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Pearson's Paradox : An Emergent Social Reality

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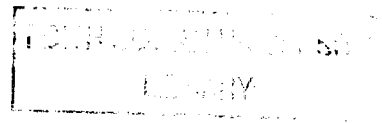
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Pearson's Paradox: An Emergent Social Reality.

By

Anthony Dews

A Thesis submitted as Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements for the Award of

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USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

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Abstract.

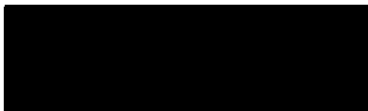
In his speech *The Light on the Hill* Noel Pearson criticises the nature of contemporary social reality in Australia. In his view this social reality is co-dependent in portraying Indigenous Australians as victims and non-Indigenous Australians as guilty. The result has been the generation of a welfare mentality to the structural disadvantage of Indigenous Australians.

I conclude that the debate Pearson has initiated is ongoing. This debate has adopted ideological overtones consistent with emphases on individual and community development and these emphases are emerging in policy. However I suggest that governments are seeking to divest responsibility for individual and community well being to those Indigenous Australians already constrained by relative structural disadvantage.

Declaration.

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief incorporate, without acknowledgement, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education; contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text or; contain any defamatory material.

Signed:

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.

Date: 31 October 2001.

Introduction.

Today we are seeing a new event take place. One which has the potential, given the social and political climate of the time, to again force Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia to reassess themselves and the reality they live in. The event is the recent speech by Noel Pearson titled *The Light on the Hill* in which he decried the welfare mentality which has, he believes, over time, resulted in his people becoming dependent on welfare payments for their survival and which has resulted in massive damage to Indigenous people and their culture.

For many years after Europeans arrived to colonise Australia in 1788 Indigenous Australians fitted a particular social reality and were identified according to the prevailing western view. They were the 'other' the native that was fated to be pushed aside in favour of the more civilised 'race' (Mudrooroo, 1995 p. 2). The same thinking pervaded other colonial societies, where this identity and reality was unquestioned based on the concept of Social Darwinism. Certainly the Indigenous Australians lacked the means to challenge the dominant version of events on a sustained basis and to bring their own reality to the attention of the non-Indigenous community. Non-Indigenous society fitted Indigenous Australians into its own social reality in a variety of ways and this is the subject of this thesis.

In recent decades this has begun to change and Indigenous Australians have become more effective in influencing the debate over Indigenous identity and issues that directly affect them. Events have occurred which have forced the non-Indigenous population to reassess the way it perceives Indigenous Australians. There are three events within the last four decades, which have significantly changed the views non-Indigenous Australians have of Indigenous Australians. The first was the Referendum of 1967, which forced non-Indigenous Australia to confront

the issue of Indigenous citizenship and to recognise that Indigenous people were citizens of Australia.

Second, the Wave Hill walkout by the Gurindji people in 1968 forced the non-Indigenous community to recognise the issue of land rights for the first time. Following on from the wide recognition that Indigenous Australians had rights of citizenship, non-Indigenous Australians now had to confront the reality that at least some Indigenous communities had a legitimate claim to land that had previously been thought of as empty and there for the taking, an issue that the Mabo decision took further in the early 1990s. The third event was the release of the *Bringing Them Home Report*, which has forced many to realise that Indigenous Australians are the victims of past policies of separation that have major social ramifications today.

These events, and others, have resulted in major changes to the dominant social reality held to be the true way of things for most non-Indigenous Australians. These events show that Indigenous Australians have, for the most part, a different view of reality. They have affected how non-Indigenous people see Indigenous people and also how each see themselves. For example the *Bringing Them Home Report* raised the issue of forced separation of children from families. This has had an unexpected repercussion in bringing to light the removal of children from England and transporting them to Australia and Canada, for example. Without the report this issue may not have come to light. It is during this period that Noel Pearson grew up and emerged as a major voice in Indigenous affairs in Australia.

In this thesis I will examine Pearson's background and how he has come to hold the views he has regarding the issue of welfare dependency and what it means for his people. What Pearson is doing is challenging the co-dependent reality of Indigenous Australians as being victims - victims in their own mind where they see others as being responsible for their position and in the non-Indigenous view that sees them as being the

victims of past policies and programs. Elements of the Third Way [*cf* – Wright 1996] and the move opposing affirmative action from African-American academics in the United States [*cf* Gergen 1998] form the basis of his philosophy regarding the failure of the welfare system and how best to advance his people. I will look at how Pearson is challenging the paradigm that to be successful and Indigenous is to somehow deny one's own Indigenous identity.

I will examine several sociological theories in this thesis to describe how this is happening; critical discourse analysis, social reality, welfare dependency and identity and how Pearson's speech fits within these theories. These theories are relevant in this debate and are interconnected at a very deep level. In critical discourse analysis I will show how Pearson has used a variety of media in order to disseminate his message regarding what his people must do to solve the problems arising from the reliance on welfare. I will show how it is necessary to know how media bias affects how an issue is reported. I will also show how we interpret the message we receive and how we can use different forms of media for our own purposes.

In social reality I will look at how our sense of reality is constructed and how Indigenous Australians and welfare dependency are social constructs, which need the institutions of non-Indigenous society to exist, what causes this reality to change and how this is a continuous process. I will look at issues of consensus collective intent, the imposition of function and how non-Indigenous Australians maintain a social reality utilising a willed imaginative that is constantly shifting. This shifting imaginative allows non-Indigenous society to maintain a continuous position of superiority to Indigenous Australians. I will show how children are socialised into this reality and how this socialisation continues throughout adulthood. In Pearson's case he was then given the tools and the language to exist in different social contexts and realities, and further to this he has the shared assumptions and knowledge that makes him able to communicate in them as well (Stubbs, 1983 p 1).

In the chapter on welfare dependency I will look at some of the historical factors that have caused it to arise among Indigenous communities. I will look at how Indigenous Australians lost the small foothold they had in the economy when they were made eligible for welfare and what this meant to those communities that were affected by this loss. It has resulted in what Pearson called 'passive welfare' which is the main cause of the social dissolution of his community in Cape York in particular but which also affects many other similar communities across Australia (Pearson 2000 p 137). I will also look at the current ideological movement towards the Third Way and what it means in the context of the current debate in terms of how there has been a shift towards individual and community empowerment and the internalising of responsibility.

In the chapter on identity I will show how the identity of Indigenous Australians has come to be seen as victims. This in turn places non-Indigenous Australians as the guilty. I will show how this identity can be challenged and how Indigenous voices such as Pearson's are doing so. I will look at how the words and the identities they describe have taken hold in the dominant non-Indigenous Australian social reality. I will look at how social referencing is used to reinforce these identities within Indigenous and non-Indigenous society. This works to prevent many from expecting any real improvement in their social position and Pearson is working to overcome this state of affairs.

