reports represent their tears as an indication of men's 'humanity' whereas, in the case of a woman, tears are employed in news reports to emphasise weakness (Boscagli 1993). In Jennie George's case her alleged tears became a focus of several news reports. They were employed as the justification for numerous comments and rumours questioning her leadership capacities and 'toughness' and fuelled predictions that she would become a 'lame-duck' leader (Farr 1996b, *Daily Telegraph*; Lyall 1996, *Australian*; Molloy 1996b, *Herald Sun*; Molloy 1996c, *Herald Sun*; Southorn & Egan 1996, *Courier Mail*; Tan-Van Baren 1996, *West Australian*). The questioning of George's toughness echoes the doubts articulated by some commentators at the time of her election. The tears triggered "widespread rumours she had cracked under pressure and was not up to the job" (Salom 1996a, *West Australian*), and led to "rumblings that she would become the 'sacrificial lamb' by standing aside" (Molloy 1996b, *Herald Sun*). Another report quoted an un-named ALP source as having said "'[i]f you are going to choose a place to have a blub, the Banquet Palace is not the place to do it'" (Charlton 1996, *Courier Mail*).[18] Here the reporting of the un-named official's choice of the term 'blub' conveyed both his (apparent) contempt and his condemnation of George through its infantile connotations. The use of the direct quote added authority to Charlton's article, as it was used to authenticate reports that George was seen as not being 'tough enough' for the ACTU leadership and was under threat of being moved sideways to a parliamentary seat. As this comment

[17] For example USA politicians Geraldine Ferraro, Jeanette Rankin, Pat Schroeder and Dianne Feinstein have all commented on the media and political attacks on them which resulted from their shedding tears in public (Braden 1996; Witt et al. 1994).

[18] The Banquet Palace is a well-known Chinese restaurant in Canberra that is frequented by politicians and the Canberra press gallery journalists.

merged with the voice of the reporter and his assessment that George's leadership was in trouble, its negative connotations converged with those of the report.

Other reports included claims that she had "panicked after the riot" (Molloy 1996b) and that she was "personally devastated" by the damage to the ACTU's reputation and had "taken much of the public criticism personally" (Norington 1996a). She was also said to have been "profoundly distressed ... feeling she had been abandoned by Kelty" (Charlton 1996). These reports emphasised her *emotional* response to the situation rather than her political response. The terms chosen to describe her response conform to those that are traditionally associated with feminine emotion rather than men's emotional responses. They also presume men can, and do, separate public and private realms and rationality and emotion, and that women do not, or cannot separate these things. George was said to be 'distressed' (a term suggestive of vulnerability and lack of agency) rather than 'furious' or 'angry' (terms that connote power, violence and threat) both of which are associated with masculine emotions.

Another focus of several reports is the costs of the gossip and speculation to George at both personal and career levels. These reports extended the doubts of her capacity to survive the crisis. She was quoted as saying "people in public life should not be subject to the kind of political innuendo and rumour-mongering, vilification, hearsay evidence that I have been subjected to" (Norington 1996d, *Sydney Morning Herald*; and also in Murphy M.1996b, *Advertiser*). She was said to be "personally devastated" by the attacks upon her (Charlton 1996, *Courier Mail*; Norington 1996a, 1996e, *Sydney Morning Herald*) even though she was a career unionist who had survived previous difficult political struggles and endured personal attacks. If *Jennie George* (the 'feminist heroine' and 'union maid') was almost destroyed by such attacks (professionally if not personally) many other women must have asked how they would be treated should they pursue leadership ambitions, whether success was worth such vilification and how they, themselves, could survive such attacks.

In selecting these personalised angles the reports utilised a gendered news frame for their analysis that emphasised George's femininity and privileged criticisms of her.

It is also significant that George's political opponents, themselves, used the hostile reporting as a tactical weapon, perceiving George's gender to be a point of vulnerability in a situation of crisis. Both the media and her political opponents emphasised George's feminine emotions as a means of magnifying her vulnerability and sensationalising the apparent crisis in ACTU leadership, thus increasing the story's news value.

Backlash Against Feminised Unionism

Other reports quoted criticisms of George's performance as ACTU president even when the report assessed these as being without much substance. One of these, which surveyed the range of stories and rumours about George's future, repeated a rumour that an "unnamed ALP staffer (said) she put insufficient time and effort into her job" (Taylor L. 1996). Some unions which disagreed with George's emphasis on the ACTU building coalitions with community groups, churches and the Democrats also criticised her performance (Molloy 1996b; Salom 1996b; Southorn & Egan 1996; Taylor, L. 1996; Taylor, M. 1996c). These criticisms could also be regarded as gendered as they demonstrated a resistance to departures from the traditional masculine model of unionism. Social unionism, which features alliance-building and support for the specific concerns of membership groups such as women, Aborigines and non-English speaking background workers, has been described by some commentators as a feminised form of unionism (Cunnison & Stageman 1995). This opposition between a new feminised, woman-friendly unionism and the old style masculinist unionism was emphasised in some news reports at the time of George's election (Doogue 1995, Radio National). In some of these oppositions this change in style and direction could imply an 'emasculation' of traditional unionism and of male leaders. This image was inferred by illustrations of George as a 'phallic woman' such as the one by Brett Lethbridge (Figure 5.5) accompanying Ed Southorn's (1995a) report at the time of her election to the ACTU presidency and the illustration by O'Brien accompanying Peter Charlton's 'The lonely leader' feature (Charlton 1996 Figure 8.7). Interestingly, both these examples were published in the *Courier Mail*. George's well-known identification as a feminist, her advocacy for measures to improve women's representation in unions and the situation of low paid women workers created resentment amongst some male

Figure 8.7 Charlton (1996), 'The lonely leader', Courier Mail, 7/9/96, p.24.

COURIER MAIL 7/9/96 p.24

THE LONELY LEADER

In a changed industrial relations landscape, ACTU president Jennie George has found herself and the peak union body under pressure, especially after union riots in Canberra. National affairs editor Peter Charlton reports



Whatever I do in my life after the ACTU, I'd certainly rule out any notion of a federal parliamentary seat. I think there is a bit of a campaign of destabilisation occurring at the moment after a difficult week for the ACTU, but a lot of it is just scuttlebutt and silly season stuff

ORNE, where the Australian Council of Trade Unions held a three-day meeting this week, is a ak and windswept resort on Victorian south coast, west Geelong.

It this time of the year, its aches are perfect for long, contemplative walks — which is actly what photographers ptured ACTU president Jennie orge doing. She had much to nk about.

The past few months have not en easy for George, the first man to hold high office in the TU. The public face of Australian unionism, George has seen ALP defeated ignominiously March 2, thus ending the ac- ss to government and, therefe, much of the power of the ak union body.

She has seen the new Governent introduce industrial relans reforms which would rece further the powers, not just the ACTU but of its member ions. During the six months ce the election, the divisions the union movement have beme more apparent, with intercine fighting in several major ions and a widening gap beeen the Right in New South ales and the Left in Victoria.

Yet all these problems — part the day-to-day burden of the tion's senior unionist under a w, reformist conservative Govnment — faded into insignifnce on Monday, August 19, en protesters, including some ion officials, stormed Parliant House in Canberra.

George's patron, ACTU secrey Bill Kelty, simply made the y worse by describing the demstration as "successful" and fusing to condemn the vlence. Then Kelty left George nging out to dry.

George, who came to union ominence through the NSW achers Federation, is used to e rough-and-tough of trade ion politics. But friends say e has been profoundly disssed since the demonstration, t just at the violence and the blic aftermath, but also at the eling she had been abandoned Kelty.

Many union officials, including SW Trades and Labor Council cretary Peter Sams, have been ·itical of Kelty for leaving eorge to face the music alone, ccording to union sources, eorge refuses to talk about the ained relationship with the CTU secretary.

But she was forced to reply to ggestions she was not tough ough for the ACTU's top job, d that the ALP was looking for safe seat in an attempt to move er sideways. These suggestions ere serious enough for Opposition Leader Kim Beazley to deny them, while endorsing a political career for George "in the fullness of time".

But the reports seemed well sourced and they followed a couple of occasions where the ACTU president broke down and cried in public, including once at a post-Budget party in a popular Canberra Chinese restaurant often frequented by politicians from both sides and their staffers. "If you are going to choose a place to have a blub, the Banquet Palace is not it," one ALP source said.

When the reports appeared earlier in the week, George attributed speculation of a possible "campaign of destabilisation" coming from Canberra and from within the union movement.

"I'm very secure in my job; I think I do a good job," George said earlier this week. "All these charitable people running around trying to fix me up with a federal seat . . . please don't bother. Whatever I do in my life after the ACTU, I'd certainly rule out any notion of a federal parliamentary seat. I think there is a bit of a campaign of destabilisation occurring at the moment after a difficult week for the ACTU, but a lot of it is just scuttlebutt and silly season stuff."

Perhaps. But the speculation was enough for another senior union official, Victorian Trades Hall Council secretary Leigh Hubbard, to blame the ACTU leadership for what he called a "collective failure".

He believes the ACTU's leadership should have acted together to quash the speculation. "If anything this last week has shown up, it is the failure of collective leadership within the ACTU to support Jennie," Hubbard said.

"If there has been an undermining of her, then that is something the entire leadership — the president, secretary and three assistant secretaries — should have dealt with collectively."

According to Hubbard, too much pressure had also been placed on George to deal with the ACTU's response to the Parliament House violence on August 19.

"The events really did require a collective response. There was no combined approach to it," Hubbard said. He said the ACTU leadership needed to reassess its management style to ensure that George was not placed under such pressure again.

According to union sources, the ACTU council discussed its "crisis management" techniques — for want of a better term — during the week at Lorne. The response was to send one of George's subordinates, assistant secretary Greg Combet, on to *The 7.30 Report* on Thursday night where he spent an unconvincing five minutes attempting to explain away the non-appearance of either George or Kelty. All this tended to do was reinforce the difficult position in which the ACTU leadership finds itself.

After this less than convincing performance, George made an appearance on the ABC's Radio National yesterday morning where, once again, attention focused on the Parliament House riots and the political and industrial aftermath.

"There's no doubt the incidents in Parliament House on the 19th have cost the union movement in the short term, not so much in terms of our own membership . . . but certainly out there in middle Australia I think it has done some damage to the movement," she told ABC Radio's AM programme, following the ACTU's three-day council meeting this week.

"But the main thing we have to do now is to learn from the lessons of that experience. We can't be deterred from protesting peacefully in a democratic society."

Predictably enough, George was defiant and optimistic about the ACTU's future. "So despite the short-term damage that may have resulted from the 19th of August, I can assure you that I'm feeling very confident, not only about rebuilding the union movement to be an effective voice for working people," George said.

According to the ACTU president, the union movement would also work to forge links with groups feeling disaffected by the policies of the Howard Government, such as child-care groups and people suffering from public-sector cutbacks, particularly those in rural and regional areas.

"If John Howard has been able to seize the political moment over the past three weeks, let me assure John Howard we're here to stay, we're here for the long haul and we're going to be working hard to protect the interests of our people, but also joining with all those who feel very disaffected by a government that's clearly not a government for all of us," George said.

All this tended to do was reinforce the difficult position in which the ACTU leadership finds itself.

According to Professor Julian Teicher of Monash University, the ACTU is struggling to find a role for itself in the changed industrial relations landscape following the March 2 election. He says this is best illustrated by the peak union body's attempts to build relationships with the Greens, the Democrats and with lobby groups such as the Australian Council of Social Security.

CERTAINLY, the ALP has made it clear the old relationship between the political party and the peak union body will change dramatically in Opposition.

Gone is the centrepiece of that old relationship: the Accord. Gone, too, is former prime minister Paul Keating, whose relationship with Kelty was often thought to be influential and strong.

Now, it seems a healthy degree of myth-making has sprung up about the Keating-Kelty relationship, particularly during the past four years. More objective observers suggest Kelty's forays into political campaigning — most notably, the threat of "industrial war" in Melbourne late in the campaign and his letters to Japanese companies warning them not to buy Australian coal.

Since the election, Kelty's industrial feet of clay have been exposed. Without the "direct line", not just to Keating but also to the Reserve Bank through his seat on the board, Kelty is having to adjust to very different political realities.

The industrial realities have also changed. The growth of enterprise bargaining, begun under the Labor government but certain to accelerate under the Coalition, tends to reduce the power of a peak union body such as the ACTU. Its power peaked in the days of the Accord, when it negotiated directly with the government; now with the Accord gone, so has much of the ACTU's power.

The power also has been diminished by the growth of the so-called "super unions", ironically a Kelty initiative. These major union groupings, affiliated directly with the ALP, compete for power with the ACTU. In recent years, they have become more powerful, a process accelerated by the Coalition Government's reforms.

George seems safe enough for the time being. So, for that matter, does Kelty. But the future of the peak union group looks less optimistic and this week's three-day, navel-gazing exercise on the Victorian south coast simply reinforced the ACTU's problems.

Traffic Alert

As a service to City motorists and pedestrians, the Brisbane City Council's Traffic Guidance Services Unit advises:

YERONGA Institute of TAFE

unionists, including officials, who preferred the status quo.[19] George's unanimous endorsement as ACTU president and the acclaim with which her election was received, protected her from the criticisms of opponents in the initial period after her election. However, the Canberra 'riot' crisis created an opportunity to attack the directions she advocated for the union movement and to destabilise her authority. George's media critics and political opponents argued that *her* failure jeopardised the credibility of both the union movement and the ALP. The criticisms of George's control over the crowd were constructed in ways that connoted both the weak leader and the bad mother. The criticisms of her leadership by her political opponents, Prime Minister, John Howard, and Workplace Relations Minister, Peter Reith, articulated with those of the media and were (opportunistically and/or foolishly, depending on one's perspective) extended by her factional rivals inside the ALP and ACTU, who advocated a different mode of unionism and were, perhaps, threatened by the rise of women into positions of power within the labour movement.

George's high approval (for a union leader) and her high visibility in part explain *why* she was targeted by the Workplace Relations Minister and the Prime Minister. George's high profile and positive regard meant that she was the prime political target for the public outrage raised by the 'riot'. If that outrage could be channelled against George her career would be seriously damaged, if not ruined, and the ACTU's primary public asset (and its most articulate media performer to that time) would be seriously compromised. George's political opponents assessed her femininity, her feminism, and her concern for her integrity, to be her vulnerable areas. Their attacks were widely and frequently reported by the media and the attacks generated internal ALP and union disagreement on how best to handle them. This internal tension generated its own stories of destabilisation and retribution. A clear example of her difference being used as the central weapon in attacks on her credibility can be seen in Peter Reith's remark that "(a)fter such a weak performance its little wonder that there are rumours about her leadership" (Tan-Van Baren 1996, *West Australian*).

[19] George alluded to some of this anxiety in an interview with Geraldine Doogue on ABC Radio National 'Life Matters' program 4/10/95.

The demonisation of George provided opponents of measures to increase women's representation in male dominated organisation and public life generally with fresh arguments and reinvigorated myths to support their case.

A Doomed Leader?

Some media reports make it clear that certain sections of the trade union movement, such as the right-wing NSW Trades and Labor Council, had not supported the strategy of a broad social coalition favoured by George (Taylor L. 1996). Others concentrate on internal ALP factional differences and rivalries. In these accounts however, it is notable that George figures as a victim and that the traditional networking and coalition-building (peacemaking) work of women has been ruined by the relentless self-interest of certain men.[20]

Even when George went public on the 'scuttlebutt' and the attempts to undermine her she was seen to be appealing to a higher (male) authority (ALP leader Kim Beazley) to intervene and 'rescue' her by disciplining party officials, thus fixing the problem of her victimisation and protecting her from further attack (Taylor L. 1996). Given previous framings, it was easy for news reports to refigure her presidency as not strong enough to control ambitious and ruthless men, who did not care how much damage they did to the Labor Party or the union movement, in their blind personal struggle for power and pay-back for perceived past wrongs. George might have been acting against this victimisation by naming it for what it was, (naming is a fundamental feminist strategy in asserting women's rights against traditional patriarchal dominance) but in these industrial and political contexts some media reports represented it as an act of weakness and desperation (Norington 1996c). George was depicted as being without agency, and the power of conferring or withholding both co-operation and support for her continued occupation of the presidential position was (represented as being) held by men. On the one hand, her requests for intervention and restraint could have been interpreted within the

[20] George did style herself as a different kind of leader and made clear some of the different directions she intended the ACTU to explore in her election speech (George 1995). Although she was able to implement some new strategies for the organisation she was not able to control all its members. However, she was not an isolated victim in the way the press reports suggested. The coalition-building strategy of social unionism was supported by a large number of unions and the actions of those involved in the violence in Canberra derailed the strategy of this entire group, not only George. Although, as has been seen, she is the one whose credibility was most damaged by it.

masculine tradition of political leadership as a weak appeal or 'plea' for mercy to those more powerful. On the other, they were also interpreted as an indication she lacked the stoical courage and endurance of good male leadership which maintains a tradition of 'stiff upper lip' and silence under fire (Cunnison & Stageman 1995; Elton 1997; Sinclair 1998). George's expressions of emotion could also have been discussed as a characteristic of cultural difference, as being a trait associated more with her European heritage instead of the stoical British tradition. However, both the media and George's opponents preferred to emphasise her 'otherness' as a woman instead of exploring the multiple differences which characterised her union ascendancy.

Reactions from Jennie George's Supporters and Other Interested Observers

Many people, including Jennie George's supporters and women not aligned to either the ALP or the union movement, viewing these events were shocked at how quickly Jennie George was scapegoated. They were also appalled to see how, at least at first, the ACTU and ALP appeared willing to martyr their star president of only one year, to appease public and political outrage at the bad behaviour of men. Democrat Senator[21] Natasha Stott Despoja, a feminist from a party that has no links with the trade union movement, expressed her horror at the riot itself but also, particularly, at the way George was attacked for it.

> I was also appalled that it was Jennie George, the first woman president of the ACTU, who was held accountable for the masculine violence that I witnessed. I cannot imagine what it is like to take on the entrenched male structures in the union movement. For a woman like Jennie George to take on that dominance and succeed is testament to how far we have progressed and what she has overcome with courage and stamina. That she should be attacked by male powerbrokers in the union and political movements for supposedly crying, for supposedly allowing the rally to get out of control, and, sometimes for just doing her job, highlights how far we have to go.
>
> (Stott Despoja 1997)

Victorian Trades Hall secretary Leigh Hubbard publicly criticised his colleagues and the ACTU for leaving Jennie George unsupported to bear the brunt of media and political attacks (Charlton 1996; Murphy M. 1996a). The apparent willingness of the ACTU and ALP to sacrifice George or to abandon her to her fate would have done

[21] Natasha Stott Despoja later became Leader of the Australian Democrats. She resigned as leader in July 2002.

little to increase the confidence of women activists that, even if they should succeed in being elected unopposed, they could rely upon their male colleagues to support them in a political crisis.

The saturation media coverage of the attacks on George for ten days between 30 August and 8 September 1996 magnified the difficulties faced by women within masculine organisations. The actual events were an aberration in the contemporary history of trade union protest in Australia. However, they were used very effectively by the ACTU's political opponents to damage the ACTU, and Jennie George was positioned by her political opponents from all sides and the media as the scapegoat for this aberration. She was targeted for a series of reasons: because she was the head of the ACTU; because she had personally pushed for the strategy of a mass Canberra rally; because she was the most effective spokesperson for the union movement (therefore damage to her credibility would inflict significant damage to the ACTU); and because her femininity and difference from the norms of union leadership made her authority vulnerable in ways that could be exploited politically and which were newsworthy. George was also perceived to be vulnerable because of her well-known association with feminism and the Left, both of which are popularly represented as extremist positions. George survived these attacks, but her reputation was tarnished and she was bruised by the experience. Furthermore, these attacks on her judgement, her credibility and her performance under pressure raised questions about her leadership qualities which reporters returned to at other times in her presidency, including in her final months.

Conclusion: The Deployment of Gender in Relation to 'Blame' in Reporting the Cavalcade to Canberra

The three chapters that examined the reporting of the Cavalcade to Canberra have argued that conventions of gendered reporting articulated with conventions of reporting industrial relations disputes and those of reporting law and order issues. In particular, this chapter has shown the ways in which femininity was deployed as a key element in both the criticisms made of George and the reporting of such attacks. These political attacks on George's leadership, particularly those conducted by the Prime Minister and Workplace Relations Minister were waged through the press and

they articulated with the media's own conventions of 'hunting for a scalp'. It has argued that should either the media or her political opponents have managed to force Jennie George's resignation it would have been perceived as a major political victory. This is because of Jennie George's status as the 'first woman' ACTU president, the wide respect for her as a reformer and competent media performer, her high public profile, and her high (for a unionist) approval rating. Such a 'prize' would have been highly newsworthy and to some extent this accounted for the apparent convergence of Government and media attacks. The attacks on her from her own side of politics can be accounted for through a variety of reasons including internal factional rivalry, poor political judgement by colleagues, and mistrust of women leaders.

The research demonstrates that signifiers of femininity were integral to the way the attacks on George were mounted and reported. Gendered beliefs about women and power formed the basis for the attacks and provided the commonsense framework to many of the reports which placed her outside of the norms of behaviour and acceptable performance. The personalised, gendered and hurtful nature of these attacks exacerbated the speculation that George would not be tough enough to survive them. Myths and stereotypes of gender, race, class, nationalism and unionism were all deployed to make sense of the 'riot'. However, when the Government and some in the media wanted to allocate blame for the events and to force a resignation, they employed tropes of femininity in their attack and their argument that Jennie George's leadership of the ACTU was no longer tenable. The role of gendered representations was fundamental to the nature of the attacks upon George. It was not a separate or minor aspect of an overall attack. It provides a stark reminder of the extent to which women political leaders are sexualised or are represented, as Karen Ross and Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi phrase it, as "a special kind of deviant professional, a woman politician" (1997: 104).

The next chapter examines the reporting of the last months of Jennie George's term as ACTU president, including attacks on her in relation to her previous membership of the Communist Party, speculation about her intentions to retire, the probable timing of her resignation, her likely successor and her possible move to Federal Parliament.

Part IV: Vale Jennie George

Chapter 9
Act1: Beginning of the End

Chapter 10
Act 2: Forced Resignation

Chapter 11
Act 3: The Final Bow, 8 March 2000

9 Act 1: Beginning of the End

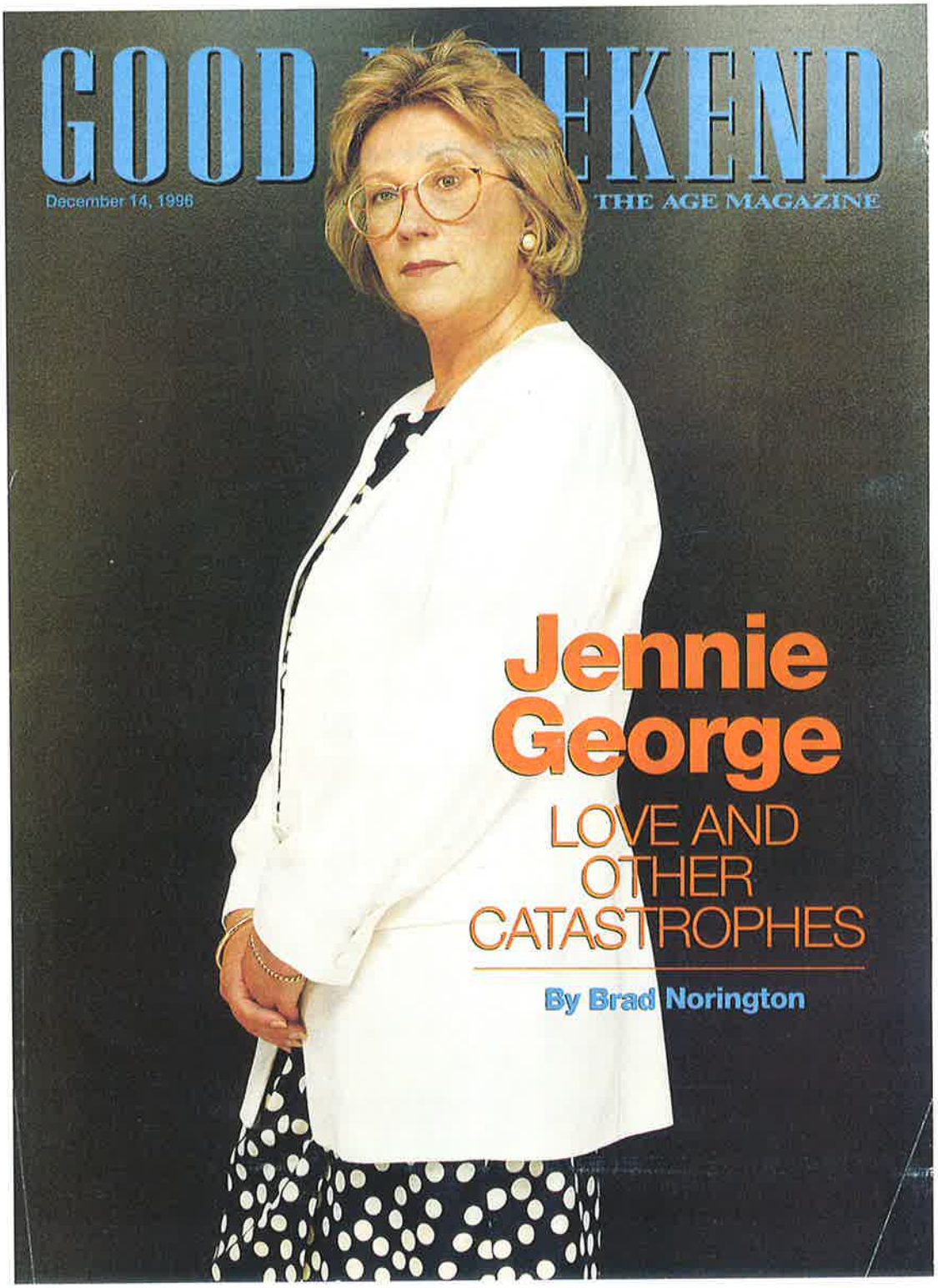
Introduction

After the dust had settled in the aftermath of Cavalcade to Canberra in December 1996 Jennie George attempted to regain public credibility and sympathy by participating in two, more personalised, interviews with journalists whom she trusted—feminist author and columnist Susan Mitchell, in the *Australian* (Mitchell 1996a) and industrial affairs journalist and editor Brad Norington in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (Norington 1996e). Mitchell had recently published a book of interviews with prominent Australian women, titled 'The scent of power' and her article canvassed several of the themes in her book and acted to promote it to the *Australian's* readership (Mitchell 1996b). Norington was, at this time, working on George's biography and his *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Good Weekend' magazine feature was based on material that he would later use in his biography of Jennie George. Mitchell's article was significantly shorter than Norington's lengthy feature.[1] Norington's article was titled 'Soft heart, hard line' whereas the front cover of the 'Good Weekend' magazine featured a full-length photograph of George and led readers to the article with its cover headline 'Jennie George love and other catastrophes' in a clear reference to the contemporary popular Australian film of that name (Figure 9.1). Both headlines are clear examples of the application of gendered and romanticised news frames to women politicians and the 'intimization' of news reporting on public figures that is characteristic of the tabloid trend.

