

We The People

Program 126

The Sounds of a Dictator



The English language is complex yet beautiful in part because it's constructed of words from many countries and languages. Somehow we have adopted and amplified this aberrated language and given it a unique Australian ring with a rare and individual application and relevance in this sun burnt country. At times I love to say a word out loud so as to surprise and please myself with its sound and the fit with its meaning. Words carry a melodic character and have an innate life and pleasant resonance while a word spoken is much more powerful than a word simply read. I suppose the best resonance comes to life in poetry where the words blend and support each other as in song. We use words to sooth and we use words to convey anger and displeasure too but today I would like to reflect for a time on words that simply sound captivating and for a good reason.

To the west of Sydney lies the Blue Mountains and Katoomba, what a great word Katoomba is and it nearly sounds African to me, Katoomba. There's Kurrajong, Mitagong, Molong, Grong Grong, Wanagaratta and Coolanagtta, wonderful words and very Australian. Many of our place names have aboriginal roots and have been perfectly adopted by us to resonate in their oral corruption. Odd but captivating names like Yamba, Tumbi Umbi, Wagga Wagga, Woop Woop and Humpty Do. Some of the areas in beautiful Tasmania have particularly wonderful names like Freycinet, Tarkine, Aberfoyle and Boobyalla while Kentish has a special attraction. Now some places in Australia have names which have become synonymous with struggle and stand for great value the equivalent of ANZAC if you will. One of these is the Gordon below Franklin River in Tasmania where in the 1980's a fierce battle raged to stop a proposed hydro dam being built and the subsequent loss of magnificent forest and wilderness. I remember it well and but for the intervention of Bob Hawke it would have been lost to a short sighted Premier Gray who was ultimately thrown from office for his inability to resonate with the land and the people. Thank God we have the wonderful forest areas of the Gordon Franklin won at great cost and with names that carry the infamy of political dictators who would have destroyed them. Words are powerful things.

Now let's reflect on the sounds of reckless decision making and the architect of environmental destruction. It's our own Prime Minister Tony Abbott who says we have enough if not too much forest area locked up and there won't be any more. He has applied to the UNESCO's World Heritage Committee to strip the Tasmanian World Heritage Area of 74,000 hectares of highly prized forest. Mr Abbott believes Australia is open for business again and while there is peace in Tasmania now with the timber industry he takes no notice and says he has a mandate.....no he does not and the loss will be enormous. So very much of the Australian landscape has been cleared and surely this PM could leave it alone and not let it be converted to wood chip or news print. Surely the forest has an intrinsic right to be, without any economic rationalism. His project to dismantle the world heritage forest protection is as stupid as his unaffordable maternity leave proposal and we know it along with the rest of his party. He claims a mandate for that too and he just as surely doesn't have one for that either.

When it comes to sounds resonating in the Australian bush Abbott loves the chain saw and the sound of economic rationalism chopping away at our very soul. The world is much more than that and we haven't come this far and made the mistakes we have just to let this bloke wreak havoc on Tasmania's priceless wilderness area. There are a thousand reasons not to do this including biodiversity, weed growth, climate contribution, animal refuge, bird habitat, CO2 capture and so it goes on. This proposal of Tony Abbotts will go down in history as one of the Coalitions most ill-conceived illogical ideas ever and we must have our say, lest he prevails.

The sounds of Australia and the Wollemi Pine of the Blue Mountains, the beauty of Wine Glass Bay and the sanctity of the Tarkine, the Florentine, Butlers Gorge and the Upper Styx resonate with me as words and places of my beloved country. I want my grand children to see it as well in all its biodiversity and majesty. I encourage you to demand Tony Abbott not interfere with Tasmania's World Heritage forest as in my view to do so, will result in his loss of office, his credibility and any environmental resonance he has left.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley