

# The university that dare not speak its name

BY MARGARET PERROT

**WOLLONGONG** — The sacking of Dr Ted Steele from Wollongong University has attracted a great deal of media attention in the past month. Much less well known is the university's treatment of *Green Left Weekly* journalist and anti-nuclear campaigner Dr Jim Green.

In 1997 the university's Science and Technology Studies (STS) department forwarded Green's name to the vice-chancellor, Gerard Sutton, for consideration for an honorary fellowship. Appointments such as these facilitate collaboration between the recipient and other staff and students on a fairly informal basis; as such, they are rarely controversial, nor are they competitive.

Sutton rejected the application because of Green's alleged "inappropriate and unauthorised use of the university's name". Green used the university letterhead on a handful of covering letters in 1997, to which were attached summaries of his PhD thesis concerning the proposed replacement of the nuclear research reactor in the Sydney suburb of Lucas Heights.

The covering letters made it clear that the research was Green's, and did not state or imply that the university had a formal position on the matter, yet he was accused of expressing his views "in a way that would indicate that they reflect the University of Wollongong's formal position".

"Academics at Wollongong Uni have differing views on this matter", says Green. "My use of the letterhead was either a complete non-issue, or a trivial breach of protocol. Such protocols are poorly defined, as the uni-

versity's director of personnel and finances has acknowledged, and they are poorly understood by teaching staff and postgraduate students."

Another of Green's "crimes" was to use the university as a postal address, rather than his home address, because of repeated examples of thuggish behaviour by supporters of the plan for a new reactor at Lucas Heights. Green was also held responsible for being associated with the university on a leaflet which he had no role in producing and has never even seen!



Jim Green addressing a public meeting in the Adelaide Town Hall to protest plans to dump ANSTO's radioactive waste in South Australia.

"Sutton never gave me a chance to defend myself against these ridiculous allegations", Green told *Green Left Weekly*. "And he ignored requests to meet with me and the then head of the STS department to resolve the matter."

In a letter dated December 1, 1998, Sutton "accepted" Green's explanations for the above-mentioned incidents. But the application for an honorary fellowship was again rejected, this time on the grounds that Green's academic standing was "not yet sufficient to warrant the granting

of honorary academic status". However, people with comparable academic records have been granted honorary fellowships, and Sutton has repeatedly ignored requests to explain this apparent inconsistency.

In the December 1998 letter, Sutton refers to Green's "profile with respect of nuclear disarmament and the debate over the future of the nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights".

It seems reasonable to ask whether Sutton's actions may have been influenced by the close links between Wollongong University and the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO), operator of the Lucas Heights reactor. The links are pervasive — an article in the March 2, 1999 *Illawarra Mercury* quoted an ANSTO officer describing

the Lucas Heights nuclear reactor plant as "almost an extension of the Wollongong University campus".

The links include financial contributions. For example, ANSTO contributed \$100,000 towards the university's mass spectrometer, according to the article. And the links go right to the top: the chief executive of ANSTO is an emeritus professor from Wollongong University. According to the *Illawarra Mercury*, Sutton used to work at the Lucas Heights nuclear plant. However, a long serving ANSTO scientist disputes this, and Sutton himself has ignored requests to clarify the point.

Did Sutton work at Lucas Heights and if so has this influenced his decisions? Has he been influenced by the extensive links between Wollongong

University and ANSTO? Shouldn't the application to grant Green an honorary fellowship be assessed independently of Sutton in light of these concerns? Sutton refuses to answer these questions.

Green says the university's treatment of him is hypocritical: "The university has a media unit which promotes the research and accomplishments of its staff and postgraduate students. But it seems that critics of the ANSTO or other corporate partners and sponsors of the university are treated very differently. If I was to take the university's bizarre edicts literally, I would have to say I completed a PhD thesis, and have been working on a contract basis as a lecturer and tutor, at a university which I am not at liberty to name!" ■

## Pink tests for girls, blue tests for boys?



Imagine you are sitting your year 12 exam. Girls sit at the tables with pink-coloured test papers, while boys sit at the tables with the blue test papers. It may sound ridiculous, but this is exactly what is being proposed by the president of the (British) Adam Smith Institute, Dr Madsen Pirie.