From this time onwards George maintained a lower public profile than she had in the first year of her presidency. Despite her public appearances and hard work associated with industrial campaigns for improvements to the basic wage and equal pay for women, and her high-profile role in disputes such as the 1998 Maritime Dispute and collapse of National Textiles in 2000, she did not otherwise engage in personalised media interviews or profiles that were separate from her campaign and

[1] Both these reports are worthy of closer analysis, however, they illustrate one strategy at an isolated moment in a longer struggle between George and the press and are therefore, for reasons of space, are only discussed in passing. The publication by the *Sydney Morning Herald* of this sympathetic feature by Norington at this time is significant in relation to his change of face three years later.

Figure 9.1 'Good Weekend', Age, 14/12/96, cover.



leadership responsibilities. In his biography Norington argues she was 'oversensitive' to media criticism (Norington 1998), however, the nature of much of the media reporting of her presidency including her election and especially the reports arising from the Cavalcade to Canberra provided grounds for her to be more cautious in her dealings with the media.

The next three chapters consider the media coverage of Jennie George's final months as ACTU president, from August 1999 to March 2000, and two related reports by Brad Norington from April 1999. In particular, they examine media reports with attention to headlines, photographs, illustrations, page layout, captions and narratives and the news frames they applied. The news reports in this period largely focus on rumours of her impending resignation, what her future might hold, the problems she experienced in attempting to gain endorsement for a suitable parliamentary seat, the question of who might succeed her and, ultimately, assessments of her achievements as president. Many of these reports are highly critical of George. They build upon issues raised in the aftermath of the Cavalcade to Canberra—such as questions of her 'toughness' and her alleged emotional nature—and deploy some of the same reporting tactics that were used in reporting her election to the presidency in 1995—including describing her in ways that emphasise her femininity, her previous membership of the Communist Party and her feminism. This section examines how these various factors work to bring down a significant, female political figure.

The publication of Norington's biography in late 1998 painted a picture of a woman who was oversensitive to criticism and heavily reliant on male company and approval. It also downplayed the significance of George's network of close female friends and the importance of her work towards greater equality of women in unions (Muir 1999). George, reportedly, had some issues with the biography and particularly with Norington's emphasis on her romantic life and lack of attention to the significance of her female friends (Kenny 2000 *Workers Online*). George was also reportedly bruised by the attacks on her in the wake of the Cavalcade to Canberra and more guarded in her dealings with the media, even to the extent of

avoiding contact with particular journalists (Norington 1998). The combination of these factors may well have been behind her choice of a lower media profile.

During 1998 Jennie George had said she would probably retire at the July 2000 ACTU Congress. She indicated she would like to continue to contribute to public life and pursue her principles through a parliamentary career, preferably in the NSW Legislative Council, rather than the Federal Parliament in Canberra, so that she could be close to her elderly mother who lived in Sydney. George's career choice was based to a significant degree on family responsibilities, as she was an only child and strongly committed to her mother. In Australia, family responsibilities are becoming increasingly acceptable as the (official) reason for sudden and unexpected career changes amongst male public figures including politicians. However, as Liesbet van Zoonen found in her study of Dutch politicians, focusing on family responsibilities reads differently when undertaken by male politicians than it does when undertaken by female politicians (van Zoonen 1998a, 2000).[2]

During 1999 speculation that George would retire early was circulating in the labour movement and by mid-year it appeared in the press. The next three chapters analyse this press conjecture and coverage of her retirement as the ACTU's president in March 2000. This chapter discusses *Sydney Morning Herald* reports in April 1999. It is significant because it clearly marks a change in journalistic reportage. The knives are now out and blood is drawn. The initial charge is communism. Under the headlines 'Comrade George' and 'Woman in red' Brad Norington leads the way with his two *Sydney Morning Herald* reports of 7 April 1999. The first in a hostile press campaign that ultimately led to the downfall of Jennie George. Chapter Ten discusses media reporting from August to December 1999 that predicted the date of her retirement, and canvassed her achievements in office, and the professional options available to her thereafter. Chapter Eleven examines the reporting of her

[2] On 1 July 1999 Tim Fischer, Deputy Prime Minister and leader of the National Party, was reported in almost heroic terms when he announced he would be resigning the Deputy Prime-Ministership and party leadership in order to cut back his travelling time and spent more time with his two young sons, one of whom suffers from autism (Farr 1999; Harvey 1999). One or two commentators observed at the time that women never received such recognition for their sacrifices for their families. Certainly Jennie George's desire to live closer to her elderly mother so that she could provide more support, was not discussed as a legitimate and responsible acceptance of family obligations.

actual retirement on 8 March 2000. The reports chosen for analysis in these three chapters demonstrate the depth of the attacks, the various conflicting signifiers of femininity deployed within them and the degree to which such signifiers are central both to the charges laid against George and to attempts to valourise her presidency.

Led in particular by Brad Norington, news reports of her retirement and future career become a battle for credibility. Norington over this period dramatically shifts roles from being a 'trusted' journalist, with privileged access to George, into being her chief attacker. He mounts a concerted campaign, through the pages of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, to discredit her personally, as ACTU president, and to push her career to a premature end. This dramatic about-face by Norington, amounts to a significant betrayal of trust. It seems that after the publication of his biography, Norington emphasises the 'discovery' that George had been a member of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA)—a membership she denied in interviews—to produce a malicious, vengeful attack on her credibility, leadership skills and political ambitions. The scale and ferocity of his attack belongs to the height of Cold War paranoia rather than the post-Communist era. Through the vehicle of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Norington published several lengthy articles attacking George commencing in April 1999. The first of these articles coincided with the release of the revised, paperback edition of his biography and functions as promotion for his book. Norington's articles set the tone for the emergence of a discourse that works to discredit her presidency and her contribution to Australian public life.

Act I: Creating an Environment of Crisis

The Undoing of George! The Leader of Australian Unions is Exposed as a 'Red' and a Liar.

In late 1998 Brad Norington, the industrial relations editor for the Fairfax broadsheet newspaper the *Sydney Morning Herald* published his biography *Jennie George*. It was unauthorised but George had 'co-operated' with his research and granted him

several interviews, as had several of her friends and colleagues.[3] The biography covered her leadership of the ACTU up until mid-1998 and the conclusion of the Maritime Dispute. One of the questions Norington left open in the book was what Jennie George might do upon retirement from the ACTU. He predicted this would take effect from the ACTU's 2000 Congress. The other question he left open was the issue of whether George had ever been a member of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA). Norington claims George told him she had never been a 'formal' member of the CPA but rather was a 'fellow-traveller', that is a member of various communist-aligned organisations such as the Eureka Youth League and the Vietnam Action Committee. Her husband, Paddy George, had been a well-known communist at the time of their marriage and subsequently. George's previous links to the CPA through her late husband had been an element in reports of her presidency from the outset with potential to arouse suspicion. Despite the end of the Cold War and the collapse of most communist regimes, communist sympathy remains suspect on the Australian political landscape. Accusations of CPA involvement was a tactical weapon that was available to George's opponents and became a significant factor in her undoing in the press.

Norington devotes several pages of the first edition of the book to a discussion of George's possible membership of the Party and her denial that she had ever joined it. He names several of George's friends, who were Party members, who "maintained that she was never a Communist party member" (Norington 1998: 70). He also mentions other observers (unnamed) who were Party members at the same time, who "had no doubt Jennie was in the CP and believed she was being 'retrospectively diplomatic' in her public denial" (Norington 1998: 70). He quotes George as saying "I was never a *card-carrying* member of the Communist Party" (1998: 71). The biographer queries this statement rejecting George's own account that she needed to be unaligned politically for her union career, to favour other possible explanations. He advances the theory that her "emotional link with her migrant past" and her mother's vehement anti-communism were the most likely reasons for either not actually joining the Party or, instead, refusing to acknowledge

[3] Although George co-operated with Norington, she made the point at the launch of the biography that perhaps a female author would "have been more sensitive to how important her female friends and colleagues" were to her (Kenny 2000).

such membership (1998: 71).[4] Norington also suggests that the difficulty communists and former-communists experienced in international travel, particularly to the USA, might have been a factor in her refusal to join or her subsequent denial of membership. Nonetheless, he labours the point of her CPA affiliations over several pages. These charges would have deleterious effects.

At the time of George's election as president of the ACTU some reports had mentioned her marriage to a former communist (who had died fifteen years previously) and her own left-wing views as matters of concern, in terms of how such allegiances might influence her policies (see Southorn 1995a, and also Akerman 1995a). However, in his reporting of her election victory, in 1995, Norington neither mentions her former marriage to Paddy George, nor her participation in any communist-affiliated organisations such as the Eureka Youth League (Norington 1995). These aspects of her life were not raised by any other reporter in the *Sydney Morning Herald* at that time. The fact that Norington did not choose to include details of her marriage and widow-hood and her political affiliations in his early reporting of her makes his subsequent attack all the more notable.[5]

On 7 April 1999 the *Sydney Morning Herald* published two reports by Norington to coincide with the launch of the revised paperback edition of his biography.[6] In both these reports Norington announces that George's membership of the Communist Party of Australia is now a "matter of record" and that his research has unearthed details of her membership and positions that she held in the CPA (Norington 1999a, 1999b). CPA records held in the NSW Mitchell Library record George's membership and her election as delegate "to the Sydney District Committee in 1972" and also as a National Congress delegate (Norington 1999a).

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[4] According to Norington, her family were refugees from Stalinist Russia and her maternal great-grandmother was a Russian aristocrat (Norington 1998).

[5] Given Norington's position as the *Sydney Morning Herald's* industrial editor (he was writing on industrial issues at least as early as 1991) and their shared Sydney background, Norington would have had access to at least some of this information. It appears he did not see it as relevant to his report at that time. This suggests it was his *attitude* to George that changed over time.

[6] The paperback edition was revised to include Norington's discovery of records in the NSW Mitchell (State) Library of George's CPA membership and official party positions (Norington 1999j 69-73). It is otherwise virtually unchanged.

The first report was printed on page three of the paper and takes up a single column on the left-hand side of the page (Figure 9.2). The headline makes the accusation: 'Comrade George: a matter of record'. Midway down the page appears a small cartoon by Cathy Wilcox (Figure 9.3 detail). The cartoon shows a woman peering under her double bed at a pair of high-heeled shoes and saying to her partner 'Good heavens, Frank, there's an ACTU president under the bed!' Apart from the loud headline and this cartoon the report is an otherwise nondescript item on the page. However, the cartoon functions to draw the reader's attention to the column headline, and George's CPA affiliations. The cartoon draws a humorous parallel between Norington's 'revelations' about Jennie George and the cold-war paranoia about communists as 'reds under the bed'. It could be read variously as sending-up the potential 'threat' implied by Norington's disclosure and/or evoking serious anxieties about the 'communist threat'. The synecdochical use of the high-heels to stand-in for the woman (George) fetishizes her and her position under the bed renders her duplicitous and suggests espionage, if not making her appear ridiculous. The inclusion of the cartoon also works to remind readers that Jennie George is a *woman* leader. It adds a gendered dimension to the entire report and the report in turn functions as a covert ad for the book. Both cast doubt on her credibility. Although seemingly insignificant at the time of first publication this revelation signalled that a campaign to discredit her had begun.

The report presents the information as newsworthy through the convention of an exposé or scoop about a public figure. It positions George as a prevaricator, trying to conceal important information about her past. The first paragraph reads: "Official documents reveal that the ACTU president, Ms Jennie George, was an active member of the Communist Party of Australia *despite her repeated denials*" (Norington 1999a, italics added). In two of the last three paragraphs Norington justifies his persistence with the question of George's membership of the CPA, despite her refusal to comment further on the matter. He writes:

Figure 9.2 Norington (1999a) 'Comrade George: a matter of record', Sydney Morning Herald, 7/4/99, p.3.

Comrade George: a matter of record

By BRAD NORINGTON
Industrial Editor

Official documents reveal that the ACTU president, Ms Jennie George, was an active member of the Communist Party of Australia, contrary to her repeated denials.

Ms George was not only a Communist Party member but was also elected to office-bearing positions in the organisation, according to official party records which are kept at the Mitchell Library in Sydney on restricted access.

The revelations are contained in a revised paperback edition of a biography on her life to be released this week.

During research for the first edition, which I wrote for publisher Allen & Unwin, Ms George persistently denied that she had ever belonged to the Communist Party.

At the time, she said: "I was never a card-carrying member of the Communist Party. Obviously I was very close to the party. I went along to meetings and social things and I was married to a communist, but I was never a member myself."



However, official Communist Party records confirm that Ms George was a member. They show she was elected to the party's Sydney District Committee in 1972.

She was elected a delegate to the Communist Party's National Congress. She sought but failed to win a place on the party's National Committee.

Only card-carrying members of the Communist Party could nominate for these positions.

Ms George, 51, has consistently downplayed her communist associations by admitting publicly that she belonged to the Eureka Youth League – which was prominent in the anti-Vietnam War movement – but insisting that she never made the major commitment of joining the Communist Party.

When asked to comment about the new information, Ms George said that her political associations of 30 years ago were well known and canvassed in the biography. "I have no comment to make beyond that which has already been written."

She said that "understandings" of her communist associations were "matters between me and individuals".

"If you want to put them in the biography, then that's what you want to do. I can't comment beyond that."

"The George biography, first released in November, is not authorised, but Ms George agreed to co-operate during original research.

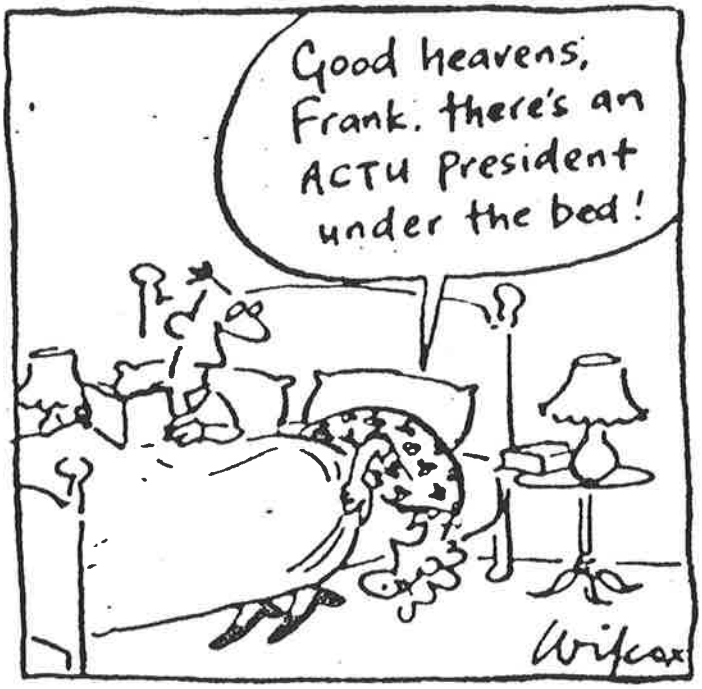
The issue of her party membership is central to the book as a historically accurate record of her life. It was left unresolved for the first edition in the absence of documentary evidence.

Confirmation of Ms George's membership means that she is the highest-ranking political figure in Australia to come through the Communist Party, having reached the top of the mainstream union movement.

Before joining the ACTU, Ms George led the NSW Teachers' Federation.

The woman in red – Page 14

Figure 9.3 Sydney Morning Herald, 7/4/99, p.3, detail.



> The issue of her party membership is central to the book as a historically accurate record of her life. It was left unresolved for the first edition in the absence of documentary evidence.
> Confirmation of Ms George's membership means that she is the highest-ranking political figure in Australia to come through the Communist Party, having reached the top of the mainstream union movement.
>
> (Norington 1999a: 3)

In this manner, the report seeks to exaggerate George's evasion of her CPA membership as serious and significant, perhaps also implying that there were other secrets still to emerge. It evokes old characterisations of communists as a serious threat, as fundamentally untrustworthy, duplicitous and unpatriotic in their loyalty to a foreign power. It also attempts to establish Norington, himself, as a significant author and investigative researcher, and the new edition of his book as worthy of purchase. In part, it also reads as an attempt to cover Norington, himself, against possible criticisms of sloppy research in the first edition. The report also builds on the earlier suggestion that readers should feel concern that a former communist has reached such a high position in contemporary Australian political life. That the fact she was a party member at age twenty-four is considered newsworthy, and a matter of potential concern, some twenty-seven years later, is an indicator of the degree to which cold-war paranoia and anti-communist attitudes still operate in Australian society. These fears are particularly associated with exaggerated ideas of trade union influence and power and also are associated, to a lesser degree, with establishment and mainstream media distrust of the left of the Australian Labor Party (ALP). This concern about communist and left-wing extremism is still cultivated by the right as a means to discredit their opponents. These associations and enmities run long and deep, despite the collapse of the Australian Communist Party and most communist states. The accusation that someone is too left wing to be credible, or is tainted by communist influence, remains an easily available means to discredit them in political and media attacks. The whole article seems to be a beat-up but, instead, it is just the warm-up to a sustained attack on George's credibility and achievements. The accusation that she lied is used to indicate that she is a fatally flawed character, whilst the issue of her Party membership is used to enhance Norington's investigative skills while also serving as promotion for his book.

It appears that the *Sydney Morning Herald* had made a deliberate editorial decision to mount a campaign to discredit George (or to support Norington's determination to do so). This decision boosted Norington's profile considerably calling attention to the story through a variety of techniques. They include cross-referencing news items that build the case against George and using Norington's columns to advertise his biography of George. For example, at the foot of the 'Comrade George' item is a reference to a second article by Norington, 'The woman in red' on page fourteen of the paper, which proves to be not an innocuous reference (Figure 9.4). The first report functions as a hook into the second and both function as advertorials for the book, although this potential conflict of interest is not declared. This second report, which is published on the features page, takes up over two-thirds of the page and includes a head-and-shoulders photograph of George looking away from the camera towards a pull-quote that reads "Are you calling me a liar? Are you challenging my integrity?" The layout of the page sends the viewer's eyes across the headline, down the photograph of George and across to this pull-quote as the 'punch-line' of the piece, for that is exactly what the paper does and appears to be attempting to prove. The layout includes the bold headline that extends over the photo of George so that the term 'in red' overlays the top section of the photograph. It also includes two images. One is the large black and white photo of George the other is a small reproduction of the front cover of the book. This sits underneath the lead paragraph, to the left of, and above, George in the main photograph. This juxtaposition of the book, with Brad Norington's name as author clearly visible, and the photo of George, offers the reader two contrasting images. On the cover of the book she is jubilant, open to the viewer/audience, confident and relaxed (the photo was taken the day she was elected ACTU president). In the second photo she appears closed to the audience, depressed, withdrawn, wary or tense. The contrast between the two images signals two different interpretations of her presidency and her character. The cover image reminds readers of the hopes invested in her presidency that she would be an 'agent of change' for the ACTU, for unionism and for women in unions in particular. It is an image of her at the time she was placed on the pedestal in various press reports. The second image suggests how far she has fallen. Visually it signifies defeat or disillusionment and it cues the reader to the change in attitude demonstrated by the author. The contrast in images could also suggest duplicity to

Figure 9.4 Sydney Morning Herald, 7/4/99 p.14

FEATURES

Woman

Being a former Communist Party member is no longer controversial. So why, asks **Brad Norington**, did Jennie George try to cover her political tracks?



Eureka! A CP member after all . . . Jennie George, and her biography. Main photograph by DAVID LOCH

ASKING Jennie George about her political past has elicited a standard response from her over the years: she was once a member of the Eureka Youth League – but not the Communist Party. Throughout George's public career, this distinction has proved to be a very convenient one. Why? She has used it to brush off any unwanted delving into her past by placing herself in a similar category to dozens of people who were student activists in the 1960s.

The Eureka Youth League, although established as the youth organisation of the Communist Party of Australia, was also one of the main rallying points for protests against the Vietnam War in Sydney and Melbourne. Many young people whose political passions were stirred by the war came through its ranks – participating in marches and mass sit-ins – but that was the extent of their political involvement. They never took the major step of joining the party. George would prefer to be remembered this way.

When I began researching a biography of George commissioned by publisher Allen & Unwin, her political history was obviously an important area of inquiry into her journey to the top of the union movement to become the ACTU's first woman president.

The biography was not authorised – but I was fortunate to gain her co-operation for extended interviews.

When it came to quizzing George about her political associations, I, too, received the stock reply. She was a member of the league, not the party. When pressed, she admitted she was very close to the party. She had married a communist, Paddy George, her friends were communists, and, by her own admission, she had attended party meetings. "But I was never a member myself."

The issue would not go away. Again and again, as my research progressed, former communist friends of George's recalled that she had been a party member with them. Other friends outside the party said they had always assumed she was a member, though they could not be certain.

Increasingly I faced a large grey area surrounding George's politics, particularly in the 1970s, as she, and a close circle of supporters, kept their memories of her political associations vague. Even her political beliefs of the time remained shrouded in ambiguity, leaving me to piece them together from the reminiscences of others and whatever hard evidence I could find.

George became impatient when I tried to resolve the question of her political past once and for all. "It's so long ago – is this important?" she said. The answer had to be yes if the biography was to be a historically accurate record of George's life. I told her it was important to my ability to trace her political evolution to the present day. When I persisted, George became irritated. "Are you calling me a liar? Are you challenging my integrity?"

In the absence of documentary evidence, I left the question of George's party membership unresolved in the biography's first edition.

The lie worked for a while. But new information contained in the revised biography now confirms, unequivocally, that George was a Communist Party member. And documents show that she was no mere party foot-soldier – she was elected to office-bearing positions.

According to Communist Party records, which are held in the Mitchell Library in Sydney on restricted access, George was elected to the party's Sydney District Committee in 1972. Among those on the committee with her were Jack Mundey, the former BLF leader and hero of the green bans era, Mundey's wife, Judy, was the committee's secretary.

George was also one of 32 Sydney delegates elected to the Communist Party's National Congress. And she nominated for a place on the National Committee of the Communist Party, but failed to secure enough votes in a ballot that included party heavyweights Laurie Aarons, Laurie Carmichael, Bernie Taft and the Mundeys.

George was 24 years old then, a teacher at Bankstown Girls' High School and several years away from starting a career as a full-time union official in which she would rise to lead the NSW Teachers' Federation and eventually the ACTU.

Confirmation of her party membership means that George is the most senior figure in Australia to have come through communist ranks and succeeded in the mainstream of the union movement. She has surpassed other former union communists – who made no attempt to hide their party associations – such as Carmichael, Mundey and John Halfpenny.

What remains unclear now is why George has wanted so desperately to cover up her membership.

When one of her supporters was asked why he had previously denied that she was ever a Communist Party member despite knowing otherwise, he replied simply: "I thought that's what she would want me to say."

George admits that it is no longer controversial to be known as a former communist. When she was a member, the party was still a publicly vilified organisation and kept its business secret. But there is not the same stigma now that was once attached to having belonged. The party was voluntarily disbanded in the early 1990s after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and many former communists are prepared to talk openly about their pasts. Not George.

One clue may lie in her ancestry. George was just three years old when she arrived in Australia in 1950 with her parents, Natasha and Oleg Sinicky, Russian migrants who detested Stalin's communist dictatorship and were prepared to do almost anything to avoid deportation back to the Soviet Union after they were displaced during World War II.

George remains especially close to her mother and is sensitive about her views. When I told George that I had confirmed her past membership and party positions, she said she had no further comment to make "beyond that which has been written".

She did not deny the facts but provided some hint when I said that I could not understand why she had not wanted her party membership known. George replied: "Whatever connection I had with the party was in the context that I came from a family whose feelings I had some respect for."

Such concern for family feelings may indeed provide the answer for perpetuating a lie – but it seems tenuous nevertheless given her marriage to communist Paddy George and the strength of her communist connections that were obvious to all around her.

Perhaps another reason lies in a decision made by George at some point early on that public admission might be damaging to her career, and that the facts of her party membership may be used against her still in her position as ACTU president. George rejected this theory, saying she would be judged on her performance, "not what I did 30 years ago".

There is some basis for supporting this theory, however. In one early interview for the biography when I broached the communist issue, George admitted that some in the party might have marked her out for a career in the mainstream union movement. This is code for saying that some of her early mentors – most probably party apparatchik Mavis Robertson – believed she should keep her party affiliation under wraps lest it harm her promising union career in the Teachers' Federation and beyond.

The last reason for denying party membership is a practical one. Admitting to being a member of the Communist Party has posed problems for international travellers in the past, particularly those visiting the United States. George has travelled through the US but one of her openly communist friends, Cathy Blinch, was barred from entry.

Are you calling me a liar? Are you challenging my integrity?
JENNIE GEORGE

One of the effects of George denying her party membership is that it has given the (false) appearance of a fundamental political gulf between herself and her committed husband, the late Paddy George.

Perhaps what is most surprising about George's political past is that she remained with the party as late as she did. Still a member in 1972 puts her among some of the party's diehards. The party had already broken its official ties with the Soviet Union, but many young communists had already split, outraged by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia four years earlier.

It is not clear when George left the Communist Party – or if she ever did in a formal sense. It is more likely that she just drifted away.

George has never cut her old communist ties as far as the clique of former communists who are still her most trusted allies. Perhaps those old ties explain in part why George left it until 1992 to become a member of the Labor Party.

As one former communist recalled: "She didn't resign – she just faded away. You couldn't resign without having to explain yourself."

Brad Norington is the *Herald*'s industrial Editor and author of *Jennie George*, published by Allen & Unwin in paperback this week, rrp $19.95.

Roses Only
12 Long Roses
Any colour
FREE DELIVERY
Sydney Wide
FREE Bottle of Rose Oil
FREE Bag of Pot Pourri
FREE Chocolates
$49.50
2 Dozen $80
3 Dozen $100
9232 4499

Commonwealth of Australia

Work for the Dole (Round 3) Projects

The Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business is seeking submissions from sponsor organisations to run Work for the Dole projects. These projects will give unemployed people the opportunity to work within their communities, and provide participants with work experience and workplace skills.

Projects will be considered for their appropriateness to the participants and to the community. Sponsors may propose projects offering a variety of work experiences in different activities and locations. Each project will have a demonstrated level of community commitment and will be of benefit to the local area.

Projects should provide participants with:
- a variety of work experiences and challenges;
- social interaction;
- interesting activities; and
- pride in the results of the project.

Eligibility for Work for the Dole projects has now been extended to allow Year 12 school leavers who have been receiving unemployment payments for 3 months to participate. In general, Work for the Dole is available for job seekers aged 18 to 24 years, who have been receiving unemployment payments for 6 months or more. Other unemployed people who fulfil the other eligibility criteria can volunteer to participate.

The Department is seeking proposals from non-profit community based organisations which can start projects from August 1999 to February 2000. Local, State and Commonwealth Government agencies may also apply.

This call for submissions is part of the ongoing administration of the Work for the Dole programme. Final decisions will not be made until early July 1999.

Potential sponsors should request a copy of the Work for the Dole Handbook and Application Form by contacting 1800 731 000 or by accessing DEWRSB's Internet Homepage at http://www.dewrsb.gov.au. Please note that the Handbook and Application have been revised for Work for the Dole (Round 3) projects. Applications must be submitted on the new version. Further information and assistance in completing the Application Form is available by calling 1300 360 368.

Submissions close at 5pm Eastern Standard Time on 5 May 1999.

Sense of duty for serviceman No 52 . . .

GOODNESS knows why a father would send his son of 16 summers to war. Patriotism probably. No doubt it's happening now, among the Serbs and the Albanians. It happened in Australia once.

Len Hall was one of the first Australians to enlist for World War I, in one of the century's blackest months, August 1914. His service number was 52. He was only 16 years and five months old but his regiment needed a bugler and young Len could play. So Major Clive Nicholas, of the 10th Light Horse, put the boy's age up.