In order to examine these issues at a deep theoretical level it has been necessary to limit the methodology to a search of scholarly literature and a wide use of the Internet. The methodology for this thesis is therefore a literature review using primary sources, library databases and the Internet utilising Meta search engines such as Google. Using the Internet for sourcing material poses new problems for the researcher in that search engines are highly specific and care must be taken to know precisely for what one is looking to prevent wading through a mass of irrelevant websites.

Literature on the theoretical side of the debate is lacking and little has been done so far in placing Pearson using these theories. That being said, this does not invalidate the method but makes it more important in that the thesis could generate discussion in previously unexplored areas. It is therefore imperative that I analyse the assumptions and ideologies held by those involved in the debate and place them effectively in the theory underlying the debate as it stands.

Searching the Internet has the same issues facing the researcher as any other form of literary search, with the added pressure of it being more difficult to determine the accuracy of the material being accessed. Pearson has his own website where the full transcript of his speech is freely available. Through the use of hyperlinks the Pearson site is connected to many other sites covering the disparate elements I am looking at here. Pearson has made use of the Internet as a means of disseminating his views. He has made his views accessible to those who are searching for data that helps them make sense of their own reality and which is relevant to their own purposes (Gorayska & May 1996 p 288).

The Internet is a new medium, one that has emerged in the last decade as new and major form of discourse, one that is challenging the current media of press, radio and television. It has the potential to radically change how the world obtains its information and to increase the number of sources of information that challenge the prevailing reality, and is Foucauldian in how it allows these sources to engage in debate and emerge into the wider society.

This thesis will use these theoretical issues to place the debate into a wider context, one that underpins how and why society changes how it views events of importance and incorporates them into its own reality. I will conclude this thesis by stating a hypothesis that the end result of the debate initiated by Pearson may be more than he expects, and may result in even greater structural disadvantage than his people face today.

Chapter 1: Background.

The background to this thesis lies in the different approaches that governments have taken over the years to the issue of Indigenous Australians and the manner in which they administered their affairs according to the reality of the times. During most of the first half of this century the way they adopted an approach known as 'smoothing the dying pillow'. In line with the prevailing attitude of the time, Indigenous Australians were believed to be doomed to eventual extinction and anything that was done was merely to make their last years comfortable and amounted to little more than calculated neglect (Markus, 1994 p. 132). During this period, from 1901 to 1945, most of the programs of forced removal came into being as it was widely believed that Indigenous people would soon die out and removing the 'part-Aboriginal' children was the best that could be done.

The belief in the eventual extinction of Indigenous Australians was in keeping with the late 19th and early 20th centuries cultural and scientific belief in Social Darwinism. Australia, lacking intellectuals of its own in this area gave voice to, and legislated for, the dominant ideas of the age (Markus, 1994 p. 111). There were few, if any, dissenting voices to this dogma. Founded on an apparently valid scientific concept where the less civilised were doomed in the face of the superior civilisation, it was a cornerstone of the White Australia policy and also gave rise to legislation aimed at ensuring their eventual demise. The position of Indigenous Australians in society was such that they had very few legal rights and fewer human rights and the power to control their own lives was largely removed from them and placed in the hands of the bureaucracy (Markus, 1994 p. 139). They were unable to marry, drink, vote or do many things the non-Indigenous society took for granted (Lippmann, 1988 p. 28).

During the 1930s the first voices began to be heard against the prevailing orthodoxy but they were few and easily ignored by the non-Indigenous

majority. Indigenous people such as William Ferguson, William Cooper and Jack Patten (Lippmann, 1988 p 49, p. 42) were notable among early activists. Most were concerned with living conditions and wages and depended upon non-Indigenous assistance (Bennett, 1989 p 4). However the protest on Australia Day in 1938, known as The Day of Mourning marked a seminal moment in the history of Indigenous Australian protest (Lippmann, 1988 p. 49). Small though it was, it was an event where Indigenous Australians attempted to make the non-Indigenous community aware of an alternative reality and was a precursor of the protest movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The protest movement came to life during the period of assimilation when different cultures were literally forced to live like the white European majority, particularly those who were previously regarded as being undesirable (Markus, 1994 p. 156). Whether assimilation worked or not it brought the non-Indigenous and Indigenous communities into direct contact. One result of this contact was to bring racial discrimination into the public focus (Markus, 1994 p. 155) and this provided further impetus to protest that had not been there previously. It was the time when young activists began to be more vocal than ever in challenging the status quo and events such as the Freedom Rides of 1965 and the increasing calls for land rights brought such people to the fore as Charles Perkins and Kath Walker (Bennett, 1989 p 8). Walker performed a speaking tour in 1965 and pastor Doug Nicholls led a march on the Victorian parliament protesting the forced removal of people from their land in 1963 (Bennett 1989 p 8).

It had its culmination in the 1967 referendum. The referendum can be seen as a moment when the goals of the growing protest movement coincided with the changing mood of the time to achieve a real outcome. Two other such moments are significant in what they achieved and how they set the scene for the future. They are the Wave Hill walkout of 1966 and the report authored by Ronald Wilson on the forced removal of Indigenous children released in 1995. Indigenous Australians gained the

certainty that being citizens entailed other rights, notably the right to own land and the right for federal governments to take responsibility for Indigenous Australians. It is in this light that what the Indigenous protest movement has since accomplished was inevitable, beginning with Wave Hill.

Wave Hill station and the walkout by the Gurindji people was the point where the growing movement towards land rights coalesced and led the way for the Mabo decision, which recognised native title under common law. It is moot to describe this as the beginning of the fight for land as this assumes that Indigenous Australians had not fought for their land before this point (Lippmann, 1988 p. 49). It was however, the period when Indigenous protests reached more eyes and ears than at any time previously. As well as this, the protest leaders were more involved in public life than previously. Some, such as Charles Perkins were directly involved in politics (Bennett, 1989 p. 25) and were better able to use the media. Others had learned lessons of the African-American civil rights movement in being active in promoting a more radical path. However the lessons learned from the native American experiences were eventually deemed by the majority of Indigenous Australian speakers to be more relevant (Bennett, 1989 p. 13).

Putting these lessons in place allowed the protest movement to gain a degree of public support that was unavailable before and it is during this period that the Wave Hill walkout occurred. Initially staged in protest against: "intolerable living conditions and inadequate wages" (Lippmann, 1988 p. 49) it soon became much more when the Gurindji camped on their traditional land at Wattie creek. Although, along with the Yirrkala protest the Gurindji did not achieve their immediate goals they nevertheless became a crucial symbol of the growing Indigenous land rights movement (Bennett, 1989 p. 120). The land rights movement can also be linked to the granting of citizenship in the referendum with its concomitant issues of the right to equal pay and to own land, both of which had gone unrecognised for decades.

