



# THE EDITORS

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NEXT MEETING.....NEXT MEETING.....NEXT MEETING.....NEXT MEETING.....

## Christmas Dinner

The final meeting for 1984 is the Christmas Dinner, a banquet at Choys Inn in Chinatown on Friday 30 November at 7pm. In case you lost your application form, we enclose another and urge you to complete it quickly and send in before 20 November. Your personal guests are also welcome. This year's guest speakers have all been invited. To date, Les and Valerie Murray have accepted.

## TAFE Editorial Course

We apologise for omitting to send the TAFE analysis on courses for editors with the last newsletter. Please find a copy enclosed this time. Their findings are interesting, though perhaps well known to many of us. The final point should give heart to freelancers.

## Last Meeting

The last formal meeting for 1984 was held on 3 October at the Kirribilli Neighbourhood Centre. Owing to a power failure, it took place by candlelight, a situation which our speaker, Les Murray, described as 'the blind leading the invisible'. The power failure also meant there was no dinner, but we thank our caterers nonetheless for the cold snacks they provided.

Les Murray spoke of the two aspects of making a poem. First there is the creative and atavistic aspect - the daring synthesis - and then the editorial aspect - the shaping and cutting. The educated artist has to strive to recover the primitive, while the editor in him works at the service of form. How does the editor avoid tyranny? Good editing keeps the mana in a poem or theory. Les explained that he calls any large theory, such as that of Freud or Darwin, a poem. Incidentally, Freud should have spoken of the 'editor' rather than the 'censor' in the personality.

Seer plus editor equals artist; each by itself is inadequate. On the one hand the seer can degenerate into a drug addict: on the other the editor is by nature a Tory. Les then read his own poem 'Art History: The Suburb of Surreals'.

The editor has to cope with the problem of power - what is edited out ceases to exist. We have to examine the bases on which we exclude in order to avoid tyrannies.

Les then went on to talk about editing Poetry Australia, which he did for six years. He was committed to quality, that is the excitement and grip of the poetic experience, the mysterious tense charm that is poetry.

Naturally they received a lot of bad poetry. Time Magazine once said that there are more people who write poetry than read it. Some of the contributors had apparently never read anything but Banjo Patterson; others were unaware that any poets had written since the death of Tennyson. There was a lot of 'drip-feed' poetry -

the kind  
that meanders  
down  
the page  
in the hope  
that  
it will be  
paid for  
by the  
line.

Les said he tried to help these poets to grow, to gain freedom from dependence on a particular world view. A good poem is timeless.

Les described himself as 'going in for pedantry'. The instrument of language mustn't be dulled. He is a stickler for spelling, because you will miss fine distinctions if you don't know the difference between 'censor' and 'sensor', for instance.

In the process of editing the new Oxford Book of Australian Verse Les has read most of Australian poetry. The sectional poetry is bad. Bush balladry rapidly loses its freshness and lapses into formalised repetition, and posh poetry is often derivative and lacking in direct response to the Australian environment. Les said that his Oxford Book will have more popular verse than other anthologies. Some of the early

ancestors of the bush ballad had a strong quality of life, and to demonstrate Les read us a poem by Charles Thatcher, 'Taking the Census'.

In Les's anthology no poet gets more than three poems - but surely the best poet can be felt in three poems? He will eschew biographies and critical apparatus to leave more room for poems. Besides, too much prose makes the poems look like specimens.

Les also mentioned the difficulty of dealing with Aboriginal verse in the anthology. How much should go in? In a section by itself, or was that apartheid? Or should it be scattered among the white verse (which is arranged chronologically)? If there wasn't much would he be accused of tokenism? One of the problems was that very few Aboriginal poets were any good in English.

He had made some good discoveries, he said, and read us a poem called 'West Paddocks' by Arthur Davies, first published in 1940 in the first Jindyworobak anthology.

After his talk Les answered the question: Should an editor ever alter a poem? He said he wouldn't wear it being done to him and he doesn't do it to others. In his present anthology he has felt tempted not to correct or 'improve' but abridge. It is a common error, especially among Australians, to write too much.

### AGPS Style Manual

Requests for help with the next edition of the AGPS Style Manual are coming into the Editors from all directions. We were asked to include the following official invitation from the Senate.

The Australian Government Publishing Service (AGPS) is preparing a new edition of the Commonwealth Government's Style Manual, with the assistance of an Editorial Committee. Publication is proposed in late 1986.

The Manual lays down editorial and publishing standards for Commonwealth Government publications, and is a major reference work for authors, editors, typists, designers and printers in both the public and private sectors.

The Committee now invites your comments and suggestions for improvement

of the manual. Please send these by 30 November, 1984 to:

Director Publishing  
Australian Government Publishing Service  
GPO Box 84  
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Telephone inquiries may be made to Editorial and Design, AGPS on  
telephone (062) 95 4711.

(Senator Ronald Elstob)  
Chairman, Editorial Committee  
September 1984

Also enclosed is the AGPS questionnaire which suggest topics you may  
wish to comment on. Please send your ideas to the address indicated.

Copyright Council

Latest two bulletins on Computer and Moral Copyright have been received.