Even so, there must have been a problem. His sire, that of a jockey, might have been a factor. Len asked his father to give permission for his enlistment. Mr Hall wrote from Nugarin, Western Australia, on January 25, 1915, to a Captain Todd: "... am writing to say that he has my full & free permission to go & hope that he will do his duty & return safely ..."

It was a sense of duty, then, probably not far removed from patriotism. Len sailed off to war, after handing an emu plume from his hat to a girl he scarcely knew on the wharf. He was just in time for Gallipoli.

Light Horsemen were used as infantry at Lone Pine, Walker's Ridge and the Nek. Len Hall, a fast growing into manhood, put his bugle aside and took up a machine gun. He was a machine-gunner during the infamously mad charge on the Turkish trenches at the Nek, with the job of firing over the heads of the running Australians.

Men of the 10th followed two waves of 8th Light Horse who were annihilated. "Boys, you have 10 minutes to live," the 10th's commanding officer said. At the end of the day, 375 of the 600 attackers were casualties.

Historian C. E. W. Bean wrote: "The West Australians assumed that death was certain, and each in the secret places of his mind debated how he would go to it. Mate, having said goodbye to mate . . . went forward to meet death instantly, running as straight and swiftly as they could at the Turkish rifles. With that regiment went the flower of the youth of Western Australia."

Staff of the National Archives of Australia office in Canberra drew attention to Mr Hall's letter when I was checking details of his son's record, after Len died six weeks ago, aged 101.

Obituaries noted that young Hall had recovered from the trauma of Gallipoli in time to help capture Beersheba in 1917 in the – this time famous – charge of the Light Horse. Records show, however, that the Beersheba charge of October 31 was made by the 4th and 12th Light Horse regiments of the 4th Australian Light Horse Brigade.


Len Hall at home in Perth. Photograph by STEVEN SEWELL

At this time Hall was in the 3rd Machine Gun Squadron of the 3rd Brigade, fighting for Tel el Saba, 5 km east of Beersheba. German bombs killed several of his comrades and their horses. Hall, wounded in the arms and shoulders, always said that he had been saved by his horse, which took the brunt of one explosion.

Hall met Lawrence of Arabia and was with the Australians who beat Lawrence into Damascus. He represented Australian troops at Easter services in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem.

Back home in 1919, a young woman stopped him in the street, introduced herself as Eunice Pollate and said: "Excuse me, sir, I give you back your name." Len and Eunice married in 1921, had two children, Frank and Lenore, and were together until her death at the end of 1995. He had nursed her for 15 years before she entered a nursing home with Alzheimer's disease. He visited her three times a week, a three-hour round trip by public transport. "She didn't recognise anyone else to talk to," said the man who gave the plume, "but she talked to me."

Len painted from Perth when he was 97, saying he wanted to meet a nephew in Sydney and asking if there were any hotels in this city. I arranged the meeting and offered a home for his four-day stay. He travelled on the Indian Pacific train and arrived at Central carrying his old Globite case, secured with a leather belt. The tiny figure standing on the platform looked, at one and the same time, vulnerable and indestructible.

He marvelled at the number of women in Sydney who wore trousers and at the sun dancing on the harbour. He made friends with the dog, whom he called Face Ache, a term of endearment rarely heard these days. The dog responded by calming his natural physical aggression at the feet of the hero. He stayed up talking to around midnight every night, not so much about war and dying as about peace and living. When not talking he hummed loudly, a useful practice because it helped locate him when he was lost inside the house.

Len was still talking when the Indian Pacific pulled out of Central for his return journey, his farewell audience so captivated as to be unconscious of the train's moving. We had to seek a guard's help to stop the train and fetch a scrambler back on the platform.

Len was amused. He might have been 16 again. He said he would try to sydney next time.

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some readers. The two images, together with the title, prepare the reader for the character assassination to come.

Like the first headline 'Comrade George', this one, 'The woman in red', signals danger.[7] It also imputes an explicit element of duplicitous femininity to her character that was missing from the masculine appellation 'Comrade'. George is dangerous on three fronts: as a communist, as a devious woman and through the power she wields as the head of Australia's unions. The headline harks back to the traditions of industrial reporting that cast unionists as deviants and as 'enemies of the state'. It could imply that both George's politics and her sexuality are threats to the reader and everyday Australian life. The association with communism and deceit raises the possibility of George as a spy and in-keeping with popular culture versions of female spies, as a seductress. The visual emphasis on 'red' also plays on the alleged lie that George has perpetrated. The caption to the image of the book "Eureka! A CP member after all ...Jennie George, and her biography" also draws attention to George's 'secret' membership. The expression 'Eureka!' links to the Eureka Youth League, a youth organisation linked to the CPA in which George has acknowledged membership. It also can be read as Norington's shout of triumph, at his discovery of the metaphoric nugget of gold, the evidence that George was a party member.[8] The headline and the caption together create a drama for the reader, pitting Jennie George and Brad Norington against each other within the classic film noir genre. In such dramas the detective solves the mysteries of a dangerous woman, restores order to a community threatened with chaos, and brings the woman to justice.[9]

In the main photograph of George she has her hands clasped in front of her which, in the context of the report, could read as an image of refusal to engage, of avoidance,

[7] It also plays on a movie title of the same name and also a well-known Australian headline used in relation to (Australian Democrats leader) Cheryl Kernot when she appeared in a fashion feature in the Australian *Woman's Weekly* magazine wearing a red evening-dress with a red feather boa. Kernot's appearance in a dress that connoted excessive and cheap female sexuality was seen as a lapse in political judgement and taste. In her book, *Speaking For Myself Again*, Cheryl Kernot argues this photograph was a 'set-up' (Kernot 2002).

[8] The expression 'Eureka' also connects to the rebel Australian gold miners at Eureka stockade and to the rebel union, the Builders Labourers Federation who adopted the Eureka flag as their symbol. In Australian history it signifies a left-wing and militant tradition despite the flag's subsequent use by the fascist National Front organisation.

[9] For feminist discussion of film noir see, for example, Kaplan (1980); Place (1992); Tasker (1998).

or of defensiveness. Her head and shoulders fill slightly less than half the length of the photo with a large amount of blank space above. Her head is slightly below the reader's eye-level and this, together with her position in the frame, works to make her appear smaller and potentially shifty, thus emphasising the idea that she is not to be trusted. As noted above this image contrasts sharply with that of her on the cover of the book, which is positioned to the left of the main photograph. The image of George in the main photograph is turned away not only from the camera and viewer, but also from this image of the book. It could read as turning away from public accountability. In addition, Norington's name appears no less than three times on the page: in the lead paragraph of the story, on the cover of the book, and at the end of the article where he is referred to as the paper's 'Industrial Editor' and the author of the book. Publication details and the price of the biography are included in this paragraph. The effect of these factors is to make the article function as a promotional teaser, or advertorial, for the book, although it is positioned and represented as a 'scoop' of investigative journalism.

The lead paragraph reads: " Being a former communist is no longer controversial. So why, asks Brad Norington, did Jennie George try to cover her political tracks?" (Norington 1999b). However, the question is disingenuous. If CPA membership was indeed *not controversial* for a person in George's position, Norington would not be promoting his book on these grounds, and the paper would not have published these two reports. Interestingly, not many news editors credited the story with wings. Only one other newspaper, the rival Sydney paper the *Daily Telegraph*, picked up Norington's exposé of George as a former CPA member. In this paper George's former membership of the CPA was discussed in Piers Akerman's right-wing column along with his 'outing' of several ALP politicians who he accused of not listing their union membership on either their websites or the Parliamentary Register of Members' Interests (Akerman 1999). The other Fairfax papers, the *Age* and the *Financial Review*, did not choose to regard George's CPA membership as being

sufficiently newsworthy to report.[10] Indeed, no other Fairfax or News Limited papers reported on George's activities on these days.

The feature 'Woman in red' has a complex organisation. It includes thirty paragraphs, the headline, the lead paragraph, the photograph of the book, the photograph of George, and one pull-quote. The words 'lie' and 'liar' appear in the piece three times in addition to the pull-quote. There are three sentences and two phrases that are direct quotes from George. In contrast, the report contains sixteen references to Norington, himself, as 'I', 'me' or 'my' as he tells the story of *his* own research efforts to expose George's alleged lie and find the truth, on behalf of the Australian public.

The report is a 'beat-up', inflating a not particularly newsworthy story about a long-ago political affiliation into one of public deceit. It works to discredit Jennie George as ACTU leader and a prominent and popular Australian woman of integrity, it elevates Norington over George painting him as the intrepid and disinterested researcher (detective) determined to uncover the secrets of her past and deliver the truth to the consuming public. Furthermore, it works to build reader curiosity in his book and ultimately increase its sales. The report establishes clear oppositions between the reporter and George. He is the subject of the story, he represents truth; she is the object of the detection, she is the falsehood to be revealed as such through his research. It presents the story as a dramatic development in Australian public life and implies it has serious political implications. In terms of newsworthiness, the report adds little additional information to the one printed on page four of the same paper. However, it increases the perceived importance of the issue, raising it twice within the one edition and devoting two-thirds of the features page to it. This position indicates the *Sydney Morning Herald* Editor's acceptance of its newsworthiness and/or a concern to promote the work of a *Herald* journalist.

[10] Just because other Fairfax papers did not choose to report George's (former) membership of the CPA in April 1999, when Norington sought to 'break' the story, this cannot be seen as any guarantee that they would not have paid this aspect of George's history significant attention had it been public knowledge at the time of her election as ACTU president. Likewise, the disinterest of the Murdoch-owned newspapers in April 1999 is no indication of their assessment of the newsworthiness of this aspect of George's history had it been known in September 1995. George's 'retrospective diplomacy' may have been warranted considering the attention her former husband's membership of the Party received, from some right-wing commentators, at the time of her election to the ACTU presidency.

Speculation about Jennie George's Retirement

The prominent reporting of George's membership of the CPA in the *Sydney Morning Herald* is relevant in the analysis of the final phase of George's presidency over the period August 1999 to March 2000. The *Sydney Morning Herald* published more reports about Jennie George's rumoured retirement, her resignation, her difficulties in identifying a suitable parliamentary vacancy, and assessments of her presidency than any other Australian newspaper. It is particularly significant that this occurred in a Sydney paper. Sydney being the city where she lives and is seeking to represent electors through a seat in the NSW Legislative Council, that is, the city where such reports have the potential to do *most* damage to her career prospects. Over this period forty articles were published in eight Australian capital city daily newspapers, (*Courier Mail*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Age*, *Herald Sun*, *Advertiser*, *Mercury*, *West Australian*) two national newspapers (*Australian*, *Financial Review*) and the weekly current affairs magazine, the *Bulletin*.[11] Thirteen of these were published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* alone and one in its sister Sunday paper the *Sun Herald*. Most other newspapers published only short pieces.[12] Brad Norington was the sole author of seven of these reports, five of these were feature articles over 1000 words in length. He was also the joint author of an eighth article. One of Norington's feature reports was simultaneously published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and Fairfax's Melbourne daily the *Age* (Norington 2000a, 2000c). It is counted twice.

It is clear that Norington takes the running on this story and Fairfax, specifically the *Sydney Morning Herald*, allowed him to do so. Given that Sydney was George's home base, and indeed that NSW was the site of her parliamentary ambitions, she was, perhaps, more newsworthy to the NSW press. It was also possible for such

[11] Interestingly, no reports were published in the Canberra daily newspaper, the *Canberra Times* about Jennie George's leadership, possible successor, parliamentary future or her retirement over this period.

[12] During this period numerous other news reports were published about Bill Kelty's resignation as ACTU secretary, including assessment of his career and profiles of his likely successor, Greg Combet. Some reports were published about criticisms made by Michael Costa, secretary of the New South Wales Trades and Labor Council, about George's likely successor, Sharon Barrow. Costa had argued that, at forty-five, Burrow was 'too old' and that the ACTU needed a young leader, like the Australian Democrat's then-deputy Natasha Stott Despoja to attract Generation-Xers to union membership. These reports are not included in the totals above as they are not *about* Jennie George, although she may be mentioned once or twice within them.

reporting in the Sydney press to do more damage to her future career than similar reports in interstate newspapers. However, the *Daily Telegraph*, a conservative Murdoch tabloid with an anti-union line on many issues, did not join in the attacks on George despite the *Sydney Morning Herald* launching the campaign.

In August 1999 alone, thirteen articles were published in a range of newspapers about rumours that George wanted to retire early. Several newspapers published this story as a brief news item ranging from a couple of paragraphs (*Age* 1999; *Daily Telegraph* 1999a) to just over four hundred words (Field 1999a). However, the *Sydney Morning Herald* published *seven* stories (including one Editorial) and one cartoon between 25 August and 29 August 1999, three of these reports were over 500 words long (Robinson & Humphries 1999; Norington 1999d; Summers 1999). The *Sun Herald*, the Sunday sister paper of the *Sydney Morning Herald,* also published one report in excess of 500 words (Williams 1999). (The possible reasons for this are discussed below). There were no further stories about George's retirement plans until December 1999.

Speculation that Jennie George would retire early from the ACTU presidency had circulated around the labour movement quite widely from at least mid-1999. George had previously announced that she would continue as president until her term expired in mid-2000. Along with the speculation about *when* she would retire went questions about *where she would go* next. As early as 1998 she had indicated her intentions to seek an ALP seat, preferably in the NSW Legislative Council, upon her retirement from the ACTU which she had indicated would be in mid-2000. Her three immediate predecessors as ACTU president: Bob Hawke, Simon Crean and Martin Ferguson all went straight from the ACTU into the Federal Parliament, and into the ALP Ministry (or shadow-Ministry). Vacancies were created for these men if appropriate seats were not already available. Labour movement and press speculation was that George, too, would be found a parliamentary seat when she was ready to retire. However, it was proving difficult to find George a vacancy in her preferred destination, the NSW Legislative Council, as no sitting members were ready to retire and future vacancies had already been promised to the dominant right-wing faction. These circumstances led to press reports critical of the ALP for

not giving George the same kind of support it had given previous (male) ACTU presidents. The ALP was also accused of double-standards and for not taking its own commitment to increasing the presence of women in the party seriously (Summers 1999 in the *Sydney Morning Herald*; and also an editorial, *Sydney Morning Herald* 1999).[13]

The events turned into a low-level media spectacle with each development being reported as a contest between George and the male powerbrokers of the ALP. As George manoeuvred for a seat some reporters were critical of the ALP for not being able to deliver her one, whilst others were critical of George's performance as ACTU president, her demands and pretensions to Parliament. There was an element of spectator sport as the reporters watched whether or not she would 'make it' in her preferred arena or whether she would be forced out of the contest altogether or to take up a less attractive seat. Headlines such as 'Labor snubs its leading woman' suggest that the press relished the contest (Robinson & Humphries 1999, *Sydney Morning Herald*). There is also an element of contest over the question of whether the press could bring down her presidency and put paid to her political future or whether she would achieve her aims and attain a parliamentary seat. Would the publicity given to her Communist Party affiliation and parliamentary ambitions damage or bolster her chances?

The hidden subtext to these questions that was not revealed, is to what degree various reports express the views and ambitions of George's union and ALP factional rivals or enemies. Attacks on George in the press in the wake of Cavalcade to Canberra were closely tied to the activities of factional enemies and it seems likely that some of these later attacks may have been fed through leaks from similar channels.

This context does not account for the turn-around in Norington's own attitude to George. Clearly supportive of her in 1996 in the wake of Cavalcade to Canberra,

[13] Anne Summers is a well-known Australian feminist, journalist and author. She was present on-stage as a guest at Jennie George's election. Her opinion article might thus be read by some as a 'biased' contribution to the debate and by others as a long overdue corrective to the misogyny evident in certain other press reports. It also indicates that Norington's attitude to George was not typical of all at the *SMH* at this time.

whilst researching his biography, he turns into her harshest critic and, indeed, leads the case against her. The degree of vitriol evident within these reports reads as something personal, something greater than annoyance at discovering she had sought to keep her CPA membership from scrutiny. The biography was not 'official' and whilst she had not authorised it she did cooperate to a significant degree. The doggedness with which Norington pursued George, his former friend, raises questions about whether he felt his research had been shown up as flawed, or whether he felt he had been 'taken for a ride' (or used) by George? Or perhaps the palpable hostility has its roots in some more personal relationship and feeling of betrayal?

The reports speculating about George's retirement constructs her in particular way. They emphasise her femininity, both in relation to her status as an exceptional politician, and in relation to her handling of the issue. Some reports emphasise the fact that this *female* ACTU president is being treated differently to the previous male incumbents, that the ALP is short of women, whilst having plenty of mediocre men. Others emphasise her different behaviour, reporting her as breaking conventions by publicly demanding special consideration. Some reports suggest that George was a threat to the incumbent politicians being 'too smart' (presumably meaning too smart to be kept down by the masculine games and tricks of exclusion) and having already demonstrated that she was tough enough to succeed in a man's world (Humphries 1999, *Sydney Morning Herald*; Williams 1999, *Sun Herald*). Sue Williams's *Sun Herald* article also suggests that, as a woman unafraid to speak her mind and faithful to her principles, she could make life uncomfortable for some of the men. However, other reporters, and most notably Norington, painted her as a 'loose cannon', and as that hugely threatening figure—the excessive woman who cannot be contained within male rules and structures; a petulant virago 'fermenting' or going bad through barely contained agitation (Norington 1999d). In his 28 August report, 'Closed shop' Norington pushes this 'expert' view, the biographer's insight into her 'real' character by 'revealing' her as unstable and dangerous despite a façade of reason.

> As political manoeuvres go, George seemed to be making a benign appeal to party people who pull the strings. She was putting herself at their mercy.
> But the men who run the Left in NSW … know better. They know that beneath George's pleasant, acquiescent façade is one very ambitious, capable and highly articulate woman who is already privately fuming, indeed fermenting because the ALP cannot go out of its way to reward her many years of contribution to the labour movement by finding her the parliamentary position she wants.
> They know, based on George's highly emotional temperament, that her agitation is likely to become a crescendo.
>
> (Norington 1999d: 42)

Norington had planted seeds of disquiet in his earlier reports. In 'Closed Shop' he reveals the extent of his animosity towards George and draws an image of a manipulative, unbalanced woman, a picture notably at odds with his descriptions of her in his earlier press profiles and his biography (Norington 1996e, 1998). George's femininity and her feminism became the central part of the story. Norington casts her as the monstrous feminine, a woman with insatiable (and unreasonable) demands whose anger is awesome. He then questions her motivations arguing that despite impressive past professional credentials " Why should taxpayers fund a pension for someone in career twilight whose contribution may be limited, even half-hearted ...? … But Parliament is not meant to be a retirement village" (Norington 1999d). Again, he turns the knife with the insult of age.

Jennie George was only *fifty-two*. She had a distinguished industrial career spanning almost two decades in public life and had built up significant leadership expertise. The suggestion that she was in her "career twilight" was unreasonable.[14] Norington does not accept as legitimate her explanation that she wants to be closer to her elderly mother, instead he presents this desire to the reader as self-serving. The repeated use of terms signifying dramatic emotional states such as 'furious', 'loose cannon', 'fuming', fermenting' and 'crescendo' of 'agitation', in several of the reports, especially those by Norington, construct George through increasingly

[14] Jennie George commented on media criticism of her preference for a seat in the Legislative Council in an interview with Geraldine Doogue on ABC Radio National (Doogue 2000). George said:

> some commentators put the worst construction on it—that I was seeking some idle resting place … The reason I talked about the Upper House was because I appreciate that having been away from NSW for a long time, if I just walk over the top of people into a seat then you build up the resentment of rank and file people who've worked on the ground … some of [whom] have political aspirations … I don't want to be the representative of people who don't want me to represent them.

marked, but contradictory, feminine categories of otherness. She is emotional, unstable, unreliable, aging/past her use by date and dangerous.

The reporting in August 1999 of the way the NSW ALP handled George's intention to move from the ACTU to a NSW Legislative Council seat maintained the emerging discourse on George. It constructed a contest between George and the ALP hierarchy. Several reporters actively took sides in the struggle. It became cast as a contest between one women and the men as well as between the way the ALP had looked after its old (male) ACTU presidents and how it was now going to manage the transition of its first female ACTU president in the new era of affirmative action rules. These aspects added to the overall sense that the *Sydney Morning Herald* campaign to discredit George had worked provoking several other papers/reporters across the nation to join an attack on George in the closing stages of her term as ACTU president.

Bill Kelty's Retirement—A Major News Story and a Lever to Shift Jennie George.

During the second half of 1999 there was substantial news coverage of ACTU secretary Bill Kelty's surprise decision to retire. Kelty had been secretary of the ACTU for sixteen years since 1983. He was considered to be a highly skilled industrial strategist, although he was not regarded as a good public communicator, and had the respect of both right and left-wing factions of the union movement. His major opposition was based in the right-wing NSW Trades and Labor Council. Kelty's decision to retire was unexpected in that there had been no rumours circulating in the press previously anticipating his announcement. His successor seemed likely to be Greg Combet, an ACTU assistant secretary, originally from the Maritime Union of Australia, who had played a very prominent role in the resolution of the Maritime Dispute in 1998. There was significant press coverage of Kelty's decision to retire and several extended profiles of both him and his successor, Greg Combet, being published during the period July to October 1999.[15]

[15] Brad Norington's (1999c) 'Mr Invisible casts a long shadow' was the first to be published in July 1999. Other reports include Grattan (1999), Long (1999), Norington (1999h) and Robinson (1999a, 1999b).

Over seventy reports covering Kelty's resignation were published across eight capital city daily news papers and two national daily newspapers.[16] His decision received far more extensive press coverage than George's resignation. It is likely that it was regarded as more newsworthy partly because it fulfilled the news value of an *unexpected* event, partly due to the *length* of Kelty's incumbency, sixteen years as ACTU secretary, and also partly because of the degree of influence he held over industrial strategy. Kelty's decision to retire prompted increased speculation that George would also leave early to allow a 'new broom' to take over although some others argued that it was more important that she stay to provide stability during the transition period.

Kelty's retirement provided an opportunity for both the media and George's opponents to increase pressure on George to retire. Some reports created an atmosphere of 'crisis' in the ACTU, with one, probably two, 'old-guard' leaders departing what would the Council do next? They also transferred this crisis onto Jennie George, questioning where she would go next and whether her parliamentary ambitions would be thwarted. The *Sydney Morning Herald* was the most notable participant in this practice. They published seven reports, including one editorial, about George's possible early retirement and hopes for a parliamentary career between 25 August and 29 August 1999. Media reporting of Kelty's retirement upstaged speculation about George's. When George did announce her retirement in December it received far less coverage than Kelty's, perhaps because it was, now, less newsworthy. It was expected, it had already been predicted, and its implications had already been canvassed.

The focus on Kelty and his successor Greg Combet could also be seen as a strategy in the 'war' that some sections of the press were waging with Jennie George. The attention paid to these two men upstaged discussion over Jennie George's future and her achievements. Furthermore, it opened up space for speculation over who would succeed her and calls for her to leave early so that a 'new broom' team could take over with a 'clean slate' (Norington 1999c). However, there were also reports of unionists arguing that she should stay until at least mid-2000 to provide stability

[16] Identified through a search of Lexis-Nexis.

during the transition period (Robinson & Humphries 1999; Robinson & Norington 1999; both in the *Sydney Morning Herald*). Both scenarios cast George's future as one of controversy and uncertainty.

The reporting of speculation over Jennie George's future in August 1999 created a scenario in which her future was at the centre of a struggle in which both the press and male powerbrokers in the ALP were key players. Multiple issues were at stake including her political and career futures, her credibility and the ALP's perceived commitment to increasing its representation of women in winnable parliamentary seats and its (gendered) practices of nepotism and 'jobs for the boys'. The press reports constructed it variously as a significant test of ALP policies and as potential hypocrisy in treating former (male) union officials better than women (*Sydney Morning Herald* 1999 editorial; Summers 1999) or as a potentially explosive issue of how the ALP would succeed in managing this unrealistic demand from a fading prima-donna leader—past her usefulness date (Norington 1999d). All these reports constructed it as a spectator sport with the assumption that readers would be interested in the winners and losers from the round. The reporting of this power struggle also involved some reporters acting as advocates either for George's pre-selection (Summers 1999) or against it, reporting her activities in ways that diminished her credibility (Norington 1999d).

Conclusion

This chapter canvasses the beginning of the end of Jennie George's career as ACTU president. It demonstrates clearly how one paper (the *Sydney Morning Herald*) and one reporter (Brad Norington) were able to mount a successful campaign to bring down Jennie George through innuendo, crisis construction, and manipulation of news. A key tactic in this deadly game of blood lust was ongoing deployment of (contradictory) signifiers of femininity-as-deviance. Scripts of feminine deviance patterned within the film noir genre, turned the final weeks of George's presidency into a spectator sport as some newspapers across the country joined the campaign to discredit George.

The distinguishing feature of the August 1999 attacks was the way in which femininity itself became a central issue in media reporting. Many of the criticisms of George employed figures of femininity within the narrative as a means to diminish George's authority, credibility and agency. In several instances this combined with compositional elements such as page layout, choice of image or photo and headlines or captions to create a picture of devious femininity and unfit leadership. This pattern was extended in the reports of her resignation some months later and will be taken up in the next chapter.

10 Act 2: Forced Resignation

Introduction: Jennie George Announces her Retirement

On 9 December Jennie George made a 'surprise' announcement that she would be retiring from the ACTU presidency on 8 March 2000, International Women's Day (IWD). She also announced that she would be taking her accumulated leave immediately. In the period leading up to George's resignation many press reports speculated about her early departure thus contributing to a sense of instability associated with her leadership.[1] Once her likely successor had been identified (Australian Education Union president, and friend, Sharan Burrow), the press moved into reporting the transition phase, guessing when the resignation would take place and, in practice, hastening its occurrence. On the morning of George's announcement, the Melbourne *Age* published a full-page feature on Burrow headlined 'The new face of our unions'. Once again Brad Norington finds a spin on the events to discredit George, arguing she quit because of she could not bear to share the limelight with another woman, thus deploying the theme of women's jealousy and rivalry towards other women (Norington 1999e, 1999f).

George's retirement was announced at an ACTU council meeting. It was reported on ABC radio current affairs program 'PM' that evening and in eight reports in seven newspapers the following day (one each in the *Advertiser*, *Age*, *Australian*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Financial Review* and *Herald Sun* and in two reports in the *Sydney Morning Herald*). Ten additional reports were published over subsequent days as five short articles in four capital city newspapers (*Herald Sun* two reports, *Courier Mail*, *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *West Australian*), two medium length reports in the *Australian* and *Age* newspapers, and three feature length articles (*Herald Sun*, *Financial Review* and *Sydney Morning Herald*). In early January 2000 the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the Melbourne *Age* both published another feature length article about George's presidency by its industrial editor Brad Norington (Norington 2000a, 2000c). In all, twenty reports about Jennie George's retirement from the ACTU were published in ten Australian newspapers between 10 December 1999

[1] As discussed in Chapters Six and Seven there was widespread press speculation in the aftermath of the Cavalcade to Canberra that she would leave the ACTU early or be forced to resign.

and 5 January 2000. Five of these (twenty percent) were in the *Sydney Morning Herald.*

Her announcement was reported in most papers as a minor news item. However, Norington's paper, the *Sydney Morning Herald,* reported it as a major news story, significant for the decision itself and the manner in which it was announced. The *Sydney Morning Herald* published four reports between the 10 December and 13 December 1999, two of which were on the day after the decision was announced and one of which was a long feature article published the following day (Norington 1999f). The two reports published on 10 December emphasise the dramatic manner of George's announcement over the decision itself. These two adjacent reports are printed on page five of the paper with a photograph between them. The headlines read 'George quits in hurry' (Norington 1999e) and 'Back-stage exit for union diva' (Jopson 1999, Figure 10.1). The second of these headlines is worthy of special comment. The *Sydney Morning Herald* presented the story as a drama, in which their own reporter and photographer played central roles, and in which Jennie George was the temperamental diva trying to avoid the public. This construction of the story extended the theatrical metaphors they had adopted previously in their speculation about George's retirement and likewise extends the implications that George was excessively emotional. The *Sydney Morning Herald* upstages her through sensationalised reporting of the *manner* and *timing* of her announcement, emphasising this aspect (and George's alleged attempt to evade the Herald's own reporter and photographer) over George's actual decision to retire from the ACTU presidency. This is evident both in the headlines and the inclusion of a photograph which features a hand coming towards the camera as though to block out its view of George. The photograph conveys the idea of a capricious and volatile pop star departing a concert or airport or an accused person trying to avoid scrutiny outside the courthouse. For some readers it could also highlight the press's relentless pursuit of their quarry.