What happened here significantly raised the issue of land rights to a non-Indigenous community that had never before been faced with this issue. Previously the non-Indigenous community had taken the issue of land as a given. Europeans settled here in 1788 and simply took it without a murmur but now there were a people saying it was really theirs, and in doing so, greyed the area that was previously deemed black and white. Along with this, the Indigenous protest movement had mobilised sufficient public opinion to force governments to recognise it. The non-Indigenous community had been forced to acknowledge that an alternative reality existed and to incorporate it into their own reality.

The last event to which I will draw attention is the Wilson report on the forced removal of Indigenous children from their families and how the non-Indigenous community has incorporated this into its own sense of reality. Many have written on the report [*cf* – Sutherland, Manne & Jopson, 1998] which has forced a rethink by the non-Indigenous community in regard to a reality that had not been contemplated before, one in which governments forcibly removed children from their families and relocated them. Again, there are links back to the 1967 Referendum in that federal and state governments had been forced to confront the end results of their past policies, furthermore being responsible for present policies demands the necessity to recognise those of the past.

The report found that parents and children alike suffered severe psychological trauma, and other authors have since found that a significant number of Indigenous youths who come before the courts come from families who have suffered this trauma as a result of this policy (Beresford & Omaji 1996 p 33). The ramifications for society in the future are quite clear. But interestingly, how non-Indigenous society has incorporated this reality into its own has highlighted where the UK and Australian governments were complicit in removing children from England to Australia. Initially thought to only involve orphans, evidence

has now emerged that even those whose parents were still alive were also sent out, and the victims of this policy are becoming increasingly vocal.

As a result of the Wilson report and the debate it has initiated, non-Indigenous people are facing the reality of a policy that was not taken for granted as the other examples were, but that was for a long time hidden, as were its victims. Be they Indigenous or non-Indigenous, they all suffered varying degrees of psychological trauma. It can be argued that instead of incorporating this alternative reality, non-Indigenous people are beginning to claim a kind of ownership of it through the increased calls for compensation for the trauma of being removed as children during World War II and in the immediate post-war years.

This is the stage at which Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia found itself when Pearson made his speech *The Light on the Hill*. A series of events had taken place where both sections of the community were confronted with new realities, and both sections of the community had to incorporate them into their everyday experience:

Among the multiple realities there is one that presents itself as the reality par excellence. This is the reality of everyday life. (Berger & Luckmann, 1967 p. 21).

What non-Indigenous Australians have done in effect is to incorporate these multiple realities into what they see as the everyday. In the Foulcauldian view, the dominant discourse marginalised other discourses and realities. However these marginalised discourses still had sites where the prevailing hegemony could be challenged and resisted. In the cases above, and with others, they were able to break free of the constraints the dominant discourse placed on them and in doing so altered the world-view of the majority and became part of the dominant (Seidman 1996 p 215).

Now we are seeing the process again, beginning with an emergent discourse being given voice by Pearson that may in time change the everyday experience and become part of the reality of everyday life.

Pearson's solutions are more reflective of white reality than of Indigenous reality yet by changing the reality he hopes to change the identity of his people. This is the background from which Noel Pearson has emerged as that new voice.

Chapter 2: Noel Pearson.

Pearson is one the new vanguard of Indigenous Australian activists. He is university educated, a lawyer by profession and highly visible in the media. When he speaks people generally pay attention to what he says, whether they agree with him or not. He was born in Hopevale on the Cape York Peninsula in Queensland in a community overseen by the Lutheran Church (Coolwell 1993 p. 50). Following high school he went to the University of Sydney where he graduated in History and Law and his thesis was on the history of his home community [*cf* – Balkanu 2000].

His law studies set him up for the next phase of his life where he was at the forefront of the native title battles of the early 1990s. He was part of a team that gained an annual income of about \$1,000,000 for Hopevale in return for permitting a company to mine the sands of the area (Coolwell, 1993 p. 43). This gave the community a measure of economic strength and independence, which reflected his own beliefs on the benefits of this strength but also strengthened his resolve to do the same for other communities in the region (*The Bulletin* 10/7/2001 p 38).

Pearson is seen by the traditional Left of politics as being an enemy [*cf* – Allum, 1999 Butler, 2000] and by the traditional Right as a voice of much needed common sense [*cf* - Abbot, 2000 Jopson, 1999] in the debate on welfare and individual responsibility. While some of his recent statements may lead people to this conclusion in regard to having Indigenous people and communities take some responsibility for their own improvement, it will be more accurate to see him in light of the growing Third Way movement [*cf* – Wright 1996, Latham, 2001] here in Australia: “This country needs to develop a new consensus around its commitment to welfare” (Balkanu, 2000).

The Third Way, the notion of the need for a change in how social democracies approach welfare has been around for some time: “Our

welfare concepts, like many other concepts are traditional” (Frenkel, 1977 p. 56). The traditional method of social welfare is responsible for a number of significant problems in that: “Reliance on government intermediacy creates Big Government” (Frenkel, 1977 p. 57). This has a greater cost than return to government and is psychologically destructive in the end to many recipients (Frenkel 1977 p 57).

Frenkel noted other significant issues which have been taken up and expanded upon by many writers and which Pearson has been able to adopt in his own personal view of what must be done to improve the situation amongst his people in the Cape York region. Welfare in its current state, according to Frenkel: “implies inability and unwillingness on the part of the recipient to look after [themselves]” (1977, p. 57). To change the attitude of recipients it must not be in the form of any kind of handout or be seen as charity but must be a clearly defined right, not an indulgence on the part of government (Frenkel, 1977 p. 57).

Government indulgence, or rather a dependency on it to solve issues leaves the state vulnerable to libertarian arguments associated with the evils of statism and bureaucracy rather than with the ideals of democratic self-government (Wright, 1996 p. 110). This is what the Third Way is attempting to deal with: “an attempt to disengage socialism from its identification (with) the state” (Wright, 1996 p. 132). It is also an attempt to fundamentally change the role of the state into one of enabling and empowering the individual (Wright, 1996 p. 132). It is in this role, of changing the attitude of and towards the state, that Pearson has placed himself.

In recent years the arguments of Frenkel and other have been taken on and expanded in terms of how socialism and social democracies have seen themselves in the past and how they must change to accommodate the emerging mass global capitalism and it is here that we will see Pearson as forging: “a social design which depolarises politics” (Frenkel, 1977 p. 63)

in how we approach the issue of Indigenous welfare and the problems that have arisen from its continued application.

Tony Blair in his foreword to Wright's work stated that he saw the Third Way as: "a rejection of both the Old Left and the New Right" (Wright, 1996 p. ix) and as the means where old socialist values can be applied to: "new and radically changed circumstances" (Wright, 1996 p. ix). Blair also sees the Third Way as a means of organising a new collective sense which helps: "extend the freedom of the individual [with] the power of the private sector used to help serve the public interest" (Wright, 1996 p. ix) which will then: "forge... a new and radical agenda for the new century" (Wright, 1996 p. ix).

