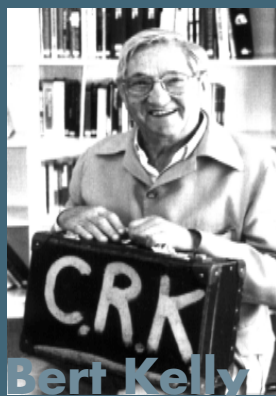


The Bert Kelly Series 2000

Established in 1993, this series of The Centre for Independent Studies includes Lectures, Seminars and Policy Forums that add to the process of public education on a wide range of subjects in economics and other social sciences. It was inaugurated to present and encourage debate on vital national issues to a wide audience.



C.R. 'Bert' Kelly was a member of parliament and a federal government minister. Possibly best known for his 'Modest Member' and 'Modest Farmer' articles published in newspapers and magazines nationally, he was for years the lone parliamentary campaigner for free market ideas and against protection. Bert died in Adelaide on 17 January 1997.



The Bert Kelly series now uses as its logo the famously recognisable suitcase of Charles Robert Kelly

Australia's Universities: Last of the Great Socialist Enterprises



Steven Schwartz

Combining the first Bert Kelly Lecture of 2000 and the launch of the new *Liberalising Learning* research programme required a speaker who can deliver.

Vice-Chancellor of Murdoch University, Professor Steven Schwartz, lived up to the challenge by presenting a lively lecture on 10 February arguing for the deregulation of Australia's universities.

Professor Schwartz used five-star hotel service as a model for the future of university services in a deregulated system. Although a loose analogy, he challenged the idea that universities were incapable of providing this level of service.

'A few hours ago, I checked into the Park Hyatt Hotel,' he said. 'When I arrived, a concierge met my car and greeted me at the door. She escorted me to a comfortable chair, and offered me a welcome drink.'

'She already had my details on computer, so she had pre-printed the necessary documents and key card. All I had to do was sign the credit card slip. I was then escorted to my room where I found my bags waiting for me.'

'The elapsed time was about five minutes and the stress level was less than zero.'

'Let's compare [this] to the ordeal faced by students who wish to enrol at a typical Australian university.'

'The Hyatt did not ask me to go to one queue to complete a registration form, a second to collect my key, and a third to arrange credit facilities with the cashier. So why are universities different?'

'They also have student details. So why can't advising, data-entry, payment of fees, and issuing of library cards and parking stickers be done all at once—a one-stop shop—just like a hotel?'

Universities are capable of providing this type of service to students, but are currently restricted due to ineffective government funding arrangements and student selection procedures. They are not, in short, subject to market forces. Nor are they adequately equipped to deal with the increasingly global nature of education.

'Australian universities are being squeezed from both directions,' said Professor Schwartz.

'Our salaries and facilities do not compare with those offered by prestigious international research universities, nor can we compete on price with low cost private providers. If we want to survive, then we have no choice but to change.'

'Deregulation of the university system will be the engine that drives change.'

'In an era when electricity suppliers, telephone companies, airlines, hospitals, tram companies, and even prisons are required to compete on service standards and price, higher education remains the last of the great socialist enterprises.'

The Idea of a University Beyond 2000



Alan Gilbert

‘The 900-year-old monopoly that traditional universities have exercised in the provision and certification of higher education is under irresistible pressure. It will not survive, and its passing will represent the greatest single revolution that has faced universities in 900 years.’

Professor Alan Gilbert, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, offered an insightful analysis of the higher education system in Australia, and the challenges facing universities in the new millennium, when he delivered the third Bert Kelly Lecture for 2000 on 21 February in Melbourne.

His forecast was not all doom and gloom. In fact, Professor Gilbert was positive about the future role of universities—provided they are willing to re-invent themselves for a new era.

‘Traditional campus-based universities will succeed in making an effective adjustment to the new, post-monopolistic world in which education, and particularly higher education, will literally be one of the most important and lucrative “industries” in the world,’ he said.

‘But no university will survive by doing nothing.’

‘In this contemporary higher education revolution, visionary thinking, planning and entrepreneurship are increasingly evident around the world. Key decisions are being made **now**, and the opportunities will not last forever.’

So can Australian universities respond to the challenge?

‘In this environment of public funding stringency, governments from both sides of politics have resorted to policies that have contrived . . . to produce a “dumbing down” of the system.’ This leads to a lack of resources and thus an inability for Australian universities to compete on an international scale.

Professor Gilbert pointed to a study he commissioned at the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research looking at the costs and benefits of higher education in this country.

‘In summary they show that, in a strictly budget bottom-line sense, the Australian taxpayer and the Australian Treasury are actually making a profit out of higher education.’

‘[When] coupled with the undeniable reality that Australian universities currently lack the resources to be internationally competitive, existing funding levels will be defensible only within a public policy framework facilitating major sustained expansion in funding from private sources.’

‘[Many] abhor private funding, . . . [however] the devil is not in being private, or partially private; the devil is in the failure of any university, however resourced, to be scrupulous in preserving its core values.’

Academic Freedom and the Well-Managed University



Lauchlan Chipman

Misconceptions about university managerialism are preventing Australian universities from progress—this was the clear message of the fourth Bert Kelly Lecture for 2000.

Professor Lauchlan Chipman, Vice-Chancellor of Central Queensland University, argued in Brisbane on 29 February that universities would not be compromised by operating in a more businesslike way—contrary to much popular opinion.

‘The phrase “university managerialism” has become a voodoo phrase amongst its critics, much like “economic rationalism”,’ he said.

‘Much of the prejudice . . . against managerialism is based on quite naive, not to say false, assumptions about the world of business, whose corporate culture has supposedly now migrated into the upper echelons of our universities.’

‘Of all the objections to managerialism, perhaps the most pervasive is that somehow its values are incompatible with many of the values of the university, most notably academic freedom.’

Fears that more businesslike management for universities would encourage a ‘ruthless’ corporate attitude, thus leading to infringements upon the freedom of universities to choose research and teaching areas, and to pursue the outcome of research even if it goes against popular wisdom, are misguided.

‘It is not the organisational structure that determines the extent to which values such as academic freedom prevail, but rather the moral integrity and courage of those who occupy key positions of authority in whichever structure is in place,’ said Professor Chipman.

‘The cherished values that are vital for a flourishing, creative, independent, and far-sighted university need not be compromised by a more effective management structure; on the contrary, that structure should exist to make them . . . robust as never before.’

‘Australian universities need to be managed as never before if they are to triumph, on behalf of their constituencies, in the industrial revolution which is taking place worldwide in the higher education industry.’

CIS would like to thank
Mallesons Stephen Jaques for their
support of these events