Melbourne's *Herald Sun* also reported it as a major news story although the tone of its reports differs significantly from that of the *Sydney Morning Herald.* The *Herald Sun* published one brief report the day after Jennie George announced her retirement

George quits in a hurry

By BRAD NORINGTON
Industrial Editor

The ACTU president, Ms Jennie George, abruptly resigned yesterday, stunning an audience of union officials and leaving her political future under a cloud.

The resignation of Ms George, the first woman to lead the Australia's union movement, is believed to have been triggered by pressure from supporters of her anointed successor, Ms Sharan Burrow, to push her out of the job she has held since March 1996.

Ms George is understood to have been upset, believing that some of Ms Burrow's supporters have undermined her by applying pressure for her to quit sooner than her chosen timetable of June next year.

Rather than face ongoing tensions, Ms George resigned yesterday so that Ms Burrow, the president of the Australian Education Union, could take over.

Ms George said last night that she was secure in her position, no-one pushed her out and she "made the call" to resign. But she added: "Obviously there has been speculation about who will succeed me, which is not good for a person. I didn't want to go diminished in stature."

Ms George's resignation makes a clean sweep at the top of the ACTU following the already announced exit of secretary Mr Bill Kelty.

Ms George, 52, made an emotional farewell speech at the close of a three-day ACTU council meeting at Parramatta's Parkroyal Hotel.

She received a standing ovation but her departure turned into a fracas when she tried to avoid media attention by leaving from a hotel back door.

A *Herald* photographer was assaulted outside when he was confronted by two women who tried to stop him taking Ms George's picture.

Ms George will cease union duties immediately, taking several months' leave before her formal resignation takes effect on March 8, a month after Mr Kelty's.

Her future remains under a cloud because leaders of her ALP Left faction have been unable to fulfil her request for a seat in the NSW Upper House.

Labor insiders said that Ms George's sudden resignation was "extraordinary" and could damage her chances of securing a seat because she would lose the prestige of her office to barter for what she wanted.

Ms George had previously given faction leaders until next July to find her a seat by saying that she intended to remain president until shortly before the ACTU's congress that month.

She now quits without a job lined up.

Ms George told council delegates that her resignation was "best for the organisation".

"It's nothing personal — it's just a judgment call I made."

According to Ms George, she wanted to leave on a "high" after her role in leading an ACTU campaign against a second batch of Federal Government workplace legislation, which was rejected last week in the Senate.

There is almost no doubt that Ms George will be succeeded by Ms Burrow, who was anointed two months ago as the next ACTU president by her left-wing faction.

At the time, Ms George expressed publicly that she was annoyed that the agreement to secure Ms Burrow's succession was done in her absence, in secret, while she was at work in her job.

Back-stage exit for a union diva



"Too emotional" . . . Jennie George gets a helping hand in dodging photographers yesterday. Photograph by PETER RAE

By DEBRA JOPSON

Jennie George's exit yesterday from the bosom of the trade union movement was an unceremonious dash through the busy kitchen of the Parkroyal Parramatta, down the back stairs, past a truck being loaded with clattering empty bottles and into a back lane.

After a lifetime in the public eye, the day she chose to announce she was quitting early as president of the ACTU she suddenly became media shy.

For about 10 minutes after her surprise farewell speech at the end of a three-day union talkfest, she had lingered in the conference room, smoking, surrounded by about 10 women admirers to whom she said: "I couldn't have done it all without you."

Outside, after making a false turn into a car park, she dashed back down the lane, at first refusing to comment, saying she was too emotional. Then she relented.

"It's my call. I wanted to go out on a high. This is the culmination of the second wave [of the Federal Government's Workplace Relations legislation being rejected by the Senate]. I'm leaving the organisation in good shape."

Where was she going? "I don't know." Did she plan a good rest? "Yes." Would she pose for a photo? No, she said. She felt too emotional. There would be a press conference on March 8.

The kitchen capers, after a teary farewell speech to her union colleagues, were designed to evade her biographer, Brad Norington, and *Herald* photographer Peter Rae, who were waiting outside the meeting room front doors.

Rae attempted to photograph her — a public figure in a public place who had just made big news. Ms George kept dodging him. A minder put her hand up to stop the picture being taken. Back at the hotel entrance, a second woman grabbed at Rae's camera.

Inside the foyer, Ms George agreed to a photograph with ACTU secretary Mr Greg Combet, who apologised to the photographer and journalists over the fracas.

The low-key announcement — made to about 80 remaining attendees, slouching over scrunched lolly wrappers and doodles — was now high-key. The unionists were feeling emotional, Mr Combet said.

After the announcement, some had seemed stunned and others tired, as Ms George thanked her staff and her own union, the NSW Teachers Federation. The sweetest moment for her, she said, was cutting back Mr Reith's industry reforms.

Some women cried. On stage, while Mr Combet hailed her as a great campaigner, Ms George dabbed at her nose with a tissue.

Then she dabbed make-up on the tear stains and stepped down to hug women supporters. The men left the circle of sisters to a few moments of grieving.

PM ban on gay couple rights

By MARGO KINGSTON

The Prime Minister has vetoed any move to end tax and superannuation discrimination against same-sex couples.

He threatened to abandon legislation before the Senate if the Democrats persisted with a demand that the Government prepare a list of discriminatory laws.

Mr Howard's decision reinforces the Government's refusal to countenance any extension of minority rights during its term, and ends gay hopes of progress on discrimination under the Coalition.

One Nation Senator Len Harris defied election campaign statements by Ms Pauline Hanson and Mr David Oldfield supporting superannuation benefits to same-sex partners. Senator Harris said: "God's words clearly say to us that the acts of lesbianism and homosexuality are an abomination."

Democrats Senator Andrew Bartlett had earlier moved an amendment to a superannuation bill which ordered the Government to provide details of legislative changes required to ensure equal treatment of same-sex couples under tax and superannuation law.

The Government adjourned debate, and sought advice from Mr Howard, who refused to countenance the plan.

The Democrats withdrew it after the Government threatened to withdraw the entire legislation. When Senator Bartlett yesterday sought to move a motion ordering the list, Senator Boswell accused the Democrats of being "hell bent on trying to promote this type of lifestyle".

The Sydney Morning Herald
TOMORROW



The quiet campus
How Australia's academics are being gagged

GOOD WEEKEND



Red faces
Where to now for NASA and space exploration?

NEWS REVIEW



What makes a great warehouse conversion

DOMAIN

ICON
What's on – online

Figure 10.1 Sydney Morning Herald, 10/12/99, p.5 detail.

and another three on 14 December, one of these was allocated a full page spread. These reports are discussed in more detail below. The reporting across various newspapers of her actual retirement on 8 March 2000 is discussed in the next, and final, chapter 'The final bow'.

George's Symbolic Status as 'First Woman President'—Her Only Legacy?

The reports of George's December 1999 decision to resign and her actual departure in March 2000 vary considerably in themes and tone. As they are generally much shorter than the reports of her election, they do not cover as much terrain. George's retirement was far less newsworthy than her election. It was anticipated, one might even say rushed, by the press. Having been discredited by (much of) the press, her status as the 'first woman' was no longer newsworthy beyond a fleeting nostalgia, as reporters that chose to celebrate her career turn more elegiac. A number of reports, both at the time of her December announcement and her March resignation, mentioned her 'first woman' status as a significant feature of her identity. Several reports included angles or descriptors that aligned with the earlier news frames of first woman president as 'agent of change', 'outsider' and/or 'breakthrough for all women' (Norris 1997a, 1997b). Some included an emphasis on George's femininity as her most distinguishing feature and implied that her gender was either the most notable thing about her, or indeed, the *only* factor that contributed distinction to her presidency. Two reports (Norington 1999e, Jopson 1999) could be read as implying that specifically feminine qualities/weaknesses such as her emotional vulnerability and 'thin-skin' were responsible for the failings of her presidency and her decision to leave early. This implication is also present in Michael Bachelard's report 'Chalk and cheese' about the differences between Jennie George and Sharan Burrow, her likely successor (Bachelard 1999b, *Australian*). Several reports rated her contribution to feminising the union movement as one of her greatest achievements (for example Field 1999b, *Financial Review*; Malpeli 2000, *West Australian*; Mitchell G. 1999, *Herald Sun*). None, of course, comment on the role of the press and their contributing responsibility to her 'rise' and 'fall'.

The 'Burrow Factor'—Reporting Jennie George's Sudden Decision to Retire Early.

On the morning of the same day that Jennie George announced her early retirement a feature article was published in the Melbourne *Age* profiling Sharan Burrow and naming her as George's likely successor (Robinson P. 1999c). Burrow had been widely reported as George's likely successor in the earlier speculation over her future and discussion of Bill Kelty's retirement. In George's resignation speech she indicated that it was important that there be generational change in the ACTU and that she favoured a female replacement. She also indicated that she was retiring early because she had achieved a major win in overturning the Coalition Government's 'second wave' industrial legislation. Burrow was the president of the Australian Education Union, and the two women had been long-term friends and colleagues. Jennie George actively supported Burrow as her successor. Both were feminists and members of the left. It is deeply ironic given their close working and personal relationship that some reports constructed them as rivals or as exemplifying opposing forms of femininity, aberrant in the case of George, acceptable in the case of Burrow.

This decision was reported in various ways by different papers. Some reported it as a minor news item (*Daily Telegraph* 1999b). Others saw it as significant and printed several stories reporting not only George's decision, but the manner in which it was announced, possible reasons behind it, and further speculation about George's likely successor. As discussed above, two reports (Norington 1999e and Jopson 1999 published in *Sydney Morning Herald* on 10 December) focussed on the *manner* of George's resignation and her interaction with the *Herald's* reporter and photographer present on the day over the significance of the resignation itself.

Sydney Morning Herald published two more reports relating to her resignation and potential future parliamentary career over the forthcoming days, both by Norington (Norington 1999f, 1999g). One of these was a short item concerned with the likely difficulties George would have in trying to obtain a parliamentary seat in her arena of choice, the NSW Legislative Council. The other was a feature length article 'Exit stage left' the headline perpetuating, even celebrating, the dramatic framing adopted

towards George by the *Sydney Morning Herald* some months earlier (Norington 1999f). The *Sydney Morning Herald* also published another feature length article by Norington three weeks later in early January 2000 about Jennie George and her career (Norington 2000a, this is discussed below). Again the Sydney broadsheet dominates the reporting of George and Norington is positioned as an authority on her actions, achievements and their wider implications, through the paper's publication of his extended reports. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reports are notable once again for their use of stage metaphors to produce a sense of drama and increased news value. Again they have the added effect of working to promote Norington's biography of George and to inflate it and his relevance over hers.

The three other significant reports were published in other newspapers about George's resignation. were: 'Women pull rank and file' a feature by Nina Field in the *Financial Review*, explored the ways the trade union movement was responding to the challenges posed by new growth areas of work such as call centres and information technology (Field 1999b). Michael Bachelard's (1999b) report in the *Australian* 'Chalk and cheese' compared the personal qualities and leadership styles of Jennie George to those of her likely successor, Sharan Burrow. Glenn Mitchell's Melbourne *Herald Sun* report 'The crest of a wave', paid tribute to George's achievements (Mitchell 1999). These reports can be viewed as illustrative of a struggle over meanings of George's presidency. Much of the press reporting can be seen as a strategy to dissipate interest in her relevance and agency by turning the spotlight on her likely successor.

George's Resignation Highlights Challenges Remaining in the Feminised Workplace

George's choice of International Women's Day for her final day in office can be viewed as a strategy to raise the problems still confronting women workers and the challenges remaining for unions in this regard. It is also possible to speculate that it was an attempt to ensure her departure occurred amongst 'friends' and to manage the reporting of her final days. If it was a strategy to promote discussion of the issues confronting women workers in contemporary workplaces it can be seen to have paid off in the *Financial Review's* reporting of her departure. Nina Field's 21

December report 'Women pull rank and file', differs from the other reports published. Field's report is a long, thoughtful article which discusses the changing nature of work and the associated necessity for the ACTU to change its policies and practices in relation to organising and recruiting workers. In particular, Field examines the increasingly significant information technology and services sectors and the challenges they present for recruiting members. This workforce is largely young, mobile, over fifty percent of it is female and the great majority of the jobs are casual.

The report also discusses the feminisation of the union movement in the context of the feminisation of the workforce. Field attributes much of the change in union approaches to recruiting and representing women members, to George's prominence as ACTU president and the policies the Council, under her leadership, implemented to increase the representation of women officials in leadership positions. However, her report indicates that the challenges are still significant and that much more needs to be done.

The article shares with the majority of other reports the framing of George as the 'breakthrough for all women' and the reference to her presidency in terms of its specific significance to women within the trade union movement. However, unlike the others, it is mainly focussed on the policy issues in reporting the ACTU's capacity to deal with such future developments rather than discussing George's personal achievements or overall performance within her presidency. The report is particularly interesting in that it is the only one published in the mainstream media that canvasses these issues of gendered work and appropriate union policies in any depth and that accords them recognition as newsworthy. It provides an important example of the way in which the press can—and does rarely—engage with gender issues as newsworthy serious, public issues that deserve of thoughtful journalistic and political assessment.

Rival Femininities: Measuring George Against Her Successor

Unlike Field's article, Michael Bachelard's (1999b) report 'Chalk and cheese another ex-teacher, but new page for the ACTU' scrutinises the personal life of the

ACTU president and her successor. It also speculates upon the differences between the two women's careers in terms of their differing femininities. Published on page four of the national *Australian* newspaper the day after Jennie George announced her resignation (11 December), it was the second of two reports to appear in the *Australian* (Figure 10.2).[2] The headline, 'Chalk and cheese' situates the comparison of the two women in a domestic context as well as using a weak pun to establish their common (and devalued) teaching background. One can only speculate on whether, if they had been two male leaders with similar backgrounds, the metaphor for their comparision would have been a more action-oriented one than this stale and demeaning cliché? This report demonstrates the way figures of femininity are deployed by sections of the press as a key strategy to discredit women in public life.

'Chalk and cheese' compares Jennie George and her likely successor, Sharan Burrow, in terms of their careers, personal styles, political affiliations and purported strengths and weaknesses. The report constructs the two women as binary opposites despite their common professional background. In this binary relationship Burrow is the positive, rational, masculine half of the pair whereas George is the emotional, negative, feminine half. The report praises Burrow's abilities as a means to attack George as lacking essential skills, flexibility and ability. Bachelard draws on quotes from both named and unnamed sources to paint a picture of Jennie George as over-sensitive to criticism, lacking in self-confidence and having 'hardline' left politics. The reference to hardline politics and her former membership of the Communist Party underscores the damage done by Norington's earlier reports. It represents her as positioned in the past and too inflexible to adjust and respond to the new work environment. The allegations that she is oversensitive to criticism and lacking in self-confidence link to traditional myths about women as being emotional, irrational, needy of approval and insufficiently tough to be good leaders. The report compares George unfavourably to Sharan Burrow, her likely successor, the fallen versus the rising stars. Burrows is represented as a more strategic negotiator, with an impressive grasp of detail. Both of these qualities align closely with traditionally masculine qualities, attributes that mark her as potentially newsworthy.

[2] The first was a short report of the announcement and the likelihood that the NSW Government would give George a job heading up an inquiry into working hours (Bachelard 1999a).

Chalk and cheese: another ex-teacher, but new page for ACTU



Entirely different: Sharan Burrow

MICHAEL BACHELARD
Workplace relations writer

NOT for the first time, a former teacher is about to step up to the plate as the ACTU president, facing high expectations and a formidable task.

Sharan Burrow, 43, NSW bush teacher and union boss, has been anointed to succeed Jenny George, 52, as the public face of the peak union body when Ms George resigns on March 8 next year.

Both grew up in NSW; Ms Burrow in outback Warren and Ms George in Sydney.

Both were senior officials for the left-wing NSW Teachers Federation — Ms George president and Ms Burrow senior vice-president. Both then moved on to the ACTU to confront a hostile federal Government and declining union membership.

But for all their similarities, Ms Burrow and Ms George are entirely different.

Former NSW Teachers Federation deputy secretary Ray Cavanagh worked with both women at the same time in the 1980s and early 1990s.

While Ms George's politics were hardline — she was once a member of the Communist Party — Ms Burrow was "a bit more flexible than Jennie", he said.

"She doesn't see people in black and white terms — she will find anyone who can help her," he said.

During the 1980s, Ms George was radical enough to hate the idea of enterprise bargaining and the Accord but Ms Burrow accepted them and worked within them.

There is also likely to be a change in campaigning style under Ms Burrow.

Among Ms George's achievements as teachers federation president was her ability to organise 65,000 teachers to march in protest against the Greiner government's education changes. That was not Ms Burrow's way, Mr Cavanagh said.

"Sharan is about what you do after that — how you mop it up into a set of compromises on both sides."

And while Ms George is said by colleagues to have an element of "fragility", a lack of self-confidence, or oversensitivity to criticism, Ms Burrow will not be so afflicted.

A stable relationship with husband Peter, two grown children, and a powerful sense of her self-worth will buffer her against the doubts that assailed Ms George, they say.

Over and again, when asked about Ms Burrow, her fellow unionists say she is a networker, a negotiator who has a blunt and no-nonsense style backed by an extraordinary grasp of detail.

Mr Cavanagh said she "knows an extraordinary number of people and uses them constantly in terms of searching for answers to things".

ACTU secretary elect Greg Combet clearly appreciated her skills — she is one of his hand-picked group of union leaders who travelled overseas with him recently, helped draft the strategy document unions@work, and who will act as senior advisers during his term as secretary.

The next ACTU president is also clearly enamoured of the political game, knowing how to exploit pressure points.

Former Democrat leader Cheryl Kernot has said Ms Burrow made a big contribution to negotiations on the Government's first round of industrial relations changes in 1996 — cementing a friendship between the two women that had begun over education issues.

Figure 10.2 'Bacheland (1999), 'Chalk and cheese: another ex-teacher, but new page for ACTU', Australian, 11/12/99, p.4, detail.

The report refers to the two women's personal lives and relationships to again promote Burrow over George. Her "stable relationship with husband Peter" and her proven motherhood skills (she has two adult children) are said to contribute to "a powerful sense of self-worth that will buffer her against the doubts that assailed Ms George" (Bachelard 1999b).[3] In other words, Burrow can be successful in masculine terms, acceptable to the public *because* she conforms to traditional femininity, in that she is evidently heterosexual, is married and a mother. As a fulfilled woman her emotions are contained within her conventional domestic relationships and are not likely to disrupt national affairs the way George's are implied to be at risk of doing. In this way factors such as George's personality, single and childless (with dependent mother) state are turned into factors that imply her to be lacking in stability, rationality, and maturity. The report's structure places the two portraits in a competitive relationship inviting the reader to choose between them. It does not acknowledge any positive achievement by George or any lasting contribution from her presidency despite her status as one of the most popular, respected and successful female political leaders in Australian history. This popularity was demonstrated through her election in December 1997 (one and a half years after the Cavalcade to Canberra fiasco) as one (of only 100) of Australia's 'living national treasures' in a public poll conducted by the National Trust. By 2000, as is discussed below, she was no longer newsworthy, in press terms she was 'dead', a person without a profile.

The report, in constructing a rivalry between Jennie George and Sharan Burrow, also builds upon an old convention of placing women in competition with each other. Rather than being allies or friends, women are seen as competing for attention and acclaim. Although reports of George's election show women bound in solidarity, celebrating together, at the end of her presidency the press reports represent union women as divided, competing rivals. Representing the relationship as being one between rivals is more newsworthy, and more in keeping with press manipulation of her demise, than the alternative depiction of it as one of support or mentoring.

[3] Kath Kenny has commented on the competing femininities displayed in Bachelard's report in the NSW Trades and Labor Council's electronic newspaper *Workers Online*, 24/2/00 (Kenny 2000).

Rather than a representation of George's achievements or contribution as ACTU president balanced with a discussion of possible weakness (the usual convention for reporting outgoing leaders), this report presents an image of George's failings as a woman and as ACTU president. It employs a number of devices in a relentless attack on George to diminish her achievements and stature, and to promote the less-experienced Burrow as the superior woman and leader.

Unusually, the report omits to comment upon Jennie George having been the first woman leader of the ACTU. Nor does it refer to the significant feminisation of union leadership in the time since George's election. The matter of two women being sequential leaders of a major political organisation is now taken for granted. Once the 'first woman' frame is rendered inoperative, the election of Burrow as a woman leader is not presented as newsworthy in these terms. The whole report constructs and maintains a comparison between preferred stereotypical and aberrant or deviant versions of femininity.

Celebrating George's Achievements

Glenn Mitchell's report 'The crest of a wave' provides a stark contrast to Bachelard's report (Mitchell G. 1999, Figure 10.3). Published in the News Limited Melbourne tabloid *Herald Sun* a few days after George announced her resignation, it presents her career in the form of a success story. Celebratory in tone, it conforms in several ways to the conventions of press tributes to successful departing leaders. In so doing, it also conforms to a set of particularly Australian conventions—those of reporting 'battler succeeds despite the odds' success stories. The celebratory character of Mitchell's report highlights the intensity of the attacks on George from other sections of the press.

The full-page feature is comprised of multiple elements. It includes a pull-quote from George in large type above the headline. It reads: "Who'd have thought a girl brought up in housing commission flats in Surry Hills in Sydney would finish up here?" Immediately beneath is the headline in bold type which reads 'The crest of a wave'. Sitting below this is an introductory paragraph printed in a font several sizes larger than the body of the text, it reads "Jennie George has no doubts about her greatest achievement as ACTU president, writes Glenn Mitchell". These glowing

Figure 10.3 Herald Sun, 14/12/99, p. 14.

"Who'd have thought a girl brought up in housing commission flats in Surry Hills in Sydney would finish up here?"

The crest of a wave

Jennie George has no doubts about her greatest achievement as ACTU president, writes GLENN MITCHELL

WHEN Jennie George sits back and reflects on her career she will have no doubt what was her greatest achievement in public life.

"My defeat of Peter Reith's second wave of industrial reforms," she told a news conference called yesterday to explain why she had quit as ACTU president three months early.

"The defeat of the second wave, the most repressive and punitive legislation we have seen, will always live in my memory as probably the high point of my personal achievement as ACTU president."

In taking credit for her career pinnacle, Ms George, 52, was duly deferential to the role others had played in the devastating blow to Mr Reith's political and legislative ambitions — particularly the small ACTU working group that had co-ordinated the union movement's anti-Reith campaign.

"Peter Reith started out trying to destroy us and we ended up destroying him," Ms George said.

An air of self-congratulation hung in the air throughout the conference, with Ms George beaming about her role in defeating the industrial reforms.

But missing conspicuously from her list of those to be thanked were the Australian Democrats, something not lost on Democrats Senator Andrew Murray, who played the key role in rolling Mr Reith's reforms.

"She strikes me as sounding like a politician already," said Senator Murray, a confessed George admirer.

(Ms George plans to run for the NSW Parliament.)

"It is right to say that Jennie and the ACTU provided important information in assisting us to make our decision, but to claim sole credit is a bit of an overstatement," Senator Murray said.

"We never got sufficient recognition for our role in ameliorating the first wave of reforms and, of course, our role in this latest second wave appears to be being overlooked again."

Doubts about who quelled the Reith reforms aside, Ms George has been a trailblazer for women in the trade union movement.

As she pointed out yesterday, she was the first woman elected to the ACTU executive in 1983, the first female ACTU assistant secretary and, in 1996, became the central union body's first female president.

"Who'd have thought a welfare officer from the NSW Teachers Federation would finish up here?" she said.

"And who'd have thought a girl brought up in housing commission flats in Surry Hills in Sydney would finish up here?"

Ms George's trade union career began in 1973 when she joined the teachers' federation as a welfare officer.

Her pugnacious and upfront style — "my ability to bang on the door of institutions" — was quickly recognised as a major asset in the vicious deal-making that makes and breaks union careers.

So was her ability as a public spokeswoman.

As ACTU secretary-elect Greg Combet said yesterday, one of Ms George's greatest strengths for the ACTU was her public relations ability.

"Jennie has been a great president of the ACTU not just because she knows the issues but can articulate those issues to ordinary working men and women," he said.

"Her performance in the wharf dispute was outstanding."

Ms George would long be remembered as the public face of the trade union movement for her leadership role in the war on the wharves, Mr Combet said.

NATIONAL Union of Workers national secretary Greg Sword said Ms George had led the ACTU at a time of great difficulty.

"She did it well and we've come through a very difficult time with unity and I think that's a great achievement by Jennie," he said.

While Ms George was regarded as an inclusive leader, she was also intolerant of anything she vaguely perceived as harming workers' rights.

In a 1992 meeting with former Kennett government industrial relations minister Phil Gude, Ms George was openly hostile as Mr Gude tried to explain the merits of the now-defunct Employee Relations Act. "With this legislation, you're saying it is a case of beggars can't be choosers," she shot at Mr Gude.

Ms George's hardline stance has earned her unprecedented popularity with rank-and-file union members. But she has failed to arrest the decline in trade union membership.

Yesterday she tried to put a positive spin on the ACTU's future, arguing it was a major achievement that fewer women than men were leaving unions.

She feels particular pride in increased involvement by women.

Now, Ms George said, more than half the staff and almost as much of the executive are women.

Her anointed successor, Australian Education Union president Sharan Burrow, will continue that tradition.

In a tearful presentation yesterday, she told Ms George: "You are a heroine to the women of the trade union movement."



Saying it with flowers: Jennie George at her farewell yesterday. Picture: CAMERON L'ESTRANGE



Party time: Jennie George dances with former Labor minister David White last year.



Docks dispute: with Webb Dock protesters at an MUA march last year.

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Geelong: 164 Moorabool St.
Hampton: 428 Hampton St.
Hawthorn: 101 Riversdale Rd.
Mt. Eliza: 86 Mt. Eliza Way.
Mt Waverley 71 Hamilton Place.
North Balwyn: 73 Doncaster Rd.
Nth Essendon: 103 Mt Alexander Rd.
All telephone enquiries: 9555 7055.

fella hamilton

remarks are challenged, however, by other elements that emphasise her femininity. To the right-hand side is a medium sized, head and shoulders photograph of George with a very large bunch of flowers in the foreground, almost appearing to reach out to the viewer. The caption is "Saying it with flowers: Jennie George at her farewell yesterday". Two other photographs sit at the bottom of the page. One is of George in a short skirt, dancing close to a man playing guitar, identified as a former Labor Minister. The other is of her in front of a crowd of smiling demonstrators during the maritime dispute. The captions to these read: "Party time: Jennie George dances with former Labor Minister David White last year" and "Docks dispute: with Webb Dock protesters at a MUA march last year". Also included on the same page is an advertisement for Fella Hamilton women's fashions in the lower right corner. It features a smiling, well-groomed woman in a softly draping pant-suit. The heading to the advertisement is "Find the most festive of fashions at Fella Hamilton". The first paragraph of the article is printed one font size larger than the remainder of article so that it stands out on the page. It reads: "When Jennie George sits back and reflects on her career she will have no doubt what was her greatest achievement in public life".