However before seeing how Pearson has adapted, if not embraced the ideas behind the Third Way movement it we should look at how its proponents define it within the socialist agenda and what faults it seeks to address in the traditional view of socialism and social democracies [*cf* – Wright 1996, Latham 2001]. For many, socialism has been seen as a panacea for the perils of capitalism and has: "sought to replace the unequal social structure of market capitalism with a structure of equality" (Wright, 1996 p. 31) and this commitment has been anchored within: "a view of the equal worth of all individuals" (Wright, 1996 p. 31).

Certainly it cannot be argued against that as Cockshott and Cottrell pointed out: "At their most successful, social democracies have certainly succeeded in improving the conditions of the working classes" (1993, p. 2) and this has been in line with the main socialist ethos that has: "stood for welfare and security claiming to end the miseries of poverty and unemployment caused by capitalism" (Wright, 1996 p. 32). However there have been major drawbacks to this ethos which has been highlighted in recent years and which the Third Way seeks to overcome.

It was thought for many years that the best strategy for socialism in capitalist economies was to: "milk the capitalist cow" (Wright, 1996 p.

108). Capitalism could be made to fund the services that socialism stood for in paying for welfare benefits, hospitals, schools and so on. In the immediate post-war boom years and for some time after this seemed a valid goal. However it: “did not take into account (that) the dynamic of inequality within capitalism was serving to increase inequality rather than decrease it” (Wright, 1996 p. 109). There were other problems as well.

What social democratic parties did not consider was that the: “free distribution of basic services have been dependent on the health of the capitalist sector” (Cockshott & Cottrell, 1993 p. 2). Furthermore there was little attempt by social democrats to define the operating principles of socialism within a capitalist economy with the end result being that the notion of a mixed economy was vulnerable to attack by the Right and socialist elements and remained subordinate to the demands of capital (Cockshott & Cottrell, 1993 p. 2). As they noted:

[The] capacity of social democratic governments to reshape the class structure of society has been inherently self-limiting; attempts at radical redistribution always threaten to destroy the engine of capitalist wealth creation on which those governments ultimately depend (1993, p. 2).

Social democratic governments therefore have to settle for what they can deliver rather than what they want to deliver (Wright, 1996 p. 109) and what they do achieve: “can be presented by capitalist ‘common sense’ as an incubus that’s preventing the economic system from performing effectively” (Wright, 1996 p 108-109). That incubus has been presented in recent years as an overblown bureaucracy.

The use of governments as the means to pursue an agenda of social equality and reform through such avenues as welfare provision has had the effect of drawing ever more power and responsibility upon the state (Wright, 1996 p. 109) with the effect that: “the welfare society thus turned into the bureaucratic apparatus of the welfare state. Centralism and uniformity triumphed over decentralisation and diversity” (Wright, 1996

p. 110). As Latham noted: "Statism was seen as an end in itself, rather than merely the means to a better society [vesting] more control and influence in the hierarchies of the state" (2001, p. 20-21).

This resulted in: "a culture of authoritarianism" (Latham, 2001 p. 21) in which the rules and regulations put in place to govern people's activities often caused hostility rather than promoting mutuality (Latham, 2001 p. 6). Latham pointed out another aspect of what this entailed: "the mass production of services inevitably leads to a depersonalisation of service delivery" which: "[deliver] a standardised product to a large number of individual clients" (Latham, 2001 p. 17-18). Here we see the connection Pearson makes with his people: "our people are suffering because of a lack of responsibility" (*The Bulletin*, 2001 p 38).

The Third Way is: "a socialism which (takes) individual rights and empowerment as its central theme and (seeks) to trump the Right in its embrace of the extended rights of individuals" (Wright, 1996 p. 132). It also discusses welfare: "less in terms of a traditional welfare statism...and more in terms of finding new forms of service delivery" (Wright, 1996 p. 133). Pearson has picked this up quite clearly: "the political philosophy of the left has changed" (Balkanu, 2000).

In the Third Way, socialism is a: "fundamental enterprise of doctrinal reconstruction" (Wright, 1996 p. 134) in which "state and market, public and private, do not live in separate realms" (Wright, 1996 p. 140). This is also at the core of Pearson's solution to the problems his people face today: "building Cape York's community capacity through social and economic investments" (Botsman, 2000) in line with Latham's idea of the Third Way's intent to "develop a stakeholder welfare state" (2001, p. 17). Pearson can be seen as a social entrepreneur developing: "new and innovative ways of creating social capital in disadvantaged communities" (Latham, 2001 p. 17) through increasing individual and collective responsibility within them. Latham sees the support of social

entrepreneurship as being vital for the success of the Third Way itself (2001 p. 4).

Pearson can be seen in the light of how Latham sees the Third Way in fostering a new sense of civic collectivism, fostering partnerships across economic boundaries and promoting a sense of civic socialism (Latham, 2001 p. 3) by his attempts to bring the private sector and governments into the community to invest in community enterprises. He is demanding that a new dispersal of power be found, devolving from governments to: “citizens and communities who will form new networks of mutual interest and mutual support” (Latham, 2001 p. 4).

This, then, is the move towards a new social democracy promoted by those who see the failings of the old form of socialism and who wish to put something in its place that will correct these faults. Pearson is neither Right nor Left but occupies the middle ground: “opening up new fault lines and issues in the public arena” (Latham, 2001 p. 2). Cockshott and Cottrell saw it as having: “[the] ultimate aim [of] the greatest possible fulfilment of the potential of each human being, as an individual and as a member of society” (1993, p. 7). How Pearson is promoting his views through the media and his website and how these views are reported in the media will be the focus of the next chapter.

Pearson as Represented in the Media.

An important means of looking at what Pearson is saying and in coming to an understanding of it is to see how the media portrays the man and the message. This is where knowledge of discourse analysis can help. However before we can know how it can be used, it is important to understand what discourse analysis is. Stubbs described it as: “[being] concerned with language in use in [a] social context and in particular with interaction or dialogue between speakers” (1983, p. 1).

I will return to this definition later but one must take note of what Stubbs also said, that discourse analysis also stems from: “the realisation that language, action and knowledge are inseparable” (1983, p. 1). Slembrouk defined it as examining the “interactive or dialogic properties of everyday communication” as well as “the inter-relationships between language and society” (2001)

Language is also concerned with how social reality is constructed. However discourse analysis is slightly different in that it describes how it actually contributes to that process and the way in which media is a vital part of that social construction. As Cook states, discourse analysis in this context:

...examines how stretches of language, considered in their full textual, social and psychological context become meaningful and unified for their users (1989, p. 1).

Dellinger saw how in order to understand discourse analysis it is: “necessary to continue under the assumption that language and meaning are in some way social constructs” (1995, p. 1).

