

The Vice-Chancellor on the
West Committee report





I trust it is not a habit unique to myself to experience a very good feeling on the sighting or hearing of certain words—for example, humanitarianism, civilisation, impartial judgement, restitution. Some words that refer to one or another aspect of human morality have historical associations so sweeping and so beneficial that there is an automatic reaction of pleasure or contentment when one encounters them.

Consider, on a less exalted plane, the following four terms: non-discrimination, dispute resolution, transparency, and harmonisation. The first three are readily equatable with, respectively, the twentieth-century experience of the civil rights movement, the discovery of ways of avoiding war or other violence, and the demand for government behaviour to occur in the sunshine, rather than in secret. “Harmonisation” is a bit harder to link to a particular social experience but in music it connotes a pleasant blend of the parts within the whole.

The MAI—Multilateral Agreement on Investment—conjured up in Paris by the OECD makes major use of the terms non-discrimination, dispute resolution, transparency, and harmonisation. But these now signify something different from their usual associations. Non-discrimination, instead of meaning “let’s be fair to every person equally” (or even “let’s overcome our bad habit of demeaning the humble”) now means “let’s give the Fortune 500 a fair go”. Seriously. In the proposed treaty, non-discrimination means no nation should commit the abominable deed of erecting a barrier to foreign investment. Even a town council that has a policy of favouring the employment of locals is seen to be in need of some kind of enlightenment here. They should stop discriminating. The OECD will see to it that they do. Any government that signs the MAI (have sheep ever gone so merrily to slaughter?) will be prohibited from “discriminating”.

The next term, dispute resolution, has undergone an even more radical change. What does the phrase connote to you? Perhaps balance? compromise? justice? Well, here’s what it connotes to the Paris Twenty-Nine. A corporation that is unhappy with (or let’s say, feels oppressed by) a host-government, can take that government before a tribunal. Will this be the ICJ—the International Court of Justice (which has so far permitted only states to bring action)? No. Will it be the domestic courts? No. It is a new tribunal. The wording is, “The tribunal may award pecuniary compensation for any loss or damage to the requesting Party’s investor or investment ...Tribunal awards shall be final and binding.”

These tribunals have to do with the greatly extended concept of a foreign corporation’s right to be compensated if new legislation, such as environmental protection, causes them to lose out on future profits. According to Robert Howse and Jonathan Feldman of the University of Toronto Law Faculty (are you sitting down?), “The arbitration rules that apply to investor-state dispute settlement under the MAI contemplate a secret process, where neither the pleadings ... nor the reasons for decisions are public unless permitted by both parties.”

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NEWS IN BRIEF

LIBRARY DIRECTOR ON BOOKS

The Friends of the State Library's "Books in My Life" series continues on Wednesday 6 May with guest speaker Robyn Collins, director of the State Library since November last year.

Robyn Collins came to South Australia from Tasmania, where she had been Director of the Tasmanian State Library. Before that she was Chief Librarian of Logan City Libraries in Queensland. She was a founding director of Jam Roll Press, a small publishing house specialising in books for children.

Institute Building, North Terrace, 1.00pm. Admission \$5 (\$3 concession and Friends of State Library).

INFORMATION INFRASTRUCTURE SECONDMENT

The Barr Smith Library's Stephen Cramond has been seconded to the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) in the position of Executive Officer, Information Infrastructure Liaison.

The position will support international collaboration among the communities involved in higher education information infrastructure and also develop the collaborative agreement announced in 1997 between the UK Joint Information Systems Council (JISC) and the Council of Australian University Librarians (CAUL).

Areas identified for collaborative activity include consortium purchasing and licensing of commercial databases, cooperative subject-based gateways to Internet resources, mirroring of datasets, and user authentication and authorisation.

Funding for the opposition was made available through the National Priority [Reserve] Grant Fund for Library Infrastructure.

Stephen Cramond will be seconded to the AVCC until early 1999. He is based at the Barr Smith Library.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS

Dr Tim Doyle from the Mawson Graduate Centre for Environmental Studies, and the Professor of Politics, Doug McEachern, have published a new study of environmental politics in the Routledge "Introductions to Environment" series. The book was launched by Emeritus Professor Hugh Stretton at Unibooks on 14 April.