The page layout works to direct the report to women readers and to emphasise George's femininity. The reference to her as a 'girl' in the top pull-quote, the large bunch of flowers in the foreground of the main photo that extends towards the centre of the page, the photo of her dancing in a mini-skirt with one knee raised close to a man, all emphasise her gender difference—and inferiority in terms of public life. So too does the photo of her as the sole woman in the midst of a crowd of smiling (approving) male waterfront workers. The demure femininity of the woman in the Fella Hamilton advertisement also reminds viewers of traditional femininity. In this context, near so many reminders of George's womanliness, the advertisement's femininity is likely to suggest the softer side to George. This is particularly so given the article's focus on her commitment to women workers. Furthermore, the viewer's gaze moves from George surrounded by burly unionists in the demonstration directly across to the smiling fashion model in the ad and George's own gaze appears to be smiling approvingly up at her. The advertisement could also be read contradictorily by some readers as emphasising George's difference from

conventional femininity. The photograph of her dancing in a mini-skirt highlights her sexuality and together with that of her in the waterfront demonstration suggests a more active and assertive gender identity than that promoted by the Fella Hamilton advertisement.

The full-page feature could pass for a profile on a 'women's page' or in a women's magazine. The page layout frames the story as one of a woman's celebration. The flowers, the photo of George dancing with its caption "Party time", the smiling faces in the photograph of the Maritime Dispute, and the advertisement's reference to festive fashions all work to privilege the celebratory meanings in the story. They also conform to the entertainment qualities and personal angles valued by tabloid journalism.

The headline 'Crest of a wave' suggests George is at the peak of her career whilst at the same time being a pun on the second wave industrial legislation, although this is clearly not a celebratory matter. Together with the introductory paragraph, the report (primarily) invites readers to identify with George as a successful leader. It uses the term 'greatest achievement' twice in its introduction. Once as the large font lead to the story and again in the first sentence of the article. There are seven direct quotes from George included in the report and several more comments from her are paraphrased. Her question: "Who'd have thought a girl brought up in housing commission flats in Surry Hills would finish up here?" is used as a pull-quote that runs across the top of the page above the headline. In this way she is allowed to speak for herself and define her own achievements in her own terms as working-class achievements. This is a privilege accorded usually only to powerful or famous subjects or in cases where the paper itself identifies with, and is in turn inviting readers' to identify with, that particular view. It is particularly surprising that the News Limited owned *Herald Sun*, usually regarded as relatively anti-union, would provide such an account of George's presidency of the ACTU. The quote, however, can also be seen to fit the conventions of tabloid journalism in reporting the personal views and experiences of celebrities and public figures over the wider implications of their policies and actions.

George's presidency is established as a success within this report, albeit within a set of layout and reporting conventions that resemble a women's page. Her greatest achievement is said to be the defeat of "Peter Reith's second wave of industrial reforms". She is quoted as saying it is "probably the high point of my personal achievement as ACTU president" She is also labelled as a "trailblazer for women in the union movement" in a clear instance of the application of the 'breakthrough for all women' news frame. The claim is, however, challenged by Australian Democrat Senator Andrew Murray, who argues the Democrats' role in defeating the workplace relations Bill has been overlooked.[4] He is however, reported as being an admirer of Jennie George's so his comments moderate, but need not be read as a rebuttal of, her achievements.

George's femininity is also coded within the reporting conventions of 'exceptional woman' and 'woman as outsider'. The report does this through the inclusion of quotes from George about her background growing up in housing commission flats and her start as a union welfare officer. Here the reader is being invited to identify with George as a battler who has 'made good' in the quintessential Australian egalitarian story of transformation much loved by tabloid journalism. Unlike some other reports that link the working-class battler identity to the hard working migrant identity and to George's upbringing as the daughter of a single-mother, Glenn Mitchell employs a simplified construction of the multiple challenges she faced. However, the placing of the quote from George about her background across the top of the page makes it clear that this is a key narrative frame employed in the presentation of her story. Indeed, George was frequently reported as an exceptional woman and successful battler at the time of her election and the reappearance of these frames neatly bookends her story. It is interesting that the migrant element to the story was downplayed at both times.

Another traditionally feminine attribute, that of being a good communicator, is raised within the report. She is referred to as the public face of the trade union movement, both common stereotypes of women. She is, however, also represented

[4] The Australian Democrats held the balance of power in the Australian Senate along with Greens and Independent senators. Their opposition to this second phase of workplace relations legislation was again necessary for it to be rejected.

as tough with a "pugnacious and upfront style" that is able to withstand the "vicious deal-making" of the union movement (Mitchell 1999). Whilst on the one hand this descriptor may call up stereotypes of unions as bullies and thugs, it also works to counter the common suggestion that women leaders are not tough enough to succeed in the male environments of trade unionism and politics (Cockburn 1991; Gray 1993). These images work in contrast to the traditional signifiers of femininity elsewhere on the page and emphasise the instability of her position, its implicit contradictions and her own outsider and exceptional status.

The report concludes with another reference to George's achievements in increasing union representation of women. It refers to George's "particular pride" in this achievement thus reinforcing and associating her firmly with the breakthrough for all women frame. However, at the same time this emphasis works to limit her relevance from the general (all workers) to the special interest (women workers). It uses a quote from another successful woman, Australian Education Union president, and likely successor to George, Sharan Burrow—with an appreciative, direct gaze—to wrap up the tribute. She is quoted as saying "You are a heroine to the women of the trade union movement" (Mitchell 1999).

The structure of the report therefore presents George as leaving at a highpoint in a largely successful presidency. The problems the report identifies, such as the continuing decline in membership, are mentioned only briefly. Significant emphasis is given to Jennie George's achievements for women, her popularity with rank and file members and her determined campaign against anti-worker legislation. The use of Burrow's quote to conclude the report pays tribute to her as the popular figurehead of the union movement, the iconic 'union maid' referred to in relation to Penberthy's report of her nomination as candidate for president in 1995 (Penberthy 1995, see Chapter Five). Burrow's acclaim for her as a heroine precludes any implication of rivalry between the two women such as Bachelard's report attempted to establish (Bachelard 1999b). Overall, the report follows conventions of celebratory reporting of successful women (especially at the conclusion of their careers) in women's magazines or women's pages of newspapers, and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the tributes to departing political and business leaders in the

news pages. The preferred readings of this report are sympathetic to George and invite the reader to identify mythically with her as a 'battler' who has defied the disadvantages of a poor migrant upbringing to succeed in this land of opportunity, the 'lucky' country. In this way, potential anxieties raised by her identity as a unionist (and former communist) might be assuaged by her conformity to the liberal script of individual success and transcendence of obstacles through hard work.

Whilst Mitchell's report in the *Herald Sun* downplays the theme of rivalry between the two women, it reappears, centrally, in another report by Brad Norington. This, the fourth extended report of George's resignation published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* the day after her announcement, focuses on Norington's explanation that rivalry and jealously is the reason for George's early departure. In 'Exit stage left' he argues that it was a combination of "George's increasing rather naïve, accumulating hurt over the attention that has been given to her anointed successor, Sharan Burrow" (Norington 1999f, Figure 10.4) and the profile of Burrow as "the new face of our unions", published in the *Age* two days earlier, that triggered George's early resignation.[5] In view of the extensive attention Norington has devoted to George's career it is significant that he should appear to be mounting an attack on her credentials at such a crucial moment.

Herald Readers Offered Intimate Insights: The Biographer's Privileged 'Knowledge' of the Subject.

The headline 'Exit stage left' continues the metaphors of the end of a dramatic performance already established in the *Sydney Morning Herald's* reporting (Figure 10.4). It suggests the curtain is about to fall on her career. The 'left' direction in the headline also reminds readers of her politics and her previous membership of the CPA.[6] Accompanying the report is a medium black and white photo of George looking sombre. She is turned to the left of the frame looking over her shoulder as though she is reviewing the past, or watching her back. Her hands are clasped in

[5] The profile article Norington refers to is Paul Robinson's report 'New face of our unions' *Age*, 9/12/1999, p17.

[6] The headline also is a play on the title of an autobiography of a well-known Australian woman playwright and former communist Oriel Grey, *Exit Left*. Some alert readers would make this conection and it would reinforce the association of George with the Communist Party.

Exit stage left

In the tough political game of musical chairs for a party seat, retired ACTU president Jennie George may just miss out after failing to follow the rules, writes **Brad Norington.**

FOR a woman with almost 30 years' experience in the rough and tumble of union politics, it didn't show on Thursday when Jennie George abruptly resigned as president of the ACTU.

She broke the cardinal rule for someone who still harbours political ambitions and hopes to use the prestige of office to exert leverage on her party for a coveted position: never resign with nowhere to go.

More than a year ago George made it clear to powerbrokers in her left-wing faction of the ALP that she wanted them to find her a seat in the Upper House of the NSW Parliament.

So far, none was available, and the faction bosses needed all the time left to find one before George's originally announced exit in July next year.

For as long as she remained ACTU president, and the closer it came to George's anticipated, very public, farewell at the ACTU's July congress, the more excruciating the pressure was destined to become for Labor's men to act.

If they could not find a seat for George — the first woman to lead Australia's union movement — they would have faced the embarrassment of glaring double standards. There would be a history stretching back two decades of Labor finding safe seats for male predecessors Bob Hawke, Simon Crean and Martin Ferguson, but nothing for George.

George's political ambitions may yet be realised. But her "currency", as Labor insiders put it, is suddenly gone. After quitting on Thursday, George intends to cease union duties and vanish from the public eye until a press conference she plans to hold on March 8, the day her resignation formally takes effect.

No longer an active ACTU president, George has lost her capacity to barter. She has departed the scene.

At worst for George, Labor's faction men could say in several months that they tried and could not find anything that satisfied her narrow objective of a seat in the sleepy NSW Legislative Council, then wash their hands of her.

In a last show of good faith, they could repeat their recent suggestions to George that she broaden her horizon by seeking a lower house seat in the State or Federal parliaments.

Why George quit this week so suddenly has perplexed many of those around her. They knew that she was tired of the union grind after many years and had already expressed a desire to leave early. But why go now in such a low-key, backdoor exit?

The answer lies in George's rather naive, accumulating hurt over the attention that has been given to her anointed successor, Sharan Burrow, since George originally said 12 months ago that she wanted to leave her post early.

George supports Burrow as her successor and the two are longtime friends. Burrow is president of the Australian Education Union and was a junior union official to George when she led the NSW Teachers Federation in the late 1980s.

The friendship between George and Burrow is likely to endure — but George nevertheless has felt under pressure in recent months as Burrow prepares to take over.

The essence of George's hurt is that she has been still holding down the presidency, officially in charge of the ACTU's campaign against the Federal Government's workplace legislation, while the union movement has fallen in line behind her successor. George felt undermined, believing that she was coming under unstated pressure to make way for Burrow earlier than her timetabled exit of July.

An early sign of this ill-feeling was George's public outburst two months ago when she expressed annoyance about a "secret" deal in Melbourne at a union faction meeting held in George's absence to give Burrow formal endorsement.

This meeting was attended by the new ACTU secretary-elect, Greg Combet, and senior left-wing figures. George was in Sydney. Perhaps the final straw was a profile of Burrow that appeared in Thursday's *Age* newspaper in Melbourne trumpeting her as "the new face of our unions".

George was adamant in an interview with the *Herald* that her sudden decision to quit was her own and no-one pushed her. This is correct. But George also revealed the inner workings of her mind that triggered her decision.

"Obviously there has been speculation about who will succeed me, which is not good for a person," she said. "I didn't want to go diminished in stature."

It may have pained George but it is a political reality that once someone in a prime position in public life flags a decision to go, it is inevitable that attention will turn to a successor. And once that is decided, arrangements in an organisation such as the ACTU will be made for a transition. It appears, however, that George's ego could not cope with this.



While the going is good . . . "I didn't want to go diminished in stature," said Jennie George on her early departure as ACTU head.
Photograph by LOUISE KENNERLEY

George claims, rightly, that she is leaving on a high note for her after the workplace legislation promoted by her nemesis, Peter Reith, was defeated in the Senate this month. George can take credit for leading the ACTU's campaign — although it was not a single-handed effort. The victory also may not be as sweet as George pretends — unions still face many obstacles ahead as their membership slide continues and Reith prepares more legislation that may yet gain support from Australian Democrat senators.

From the start, the odds were stacked against George's ACTU presidency succeeding. She took over at a time of serious union decline as Labor lost office after 13 years in power. She spent all of her term in a frustrating battle against a Coalition Government with an anti-union agenda, dogged by political circumstance and union blunders such as the 1996 Canberra riot.

Where George will go now is not clear. There is speculation that she may be able to rely on interim patronage from the Carr Government to put her in charge of a mooted public inquiry into labour hire agencies. It is not her area of expertise. And the political concern for Carr is why taxpayers' money should be used to fund an ACTU president who quit earlier than planned because she was dissatisfied with her organisation's treatment.

The greatest risk for George is that she could share the same fate as Michael Easson, the former head of the NSW Labor Council, who committed an act of political self-immolation. He demanded a Senate seat and quit in the grandiose hope that it would force the NSW Labor Right to give him what he wanted. Easson now makes a lot of money in the private sector — but the Labor Party deserted him in his quest for a seat.

Brad Norington, the *Herald's* industrial editor, is the author of the biography Jennie George (Allen & Unwin).

FNL SYDWRESMH

Figure 10.4 Norington (1999 (), . Exit stage left', Sydney Morning Herald, 11/12/99, p.40, detail.

front of her as though in prayer. Behind her is a banner or sign and although only a fragment of the text is visible the general message could read that 'the writing is on the wall' for her. To the right of the photograph, in the top corner of the article the caption reads: "While the going is good … 'I didn't want to go diminished in stature,' said Jennie George on her early departure as ACTU head". This caption is ironic in context since the diminution in stature had been largely effected through the pages of this very newspaper.

The introductory paragraph in large type refers to politics as a 'game' and accuses George of failing to follow its rules. The first paragraph of the article continues this theme arguing George behaved impulsively and unstrategically (read unprofessionally) by resigning suddenly. Her behaviour is cast as impulsive, irrational, emotional and self-destructive. These qualities are commonly presented as quintessentially feminine behaviour and the diametric opposite of the rational masculine characteristics necessary for success in politics and the public sphere. Referring to her behaviour in such terms represents George as breaking the rules, placing her outside the masculine norm and therefore as being undeserving of male support.

The report 'Exit stage left', presents as an analysis of the reasons behind George's unexpected decision to leave early. In this regard, Norington's status as George's biographer implicitly promises readers an insider's view of her decisions and reasoning processes. The report, however, functions to *once again* attack George's credibility as a leader and her political judgement. It has some key similarities with his April 1999 reports on her membership of the CPA. The report constructs Norington as *the* authority on George, through his status as her biographer. Only he can interpret her irrational actions for the *Herald's* readers. His insights are more important than George's own words, indeed only one direct quote from George is used in the article and that is taken from an earlier interview. Possibly after her treatment at his hands George has refused to be interviewed by Norington, but the lack of her own voice is not allowed to get in the way of a good story.

Norington's authority as George's biographer, his expert status, is built-up within the article. It is a significant factor in considering the construction of meaning within this report. In naming the author as not only as "the *Herald's* industrial editor" but also as an established authority on the subject as he is "the author of the biography *Jennie George* (Allen and Unwin)", the paper attempts to establish Norington's report as a more authoritative assessment of George's presidency than any other, and readers are invited to buy his biography to gain greater insights into "the inner workings of her mind" (Norington 1999f). The feature, therefore, serves several functions. Firstly, it serves the function of a news report providing specialised knowledge to an interested audience of citizens who are concerned about, and knowledgeable, at least to some degree, of the workings of Australian political parties. Secondly, it provides inside information for an audience of citizens interested in the progress of the first woman leader of a major Australian political organisation. Thirdly, it appeals to certain readers' presumed love of gossip and pop psychology by promising to solve the mystery of George's resignation through the author's insight into the "inner workings of her mind" in the manner of tabloid and women's magazine celebrity profiles. Fourthly, and yet again, it works as a promotion for the author's book. It does this by offering a glimpse into (what is suggested to be) the troubled psychological profile of Australia's first woman union leader and promising more intriguing insights into her psyche and her complex political situation should the audience buy and read the author's biography. All these functions can be filled more successfully if the report succeeds in convincing the audience of Brad Norington's special knowledge, the unusualness and complexity of the scenario and the importance of Jennie George's difference from the normal (male) ACTU president and parliamentary candidate.

George's failure to behave as expected, her "fail[ure] to follow the rules" can be seen as troubling the normal state of affairs, even as a threat to the well-established traditions of ALP pre-selection. It also provides possible justification for the ALP hierarchy's failure to provide her with a parliamentary seat. The article suggests that George's transgression needs to be punished in case other women get the idea that they too can act outside of the system to get their own way. Norington's report presents George's behaviour as just such a transgression of rules. It also administers

some of the punishment in its attempted demolition of her credibility and authority by revealing her to be as not so much a threat as a mere hysterical woman. As in his earlier reports it again follows some of the traditions of film noir in its positioning of her as the woman who has failed to follow the rules, and himself as the knowing detective who reveals her secrets and brings her to justice.

Norington uses his intimate knowledge to supposedly reveal George's interior emotional state. He contends that George felt slighted at the amount of attention being given to her likely successor Sharan Burrow whilst George, herself, continued to be responsible for the ACTU's major campaign against the Government's proposed harsh changes to industrial relations legislation (Norington 1999f). He argues that "George's ego could not cope with this". Norington's report builds a picture of George as thin-skinned, "naïve", overly-emotional, and irrational. It stresses her emotionality through the repetition of the words "hurt", and "pained", and the reference to George's ego being unable to cope with the attention her friend (whose candidacy she supported) was receiving. The lead paragraphs imply that Jennie George is insufficiently tough (and/or excessively feminine) to gain an ALP seat, the usual reward for retiring ACTU presidents, and furthermore her sudden resignation was a failure to follow the rules of parliamentary preselection. The first three paragraphs read:

> In the tough political game of musical chairs for a party seat, retired ACTU president Jennie George may just miss out after failing to follow the rules, writes Brad Norington.
> For a woman with almost 30 years' experience in the rough and tumble of union politics, it didn't show on Thursday when Jennie George abruptly resigned as president of the ACTU.
> She broke the cardinal rule for someone who still harbours political ambitions and hopes to use the prestige of office to exert leverage on her party for a coveted position: never resign with nowhere to go.

This opening sets the context for an article that represents George as too irrational and emotional to succeed in her objective of gaining preselection for the NSW Upper House or indeed to competently represent constituents. The reference to "the game" could be seen to infantilise George as a player. It implies she is acting outside the conventions governing normal (that is masculine) political behaviour. In noting that she first made clear to party and factional powerbrokers her preferred destination over a year earlier it suggests her lack of success to this stage could be

tied to her incapacity to conform to the expected (masculine) norms of behaviour and that she is perhaps *too* feminine to be acceptable. Norington raises the possibility that George will not be found an appropriate seat and that the party will then be (seen as) guilty of double standards, accommodating its male union leaders but not its first female union president. In raising this possibility and in his reference to her breaking the rule "never resign with nowhere to go", Norington seems almost gleeful at her 'mistake' and at her potential exclusion from parliament. This tone is similar to that he used in his August report 'Closed shop' when he reported the brewing difficulties in finding George an appropriate seat (Norington 1999d). As in his April reports there is a sense here of a contest between the reporter and his object (Norington 1999a, 1999b). The report uses several strategies to discredit her including attacks on her personal qualities—her emotional vulnerability—and comments that discredit her professional judgement and achievements.

This report draws attention to George's gender, her difference from conventional union leaders, and the differential treatment she is receiving from the ALP. In addition it also links back to the introductory paragraphs and refers forwards to subsequent discussion of her emotional response to attention given to Sharan Burrow, in this way setting up an intertextual representational logic that associates George's personal qualities and gender with irrational and unstrategic decisions, overly emotional behaviour and lack of success. The report's subsequent assessment of George's presidency represents it as unsuccessful. It does this through the device of suggesting that it was inevitable that she would fail due to the combination of declining numbers and the hostile Coalition Government. In this way it superficially appears sympathetic with George's situation, however, in the context of the article it favours the interpretation that she is a less able, less strategic, less 'tough' and less successful leader than her predecessors and that her term therefore has been a relative failure.

> From the start, the odds were stacked against George's ACTU presidency succeeding. She took over at a time of serious union decline as Labor lost office after 13 years in power. She spent all of her term in a frustrating battle against a Coalition Government with an anti-union agenda, dogged by political circumstance and union blunders such as the 1996 Canberra riot.
>
> (Norington 1999f)

Once again, George is held responsible for the so-called 'riot' that occurred during the Cavalcade to Canberra and her performance as ACTU leader is assessed in relation to that event (and the outbreak of feral masculinity).[7]

'Exit stage left' appears on the lower half of the features page below an article about politicians' pay and the remuneration tribunal which determines their worth. Headlined 'The paymasters' and accompanied by three photos of the men who head the tribunal, the top report represents the male establishment and patriarchy in general. Although this specific branch of the establishment is concerned with politicians pay not that of ordinary workers, the report and photographs metaphorically stand in for the men who are determined to get rid of George and keep her out of Parliament. In terms of layout it visually squeezes Jennie George between three powerful men who determine the pay of the elite, and an advertisement for Volkswagen cars, that runs across the bottom of the page, titled 'The winning trifecta'. Clearly the winner is *not* Jennie George but is instead the male 'trifecta'. Instead she is being forced out of her position as the workers' advocate early, having run foul both of the establishment and some key members of the male ALP hierarchy for 'failing to follow the rules'. She is potentially to be excluded from this exclusive club of politicians for not 'playing the game', clearly the men's game.

The overall impression created by the elements of the report and its position on the page is that George's time has passed and she has brought her downfall upon herself by her inability to conform and act within the conventions of parliamentary politics. The page layout also conveys the impression that the male powerbrokers have won in their endeavours to keep control of the institution. It could also be read as equating Norington himself as the winner in his personal crusade against George. It

[7] The only other print news reports to raise the failure of Cavalcade to Canberra as a key event in George's presidency are also by Norington (Norington 2000a, 2000c). Geraldine Doogue also questioned George about this in her ABC Radio National 'Life Matters' interview (Doogue 2000). Doogue described the 'riots' as "frightening and she asked George if that was "the worst time in your life at the ACTU" and if she regretted "the way you handled that, the kind of leadership you showed then?" However, although Doogue framed the management of the public relations fallout as George's responsibility, she did discuss the issue in the context of an extended interview (over half an hour) that canvassed the pressures and challenges women experience as leaders, how they deal with them, and how they obtain support during the hard times.

also makes more obvious the fact that the *Sydney Morning Herald* is out to get George.

Brad Norington published four feature articles about George's resignation and her presidency in the lead-up to her retirement on 8 March 2000 (Norington 1999d, 1999f, 2000a, 2000c) and one soon after in which he reported on the strategies being used by the ALP and George herself to find her a suitable parliamentary seat (Norington 2000b). Throughout these reports there is the sense of the reporter's pursuit of George, his personal crusade to 'bring her down'. They build the picture of a highly personalised battle between the reporter and the ACTU president and could therefore be regarded as shameful self-promotion in contravention of the ethics of journalistic reportage. This picture is confirmed by his January 2000 reports 'Hard labour for a union trailblazer' and 'Her luckless legacy' (2000a, 2000b).

A Fallen Star Who Failed to Deliver her Early Promise

'Hard labour for a trailblazer' was the second feature report by Brad Norington published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* following George's announcement of her resignation (Norington 2000a, Figure 10.5). It was published on 5 January 2000. On the same day an identical report titled 'Her luckless legacy' was published in the Fairfax daily *Age* newspaper (Norington 2000c, Figure 10.6). Norington's pursuit of George now extended into Melbourne. The analysis will focus on the *Sydney Morning Herald* version of the report. Its title plays out his now well-established themes. 'Hard labour' is a pun referring to the punishment meted out to dissidents and enemies of the communist state and cultural revolution as well as the difficulties she is experiencing with the ALP and labour movement. It again refers to George's communist party background. The black and white illustration by Rocco Fazzari that accompanies the report depicts Jennie George wrapped in a shroud with a falling star behind her. Her head is significantly enlarged in possibly another image of the phallic woman. She appears old and is enveloped in a shroud that merges with the landscape. Her gaze is unfocussed and vapid, the right-hand lens of her glasses appears to have a spider-web spun across it indicating she has not moved for a very long time. The image could suggest Jennie George has burnt herself out in the union

Figure 10.5 Sydney Morning Herald, 5/1/00 p.15.

In the future, death may be a thing of the past

William Safire

One day we could be saying 'happy 200th birthday grandma – here's your ticket to Mars'.

OF ALL the instincts in animals, the strongest is the will to survive. In the human animal, that inborn defence is sometimes overcome by the maternal instinct, by love of country or comrades in battle, or by an illness like depression. But in most of us, nothing makes the weak strong or the fearful brave as much as our bodies' innate drive to stay alive.

Because of that survival instinct, in the millennium to come a curious question will occupy the minds of our descendants. It seems almost nutty to ask it today, but tomorrow's question will be: Why die?

One sober-sided school of scientific thought holds that *Homo sapiens* sapiens, our species now celebrating its 100th millennium, is born with an inner clock. That genetic clock directs our cells not only to grow but to age and decay. It is set to run no more than 120 or 130 years.

Few of us live to that full span because of illness, accident or war. But the clear trend is toward filling up more of that span: in the past century alone, life expectancy has increased dramatically in most parts of the world. Now add the ingredients of our uselessness: conservative scepticism say that in the coming century cures will be found for the leading killers – heart disease, cancer and stroke – and genetically influenced diseases will be engineered out of existence.

With the major killers gone, and with organ transplants or prosthetic innards replacing worn-out human parts, more people will be pushing up against that presumed clock. Centenarians will be common. Now take the leap: What if the hypothesis of the clock-watchers is mistaken? As the lengthening of life in the 20th century showed us, a life span of "three score and ten" is not the most reliable prediction in the Bible. Where is it written in our genes that a signal will direct our bodies to close up shop at 120?

I put that question to the great Johns Hopkins neuroscientist Dr Guy McKhann. He and his wife, Professor Marilyn Albert, the new head of the Harvard Mahoney Neuroscience Institute in Boston, are completing a book about the untapped potential of the aging brain. (They are "experts on aging", never call them "aging experts".)

"Maybe you're asking the wrong question," says McKhann. "Assume there is some finite span of time set by an internal clock, as studies of other species suggest. Then the real question becomes: Can we reset the clock?" That's what all the recent excitement among scientists over stem cells is about. If the next-to-last year of the second millennium is remembered for anything, it will be for the discovery of the human body's ability to regenerate itself.

These stem cells – nondifferentiated globs of cells that divide randomly and blossom into nerve or muscle or brain cells – are being shown to be a source of replacement of dead or dying cells. We never thought that to be possible. These wild card cells may be found not just in embryos but in adult bodies, and could, in effect, reset the clock – time and again, doubling and redoubling the life span.

"Some organs, like the liver, will be relatively easy to regenerate," says McKhann. "The brain is harder, but we should be able to replace parts of the brain afflicted with diseases, as well as to improve short- and long-term memory in the outgoing brain."