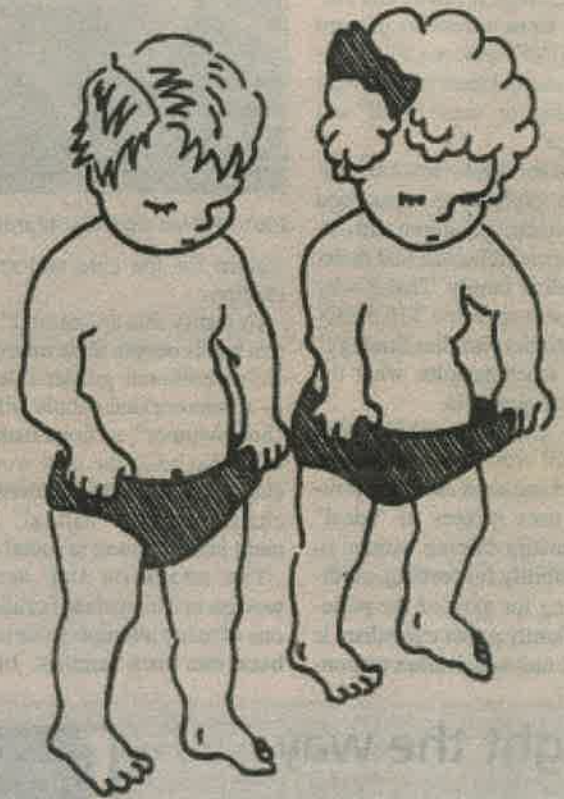
Pirie's arguments have received considerable coverage in the Australian press. This is just the latest in a series of arguments by academics and the establishment media attempting to prove that affirmative action programs in schools have disadvantaged boys.

The development of these programs in the 1970s, under the pressure of a strong feminist movement, has contributed to significant improvements in the marks that female students achieve in most subjects at year 12 level.

Despite the fact that boys still have good year 12 results, the reactionary attacks of some academics and the media has led to a national inquiry into boys' education, which will report later this year. Girls' education has never been the subject of such an inquiry.

Dr Pirie argues men and women learn in fundamentally different ways. He says that boys are risk-takers and therefore prefer cramming for exams that test empirical knowledge while girls prefer continuous assessment where they can explain ideas and give "personal responses". He also argues that boys are better at seeing the "big picture" while girls have a better grasp on detail because they are methodical.

Pirie comes to the conclusion that the move towards continuous assessment over the last two decades has discriminated against boys, and boosted the marks of girls. This is a problem, he says, because "if we select the methodical over the risk takers ... will Britain still be capable of meeting the challenges the world throws its way? While the country might be more peaceable ... will it still be as inventive and creative? Will it still produce penicillin and hovercraft?" He proposes that male and female students be



"OH! THAT EXPLAINS THE DIFFERENCE IN OUR WAGES"

steered into different methods of assessment.

The idea that boys are "big-picture" risk takers, while girls relate to emotions and bury themselves in detail regurgitates sexist stereotypes. Assessing girls on their knowledge of detail with frequent assignments, while assessing boys on their "big picture" ideas in an exam will make study more difficult for girls than boys. It is reminiscent of the days when girls were barred from studying science and maths based subjects because their brains were "more suited" to humanities.

Far from being a "crisis" in boys' education, they still have access to options at school that girls don't.

One of the reasons that female students do better *on the whole* at school than boys is because very few young women take trade-based vocational subjects. Sexism has ruled out apprenticeships as a viable option for most young women. Girls are thus more likely than boys to enrol in academic subjects.

But higher marks in schools do not

translate into a better position in the work force for women. Women are still concentrated in particular occupations, and earn considerably less money than men.

In the teaching service in NSW, for example, women make up 75% of primary teachers, but men are 75% of school principals and senior managers. Although female law students in NSW universities do better than male students, on average women lawyers' starting salaries are \$5000 a year less than men's, and they are more likely to be unemployed.

Men who have not finished high school earn 30% more on average than women who have not.

Rather than attempting to make things harder for girls at school, we need to fight for gender equality of opportunity in all professions. This is how we can translate gains in schooling for women into real differences in women's lives.

BY JAQUIE MOON

[Jaquie Moon is a member of the socialist youth organisation Resistance.]

**Green LEFT** ANNUAL  
Green Left Weekly  
DINNER DANCE

'GLOBALISING RESISTANCE  
to CORPORATE TYRANNY  
and BUILDING the  
ALTERNATIVE'

Live music by  
**Anthony Poulsen  
& the Toe-Sucking  
Cowgirls**

**SATURDAY MARCH 31st, 7pm**  
GRANVILLE TOWN HALL, CARLTON ST, GRANVILLE

ENJOY A DELICIOUS 3-COURSE INTERNATIONAL FEAST

Speakers on: Free the Refugees Campaign

- May 1 (M1) global strike against corporate tyranny
- Socialist Alliance — a radical activist alternative to Liberal/Labor
- Cuba as Alternative — celebrate Cuba's ongoing revolution
- Cost: \$25 waged, \$15 unwaged, \$10 high school students

**BOOK NOW ON 9687 5134 — DON'T MISS OUT!**