The book is intended as an introduction to environmental politics, explaining key concepts, conflicts, political systems and practices of policy-making, and drawing on a wide range of examples from around the world.

Areas examined include institutions such as parliaments, non-government organisations and social movements, the business sector and international ecopolitics.

Environment and Politics is available from Unibooks (rrp \$29.95).

GEOLOGIST HONOURED

The petroleum industry has recently given a posthumous honour to the former director of the National Centre for Petroleum Geology & Geophysics, Dr Bill Stuart.

Dr Stuart, who died in 1996, was awarded the Lewis G Weeks Memorial Gold Medal. It is the industry's highest award.

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He has also begun his PhD in computer science, continuing work into the field of computer vision.

While Anthony's family will be celebrating his success, they will also be applauding the efforts of his father, Mr Ian Dick, who will graduate at the same ceremony (Monday, 27 April) as a Master of Engineering Science in Materials Welding & Joining.

Mr Dick first graduated from the University of Adelaide with a degree in Electrical Engineering in 1969. Having spent more than 25 years specialising in electronics and scientific instrumentation design with the CSIRO, he returned to the university to gain qualifications in welding and metallurgy.

"The CRC for Materials Welding & Joining offered a Graduate Diploma which involved basic metallurgy right through to welding engineering, so I decided to apply for it and was accepted into the first intake of that course. Halfway through the course I was offered the opportunity of converting to a Masters by the addition of a thesis, so I decided to go for it," he said.

Mr Dick's thesis focused on safety issues surrounding the use of industrial welding equipment.

"It's an important topic in that there are several

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Architecture and Planning Chapter: call for more alumni involvement

SOME YEARS AGO, an Architecture and Planning Chapter of the Alumni Association was inaugurated. Several hundred graduates and their partners travelled from various parts of Australia to celebrate the occasion in the Bonython Hall with a dinner and an evening of entertainment. Since then, a number of informal reunions and other activities have taken place. However, for a variety of reasons it has been difficult to establish a viable committee of interested people to initiate and coordinate activities.

It should be stressed that the activities of the Chapter are not intended to compete with those of the professional associations to which architects and planners may belong. On the other hand there may be

occasions when collaboration between the Alumni, the Faculty and the professional organisations would be beneficial to all.

An example of this is the forthcoming Evening of Victoriana on 26 May at Ayers House. This event is being organised by the Cornell Chapter in collaboration with the Architecture Chapter, with the cooperation of the Elder Conservatorium and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects SA Chapter.

Being part of the Architecture and Planning Chapter offers the following benefits to members:

- fellowship among graduates of the University of Adelaide
- networking among people from other disciplines

- access to information about a wide range of University activities
- access to library and sporting facilities
- access to social and intellectual activities arranged by the Alumni Association and its various Chapters.

The Architecture and Planning Chapter is looking for graduates who are willing to become involved with its organisation and planning of activities. Anyone interested should contact Albert Gillissen, trustee for Architecture and Planning, at Aldinga Beach on (08) 8556 3702.

—Albert Gillissen
Trustee: Architecture and Planning

An evening of Victoriana

THE CORNELL CHAPTER and the Architecture and Planning Chapter jointly invite all enthusiasts of the Victorian era to an "Evening of Victoriana" at Ayers House, one of Adelaide's most splendid nineteenth century homes.

Enjoy a three course meal with wines, Victorian drawing room music for voices, flute and piano, and an address on the architecture of nineteenth century Adelaide by distinguished architectural historian Brian Andrews.

Tuesday 26 May, at 7:30pm. \$50 per person. Period dress may be worn.

Bookings and enquiries: Ms Kinga Gasirowski at Alumni House, telephone 8303 4275. The Alumni Office accepts cheque or Visa Card/Mastercard/Bankcard; cash payments may be made in person at Alumni House.

Walking tour of historic Gilberton

THE AREA which is now Gilberton was purchased in England by Richard Blundell, a proprietor of the South Australia Company. In 1839, he was found guilty of embezzlement and sentenced to transportation for 7-14 years. By 1846 the land had passed to Joseph Gilbert, after whom the area is named. Gilbert did not live in the area but gradually released land for subdivision.

Local historian Diana Roberts will lead a walking tour of the historic residential suburb of Gilberton on Sunday 17 May at 11:00am. The

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