If the instinct for survival remains paramount, most of the geezers of the next few hundred years will want to stick around. At first, that seems troubling; as the Ira Gershwin lyric observed:

"Methuselah lived 900 years.
But who calls that livin'
when no gal'll give in
to no man what's 900 years?"

For future people, doddering will no longer be an option. Throw out those second-millennium images of codgers in wheelchairs staring at the wall. The Gramps of a century or so from now will be swivelling on the dance floor with his replacement hips and fresh lungs and newly enlivened brain and pocketful of potency pills.

Granted, as mortality recedes and babies keep coming, it could get a little crowded here. After the population of earth reaches 30 billion, what then? Solution: Start shopping the spry old folks out on a mission to colonise the solar system. "Happy 200th birthday, Grandma – here's your ticket to Mars, and say hello to your parents out there."

This calendar-induced speculation is not directed at those of us today who will probably keel over even before our genetic clocks run out.

But for those readers of a distant tomorrow who will flip back through the millenniums to access *The New York Times* archive, one will say: "You know, this fellow was incredibly prescient."

And another will respond, with all human scepticism: "Sure, he was right – but do you really want to live forever?"

The New York Times

Boris Yeltsin: a nuisance who stayed too long

Bob Ellis

He has not done as much wilful harm as Stalin, but 'Tsar' Boris has turned a brave, romantic, patriotic and brilliant people into a den of squabbling thieves.

BORIS Yeltsin will soon be shown by history as worse than a stumbling, drunken blowhard, worse than a horn-fisted mangler of immortal opportunities, worse than a club-footed Machiavelli and public nuisance who stayed too long, worse than an amiable buffoon. He was not that amiable. Worse than a lethal fool.

For what he interrupted when he stood up swaying on his famous tank, and a few days later bullying the frayed and traumatised Gorbachev (just back from his kidnapping) into unjust and thankless oblivion, was the only process that could have steered the fractious, plaintive Soviet peoples into the orderly embrace of other nations.

This was its cautious, gradual corralling into the dull and kindly traditions of European social democracy, of the German, Dutch and Swedish kind. This was where it was heading under Gorbachev's weary, passionate guidance. This was where it should have gone.

I lived for short patches of time in the Soviet Union in 1988, 1989 and 1990. And it was OK. Everybody had a job, everybody had a roof, and an income equivalent with that of a kindergarten teacher in Murwillumbah.

Everybody had (for the only five years of their history) complete freedom of speech. Fearless investigative reporters each night grilled on television cowering ministers.

The parks, the public transport, the circuses, operas, ballets, live theatres were the best in the world. The streets were safe. There were no beggars anywhere, though many street hawkers.

The divorce and abortion rates, on the other hand, were abominable. The accommodation was cramped and mostly insufferable. The cuisine dreary. Alcoholism was a national plague.

Education an international triumph. Many, many wives worked part-time as hookers. The black economy was everywhere.

Half the available currency was forged.

Bureaucrats were on the take. Corruption was deep in the system. It was, in short, like a lot of other countries, if in different proportions. It had good and bad. People felt frustrated, especially the men, but they ate, made love, threw parties. They had a life.

Then Yeltsin managed his flat-footed coup (the kidnappers tried to get him too, but couldn't discover which early-opener he was in) and levels of calamity still unadmitted ensued.

Free enterprise was declared overnight, and global economics, just like that. People lost their jobs, their flats, their sense of self-worth.

For the first time since Tsarist times, families slept in the railway stations, begged in the snow.

Inflation soared to 1,000 per cent. Life savings were needed to buy a week's groceries. Government departments were sold off cheap to criminals, gangsters, forgers – the new elites. Gunfire in the streets between new competing mafiosi scared off tourists.

The Bolshoi Ballet began to starve. The Moscow Circus was downsized, forced endlessly to tour. America was pleased with all this. For Yeltsin, the former communist apparatchik, was anti-communist now – flagrantly capitalist in fact – so had to be sustained.

When his legally constituted parliament defied him, he besieged it with machine guns and mortars, burned it down, killed more than 100 of its duly elected members. Although Russia's highest court declared his actions illegal, he was applauded as a masculine reformist, and the duly elected corpses in the burned parliament as "hardliners".

They weren't; they were Gorbachevites. They wanted slower rates of transition, and they were right; and they were dead.

Gorbachev stood against Yeltsin in the next presidential elections, but Boris, in charge of the airwaves, made sure his face was never seen. Like any Third World dictator, like any Marcos or Suharto, this apostle of democratic freedom called the tune.

He broke up the Soviet Union because it suited him to be head of Russia, deranging forever the economies of Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan and so on. When, however, Chechnya chose to leave Russia – much like East Timor leaving Indonesia – he answered with fire and vengeance, rocket bombings, aerial strikes, street-by-street fighting, killing tens of thousands.

All the while gulping down and wasting billions in foreign aid that quickly went nowhere, as Russia's debt deepened. No-one wants to invest in Russia any more.

Why would they? Many of its employees haven't been paid for three years, and might prove a fractious workforce. Not paid for three years. Think about that.

He sacked three of his cabinets with imperial petulance, and four (I think) of his prime ministers abruptly, overnight. He survived crippling heart attacks and massive alcoholic binges, made an international fool of himself and refused to resign – having devised a Constitution that meant he couldn't be voted out.

His present ploy is to get his mum up as his successor in the next elections and so ensure – like Nixon – he does not go to jail.

What a catastrophe this man has been. Not an unusual kind of Russian of course. Provincial officials for centuries have been like this: rapacious, drunk, self-serving, corrupt, impulsive, cruel, ill and mad. The tragedy is he ran a continent, and ran it into ruin.

His legacy is absolutely predictable. His successor, appalled at the debts he has run up, will repudiate them, and pull out of the world economy, and smaller nations will follow – in Africa, in South America.

There will be depressions, revolutions, and poverty everywhere.

And plagues, and civil wars, and runs on currency, and pogroms, and the rest of it. He has not done as much wilful harm as Stalin, but the harm he has done is great. Worst of all he has turned a brave, romantic, patriotic and brilliant people into a den of squabbling thieves. He has badly bruised if not mortally wounded one of the great artistic and literary cultures with spontaneous vulgarities and cruelties worthy of Idi Amin. He has wrecked that great unwreckable, Russian pride.

May his latter days go hard with him.

Bob Ellis is a Sydney writer and the author, most recently, of *First Abolish the Customer: 202 Reasons Against Economic Rationalism.*

Hard labour for a trailblazer

Brad Norington

Timing is everything, as Jennie George discovered when she became boss of a union movement in decline.



AS MOST successful politicians know, timing is crucial in the ascent to power – and in its exercise. For most of her career as a union official, Jennie George was blessed with good timing.

She was the ambitious young woman best placed to take charge when the tide ran in favour of NSW teachers electing their first woman union leader in the 1980s.

George brought to the job her enthusiasm and charm. But her union was also in the doldrums, crying out for someone, of either gender, to offer inspiration.

Then along came Terry Metherell, the eccentric, extremely unpopular minister for education. He was a gift, the ultimate bogyman, the answer to George's prayers, as she attempted to generate public sympathy for her union's campaign against the Greiner Government plan to radically change the State's school system.

Timing once again was on George's side when she made her run to become the first woman ACTU president in the 1990s.

The consensus of male union elders was that the next ACTU president should be female, but another woman, Anna Booth, was the favoured choice of the man with the power to make it happen – the ACTU secretary, Bill Kelty. Booth, however, decided to change direction and quit the union movement.

Just as George, too, toyed with leaving, fate intervened. The incumbent ACTU president, Martin Ferguson, changed his mind about staying when a prime seat in Federal Parliament became available. Suddenly an opening was created for George, well-positioned by Kelty, to take Ferguson's place.

That is when George's luck deserted her. She became the ACTU president at the wrong time of the political cycle, when Labor was thrown out of office after 13 years. She had the misfortune of being the Carmen Lawrence and Joan Kirner of union history – the woman to whom the boys turned when things went bad.

George announced her resignation last month in a low-key setting and left by a back door. It could be a metaphor for her four years in the ACTU presidency, which began with promise but petered out.

For her loyal union supporters, for her network of women friends, for many low paid women (and men) who needed a voice, George will remain an icon, a champion of the cause of unionism and of basic human decency.

But a cool-headed assessment of her presidency has to be that George does not leave a great legacy behind her, apart from having been the first woman to hold the position.

The ultimate failure of George's ACTU presidency is not her fault – her chief problem was poor timing because her fortunes were linked to those of the trade union movement.

Her predecessors, Simon Crean and Martin Ferguson, had to cope with a decline in union membership – but the slide had reached crisis proportions by the time George took office and it became clear none of the remedies Kelty had put in place were working.

At least Crean and Ferguson had the luxury of a friendly Federal Labor government in office throughout their presidencies. George officially took office in March 1996, just as the Coalition came to power with an extremely hostile attitude towards unions. It was a shocking adjustment for George and the entire ACTU crew as government patronage – in the form of access to ministers and funding of union projects – suddenly ceased. Legislation was quickly enacted to remove union rights that had been taken for granted. George's role, as the ACTU's official spokesperson, became that of perpetual opposition for a union movement reluctant to lose "hard-won gains".

George was never a person of ideas; her strength was always that of an articulate campaigner, a talent that Kelty, as the ACTU's brains trust and most influential figure, believed she could bring to the job in adverse circumstances. Nevertheless, she often sounded too harsh, repeatedly cast as a reactive, unyielding figure, defending old-fashioned values.

ACTU initiatives promoted by George fell flat. The ACTU's "living wage" for the low paid fell far short of its objective. A plan to put union "shopfronts" in shopping centres never happened. Neither did a plan to set up a "people's airline" with cheap fares for unionists. A plan to offer cut-price "associate" union membership to workers faint-hearted about full membership was forgotten. So was a commitment to increase total net union membership by 200,000 by mid-1997.

Boosting union membership was always the primary task of George as ACTU president. It was certainly beyond the capacity of any single human being to turn the tide. But George made several efforts at putting a gloss on the real picture with public declarations, based on anecdotal evidence from union leaders at the conference table, that the decline had "bottomed out". When official statistics kept showing the contrary, she finally stopped talk of target numbers. "Job security" became her new catchcry.

The low point for George was undoubtedly the anti-government protest rally in Canberra, wrecked when rioters stormed Parliament House. George's presidency never fully recovered. While she could not be held personally responsible for thuggish behaviour, she was handed a dud brief, arguing from a morally weak union position. She was not assisted by Kelty, who set the union tone from the start by labelling the Canberra protest a "most successful rally", without full knowledge of the facts. He then disappeared from sight, leaving her in the firing line.

When industrial warfare erupted on the waterfront in 1998, it was a fillip to George that sacked unionists were able to walk through the gates and reclaim their jobs – even though almost half lost them in the final settlement. George gave a lot of media interviews and rousing speeches to lift the spirits of the union troops – but she never commanded the battle. Kelty gave this job to his protégé, Greg Combet, as an unofficial test of Combet's acumen. It was confirmation, if one were needed, that the ACTU president, contrary to the days when Bob Hawke ruled the roost, was a frontperson only. A large part of the reason for the ACTU president's declining profile compared with the past is related to the loss of union influence since Labor's 1996 electoral defeat. But over the last year of George's presidency, her profile appears to have slipped almost deliberately. She continued campaigning – but there was the overwhelming sense of an ACTU leadership winding down, fading away.

Over the years George has said that she is not a "token woman", which reveals her hypersensitivity to, among other things, any suggestion that she has not worked hard. Undeniably George has worked hard for what she believes and deserves recognition – but even she would not shy away from the notion that she has represented the wider interests of women by going as far as she has up the union ladder. In the end, this is her greatest contribution as ACTU president. She is a symbol who has paved the way for others.

When her anointed successor, Sharan Burrow, reflects on how she became only the second woman in history to lead Australia's union movement, she may consider what it was like, in 1983, when George joined the all-male ACTU executive. In Bill Kelty's words, "It's much harder when you are 'one-out', fighting alone as she was."

Brad Norington is the *Herald*'s Industrial Editor and author of the biography *Jennie George* (Allen & Unwin) $19.95.

Why we should be wary of the WTO's mantra of globalisation

The World Trade Organisation operates mainly for the benefit of corporations, not people, writes Helen Caldicott.

HENRY Kissinger ruminated recently (*Herald*, December 27) that although globalisation has successfully generated unprecedented wealth for the United States, the "impact on the rest of the world has been more ambiguous".

This is an understatement.

In analysing the failure of the recent World Trade Organisation talks in Seattle, Kissinger, who urged the US to take a more imaginative approach to globalisation, concluded: "The basic challenge for America and for those who believe in free trade is to match economic growth with political imagination. The challenge is to foster an international sense of social responsibility without strangling a highly successful economic system in regulations imposed by international bureaucrats."

Many feel it is already too late. The damage has been done. There are people in Australia who, like me, believe the New World Economic Order operates mainly for the benefit of the corporations, not for the ordinary people of this country, or indeed of any country. All we have to do is look around us – from the demise of Souths to Kerry Packer's data bank of information on every Australian to the SOCOG fiasco to the devastation of our hospital system to the proposed turning of the Australian desert into the world's nuclear waste dump.

Established in 1995, the WTO emerged from the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, an international body founded in 1944 by the world's nations to accelerate global economic development – in itself not a bad thing. Trade then was limited to manufactured goods.

In 1986, at the instigation of the transnational corporations, which were rapidly growing in power, a new round was held in Uruguay whose purpose was to radically reorganise the international economy.

The ensuing negotiations were conducted behind closed doors in secrecy, attended only by representatives from the transnational corporations and the major industrialised nations of Japan, Britain, Europe and the US.

New GATT rules on tariff reductions in goods and services were forged – largely by corporate lawyers for the benefit of their employers. After eight years of transformational negotiations, the WTO became the operating body of GATT. Based in Geneva, it now has full executive authority to implement GATT and more than 20 major new international agreements governing, among other things, agriculture, banking, insurance, data management and financial services.

Some 125 countries (now 134) signed on to the WTO in 1995, even though their citizens were largely unaware their national sovereignty was under threat. What was this radical reorganisation of world trade? For one thing, it now involved more than tariffs. What the corporations were after was a global playing field – without rules and access to unregulated labour, consumer markets, and natural resources without having to operate under the restrictions of national laws. And what the corporations wanted in what they got: their agenda became paramount as national and even state laws relating to environmental protection, human and consumer rights, local culture, social justice issues and even national sovereignty fell before the new hegemony of the WTO. The WTO, however, actively encourages national militarisation.

Globalisation invoked four mantras – "free trade", "deregulation", "privatisation" and "commodification" – the last meaning that even the genetic basis of life itself can be bought and sold.

International and corporate disputes relating to trade are adjudicated by a three-person WTO panel of trade officials and lawyers with little or no expertise in the subject areas they are dealing with – areas such as the environment, patents, labour laws, health care or agriculture. Dispute resolution, which places no economic value upon clean air, water, forests or biodiversity, takes place behind closed doors in absolute secrecy.

Although in this New World Order the economies of many developed countries have ostensibly never looked better, the truth is that the distribution of wealth is dramatically uneven. American CEOs are paid on average 419 times more than their workers, while the gap between the rich and poor in most societies is growing rapidly, including, sadly, in Australia. What is more, of the 100 largest global economies 51 are corporations and only 48 are countries.

The economic rationalist/free trade ethic embodied in the WTO also demands major spending reductions by nations in social programs such as health, education, wage support and support for small business. The effects of these catastrophic policies are cascading through Australian institutions as we can see every day in the news stories about our hospitals and universities. Yet as recent reportage in this paper has revealed, the very governments that are starving our medical and education systems with one hand are doling out massive subsidies to large corporations with the other.

All this is but the tip of the iceberg.

Those who dismiss critics of the WTO as economic Luddites are out of touch with reality, the reality of egalitarianism and a fair go that has until recently been the hallmark of civilised society, especially Australia's.

To participate in this flight from reality by according it our silent assent would be the ultimate folly.

The Seattle demonstrations were a long-overdue wake-up call about the WTO that the Big End of Town would have preferred we did not hear. But we did.

Helen Caldicott is a pediatrician, founding president of Physicians for Social Responsibility and secretary of Our Common Future Party.

Figure 10.6 Norington (2000c), 'Her luckless legacy', Age, 5/1/00, p.13, detail.

Her luckless legacy

Circumstances and timing finally conspired against Jennie George.

By **BRAD NORINGTON**

Picture: DANIEL O'BRIEN



AS MOST successful politicians know, timing is crucial in the ascent to power — and in its exercise. For most of her career as a union official, Jennie George was blessed with good timing.

She was the ambitious young woman best placed to take charge when the tide ran in favor of New South Wales teachers electing their first woman union leader in the 1980s. George brought to the job her enthusiasm and her charm. But her union was also in the doldrums, crying out for someone, of either gender, to offer inspiration.

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Timing, once again, was on George's side when she made her run to become the first woman ACTU president in the 1990s. The consensus of male union elders was that the next ACTU president should be female, but another woman, Anna Booth, was the favored choice of the man with the power to make it happen — the ACTU secretary, Bill Kelty. Booth, however, decided to change direction and quit the union movement.

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Over the years George has said that she is not a "token woman", which reveals her hyper-sensitivity to, among other things, any suggestion that she has not worked hard. Undeniably, George has worked hard for what she believes and she deserves recognition — but even she would not shy away from the notion that she has represented the wider interests of women by going as far as she has up the union ladder. In the end, this is her greatest contribution as ACTU president. She is a symbol who has paved the way for others.

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Brad Norington is The Sydney Morning Herald's industrial editor and author of the biography Jennie George (Allen & Unwin, $19.95). E-mail: opinion@theage.fairfax.com.au

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movement waiting for the ALP to find her a parliamentary seat or that she is a figure belonging to a previous era.

The introductory paragraph reads: 'Timing is everything, as Jennie George discovered when she became boss of a union movement in decline'. It sets up the argument that George has failed in her leadership of the ACTU, as it is (still) in decline. In conjunction with the headline and illustration the article can be seen to suggest her presidency is a burden, that she is burnt out and has no energy left to contribute to public life while also confirming the decline of the union movement in line with the Coalition Government's ideology.

The report employs several rhetorical strategies to assess and criticise George's contribution as president of the ACTU. These include a focus on timing in relation to her achievements in a way that suggests her successes could be due to luck or good timing. The strategy of discussing timing links to the question of fate and whether problems that arose were down to fate or human ineptitude. George's personality and her gender are also strategically used to account for her failure as unequal to the task.

The report uses the issue of timing to further impute George's career, suggesting that some of her previous success might have been due to good *luck* in being in the right place at the right time rather than hard work and talent. This is a new element in Norington's attacks on George's capacity, performance and contribution to public life. This luck then ran out in the timing of her election to the presidency of the ACTU and she was found wanting. Norington observes that George was elected to the ACTU presidency at a bad time in the political cycle—at the time of the election of a Coalition Government that had "an extremely hostile attitude towards unions". Norington argues that the loss of influence, access to Ministers, and the loss of funding for union projects (that eventuated with the loss of the ALP Government) was a huge shock that required significant adjustment. He notes that George's role became that of a perpetual opponent of legislation and initiatives that would remove workers' rights. The report points out that the decline in union membership "had reached crisis proportions by the time George took office". This concurs with the

reports at the time of George's election to the presidency which argued that turning around the decline in union membership and dealing with the likely conservative Government would be the two main challenges she would face (see for example Penberthy 1995; Southorn 1995a). To this point the report could read as though the problems George faced as ACTU president were 'unlucky' and that the limitations in her achievements were largely to do with context and timing rather than her own abilities.

However, Norington goes on to argue that George was a disappointment as ACTU president and achieved little. He claims that her presidency "began with promise but petered out" a claim emphasised by the falling star in the accompanying graphic. He acknowledges that "George will remain an icon" for low paid workers, for her supporters and friends but suggests this is a partisan view rather than a "cool-headed assessment of her presidency" which presumably the author provides. This rational assessment Norington contends "has to be that George does not leave a great legacy behind her, apart from having been the first woman to hold the position". Here the appellation 'first woman' is evacuated of its positive valence to become an empty signifier. The reference to her as an icon builds on the image of the falling star or burning out meteor in the illustration. It also ties into the discussion of timing or 'fate' and sets up a tension between the question of George's failure as being the result of fate or human ineptitude. Norington employs the metaphor of the rising star burning out before it could fulfil its promise in various ways throughout the article. Initially he describes her as "the ambitious young career woman best placed" at the time of her election to the leadership of the NSW Teachers Federation. He later describes her as having been "the Carmen Lawrence and Joan Kirner of union history". This equation of her with these pioneering but defeated state ALP Premiers links George to the reporting convention that associates these two women's failure as being due to the poisoned chalice syndrome: namely that women are only offered such positions in masculine organisations as a desperate measure.[8] George is likewise equated with two women political leaders who have been widely discussed as failures, notable only for their 'first woman' status.

[8] Others might suggest that all three are victims of the 'pedestal effect' whereby journalists amongst others create such high expectations of women leaders that it is inevitable they will be unable to perform to expectations (Else-Mitchell 2000).

Norington builds an argument for George's ineptitude through his characterisation of her as "never a person of ideas". He claims her initiatives "fell flat" and although she was "an articulate campaigner", "she often sounded too harsh, repeatedly cast as a reactive, unyielding figure, defending old-fashioned values" (Norington 2000a, 2000c). Although these criticisms may read as gender neutral to some readers, criticisms of women's voices as sounding 'harsh' or 'shrewish' articulate with undesirable versions of femininity where women are rejected or punished for not speaking in sufficiently feminine a mode. Receiving criticism from a woman is problematic for many men as the stereotypes of the 'school-marm' and the 'battle-axe' bear out. Norington's criticism of George for sounding harsh, rather than describing her defence of workers rights as 'assertive', 'strong', 'tough' or 'determined' evokes undesirable images of femininity and her personality as an unsympathetic or flawed one.

George is also shown to be flawed through reference to a lack of leadership or control over her members in relation to the 'riot' during the Cavalcade to Canberra protest. Norington argues this was the low point from which her "presidency never recovered". Although he acknowledges she was not personally responsible he reminds readers of the so-called "thuggish behaviour" of some unionists and the damage caused, thus calling up the traditional stereotypes of unions and unionists as bullies and thugs that act outside the law and associating George with such behaviour. In this way the report reminds readers of a particularly damaging event associating it with George and, although partially absolving her from blame, it also gives credit to the argument that the damage done to the ACTU's reputation was, in part, the result of her poor leadership. The effect of this is to add union violence and a political debacle to the list of negative occurrences associated with her leadership. The parallel and opposite campaign was the relatively successful management of the Waterfront Dispute in 1998 in which locked out unionists got their jobs back. Norington, however, argues that Jennie George should not be given credit for the successful outcome of this dispute as the union campaign had been directed by Greg Combet with George fulfilling the role of "frontperson only". In this way the report

reads to diminish both her significance to the whole dispute and the value of her specific role.[9]

Throughout, the report discredits George through gendered descriptors of her personality and performance. This includes the question of her public persona as 'harsh' discussed above. The allegations that she is 'over-sensitive' also fit within the stereotypes of femininity. The second to last paragraph of the report notes George's rejection of the term "token woman" in reference to her presidency, this reference works to raise the possibility in readers' minds that this in fact might be all she is. It argues that this rejection is an indication of her "hypersensitivity". The charge that her Achilles heel is her excessive sensitivity positions her as too emotional (that is, *too* feminine) and is one that the same author has raised in several other reports and in his biography.

Norington's final argument is precisely that the sum total of George's contribution is her role as "a symbol who has paved the way for others", who has 'blazed the trail' for other women. He argues her contribution is not distinctive through the quality of her efforts but only through the timing of her being the *first* woman to achieve the position of leader of the ACTU. In this way he reduces George's hard work, skills, and specific contributions to trade unionism and to particular disputes, to the 'tokenistic' role of first woman.

The report appears centrally on the opinion page of the *Sydney Morning Herald* with three other reports surrounding it. The illustration of George in a shroud with a falling start behind her is placed in the very centre of the page. Her demise is reinforced by the placement of other items on the page. From the top the headlines read: 'In the future death may be a thing of the past'; on the right of the page is a report headed 'Boris Yeltsin: a nuisance who stayed too long'. In the centre is Norington's report on George—'Hard labour for a trailblazer'—and across the

[9] Given one of the key ingredients in the success of the trade union campaign, after the legal strategy, was the degree of public support *for* the workers, and opposition to the tactics of the employers and the Government, this assessment could be challenged as certainly devaluing the importance of the role of 'frontperson'. It is also interesting that in his (1998) biography, Norington writes about the *significant contribution* George made to the Waterfront Dispute, particularly through her media work which, he argues, was vital in shaping public opinion against the Government.

bottom of the page is a report 'Why we should be wary of the WTO's mantra of globalisation'. These separate reports create an unusually noisy atmosphere of 'nuisance', 'anxiety', mortality and being 'past it' that contributes intertextually to the meanings associated with Jennie George in the Norington article.

These surrounding reports and headlines could work to both reinforce the article and Norington's authority as an 'expert' on the issue of George and her presidency of the ACTU , however, at the same time, they could be read as destabilising his authority. On the one hand, given the context of the whole page and surrounding headlines, the reader could associate Jennie George with the past, with discredited communist regimes, someone who has stayed around too long, is burnt out and of whom we, the readers, should be wary. On the other hand some of the components, such as the Helen Caldicott opinion piece 'Why we should be wary of the WTO's mantra of globalisation', raise questions about established orthodoxies and the authority of experts. Caldicott's column critiques the World Trade Organisation's rhetoric of globalisation (and many of her concerns are shared by the ACTU). Her article could work intertextually with that by William Saffire at the top of the page 'In future death may be a thing of the past'. Saffire's report suggests in the future death may become 'deferrable', thus overturning a central tenet of human existence and suggesting the fallibility of 'experts' and established wisdom. At the same time the highly emotive word 'death' above her image in a shroud signals the death knell to her career. Although reading it in relation to Saffire's report could also suggest a 'resurrection' is in store for George and that Norington's assessment of her demise is premature. This analysis underscores the importance of reading the text and image and intertextual elements together. Editorial decisions with regard to placement, layout and emphasis have significant implications for the ways certain meanings are privileged, in this case the negative connotations of the article and its headline, for the reader.

Norington's report 'Hard labour for a union trailblazer' provides compelling example of the significant role played by the press in constructing Jennie George as a 'failed' leader despite her numerous and demonstrable successes as ACTU president. This report combines image and text relations, rhetorical strategies, together with myths and metaphors of femininity and communism to develop the case that George's presidency was a failure. It relies totally on the views of its

author quoting neither colleagues, nor George's own views of her achievements or contributions. It positions the author as the expert, through the reminder at the conclusion of the article that he is the author of the biography Jennie George and also through his reference one third of the way through, to a "cool-headed assessment of her presidency". The impact of the article is extended by its syndication to Fairfax's Melbourne daily broadsheet the *Age*.

Conclusion

This chapter details press reports during the period August to December 1999 that saw the attacks on George result in her resignation. Her opponents in the press and in politics had 'won', they forced her early retirement. Press reporting of her decision in December 1999 and January 2000 build on many of the same tactics that were present in the reports in the wake of the Canberra conflict. Her authority and performance are diminished through repeated deployment of visual and textual signifiers of femininity as weakness. Brad Norington's role in the downfall of George is instrumental and his reports contribute the additional element of an apparent personal vendetta to the mix. George is attacked for not following the 'rules', for poor political judgment, for 'hypersensitivity' and an overly emotional nature, for inflexibility and for being unable to control the 'thuggish', hyper-masculine elements in the union movement.

