**Machiavelli Macklin or the Politics of Mediocrity?**

The current Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Jenny Macklin, is regarded by some as an enigma. This is probably because she is mostly invisible in the mainstream media. She appears to have adopted the strategy of a very low public profile in order to remain unaccountable for her appalling policies. She has taken the idea of ‘flying under the radar’ to a new level, so to speak. All we ever see or hear of her is ten seconds on TV or radio announcing the latest repressive measure her bureaucrats have dreamed up to make life more miserable for as many blacks as possible. Or maybe the latest carefully staged photo opportunity preferably in the midst of some happy group of innocent Aboriginal bystanders.

Such scripted photo opportunities, tv grabs and sound bites are also more likely to occur in carefully chosen remote communities where there are ‘real’ Aborigines and where language differences minimise the risk of embarrassing questions by the locals being heard or understood on radio or television. And in any such community it is always easy to find at least one disgruntled ‘elder’ who is happy to be paraded before the media and presented as evidence that Aboriginal people support the repressive and punitive policies being implemented by Minister Macklin. This is the dishonest and disingenuous manner in which policy issues affecting Aboriginal peoples are communicated to the rest of Australia.

The thing we have never seen yet is the Minister of mystery being subjected to a serious interrogation about her policies by any of our opinionated, high profile, media attack dogs of the likes of Tony Jones at one end of the spectrum or Allan Jones at the other.

That neither of the Jones boys have ever really challenged Macklin on her policies is not really surprising as both ends of the political spectrum in the media appear to either quietly or loudly approve of those policies. On one hand Tony Jones’ ABC-TV program *Lateline* has in the recent past been most praiseworthy of itself and the program’s own role in stirring up the false assertions and misrepresentations that resulted in the racist knee-jerk reaction today known as the “NT Intervention”.

On the other hand one would expect that right wing shock-jocks such as Allan Jones would loudly approve of Macklin’s policies because they would appreciate policies which demonise Aboriginal people as villains who live in dysfunctional communities with problems of their own making, as being completely in line with their own shrill assertions on commercial radio. The ‘blame the victim’ syndrome in the world of shock jock radio has been an essential staple of most Australian commercial radio for decades now.

This loving media approval of Macklin’s policies against Aboriginal people has enabled the Minister

to be not answerable in any way for the widespread suffering and pain that her policies produce. Instead, she can happily sit back and relax in the glow of praise splashed upon her by the little gaggle of latter day Aboriginal self-interested sycophants (in the old days called “Uncle Toms”). This glow of praise is disseminated by an ignorant and unquestioning mass media dutifully reporting and allowing acres of space to the “acceptable and responsible” Aboriginal “leaders” of the day. The fact that virtually all of the ideas and policies advocated by these right-wing, “responsible leaders” have been mostly miserable failures doesn’t seem to register in the minds of either Australian journalists or the greater Australian apathy and ignorance out in suburbia where most of the country’s populace reside.

At the same time, something that is almost completely unreported in the mainstream is that a large majority of informed and intelligent Aboriginal leaders around Australia now strongly condemn Macklin’s policies. The Australian public are instead told by their political leaders and mainstream media that only the dubious views of Noel Pearson, Warren Mundine et al are credible. Thus propaganda is transformed into popular public perceptions that further harden the already hard-core racist attitudes in Australian society. Indeed, if you ingest any of your information by reading tabloid newspapers, watching commercial television or listening to commercial radio (as most Aboriginal people do) then you too are being fed a regular diet of State contrived propaganda. We all should be conscious of this on a daily basis.

Nevertheless, at one stage in Macklin’s mediocre (rather than meteoric or meritocratic) elevation to Minister for Aboriginal Affairs (oh sorry, ‘Indigenous Affairs’ in the newspeak), I was inclined to dismiss her as yet another dopey nobody; a dull ALP lower echelon apparatchik being raised above her station by the factional overlords as a reward for years of mindless service to the Party. But I have been since forced to revise my opinion of Macklin in light of her remarkable talent for being able to generate suffering and pain on a vast scale whilst managing to remain completely unaccountable, and not even be seriously challenged in any forum in the land.

Jenny Macklin, I salute you! To have been able to achieve all this whilst at the same time as presenting an image of absent-minded, motherly dullness is an act of political mastery. To have been able to fool all of the people all of the time (so far) is something no other Minister for Aboriginal Affairs has ever been able to do. And I’ll bet you have even got a plan of how you will ultimately escape being held responsible when the whole house of cards comes tumbling down. I can’t wait to see that one.

Yes folks, I give you Machiavelli Macklin. A Master of politics and Master of deception. A Magical mystery woman who can make people believe that black is white and white is black (and I’m not talking about Warren Mundine at this point). This is a female politician who is so cunning that she could well end up in Julia Gillard’s shoes.

Come to think of it, didn’t my comrades at the Aboriginal Embassy acquire one of Gillard’s shoes? Someone should check and see if it is the same size as Macklin’s.

**Gary Foley**

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