Discourse analysis is also not merely restricted to whether a statement is intrinsically true or false, that is to say whether a statement or sentence has any truth value, but to determine the different logics, background

assumptions and belief systems behind these statements (Stubbs, 1983 p. 3). Stubbs also noted that: "different factors all interact to determine the acceptability or appropriateness of utterances used in different social contexts" (1983, p. 3). Therefore discourse analysis leads us not only to identify the logic, but also the rhetorical function behind the argument or conversation in which we are taking an active role (1983, p. 3).

If then language is an intrinsic part of how we construct our social reality, and that discourse analysis is a means by which we understand how this works, then we can realise that in order for us to make sense of what another is saying we have to realise that: "communication is impossible without shared knowledge and assumptions between speakers and hearers" (Stubbs, 1983 p. 1). Language is fully embedded in our culture and society, there is no use of it outside it and there are: "no large-scale relationships between language and society which are not realized, at least partially, through verbal interaction" (1983, p. 8).

This verbal interaction is commonly regarded as being what happens in speech between two or more individuals engaging in conversation, but this interaction also occurs when individuals read the paper or watch television even though no direct verbal interaction takes place. Here we can make a connection between Stubbs' speakers by classing one as a speaker/writer in the media and the other being the reader/viewer. In the context of discourse analysis, and seeing how we can view Pearson in the print and television media the differences are minimal enough not to render this definition unworkable.

Discourse analysis has major ramifications for how society views media as a tool for imparting information and as a means of helping to construct or reinforce the prevailing, dominant social reality and how now discourses from time to time become part of it. Berger and Luckmann wrote of how we: "experience everyday life in terms of differing degrees of closeness and remoteness" (1967, p. 22). Language: "bridges different zones within the reality of everyday life and integrates them into a

meaningful whole” (1967, p. 39). Media language, and I include images as part of this language, is a major factor in this process.

What we can recognise through discourse analysis is that in media, conversation and debate the words used by the speaker express an ideological content and this also applies to written, as well as visual text (Dellinger, 1995 p. 2). This highlights another factor that can be examined by the use of discourse analysis: ideology. Ideology is one major factor in examining: “language use beyond the boundaries of a sentence/utterance (Slembrouk, 2001). Van Dijk is also pertinent in this context in that he defines ideologies as “‘interpretation frameworks’ which ‘organise sets of attitudes’ about other elements of modern society” (as cited in Dellinger, 1995 p. 3). They are the cognitive foundations that all groups in society use to base their attitudes as well as furthering their own goals and interests (Dellinger, 1995 p. 3).

Within social structures, social interaction in the form of text, spoken or otherwise, takes place and takes the form of discourse (Dellinger, 1995 p. 4). Regardless of the size of the structure this is always the case and the result is cognitised as memory, both short term where interpretation takes place and long term, which holds the socio-cultural knowledge of the group; language, communication, people and events (Dellinger, 1995 p. 4). These form the group attitudes that Pearson would have grown up with at Hopevale, and absorbed at university and working within the legal profession.

What we see here is that Pearson has encountered and taken on board many different attitudes, biases and ideologies that fit together to make up his own personal ideology, conforming as it does to his identity, goals, position and values (Dellinger, 1995 p. 4). He been in positions to see many different, problematic social realities and has integrated them into his own particular world-view and rendered them unproblematic (Berger & Luckmann, 1967 p. 24).

However, over and above Pearson, is the ideology of that which he uses to impart his message to others and force them to confront a different social reality, the media. The mass media is driven by ideology and is a very powerful tool for shaping the attitudes and beliefs of those who rely on it for their knowledge of the social world. All media text is based on ideology, either of the reporters in the first instance or the editor or producer of the finished product that is viewed by the public. For Dellinger:

...the adoption of a particular ideological-discursive structure on the part of the journalist expresses the values of an ideological system and of a specific 'discourse authority' (1995 p. 3).

The media relies on the essentially subjective interpretation and observation of the viewer/reader of its text (Hoenisch, 1998 p. 2) and frames the news accordingly. Within media news there are many messages communicated through its structure and the text itself is only part of the message, the rest is implied (Dellinger, 1995 p. 4).

One element is the theory regarding media ideology and the influence it has on the content and structure of the news. In order to maintain the current power relations within society, or to influence the population to accept a shift in attitudes, the news will be structured accordingly (Dellinger, 1995 p. 4). Whether consciously or unconsciously this is done to control group attitudes and their own ideologies so the audience members will believe they are acting out of their own free will, rather than behaving according to the messages they receive and interpret (Dellinger 1995 p. 4).

One other element is the element of implicitness, that is to say that the text, being only the tip of the information iceberg, expressed in words, leaves much unsaid: "The rest is assumed to be supplied by the knowledge scripts and models of the media users, and therefore usually left unsaid" (Dellinger, 1995 p. 4). This means essentially that the news is framed

according to two complementary ideologies, those of the media and those of the viewer, and each acts to strengthen the position of the other.

Media broadcast styles are now formalised to the extent of being ritualistic (Dellinger, 1995 p. 4) and people have now become so familiar with it that they never notice the implicit messages it contains. They now take for granted the messages they contain but for other groups it is not only possible to misinterpret these messages but to believe their misinterpretation is the correct one depending on their personal and group ideologies (Dellinger 1995 p 4). We can see this quite clearly in some of the voices heard in the current debate who have used it to further their own agendas:

[It is doubtful whether] a treaty would be in the interests even of the relatively few Aborigines who live in traditional type communities (Howson, 2001).

In Australia the familiar news broadcasts follow a pattern, which has existed for decades, the pattern of the tabloid. Media critics can see this style clearly when comparing it with other forms of media presentation from elsewhere in the world where tabloid style news broadcasts are not the general rule (Dellinger, 1995 p. 5) but for most consumers of media, the implicit style of news, tabloid goes unnoticed as does the influence it has on the viewers. Tabloid-style journalism is based on deep historical roots deriving from the old scandal and gossip sheets (Knight, 1989 p. 111).

What differentiates tabloid-style journalism from others is its ritually structured and formalised structure emphasising topic, accent and style at the expense of weighty issues (Knight, 1989 p. 111). It places a substantive emphasis on issues of 'moral disorder' (Knight, 1989 p 111), highlights the sensational and the emotional in which journalistic objectivity has been set aside in favour of exaggeration and over-dramatisation (Knight, 1989 p. 111).

The television media is perfectly suited to tabloid-style reporting and in our local media the presenter and/or reporter are played up to enhance the credibility of the news program itself rather than the content (Knight, 1989 p. 112). Television's move to tabloid-style reporting was perhaps inevitable given its affinity for the subjective (Knight, 1989 p. 112) and several other factors that shaped the way it looks today.

