



Gary Johns's new book, Noel Pearson, *The Oz and sonderweg*

Guy Rundle | Apr 29, 2011

Readers of *The Oz* will have noted the extensive space given to former Keating minister, and now IPA hack, Gary Johns's new book: *Aboriginal self-determination: The Whiteman's dream*.

Johns's argument, as the title suggests, is that notions like "self-determination" have been projected onto Aboriginal people by white leftists with their own agenda, and that we have heard little of what Aboriginal people really want.

It's a book so important that it needed a launch, and it's getting one — by, erm, Andrew Bolt, at Melbourne's Celtic Club, on Monday.

Yes, that's right, a white guy is launching another white guy's book criticising white people for projecting their fantasies onto Aboriginal people.

The publishers couldn't find a single Indigenous person to speak up for the book — or didn't try. (Mal Brough! is launching it in Brisbane. But Wesley Aird will, as chair of the event, be doing the housekeeping).

Of course the obvious go-to for any attack on the left's Indigenous politics would have been Noel Pearson. But Pearson doesn't have much time for Johns. In 2006, Pearson noted that, with Keith Windschuttle's genocide denialism and other attacks, indigenous people had been subjected to:

"... a relentless and seemingly endless cultural cleansing....There is a breathtaking vehemence to this neo-conservatism...."

He went on to note that:

"The worst effect of the neo-conservative ascendancy is that opinions that normally would be mean and ungracious in a generous, democratic country become acceptable and indeed de rigueur.

An example is Gary Johns's view that government does not have any obligation to support the cultures of national minorities as well as the culture of the majority...."

The term Pearson used for this development was "sonderweg", the German term for "peculiar path" — applied, after 1945, to speculation on how Germany's culture had managed to deliver the Holocaust.

Given the new prominence that Johns's arguments — which are effectively a form of cultural dissolutionism/exterminism — are being given, it's no wonder Pearson is being given short shrift.

Take a look, for example, at today's [Cut and Paste](#) — still fighting long after the bunker's been overrun — in which Pearson's position on the Australian's beat-up about Bess Price et al is completely misrepresented by selective quotation — quoting only one side of an article in which Pearson strove to be even-handed. It's a crappy and disrespectful thing to do to your own columnist.

But at *The Oz*, the IPA, the CIS and elsewhere, the push is now on to support the “dissolutionist/cultural exterminist” position, and Pearson's complex arguments about how modernity and traditional modes of life can be combined is becoming a nuisance to them.

Perhaps they hope he'll go away. He certainly won't be able to avoid this stoush for long — the wolverines are on the sonderweg.