Although George received a few laudatory assessments that attempt to elevate her to the iconic status of the 'Aussie battler' in the main her final months in office are diminished by media constructions of her as a disappointment who failed to live up to her promise, notable only for her status as "a symbol ... who paved the way for others" (Norington 2000a, 2000c). This figuring of her as a 'token woman', handed the poisoned chalice of leadership by desperate male powerbrokers as a last resort, is now familiar in Australian political culture. It conforms to predictions made in her earliest weeks in office and persists in the reports of her retirement. It demonstrates the power of the press to construct and then arbitrate meaning through a range of editorial techniques within the guise of 'commonsense' assessments and penetrating authoritative analysis

11 Act 3: The Final Bow, 8 March 2000

Introduction: Bowing Out on IWD

George's choice of International Women's Day (IWD 8 March 2000) as her departure date is significant. It was a way of attempting to take back agency and a strategy to increase the likelihood that her commitment to women workers and improved union representation of women would receive media attention. To increase the chances that this aspect of her presidency would receive attention, George also made it the theme of her farewell address. This focus also provided impetus for further change within unions and publicised inequalities still remaining to be addressed. These commitments and her own feminism were personally significant to George and to the women who supported her.

The choice of date and focus on barriers to equality in the workplace still to be overcome articulated with particular news frames, values and conventions of reporting first women leaders, that had been apparent since her election to the presidency. On the one hand, it increased the likelihood that her resignation, and achievements as ACTU president, would be reported seriously within a gendered frame. Whilst it was an attempt to provide the media with a reporting opportunity that might be more amenable to women's interests, on the other hand, the conventions of reporting feminism as sectional interests and even as extremist made it equally likely that the choice of IWD as a departure day would provide an opportunity for some reporters to disparage the event and George, herself.

However, even though her departure took place on IWD, and was an event of significance for women as well as for the labour movement and the nation, only three reports were published on that day to mark the event in the nine Australian city newspapers and two national newspapers sampled. Jennie George's resignation and her speech calculated to draw attention to the particular gender inequalities still existing within the industrial relations system and specific industries, were largely ignored. Instead, the press had another agenda. The three reports that were published on the day of her departure were in the Perth *West Australian*, the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* and the Melbourne *Age*. A few reports had been published over previous

days, in late February, in the *Australian*, the Adelaide *Advertiser* and the Hobart *Mercury* newspapers. Four of the papers that did report her departure are News Limited owned, the *Age* is owned by Fairfax and the other is independently owned by West Australian Newspapers. A feature length report on her presidency and her achievements was also published in the national weekly current affairs magazine the *Bulletin* (Susskind 2000). This limited reportage is in stark contrast to the widespread coverage of her election. Most of these reports were very short (between 100 and 200 words) with the exception of the *Bulletin* feature which ran to three pages and included photographs.[1] George's departure was also marked by an extended interview with Geraldine Doogue on ABC Radio National's 'Life Matters' program on International Women's Day (Doogue 2000). This was a companion piece to the interview broadcast in September 1999 when she was elected not quite five years earlier (Doogue 1995).

In keeping with the genre of the program, Doogue's interview concentrated on George's personal experiences in the job. She asked Jennie George questions that emphasised her otherness to the masculine norm including whether she had ever doubted her own capacities, how she handled the masculine culture of the trade union movement, whether her worst time "at the helm of the ACTU" was the 'Canberra riots' and whether George believed that she was "on display for all subsequent women". Dougue also raised the question of how George (and other powerful women) buttress themselves against criticism—especially given that most of them, like George, are single. She also asked George whether she regretted not having children as well as discussing the chances of her moving into politics and what kind of seat she might be offered. Most of these questions belong very much to a developing genre of interviews with prominent women, that foreground the specificities of their femininity and how these characteristics differentiate them form their male colleagues. This is consistent with 'Life Matter's' core terrain, the work/family/life balance and it is therefore fitting that Doogue would make such questions the focus of her interview. However, the tradition of focussing so strongly

[1] The *Sydney Morning Herald* subsequently published an additional feature article by Brad Norington, focussing on George's efforts to obtain a parliamentary seat on 18 March 2000 (Norington 2000b). As this was published after she had left the ACTU and does not cover her presidency it is not discussed.

on the individual's story in such interviews, means that other pertinent and revealing questions are omitted. These include questions about the way Jennie George worked together with and/or networked with women inside the trade union movement and in politics, the bureaucracy and community organisations to achieve certain changes and to gain support both personally and politically. These useful questions about women's collective organising strategies and priorities were neglected (as the usually are in other media) in favour of the conventional story of the lone woman succeeding (or not) against the odds. Doogue's interview—whilst offering interesting personal insights—and allowing George to speak extensively for herself, confirmed the trend that George's presidency was remarkable primarily for her status as first woman, rather than for any other events, strategies or changes she achieved.

Despite George's choice of IWD, a date that provided a ready-made claim to newsworthiness, seven out of the ten Australian newspapers sampled chose to ignore the event altogether or report her retirement on separate days. George's strategy to highlight issues of concern to women workers and women unionists by making IWD her departure date, and at the same time to negotiate some (limited) agency for herself in her battle with the press did not succeed as she would have hoped.[2]

The other extensive coverage given to Jennie George's retirement from the ACTU was by the NSW Trades and Labor Council's electronic 'newspaper' *Workers Online*. In this weekly bulletin George's presidency was commemorated in an editorial by Peter Lewis (2000b), she was interviewed by Lewis (2000a), and tributes to her by various colleagues were also published (Steer & Moaitt in *Workers Online* 2000b). George also presented her own farewell message in the 'Soapbox' column (George 2000). This contrast in reportage between the mainstream commercial press and the alternative media of the labour movement demonstrates

[2] Farewell events were held for George across most States and in some regional centres. They were organised by state and regional Trades and Labor Councils or their women's committees. George spoke at these events and gave interviews to local media. Some newspapers chose to report her departure in the context of a local event rather than in the context of the national event held to mark the feminist landmark, International Women's Day.

the important role played by these kinds of alternative sources despite their limited audience.

'Hard Act to Follow': The Eulogy

The most significant coverage of George's retirement as ACTU president was a report entitled 'Hard act to follow' published in the *Bulletin* magazine the week she retired (Figures 11.1 and 11.2). This report was by Anne Susskind, who declares herself to be a friend of George's (Susskind 2000). To some extent this article can be juxtaposed with Norington's January profile in the *Sydney Morning Herald.* There are some similarities but the overall assessment of George's presidency is very different. Both have a personal, although significantly different, tone to them. The personal element to Norington's report is expressed through *his* claim to authority through his status as George's biographer and the claim that he therefore, knows her very well, his tone is that of a superior judgement. The personal element to Anne Susskind's report is constructed through the disclosure of her friendship with George, she positions herself as a peer and her tone is elegiac.

The report fills three pages of the *Bulletin* and is accompanied by two black and white photos of George. The headline reads 'Hard act to follow' which suggests the completion of a successful performance, therefore presumably that her leadership of the ACTU be viewed as a success. The introductory paragraph tells the reader that the report is to examine what the future holds for George "after such a long and glittering career" thereby reinforcing the suggestion that her two decades in union leadership and her presidency of the ACTU was a success. Just to the left of the headline, a small sidebar reads 'Turning point'. On the one hand this signals it as one of a series of reports on people who are at a transition period in their lives, it could even suggest a death or a passing. On the other it indicates that this report provides an insight into the experiences and feelings of a well-known woman who is at such a crucial moment.

The main black and white photo crosses the first two pages of the report and sets the tone for what is to follow, colouring the text. It shows George walking barefoot

TURNING POINT

Hard act to follow

After more than two decades in the union movement, including five years as ACTU president, Jennie George steps down this week. **Anne Susskind** asks what is in store for her after such a long and glittering career.

Jennie George wants the world to know that she'll be fine. Sure, she is a little sad and apprehensive about leaving the union movement after 26 years, at the age of 52. "This is all I've ever done, this has been my life," she says of relinquishing this familiar territory. But her other side, the feisty, fighter side, the public side which got her through the protracted and pitched battles with several governments, says: "Some might portray it that I want to swan off and go and be idle – let them wait and see ..."

There's a lot of pressure on George to continue to perform. First, from herself. She is the creature of her background – her mother, who lives in a housing department apartment in Sydney, was a Russian migrant who worked as a kitchen hand and had an abusive husband. From that comes the empathy with those who've done it hard, and the driving need to continue, as she puts it, to do "good deeds, or socially useful things".

Then there is the other pressure, from outside, from other women, some of them friends, the faithful, who would like to see her celebrated career continue. The pressure from those women she has been a role model to – as first female president of the New South Wales Teachers' Federation and first female president of the ACTU, the job she formally leaves this week.

Now what? She has been appointed by the Carr government in NSW to a seat on the board of Delta Electricity on a one-year contract. In recent days, the phone has not stopped ringing with people curious about her future. George has been a little media shy because she doesn't have any answers yet. But she does have options. While it seemed for a while there would be no vacancy for her in parliament – as has been the traditional route for most of her ACTU predecessors – there might now be more than one.

There has been media speculation that she may become the Left's candidate for the safe Labor seat of Throsby, south of Wollongong, in the next federal election. In the past, she has expressed reservations (about being a "high-flyer" imposed on an electorate) but she did not deny this possibility in a recent interview. Then there is the NSW Upper House option. This was what she said she wanted all along – a vacancy there could well be looming. There is also the opting-out option – although, in her case, it wouldn't be what most people call opting-out, rather, trying to get a "job with a mission", using her experience for a cause she cares about.

Each has its temptation, and each its setback. A working-class federal seat such as Throsby would satisfy her need to be useful and keep everyone else happy. But there's a personal problem. An only child, and with no children of her own, George's fiercest emotional attachment is to her 75-year-old mother. Her mother thinks Jennie has proved herself quite enough in the public arena and now is the time to concentrate on herself.

The Upper House would seem to be it, but that has been tainted for her. Suggestions in the media that it would be a cushy job, a sinecure, embarrass and offend her, although she can't understand why, if it was good enough for Neville Wran, the NSW Labor premier she most admired, she should be subject to different rules. As for the welfare organisations, well, offers haven't come in yet.

This week, George will sit down with her partner, Denis, a former union secretary, and her mother, Natasha, to decide her next move. "There are three people now to take into account," she says, "not just Jennie George's career ambitions, as has probably been the case in the past."

This is also a week of farewells, which began with a lunch at Parliament House in Sydney for about 200 union women, timed to coincide with International Women's Day. There, her speech was about women's progress in the union movement and the perils of "creeping casualisation".

"Twenty-six per cent of Australian workers now work as casuals. A lot of them are women, and what particularly galls me is that everything we fought for, maternity leave, carers' leave, parental leave, are now being subverted. This creeping casualisation is producing a new form of systemic discrimination against women."

This week also there is a dinner, for about 400 again, at Parliament House (also to farewell the outgoing NSW Labor Council president, John Whelan) and another dinner for about 300 ALP women and supporters. And, later in the month, a party for 40 women friends. In other states, more functions, culminating in a final farewell on March 24 in Victoria. Ask her about the details of any of these and, with some pride, she replies: "I don't know. Other people organised them ..."

I have to declare here that Jennie George has been a friend of mine for many years. I met her when I was education writer on *The Sydney Morning Herald* and, while we kept it strictly professional for the time I was reporting on her, we relaxed into a friendship when she left the NSW Teachers' Federation in 1989. I followed her career during the Metherell era, when NSW education was turned inside out and 50,000 people took to the streets to protest at the education policies of the then Liberal government and its education minister Terry Metherell.

From the start, I admired George's moral certitude and charisma. I had come to Australia fresh from being a teacher in schools on the Cape Flats of Cape Town, South Africa, a teacher of "coloured" or mixed-race children, who did not receive nearly the same education benefits as I had and whose lives and opportunities were the poorer for it. So I was glad, when I arrived here in Australia, to be in a country where comprehensive education – the idea, if not the reality, of the school on the corner being good enough for everyone – was treasured.

However, all this soon changed: private schools got more money from both federal and state governments and the new NSW education minister, Metherell, set about creating a stratified system within the state education department by more than doubling the number of specialist and selective schools, schools which the union argued would diminish the remainder by creaming off the cleverest and most able kids, and the best teachers.

The publication of competitive HSC lists pitting one school against another, which Labor had abolished, were reinstated. All this was done with the rationale that competition between schools was good, that some bright students who couldn't afford a private school would be able to get ahead in a



KYLE MEGAN SMITH

A time to reflect? Jennie George must decide where the future will take her

Figure 11.1 Bulletin, 14/3/00, pp. 34-35.

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Figure 11.2 'Bulletin, 14/3/00, p. 36.



KYLIE MELINDA SMITH

specialist state schools and that the public-education system overall would benefit because it would be able to compete with the private.

Teachers' wages were low, there were staff shortages and class sizes in public schools were swelling. George and her union fought for teachers' conditions, but she was also fighting always for public education, for opportunities for children who, like her, came from marginalised backgrounds, be it because they were migrants, poor or both.

With hindsight, the Teachers' Federation waged a good campaign to make people aware of the threat to comprehensive education. Many battles were won, but they lost the war. Most of the Metherell changes went through and can be seen in NSW schools today, continued by the Labor government. Middle-class parents are clamouring ever harder to get their children into selective or private schools. It now seems the only way, a natural part of the inequality and scrambling we see all the time around us.

I admired George's single-mindedness, her refusal to compromise, the whole deal. I knew her weaknesses – she smoked too much, drank too much sometimes, was too oversensitive for a public figure, perhaps because she was lonely and had no buffers against the world. Her husband had died when she was 32 and the other men she became involved with seemed too intimidated by her to give her the support she needed.

George had a relatively low profile for a while at the Trade Union Training Authority in Victoria. When she resurfaced as ACTU president in 1996, expectations were high. But she was presiding over a union movement already in decline, its numbers diminishing. There was a change of government and George, who had gone in on the offensive, saying she'd had enough of the union movement being so conciliatory at the expense of workers, found herself on the defensive in new, much more hostile circumstances.

Says George: "There was a change of climate, a change of government, a change in the economy. I don't accept any personal culpability, I can't afford to do that. I gave it my best and the forces were probably bigger even than I had anticipated, so really what we've done is hold the line as best we can. Numbers have continued to decline, regrettably, but I don't think I could have done anything other than what I've done."

She is leaving, she says, at a personal high point. She sums up her achievements thus: "First and foremost, I've transformed the culture of the union movement which, when I first got involved, was totally male dominated. Women didn't have a space or a place. Secondly, I think I've helped shaped a very organic relationship between the ACTU and the rank and file, and juggled to see that unity was maintained. We're a very broad church and that's not always easy to do with factional and sectional and gender issues.

"For me, personally, I've got to say industrially, the maritime dispute was seminal. There could have been a really nasty turning point if the government had got its way. Also, having responsibility, with the team, that defeated Reith's second wave [of industrial relations legislation] – that gave me great satisfaction.

"As you know, I'm thin-skinned and what matters most at the end of my career is what the members who elected me think. You have to ask them, but let me say that in the times I was there, I never had a complaint from one union or one member about the performance of my responsibilities."

George left, she says, because she wants the pressure "scaled down a bit" and because the time had come. "Look, you've got to go at some stage, and I'm a product of the baby-boomer generation, the '60s and the '70s, of a different era, a different generation, different issues.

"I think I was getting a bit out of touch with the new people coming through, and there comes a time when you think, I did what I could, and it's time for new ideas, new visions, new creativity ... I wanted to go."

It is clear that George is feeling out of step with the way the world is going, even isolated, in "our increasingly greedy, dog-eat-dog society", in which someone with a background such as hers is unlikely today to have the chance to get on in public life the way she did.

"It was there for me ... I fear it's not going to be there if the direction we're following now continues into the future. I think Australia is very much at a crossroads. What people don't realise is that the pursuit of economic goals alone as a criteria, excluding social and human values, will eventually threaten society and democracy as we've known it.

"The things that were fantastic about Australia – we were known as the lucky country and that was predicated on a good deal of mateship and concern for those less well off – now that is eroding.

"I've never wavered in my belief that this has been a fantastic country to provide for a migrant girl, with a single mother from the housing commission, the opportunity through education. And I will fight 'til my last day for the importance of public provision, the best health care and education, to enable kids to have meaningful life choices. But I despair that that is no longer something that is occurring in our society. I really do despair."

In many ways, the hardest act Jennie George has to follow is her own. Her disillusion with the world is quite profound. But she has bounced back before, and she probably will again.

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through the shallows of a beach looking towards, and to the right, of the camera. She is wearing a long dark shirt with white stripes and slim-fitting trousers pulled up to mid-calf length. The sky behind her is partially cloudy and the sea slightly choppy. The scene could be interpreted as her walking the beach taking time out to reflect or to weigh up a difficult decision about her future. The mood is melancholic and the light in the photo suggests the time of sunset. George is slightly smiling as though accommodating of the camera/photographer but not fully relaxed. The photo provides a visual metaphor for the article—access to George at a critical point in her career, in a liminal space, reflective, satisfied with her performance but not happy about the state of the nation and its workers. Alternatively, it provides readers with a well-recognised visual stereotype of a symbolic moment it marks a passing for both her and the reader.

The second photograph, on the final page of the report, is a quarter-page head and shoulders portrait of George. She is dressed in the same striped shirt as the first photo. Her head is slightly canted to the right and she meets the camera and viewer's gaze directly at eye-level. Her face is calm and unexpressive, neither smiling nor frowning. The battle is over, she has moved out of range (temporarily) as she has left the arena. Despite the canted head, it does not look as though she is appealing for acceptance or approval, rather it suggests someone who accepts themselves and could be saying to the viewer/reader 'mourn for my passing, you won't see my like again'.[3]

Anne Susskind's report adopts a confiding tone, perhaps as a strategy to obtain the reader's trust and identification with her position. She reveals that she is a personal friend of Jennie George, having met her and come to admire her whilst she, Susskind, was education writer for the *Sydney Morning Herald*. She writes of her admiration for George's "moral certitude and charisma" thus vouching for George's integrity. Susskind justifies her admiration with praise for the hard work of George, and others in the NSW Teachers' Federation, to improve teachers' conditions, class sizes and George's particular efforts to improve the "opportunities for children …

[3] A canted head is traditionally used and/or interpreted as an indication of women's submission to the male viewer and need for his approval (Berger 1972; Goffman 1976).

from marginalised backgrounds". She also writes of her esteem for George's "single-mindedness [and] refusal to compromise" (Susskind 2000).

The rhetorical strategies used in the report allow the reader to weigh up the influence of friendship on the author's judgements. Susskind also reveals that as a friend she came to know George's weaknesses: "she smoked too much, drank too much sometimes, was over-sensitive for a public figure". This use of the past tense suggests an obituary. The use of personal revelation invites the reader to share an intimate glimpse of a controversial public figure—admirable, but with her share of faults. In inviting the reader to share this insight the report is also inviting her/him to share the author's assessments of George's strengths.

Susskind employs rhetorical strategies of elegy and mourning throughout the report. The first three sentences establish this mood:

> Jennie George wants the world to know that she'll be fine. Sure she is a little apprehensive about leaving the union movement after 26 years, at the age of 52. 'This is all I've ever done, this has been my life,' she says of relinquishing this familiar territory.
>
> (Susskind 2000: 34)

Here Susskind speaks for George in tones of personal loss and nostalgia. The more positive discussion of George's achievements is not reached until the latter half of the article. The early section of the report reviews the "pressure on George to perform" from a variety of sources. She is expected to meet expectations. At the same time it reveals there are two sides of George, the soft and the hard, vulnerable and feisty, leading to two sets of options as to her future career. The report creates a strong binary structure and positions George in between the two at a moment of personal vulnerability. This binary structure is also reflected in the way the report constructs George's strengths and weaknesses. In the photo, however, she is depicted in liminal space—she is in transition between two geographical states, between two types of places and two stages of her career where meanings are indeterminate.

Susskind employs an empathic, caring tone in her discussion of George's weaknesses, and her offer of a possible explanation for them. It reads as though she

is inviting the reader to understand her friend and the hardships she has experienced in her life. She attributes George's weaknesses to her loneliness and lack of emotional support. This explanation functions in two main ways. It invites the reader to sympathise with George, widowed young at thirty-two and apparently thereafter unlucky in her choice of partners. Susskind asks how readers would cope in such circumstances with the demands of public life. Her tone also invites readers to share the author's admiration of George's achievements. This feature invites this empathy more than other news reports that have revealed George's personal circumstances because it is written from an intimate perspective of friendship and admiration.

Although Susskind's report concentrates on George's strengths and achievements it also informs the reader that George is disillusioned with the increasingly individualistic and greedy aspects of Australian society and the erosion of the values of "mateship and concern for the less well off". Accordingly, some readers could see her as a sad or disillusioned character who has sacrificed personal happiness for a cause only to be left wondering whether the sacrifices have been worthwhile. This scenario conforms to the traditional scripts of femininity that tell us that women are only 'truly' fulfilled through conventional family and maternal life.

As an in-depth, feature article in a current affairs magazine, there are two unusual aspects of this report. Firstly, it is a tribute to a friend, in a personalised account of George's career which evokes the genre of the obituary, a sense that is increased by the elegiac tone. Secondly, there is the strong presence of Jennie George's voice in the report which privileges her own assessment of her achievements. Neither George's colleagues, nor her opponents', views of her career and contribution as ACTU president are canvassed. The report is structured around the insights of the reporter, her privileged knowledge that is coloured by the history of friendship between the two women, and George's own account of her contributions to the labour movement. Within the thirty-one paragraphs of the report George is quoted fifteen times and ten paragraphs are wholly, or almost wholly, comprised of direct quotes. George's assessment of her achievements as ACTU president fills four paragraphs with five separate points being made and a sixth implied. These

achievements are: transforming trade union culture to make it more supportive for women; improving the relationship between rank and file members and the ACTU; maintaining unity despite differences across "factional, sectional and gender issues"; the resolution of the maritime dispute; and the defeat of the Government's "second wave [of industrial relations legislation]". George also discusses her appreciation of the opportunities that Australia provided for her as a poor, migrant girl to achieve success. In this way she frames her own success as an outsider and battler within the well-known Australian 'migrant-makes-good in the lucky country' mythology. Her comments also emphasise her concern at the diminution of support for the less well-off that lead her to worry, as Susskind points out, that "someone with a background such as hers" is now less likely to be able to attain success in public life than was possible for her.

The *Bulletin* report provides George with more agency to define her own position than any other in the mainstream press[4]. It invites the reader to share a sympathetic and admiring view of George as an honourable individual with a deep commitment to social equity and as high-achieving ACTU president. It softens the image of her as harsh or grim represented in some other reports (Bachelard 1999b; Mitchell S. 1996a; Norington 1999f and 2000a). It provides an antidote to the rancorous attacks on her mounted in some other papers and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, in particular. Now that she has left the arena there is a space to review her performance with generosity, as the contest is over. Susskind's report balances her 'feisty' combatant identity with evidence of her moral integrity, dedication to her principles, hard work, concern to meet the expectations of others, deep emotional commitment to her mother, and personal vulnerability. Susskind juxtaposes George's achievements with her deep concern for the erosion of social justice and the public sector that could deny a young person with similar background to hers the opportunities that enabled her success. It utilises the news frame of George as a role model for others whilst at the same time showing the pressure and obligations that come with such a role. Likewise, it utilises the 'migrant-makes-good' frame whilst showing that this, too, increases the expectations and pressure upon the subject to succeed. It is the

[4] Peter Lewis's interview with George, 'Parting gestures' in the NSWTLC electronic 'newspaper' *Workers Online* is the only other report that offers her more opportunity to assess her own achievements (Lewis 2000a).

only print news report that clearly explores the downside of the position on the pedestal.

The report makes clear the degree to which George is valued by friends and colleagues, especially women, whilst at the same time attempting to elucidate the complex sets of decisions that are attached to career transitions. Indeed, the side-bar next to the headline reads 'turning points'. It represents George's career as successful, even "glittering" but at the same time includes mention of some of the problems, disappointments and setbacks she has encountered.[5] It is a deeper and more thoughtful discussion than the majority of broadsheet reports, for example Norington's reports (1999f and 2000a) that represent his harsh assessment of her leadership as a failure or a disappointment and refer neither to George's views nor those of her colleagues. This is in part due to it being written at a different stage in the drama and employing the conventions of a different genre of writing. Whereas Norington was writing himself into a key role in the drama of Jennie George's retirement, Susskind is marking her passing by writing the eulogy.

Patterns in the Reporting of Jennie George's Retirement

Jennie George's retirement received far less press coverage than that of ACTU Secretary Bill Kelty and the contrast with the amount, and the nature, of coverage of her election is marked. The last months of her presidency were notable for media speculation about the timing of her retirement and her future career options. Brad Norington's series of personalised attacks on her politics, leadership, judgement, achievements and integrity stand out as a campaign to discredit her personally and professionally, apparently in retaliation for her lack of full cooperation with him in the writing of the biography. Of particular significance here, was George's refusal to acknowledge publicly her former membership of the CPA and Norington's ultimate revelation of this fact. Subsequent to this revelation his attacks consistently attempt to bring her into disrepute, employing the strategy of attacking her as the wrong 'sort' of woman, or as too feminine, for the tasks required of her. These are

[5] However, its also omits mention of several key setbacks in George's career such as her failure to secure pre-selection for an ALP seat in 1995.

expressly gendered strategies and provide a clear example of the way femininity is deployed by both the media and political opponents in efforts to discredit women politicians. Norington's standing as her biographer, together with his role as the industrial editor of an influential Australian broadsheet newspaper, works to inflate his authority and to mask the vitriol within his attacks. The fact that his campaign to bring down her career also promoted his own book was a clear conflict of interest that was not remarked upon by other commentators. The last months of George's presidency read, through many of the media reports, as a drama in which Norington and George are the key protagonists. Ultimately she is 'done over' by the mainstream political and media establishments and her achievements are reduced to an incident of timing.

Despite Norington's attacks on George's credibility, a lead followed by some journalists (Bachelard 1999b), others such as Susskind (2000), assessed Jennie George's presidency differently. Susskind paints an image of a woman of principle, integrity and ability whose contribution to Australian public life has been significant. Furthermore, despite this pattern of discrediting George through the press, which served at the same time to again raise questions (and confirm doubts) about women's leadership capacities, George's ACTU presidency was widely judged as successful within the labour movement.

After the Show, the Cast Party: Jennie George at Mardi Gras.