Firstly there has been a growing competitiveness among television stations for viewers and advertising revenues (Knight, 1989 p. 113) given that many stations now view winning the news slot as important in retaining viewers for the rest of the evening's programs. Television stations began to market themselves in the 1960s and news became for many, the main form of in-house production (Knight, 1989 p. 113). Consequently news had to be able to pull in the viewers and tabloid-style lent itself to this change in ethos.

Tabloid-style has the reputation of enhancing the subjective and what is selected, as news has to be trimmed down to small sound bites. Producers decide what the essential elements of the event covered are in terms of relevance and significance, (Knight, 1989 p. 117) not only for the station but to its viewers. This process occurs according to the shared ideologies of the speaker and the viewer (Dellinger, 1995 p. 4). In the context of the current debate, tabloid-style fails to deliver the true story since:

...it neutralises meaning in favour of meaningfulness. It makes the concrete and the particular for the most part readily forgettable in the face of an abstract and universal system of quick and easy recognitions (Knight, 1989 p. 125).

This is important in the current debate since it helps us realise that what the debate will mean is at times disregarded in the search for what the media regards as being meaningful for itself and its viewers according to what it defines as being newsworthy (Cohen & Young, 1974 p. 15). However Pearson may well be using the media to his own advantage to promote his stance as newsworthy since tabloid-style does offer: "a

potentially greater opportunity for alternative and oppositional forms of activism and discourse to achieve representation in the mainstream media” (Knight 1989 p. 126). Pearson is doing so very successfully.

What comes out of a critical look at the media and the way it presents news according to its own ideologies and preconceptions is the awareness that there are: “built-in factors... which predispose the media to make a certain event into news” (Cohen and Young, 1974 p. 15). Some of these may be commercial and political interests as Cohen and Young alluded to (1974 p. 16) but these are likely to take second place to the implicit ideologies of the media and its consumer.

There is however one more vital medium to examine in this look at how discourse analysis helps us to examine Pearson’s speech and what it means, and that is the Internet. While we may generally think of the press and television as the main means by which Pearson is getting his message across, his use of the Internet in constructing his own website makes it a relevant medium to analyse. The Internet is an emergent worldwide communication system (Biocca & Levy, 1995 p. 15). It is a medium where: “Human exchange is migrating from physical space into cyberspace” (Biocca & Levy, 1995 p. 20) where debate can and does take place worldwide (Hudson, 1997 p. 149).

Pearson takes part in this migration by bringing the debate into a medium where he can potentially tap into a much wider audience than would be the case if he were to limit himself to more conventional media; radio, press and television. The Internet allows for quick and easy access to information by the public and conversely it allows access to people who would otherwise be unable to be reached (Hudson, 1997 p. 149). The rise of the Internet has major ramifications for our social, cultural, political and economic lives (Hudson, 1997 p. 2) and Pearson is using the medium to the extent that he may indeed be staking his future on it. Hudson makes this point in a more generic sense: “so many powerful entities have begun

to invest in it, some of them staking their futures on its future” (1997, p. 2).

Pearson and his reach worldwide through the Internet is a product of the increasing use of technology to formulate a discourse, a process to which Fairclough refers (1995, p. 180). Pearson has become part of an environment that is an inseparable component on which the mind operates, part of the relationship between the environment and the human processes that make sense of it (Gorayska & May, 1996 p. 288, [*cf* – Norman 1988, Brooks 1991 & Haugeland 1993]).

The Internet is a technology: “that can be appropriated for use at a local community level, developed by, and for a particular culture or sub-culture” (Taylor 1996 p. 265), in this case, Pearson’s community at Hopevale and in the Cape York peninsula and the means he sees to overcome the problems faced in these communities. In doing so he is using the Internet as a form of mediated political discourse to bring about a new political force which: “to achieve power it has to carve out a political base, a sufficiently powerful constituency of supporters: (Fairclough, 1995 p. 179). Bringing his speech onto the Internet can only increase the size of this support base. It can also be a powerful medium for changing the social reality we experience. How social reality changes, and how Pearson and the debate he has initiated may cause this change will be the theme of the next chapter.

Pearson and the Discourse on Social Reality.

Pearson has initiated a debate, which may, at its conclusion, change the social reality experienced by Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It is important then to know what social reality is, how it differs from the extrinsic reality and how we act to make this difference. Extrinsic reality is that which exists regardless of any labels we put upon it. For example the planet we live on exists whether we are here or not, but the words we use to describe it are socially constructed. These words come about through the process of collective intent, which best defines the difference between social and extrinsic reality. Searle put it best when he stated that:

...[Humans] through collective intentionality impose functions on phenomena where the function cannot be achieved solely in virtue of physics or chemistry but requires continued human cooperation (1995, p. 40).

Or perhaps more in tune with how societies evolve from physics: “the collective intentional imposition on entities that cannot perform that function without that imposition” (Searle, 1995, p. 41).

It is important here to understand the role collective intent plays in the formation of social reality as it not only informs the reality of Indigenous Australians but it also informs the reality we impose upon them. It is also important to recognise the three elements that make up this intent. First of which, is the imposition of function. This is a conscious decision and all societies impose them even if this function differs from one society to another and from this it can be seen that imposition needs consciousness: “In order to think the thought...we must have something to think with” (Searle, 1995 p. 73). We must also have the ability to say it, as thought by itself is useless without the means to communicate it.

This introduces the second element, language. For the purpose of this thesis language can be described as the spoken expression of conscious

thought. It is a linguistic move and by using language we can invent functions and entities that don't exist prelinguistically (Searle, 1995 p. 74). Only by language can we gain the consent of the rest of the society to this invention. The notion of 'property' and 'ownership' are only two examples of this ability. For Indigenous Australians the collective intent is not 'ownership' but 'belonging' and is a similar linguistic construction.

This introduces the third element, consensus. Consensus in that we continue to call property, property; money, money and Indigenous Australians, Indigenous Australians because it suits our common purpose to do so. What terms non-Indigenous Australians use to describe and identify Indigenous Australians are terms that only exist by: "[our] collective agreement and language [that] is needed to formulate that agreement because the natural phenomena doesn't exist" (Searle, 1995 p. 69). It is with our common consensus that we use different words, phrases and terms to describe Indigenous Australians and place them within our own social reality. Indigenous Australians become social facts, and in this context it is a peculiarity about social facts that they are self-referential (Searle, 1995 p. 32). What this means is that not only do we refer to Indigenous Australians in a certain way, but that over time, they also take on this reference for their own reality and identity as well.

It is also evident that this consensus can and has changed as our common purpose has changed, perhaps even because of it. This consensus has ramifications for our culture, groupings and relationships in society as Shotter noted:

Personal relationships and other human groupings do not exist and function as matters of fact, but are maintained by the intention of their members to maintain them (1974, p. 223).

The ramifications for non-Indigenous society are clear in that while Shotter refers to those relationships of a closer, more personal level, his ideas can be extended to relationships and groupings on a larger scale within society. The non-Indigenous group, which is the dominant group

in Australia today, exerts a 'will to truth' amongst the whole of society. This Foucault saw as the major system, which forges the dominant reality and constrains other realities from challenging it (Seidman, 1996 p. 215). Here we see Pearson emerging from the subjugated discourses to challenge that reality, bringing his own reality with him. His discourse is as yet only provisional in that its true value will only emerge when we see how fully it is engaged within the dominant discourse (Seidman, 1996 p. 215).

Pearson's provisional discourse has emerged from a site that has been marginalised and subjugated by the non-Indigenous dominant discourse and where the prevailing reality is challenged and resisted (Seidman, 1996 p. 217). These alternative sites have also given rise to the events looked at previously, which have changed our perception of Indigenous Australians by how successfully they have engaged with the dominant reality. The 1967 Referendum, Wave Hill, the *Bringing Them Home Report* and others have been engaged almost totally and thus became part of the new reality.

The realities expressed in these cases were made legitimate within: "the matrix of *all* socially objectivated and subjectively real meanings" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967 p. 97). It is the existence of these differing spheres of reality that has relevance for the way individual Indigenous Australian speakers can express such radically different views as evidenced by the current debate between Pearson and Democrat Senator Aden Ridgeway.

The effect of the dominant reality works in two directions. While it marginalises and subjugates other realities, it allows at the same time challenges to itself. The realities experienced by different Indigenous Australian groups across the country were, for them, the dominant ones and in turn were challenged by a new reality of colonisation. It is how the different Indigenous Australian groups coped with this new reality that shaped the different social realities in which they live today. This can explain why both Pearson and Ridgeway in their speeches and public

utterances have such a disparate view regarding the best solution for improving the position of Indigenous Australians.

As described earlier, social reality derives largely from the collective intent of people, things are what they are because we intend for them to be so, and from the agreement people have that they should remain so. The reality for Pearson straddles the two forms of collective intent, the Indigenous one where people identify themselves as being intrinsic to their reality and the one we use which places the reality in relation to us. Both of these share collective intent where: “function is imposed on entities that cannot perform that function without that imposition: (Searle 1995 p 41). And this function becomes institutionalised when the entities cannot perform that function purely by virtue of their physical structure (Searle 1995 p 41).

In terms of how the differing sides see Pearson’s speech we can see how these have been shaped by the differing realities the people have experienced. Indigenous Australians have encountered European colonisation in different ways and have met different problems as they have done so which shaped their own reality:

Reality construction thus takes place in a context of continuous problem orientation. What basically drives reality construction is not some all-compassing plan, but an unremitting flow of problem orientation. (Birrer, 1993).

In the current debate between Pearson and Ridgeway these different experiences are also at the center of the urban/remote welfare approach dichotomy. The term ‘urban/remote’ is only used here as a term of convenience to describe two types of Indigenous Australian communities. It is not strictly accurate but it will serve the purpose in differentiating between the stances of the two in how they approach dealing with these issues.

Mainstream reality has within it the social construction of Indigenous disadvantage. The main issue in regard to the social construction of Indigenous disadvantage is that without us it would not exist. The social construction of Indigenous disadvantage lies in the need for institutions that cannot exist independently of us in order to define what Indigenous disadvantage is. It also needs the total subsumation of Indigenous social reality into our reality. The facts about Indigenous disadvantage are therefore not only social but also institutional in that they have, as Searle put it: "[The] collective imposition of function onto entities, which cannot perform the functions solely by virtue of its physical structure" (1995 p 41).

This collective imposition changes; as does the institutions we impose these functions upon. Not only do we impose a status on these institutions but on other entities as well in the form of a collective status, which the majority agree on (Searle, 1995 p. 41). For Indigenous Australians the key here is the way the majority have and perhaps, still do, impose a status on them in order to justify programs ostensibly designed to help them, Stanner's "hobby-horses" (Pearson, 1993 p. 100), designed to save the non-Indigenous conscience rather than achieve positive results. Stanner described them as such in that deepening and widening the reach of welfare programs will naturally improve even though the evidence suggests otherwise (1992, p. 58).

For these programs to be justifiable within the mainstream reality, Indigenous people also have to be constructed in a certain way and be identifiable as needing them. They have been constructed according to what Said called "a willed imaginative" (1995, p. 201) based entirely upon a sovereign western consciousness (1995, p. 8). As stated earlier, Said noted that the flexible superiority of the European consciousness allows the mainstream reality to always remain dominant and retain this sense of superiority. The use of different terms to describe Indigenous Australians down the years from Native to Aborigine to Indigenous Australian and the occasional use of 'First Nation Peoples' reflects this

constant change. The consistent use of welfare programs to assist Indigenous Australians reinforces the perception within the mainstream reality of their need to continue to receive them and the cycle continues.

Add to this the immersion of opponents such as Pearson and Ridgeway within mainstream realities, which differ in detail if not in generalities and we can see how their opinions reflect their individual upbringing, where they lived, worked and the different people they came into contact with. To do this we have to know how people come to know their place in the world. What is important to realise is that all human cultures and societies have similarities in how people become fully functional members of their society. The most important similarity is that: "Human babies [are born] into a humanly created setting" (Shotter, 1974 p. 223) even if the specific construction differs. Shotter also noted that: "To be counted as an autonomous individual in social life, we must be solely responsible for our own actions" (1974, p. 218).

The issue here is one of social referencing and how individuals, in order to formulate and interpret their own reality, use it. How people have reacted to Pearson's speech sees social referencing in its most obvious light. Feinman described 'social referencing' as: "a process in which one person utilises another person's interpretation of the situation to formulate [his] own interpretation of it" (1992, p. 4). That people on both sides of the debate engendered by Pearson's speech tend to have the same interpretation is irrelevant. They still use someone else's in order to do so. In the case of Pearson he has used a disparate range of interpretations to formulate his own particular reality.

Pearson's speech in this context is a base of information which is being used by both proponents and opponents as the means by which they can construct, or add to, their own sense of reality (Feinman, 1992 p. 4). They do this by picking out those elements which bolster their own reality without knowing they are doing so as we can see here: "Pearson is blaming Aboriginal people for the racism and discrimination they are

subjected to” (Butler, 2000) and “those improvements have had little impact on the everyday circumstances of many” (Thorp, 2000). Both these writers have selected that which already conforms to their world-view and use it to bolster their arguments, which in turn will appeal to those with a similar world-view.

How this socialisation comes about is important to understand what is going on at this point in regard to Pearson’s own socialisation. It comes about primarily through childhood socialisation although the process continues throughout one’s lifetime. As Shotter pointed out: “a person’s past does not determine just one possibly real future of him but a number” (1974, p. 224). Socialisation is a process where the children, as the prime locus of this process, gain the skills needed to become fully-fledged members of the society in which they live (Hewitt & Livingstone, 1986 p. 121) and is a process common to all societies. Pearson’s childhood socialisation took place within two disparate social realities even though they would have taken elements of each and woven it into their own.