In her farewell speech thanking George for her support for women workers and her role as a role model and mentor to women unionists, Sharan Burrow said:

> There are a lot of your women friends here who wouldn't be where we are if you hadn't changed things. Nobody will be able to fill your shoes. Jennie George is a heroine of the union movement and we love her dearly.
>
> (Burrow quoted in Robinson 1999d)

Whilst reporters like Norington might sneer at such acclaim, suggesting she is a heroine only to an "adoring party sisterhood" (Norington 1999d), others reject his designation of her as a token woman. Sam Moaitt, president of the NSW Trades and Labor Council said "Jennie has never been a token woman" (*Workers Online* 2000b). Moaitt went on to praise Jennie's hard work for women and workers' rights

which, she said, had made her "an icon for women, an icon for unionists and an icon for workers" (*Workers Online* 2000b). Whilst this perspective was absent from most mainstream press coverage George's comrades in the labour movement found an alternative vehicle though which to applaud her as an icon. George's status as labour heroine, her well-known love of a party and her "contribution to industrial glamour" was affectionately and humorously commemorated by the action of gay and lesbian unionists in the 2000 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras parade (Fortescu in *Workers Online* 2000c). They constructed a float that featured a giant figure of her dressed in red sequins surrounded by "dozens of beefy blokes in Peter Reith masks" (*Workers Online* 2000c).[6]

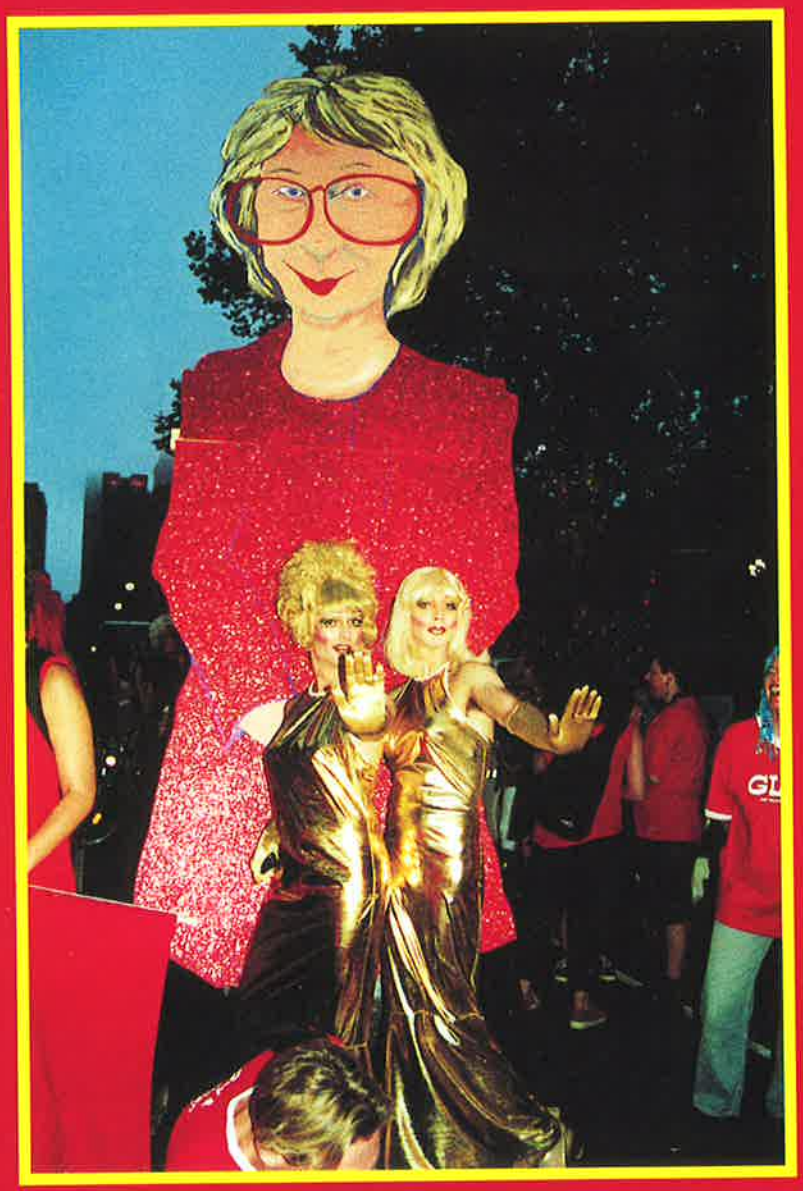
Jennie George might have been pilloried in the mainstream press and her carefully constructed farewell might have gone largely unreported but the irrepressible Australian Left found an unusual but fitting means of resisting such coverage. With traditional larrikin humour, but new equal opportunity sensitivity, they paid tribute to her support of gay and lesbian unionists and ordinary working people by turning her into a gay icon, parading a giant puppet of her throughout the streets of Sydney in the Mardi Gras procession (see figure 11.3).[7] The Mardi Gras parade is witnessed by hundreds of thousands of Sydney-siders in person and across Australia through national television coverage. Jennie George might have lost the battle but she went out in style.

[6] Peter Reith, the Federal Minister for Workplace Relations, was intensely hated by unionists for his key role in attacking the MUA in the Waterfront Dispute. He was the architect of the second-wave workplace relations Bill against which George had led the ACTU campaign.

[7] The photograph of the Mardi Gras float of Jennie George has itself become a symbol of feminist resistance in women's and labour movement critiques of the representation of women in the union movement and of media reporting of women politicians, see for example the front cover of *Hecate* 2000 no. 2.

Figure 11.3 Hecate, vol. 26, no. 2, 2000, cover.

HECATE



HECATE Vol 26 No. 2 2000 $10

Conclusion

This chapter analyses reports of Jennie George's retirement from the ACTU on 8 March 2000. Together with Chapters Nine and Ten, it demonstrates how the press effectively managed her downfall despite George's attempts to maintain some control over the public reception of her final days in office. As befitting the end of a drama that became tinged with tragedy, reports turn elegaic. Whilst Brad Norington and the *Sydney Morning Herald* are the 'victors' some mediation occurred. Anne Susskind's empathic article identifies with the embattled figure and puts on record her claims to lasting significance. *Workers Online* published tributes from colleagues to whom George was an inspiration and the GLAM[8] contingent's iconic Mardi Gras float commemorated George's presidency through parody. Although the myths and stereotypes persist, the reportage shows many forms of battler.

[8] GLAM stands for the Australian Services Union Gay and Lesbian Members group.

Conclusion: Reporting Women in Mediatized Politics

Introduction

Jennie George, the daughter of a refugee Russian-speaking single-mother, raised in the housing commission flats in Surry Hills, the product of a good Australian public education, 'made it', despite the odds, to be the first woman president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions. Despite premature widowhood, despite her communist sympathies, despite her feminism, despite her love of parties, cigarettes and chardonnay, George succeeded in being elected to this top job. The print media news reporting of George's career highlighted all these characteristics and more. They loved the colourful background. She made 'good copy', first as a success story and then as a flawed character. Trade unions are seldom 'good copy' in the Australian media. Industrial relations reporting is strongly oppositional with unions coded as 'them', positioned against the interests of the nation and the presumed audience. For a time, the media characterisation of George was not totally constrained by the pre-existing conventions of reporting unionists as deviants and/or threats. At times she provided newsworthy copy that fitted other reporting conventions and news frames, including the conventions of reporting 'first women' achievers. However, the final stage of her career as ACTU president was marked by a battle waged in some sections of the press to bring her down. News reports, particularly in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, attacked her credibility, her achievements and her femininity.

The thesis has interrogated the construction of political meanings of key events and judgments about the performance and credibility of particular women political actors through semiotic and deconstructionist analyses of the images and textual aspects of representative news reports of these key events in Jennie George's presidency. This analysis addressed the question of how media accounts of actors and controversial political events intersect with other political and discursive practices. It also investigated how 'Jennie George', as a sign, slipped between constructions of preferred masculine identities that are normative and feminine identities that are deviant together with other normative and non-normative categories such as democrat/communist, Australian/migrant,

married/widowed/single, middle-class/working-class. Her construction drew on all of them, often in contradictory ways. Such analysis is important if we are to increase our understanding of how gendered, sexualised and racialised meanings develop, intersect, and are circulated about particular political issues and how these symbolic practices enhance or limit the capacity for minority groups and women to attain, and succeed within, positions of power in the public sphere.

The thesis has variously applied semiotic and content analysis to news media reportage of three critical events during George's presidency. Content analysis has demonstrated the existence of repeated signifiers of femininity, repeated news frames and, in relation to Cavalcade to Canberra, multiple use of particular images to stand in for the whole meaning of particular events. Semiotic analysis has revealed the ways meaning is rhetorically constructed within reports, as well as through visual elements such as page layout and image-text relations between adjacent articles and other elements on the page. In particular, the analysis has revealed the ways various significations of femininity have been central to constructing meaning about George's leadership of the ACTU at crucial periods in her presidency. It has also traced the ways multiple factors of gender, class, race, nationalism, occupation and political affiliation are deployed, separately and together, to make sense of accounts of various events that occurred during George's presidency.

The discussion of the results of the analysis has paid close attention to several leading questions. These include whether, and how, the shift to tabloidisation has impacted on the reporting of women political actors; how the news is presented to be consumed in ways that deliver audiences to advertisers; how actors are embedded within media discourses as newsworthy; how news constructs the 'truth' about its subject; how news reports invite reader identification through complex relations of opposition and the articulation of multiple discourses such as gender, race, class, political affiliation, and nationalism; and how media processes have transformed politics into mediatized politics. Conclusions drawn from the investigation of these aspects will be discussed below.

The thesis has also investigated whether any consistent pattern could be discerned in the reporting between tabloid and broadsheet newspapers and/or between newspapers belonging to any particular ownership group or corporation and found that, whereas there are interesting patterns in the reporting of women politicians, these patterns did not conform to any simple split between tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. Indeed, the influence of tabloidisation was discernible in the reporting and presentation strategies adopted by newspapers in both formats. Furthermore, these patterns did not conform to any pattern of newspaper ownership. Prior to the analysis, it seemed possible that the history of News Corporation as 'anti-union' might lead to newspapers owned by companies affiliated to that conglomerate adopting a more hostile reporting tone towards George than papers owned by other groups. The analysis proved this hypothesis to be false. Whereas antagonistic reports that displayed misogynist attitudes and anxieties about powerful women were found in three Murdoch-owned newspapers (*Courier Mail* and *Daily Telegraph* two examples each and one example from the *Australian*), the most consistently hostile reporting of the latter stage of George's presidency was found in the flagship Fairfax broadsheet the *Sydney Morning Herald.*

Building a Pedestal for a New Leader: Reporting Jennie George's Election

A highly popular figure, not just amongst union members, Jennie George's election was widely reported. Several of the reports built-up high expectations of her performance suggesting she would be the saviour of the union movement, rescuing it from the twin dangers of declining membership and the challenge of a hostile government. Many of the reports also raised doubts about her capacity to succeed, through the question would she be 'tough enough' to overcome these challenges? In this way a pedestal was created for Jennie George and the seeds of her downfall were sown. George's status as the *first woman* union leader was the central feature of most of the reports of her election. It continued to be a dominant feature of reporting throughout her presidency. Her status as first leader from a white-collar union background was only a minor feature of a few reports whilst her status as the first leader of non-English-speaking background was rarely remarked upon. Clearly her gender was regarded as the most newsworthy aspect of her personal profile.

Indeed, one commentator described it, caustically as 'her *real* jewel' (Akerman 1995, italics added).

This study concurs with the findings of Pippa Norris (1997a, 1997b) as to the existence and regular application of the three gendered news frames she identified in the reporting of newly elected women leaders from various countries worldwide. In the case of the reporting of Jennie George's election, additional frames were employed. These include those traditional reporting frames for industrial relations issues and disputes in which unions are constructed as 'trouble', and those that relate to conventions of reporting on feminism and feminists as 'deviant' women. They also include the news frame of national politics for, as George's election was reported within the context of an upcoming election, she was often reported as a player in that campaign. In additional, there were specifically Australian aspects to the reporting. These include casting George as an Aussie 'battler' and as the recipient of a poisoned leadership chalice in common with other Australian female leaders. In contrast to Norris's findings, but in common with research into women politicians undertaken by feminist media scholars such as Liesbet van Zoonen (2000), Karen Ross and Annabelle Sreberny (2000) and Clare Walsh (1998) the analysis has shown that signifiers of femininity (including traditional myths and stereotypes) have been widely deployed in reports that construct meaning about George's presidency. Gendered stereotypes and myths are widely found in the framing of reports; in their presentation through photographs, headlines and layout; and in the composition of the reports. Significantly, the study found that the deployment of gendered frames persisted *throughout* the reporting of George's presidency with variable effects on the ways meanings were made of events: sometimes they held positive and sometimes negative valence and often they could be read in various ways depending upon one's views and allegiances. Gendered frames were most notably present in periods when her performance, or the actions and policies of the ACTU itself, were under attack. At these highly contested times, gendered frames and specific signifiers of femininity were instrumental in constructing preferred meanings of events and in making such meanings appealing for audience identification.

Cavalcade to Canberra and its Aftermath—Deploying Multiple Discourses of Gender, Race, Class, Unionism and Nationalism

The analysis of the Cavalcade to Canberra reportage reinforced the old news adage that 'if it bleeds, it leads'. The story of the attempted forced entry to Parliament House, labelled a 'riot' and a 'national outrage' by the media, police and politicians, received blanket media coverage and squeezed out other accounts of the event, in particular the story of the *peaceful assembly* of 30, 000 people in the national capital and their deep concerns about the proposed Workplace Relations Bill. These news values, together with reporting conventions that privilege the views of elite persons such as the Prime Minister, and institutional sources such as the police, over demonstrators or unionists, meant that the reasons for the demonstration and the story of alleged police violence to an Aboriginal protester received very little coverage. Instead, the probable cause of the event was attributed to union militants, Aborigines, anarchists and student radicals who had come prepared, 'tooled up', for such a confrontation. The union movement was held to blame. This construction of the event enabled long-standing stereotypes of unionists as thugs and bullies to be mobilised by both the government and news reporters. Within the reporting scenario, Jennie George was positioned as a potential scalp, a political or media trophy available if her resignation could be achieved.

Considerable political energy and news coverage was devoted to continuing the story and trying to achieve George's resignation. The analysis of this in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight demonstrates the way signifiers of gender, race, unionism, political affiliation and nationalism were mobilised to demonise the protesters, to magnify the degree of 'outrage' that had occurrred, to argue that George and the ACTU should accept responsibility for the violence and damage and that George should do the honourable thing and resign.

The Prime Minister and Workplace Relations Minister cunningly capitalised on the events to discredit the opponents of their legislation and the trade union movement in general, calling for George's resignation. Their attacks, together with those of certain press commentators, deployed signifiers of femininity as central elements in their assault on George. Her leadership, and George herself, was presented as weak,

lacking authority, overly emotional and unable to control hyper-masculine, radical union elements. Various (frequently outdated) myths and stereotypes of unions, unionists, Aborigines, nationalism and women leaders were deployed to both increase the newsworthiness of the events and also to increase their political damage to the unions' cause. The intersection of political strategies and media practices had serious implications for Jennie George's future.

The political and media constructions of the Cavalcade to Canberra as a mass riot renewed the potency of previous conventions of reporting unionists as thugs and the contention that direct, illegitimate and violent political action is an *intrinsic* component of unionism. It signalled the end of the Accord era in which unions had gained political credibility and influence and it revived repertoires of reporting unions as deviants. The specific visual and rhetorical devices used created categories of difference along the reason versus chaos divide. Allied to this was the potential downfall of the ACTU's *first woman* president, a potentially sensational political and media coup, and an event that, if it transpired, would cause irreparable damage to the ACTU and to the cause of increasing the number of women in leadership positions. George survived the campaign to force her resignation but the ordeal scarred her personally and diminished her presidency. The attacks established the ground for the final battle over her credibility that was to be mounted during 1999-2000. The attacks on George in the wake of Cavalcade to Canberra created a continuing perception amongst certain reporters and political commentators (although not necessarily amongst union members) that there were serious flaws in George's presidency. Questions about her 'toughness', particularly her performance under pressure, her credibility and her authority, that were raised in the context of the Canberra confrontation, were revisited in the final months of her presidency.

One Man's Mission: The Personal Element in the Press Attacks on George in her Final Months as ACTU President

The analysis of the reportage of George's final months as ACTU president presented in Chapters Nine, Ten and Eleven reveals a remarkable personalised attack on George, waged through the pages of the Australian press. The role of the widely respected 'quality' broadsheet, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, in leading the pursuit is

extraordinary. Although papers published by both Fairfax and News Limited participated in this attempt to drive George from office prematurely, it was the supposedly more 'progressive' Fairfax press that provided the vehicle for one journalist's apparent vendetta against a popular Australian political leader.

Brad Norington devoted almost a year of newspaper reporting to that end, waging a war to discredit Jennie George and her contribution to the ACTU. Norington and the *Sydney Morning Herald* together campaigned to bring Jennie George's career to a premature end whilst enhancing the fortunes of Brad Norington as both an industrial journalist and biographer of Jennie George. The press reports promoted his recently published biography in a clear example of advertorial. They constructed Jennie George in highly personal terms as a flawed woman, her Achilles heel(s) being her insecurity, emotional instability, and unsatisfactory emotional liaisons with men. These flaws were seen to be too deep to allow her to be a good political operator. By including references to George's complex emotional life, an active—albeit unsatisfactory—sex life, and public deceit in his reports, Norington titillates the audience who are indirectly promised more revelations if they buy his book. These tactics are more commonly associated with tabloid newspapers than so-called 'quality' broadsheets. Norington may have been the winner in this battle with Jennie George but his own tactics raise significant questions about the limits of political reporting and his own motivations for this concerted pursuit. Utilising a variety of editorial, textual and visual strategies (including ones more often associated with the tabloid press), Norington and the *Sydney Morning Herald* mounted a destructive and ultimately successful campaign. When picked up by other newspapers, it spelt the end of George's union career.

Recurring Patterns in the Reporting of Australian Women Politicians

The battle that was played out in the press over George's career as ACTU president, the timing of her departure and her ultimate shift into Federal Parliament was a drama with distinctly Australian elements. Whilst the gendered nature of the reporting and many of the myths and stereotypes of femininity that were deployed are international in their relevance, motifs such as the 'Aussie battler' and the 'migrant-makes-good' lend national specificity to the reports. The drama has

another quintessentially Australian feature. George was several times directly compared to the two ALP women State Premiers, Carmen Lawrence and Joan Kirner, who were elected to party leadership at times when their Government was in dire electoral straits. The press, cynically adopting for a moment advocacy of women's rights, designated this as an example of the 'boys' turning to women to save them when all else fails. George's achievement of the ACTU presidency at a critical moment in the ACTU's history, when membership was declining and a hostile Government opposed to unionism was about to come to power, was compared to the situation of Lawrence and Kirner and characterised as a poisoned chalice by some commentators at the time of her election and subsequently (Akerman 1995; Mitchell S. 1996a; Norington 1998; Ramsay 1998; Southorn 1995a). This comparison was again raised at the time of her retirement (Norington 2000a, 2000c).

The particular experiences of these Labor women provided a familiar narrative to which George's experiences could be linked. On the one hand they could be used to predict the outcome of her presidency and on the other they could be invoked to extend George's relevance. Another Australian element which has resonance here is the practice of lopping down the 'tall poppies'[1] and George, who had been recognised as one of Australia's 'Greatest Living Treasures', qualified as a tall poppy (Robinson 1999d). Certainly, high-achieving Australian *women*, especially those in politics, have been subjected to consistent media attacks.[2] In the Australian political context a woman placed on a pedestal is in a highly vulnerable position, effectively designated as a political and media target through the accompanying expectation that something will inevitably occur, in time, to trigger her fall from grace. This expectation also fits the news values of continuity and prediction that contributed to the framing of reports around the speculation of failure and even (in

[1] That is, attacking anyone who is seen to stand out above the ordinary person, or who *thinks* they stand out above the ordinary crowd.

[2] Carmen Lawrence and Joan Kirner are only two examples. Former leaders of the Australian Democrats Janine Haines, Cheryl Kernot and Natasha Stott Despoja, together with ALP Minister Roz Kelly, Liberal Minister Bronwen Bishop and One Nation's Pauline Hanson are some other examples of women politicians who experienced concentrated media attacks on their credibility in which specific constructions of femininity featured strongly.

extreme cases as was seen in the wake of Cavalcade to Canberra) to a contest to see which paper/reporter could achieve her downfall.

Femininity as Achilles Heel: Australian Women Leaders Set Up to Fail?

Another lesson to be drawn from the analysis of the attacks on George concerns the vulnerability of women leaders to continued media attacks when problems arise during their leadership term. Several journalists and academics, together with Carmen Lawrence, herself, have remarked upon this in relation to the attacks on Lawrence that culminated in a Royal Commission[3]. Referred to variously as the 'Madonna-whore' syndrome and as the 'pedestal effect', the developing Australian propensity to predict, then report women political leaders' failure through the media is alarming. Initially George's arrival was heralded as a triumph in the media, however, her fall from grace was predicted, hastened and sensationalised through media reporting. Her experience, together with recent examples of Cheryl Kernot and Natasha Stott Despoja, testifies to the highly problematic effects of emphasising a woman's difference through rhetorical and visual signifiers of femininity and deploying such signifiers as central elements in attacks on women politicians. Used to increase her newsworthiness in the initial stage of her office, such signifiers create impossible expectations of her performance. They discursively set up the conditions of promise that inevitably are disappointed—resulting in a highly public fall from grace. The relative rarity of female leaders contributes to their ongoing newsworthiness and to the emphasis on their femininity as unusual and a point of interest. Of particular concern are the occasions in which particular significations of femininity are deployed as the central element in both political and media attacks on women leaders' performance, credibility and achievements. This has become an established pattern in Australian political reporting that has not diminished despite increased numbers of women having achieved leadership positions.

Reporting Feminism

The thesis has shown that feminists and feminist concerns are reported in complex and contradictory ways within news and current affairs media. Used as a scare word

[3] The Marks Royal Commission was established by the Court WA Liberal Government to investigate whether former Premier Carmen Lawrence had misled the WA Parliament over her knowledge of the events leading to the tabling of a petition in the WA Parliament that led to the suicide of Perth lawyer, Penny Easton.

by some reporters, and as a wedge to distinguish certain high-profile women advocates for improved rights for women from their so-called 'normal' or 'ordinary' sisters, feminism is not publicly supported by most media organisations. Despite this shunning of the *label* feminist an implicit support for the loose concept of 'equality' underlies much reporting of social issues even though the specific strategies and debates around the achievement of equality within many contexts remains un(der)reported. Thus the press maintains a 'liberal' guise.

It is arguable that certain types of reports—such as the extended personalised interview that canvasses how public figures (particularly women) balance the demands of career and family, and at what cost—are possible because of the combined effects of tabloidisation and feminism. The questions that were put to Jennie George in a few interviews about the challenges of working in a masculine organisational culture and representing the needs of both female and male members, also reveal feminist-informed understandings of these issues and debates. Furthermore, certain genres (such as Radio National's Life Matters program hosted by well-known liberal feminist Geraldine Doogue) are made possible because of the influence of feminism on public debate, social policies, audience interests and experience, and on organisations (at least those in the public sector).

These individual reports and programs indicate a conscious willingness by some sections of the media to address a feminist audience, albeit intermittently and often only at the margins. The analysis of the reporting of three key events of George's presidency, however, also demonstrates clearly the way 'feminism' was specifically deployed to discredit women political actors or to construct them as 'unnatural' or other to 'normal' women and opposed to the interests of men.

The analysis of the reporting of George's election to the ACTU presidency demonstrates the contradictory nature of media references to George's 'feminism' particularly when coupled with her masculine surname. It also indicated that both George and the ACTU were aware of the potential for the newsworthy feminist aspects of her election to be reported in ways that had both negative and positive implications for the organisation and its relationship to its members and potential members.

Rhetorical and visual signifiers of femininity were persistently deployed throughout the reporting of George's presidency as key aspects of her identity. Frequently these articulated with her identification as a feminist. In some instances, feminism was opposed to her credentials as a 'normal' woman or a 'good' unionist; in others, feminism was reported as one among several components of her identity. It is notable that at time when George's actions or performance were under attack both her femininity and her feminism were deployed as a means through which to position her as lacking authority or acting in opposition to the interests of readers. Frequently, additional factors such as her class, her status as a leading unionist, and her political affiliation to the Left were also significant elements of the attacks. It was only in very rare instances that her ethnicity or her background in a white-collar (teaching) profession were included in such reports. Femininity and feminism appear to have been the most newsworthy aspects of George's identity, particularly in relation to her position as first woman president of a masculine organisation.

The vast majority of reports that assessed George's presidency in 1999 and 2000 constructed her feminism and/or her symbolic value as the first female ACTU president as a defining and, at the same time, limiting feature—often as her *only* distinctive contribution. That which made George unique and highly newsworthy at the time of her election, as well as constituting part of her value to the organisation, was used against her in the attacks that preceded her resignation. The assessments of her achievements were still limited by traditional masculine concepts of leadership and the specific strategies George adopted (and encouraged the ACTU to adopt) to build and strengthen the representation of women within the union movement were not considered seriously within these mainstream media assessments.

George's feminism was reported variously as one of several aspects of her identity. In some reports her presidency was celebrated as a great achievement for *all* women, for feminists, in particular, for George, herself, and for the ACTU and union movement in general. In other reports, her feminism, along with her affiliation to the Left and her previous membership of the CPA, was reported in ways that opposed her to the presumed interests of the audience and the nation. Her feminism was also, from time to time, reported in conjunction with other aspects of her identity such as

race and class, in ways that invited the audience to identify with her or, indeed, feel a sense of national pride in Australia's pluralistic egalitarian society where a woman such as George could be both a woman and a 'true blue' Aussie battler, and could be *both* a woman and make it as head of the Australian union movement.

The continuance of such deeply entrenched gendered patterns of reporting and the ways in which they articulate with attacks made on women political actors by their political opponents is deeply problematic for women concerned about improving women's representation in the political process. It is also a matter of key interest to feminist media researchers and those who participate in political campaigns.

Conclusion

The thesis has argued for increased feminist research into news media and the significance of such research to improving the capacity of women to participate more fully in politics. Through the detailed analysis of the reportage of Jennie George's presidency, it has demonstrated specific ways in which femininity is mobilised in attacks on women political actors by their political opponents and through the media. It has shown that the increasing emphasis on personal and private sphere concerns that is characteristic of contemporary news and infotainment media can be problematic for women political actors. Whilst it may create opportunities and vehicles for women to build affinity with audiences who have 'turned off' conventional news, and indeed, party politics, it also is characterised by a tone of address and focus that emphasises women's 'otherness' to men in ways that frequently represent women as *lacking* the qualities necessary to succeed in the public sphere. In particular, in news accounts of women political actors, the deployment of myths, stereotypes and figures of femininity can work strongly against women's credibility as leaders. Most notably, the thesis finds that in attacks on women leaders by both political opponents and media critics rhetorical and visual representations of femininity are most often deployed as weapons.

These representations are not specific to the reporting of Jennie George. They have been applied to many other Australian (and international) women politicians. These

representations have political effects. They may influence the success of these women in their careers, and the views and attitudes of women who are considering politics as their future. They may also influence the views and attitudes of men and women who do, or do not, vote for such women representatives, and/or are influential in determining promotion within political parties and organisations. Whilst news accounts are not the *only* source of information on politics, industrial relations or public policy, they remain a very important source. In addition they have a privileged status due to the myths of 'truth', 'objectivity' and 'authenticity' that continue to adhere to news as a genre. This is despite increasing public cynicism about the credibility of some sections of the media and conflicting audience (and industry) views about the credibility of specific sections of news and current affairs media (Pearson & Brand 2001). Given the continuing low levels of representation of women in political parties and leadership positions within both corporate and non-government organisations, media representation of the limited number of women leaders currently in public life is highly relevant to the struggles for equality in Australian public life and policy. These representations should be a matter of great concern not only to feminist media researchers and those interested in a political career, but to all interested in the workings of democracy and the media.

Post Script

Jennie George was eventually preselected as ALP candidate for the south coast NSW House of Representatives seat of Throsby. This was not her first choice and she had said several times that she did not want to be imposed by the State office on an electorate to which she did not already belong. Her candidacy was contested by some in the branch who wanted a local candidate and by others who supported the Right. Finally, she was elected ALP member for Throsby in the 2001 Federal election. Her name is seldom now mentioned in the press.

The End

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