During childhood, societies of all types imbue children with those parts of the culture, the knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to its particular level of development at that time (Hewitt & Livingstone, 1986 p. 124). This also changes throughout the life of the individual as well. For Pearson this has taken place at university and in his career as a lawyer before entering the arena of Indigenous Australian land rights. Pearson over the course of his adult life has recognised that: “[to be] counted as an autonomous individual in social life, we must be solely responsibility for our own actions” (Shotter 1974 p 218) and that: “[people] direct their conduct not only to their own immediate needs and interests, but to actual or potentially constructed ones” (Shotter, 1974 p. 222).

These actions reflect the sense of identity the individual has and how they place themselves in the dominant social reality. We can understand Pearson’s beliefs in how he sees himself as an autonomous individual in two societies. Social reality has particular relevance in the case of the

dependency Pearson has stated is the cause of massive social disruption in the Cape York Peninsula because this dependency is a social reality for many Indigenous Australians. I will look at this issue in the next chapter.

Pearson and the Discourse on Dependency.

Welfare dependency arises out of a social reality that sees welfare as the means to maintain a reasonable level of income for those who through no fault of their own are unable to find work. It is a construction that needs institutions to be created in order for it to exist. Pearson and Ridgeway straddle a divide that separates their different social realities by how they approach ending this dependency. Pearson has adopted an ideology that sees the Third Way as the means he prefers. Welfare dependency itself has been identified as a major issue in white and Indigenous socio-economic groups that have high levels of unemployment. The issue of dependency is also at the centre of the remote/urban divide in the debate between Pearson and Ridgeway.

Dependency for Indigenous Australians has been seen as problem for some time: "Escaping from dependence...is a legitimate and important goal" (Altman & Saunders 1991 p. 13). But these two authors also seem to be unsure as to whether it is a problem at all: "to have attained such dependence...has been a major achievement" (Altman & Saunders p. 14). This is what Pearson is fighting against, the notion that welfare is an end in itself rather than the means to one, as we can see in some of what Ridgeway has said on the issue.

Welfare dependency has become endemic in a number of Indigenous communities to the extent that even 10 years ago it was difficult to see how it could be overcome or even lessened in the immediate future (Altman & Saunders, 1991 p. 17). With hindsight it is clearer how difficult it would be, given the reliance on welfare to solve problems it has largely contributed to creating, and given the rising climate of restructuring inhibiting Indigenous prospects in remote communities. Overcoming this would overcome a lot of negative stereotyping, and pursuing it is seen as an important policy issue for governments and other bodies (Altman & Smith, 1992 p. 1).

Stanner first noted the possible deleterious effects of welfare dependence on Indigenous Australians, not only by Indigenous people themselves but by governments who he feared would come to see it as a panacea for all ills: “things are now going well, all we need to do is more of what we are already doing...and the rest will come” (1992, p. 58). This was what Stanner called the ‘hobby horse’ approach (Pearson, 1993 p 100). It was something easy to do, required little thought and felt right for the majority white population who were brought up in an environment of a broad application of social welfare.

What Stanner realised and which others have long failed to notice or even address, was that, even for Indigenous relative disadvantage to stay the same, their standard of living would have to improve faster than that of non-Indigenous Australians (1992 p 58). Simply bringing Indigenous Australians along with the rest of the community and relying on welfare to do it would not be enough to bring about substantive change. What this approach has led to is the growing realisation of Pearson among others, that all welfare does, and is intended to do is allow: “The Australian body [to] salve its conscience so far and then react in an indignant backlash, the ‘we can’t be blamed for what happened’ response” (Pearson, 1993 p 100).

The wholesale use of welfare in the case of Indigenous people has forced them into the position of being victims, which in turn places the rest of Australia as being the guilty. More significantly it salves the political conscience of governments, showing them as more understanding and sympathetic than past governments while still achieving little real change. This issue has more recently gained some credibility in the United States through the work of Shelby Steele among others [*cf* – Lovell 1999] and there can be little doubt that Pearson is taking a similar path:

... the recognition on the part of whites of a ‘contained guilt of genuine concern’ but under the brooding and prodding of black intransigence this venting of white guilt was transmogrified into a morbid preoccupation with repentance.

This unhealthy pursuit of 'innocence', to use Steele's word, has bound the guilty white to the victimised black in an ironic pact of mutual convenience (Lovell, 1999).

Welfare dependency in remote communities particularly has come about as a result of similar practices here. The solution Pearson sees is similar to that stated by Steele:

...to build, coax, induce, promote, a sense of individuality, self-help, call it what you will, particularly within our black community. Tough love and high expectations must take the place of warm and fuzzy deceptiveness and preferential treatment (Lovell, 1999).

It is important for Pearson that we end the reliance of remote Aboriginal communities on fragile support systems that leave the communities almost totally dependent on such income, which will inevitably destroy them and much of the culture along with it (Pearson, 2000 p. 139). Programs that push individual responsibility are his preferred vision of the future. But what does individual responsibility actually mean and where does it stand against collective welfare?

Individual responsibility can be defined as the internalising of being on welfare and doing something personal and positive to overcome it. However being dependent on welfare can and does, in this view, lead to the externalising of it with the result that the welfare recipient blames others for his predicament and depends on the same others to overcome it (Schmidz, 1998 p. 8). It is not debatable that communities can also internalise this responsibility by the acts of their members. What is needed in this view are programs that lead to people contributing in a positive sense rather than making it unnecessary to do so (Schmidz, 1998 pp. 6-8).

What this new welfare orthodoxy of individual responsibility has done is to allow the apportioning of blame away from governments and business and onto the recipient of welfare (Schmidz, 1998 p. 10). This is a cycle

where society can blame the unemployed and other welfare recipients for his position and they in turn can blame the programs for reinforcing the dependency they inflicted upon them in the first place. In the new politics of welfare, governments guarantee a decent standard of living for their citizens and place at the same time more conditions on those receiving those benefits to avoid this dependence arising (Jordan, 1998 p. 139). Both these factors are increasingly politically determined (Jordan, 1998 p. 139). How this will work to counter this among those who are already dependent is more problematic and part of Pearson's argument: "none of the current discourses give me any confidence that the underlying issues have been grasped" (Pearson, 2000 p. 137). But what does it mean to be welfare dependent and how did Indigenous communities, particularly remote ones, come to be in this situation?

The term 'welfare dependency' has several definitions, most of which are simply a matter of semantics but for the purpose of this thesis it can be defined as being the end result of a policy that by which: "the availability of state aid has rendered them incapable of making provision for themselves" (Burden, 1998 p. 111). What we know, or call, welfare dependency has come into the public arena over the last few years as society as a whole, and particularly governments, strive to achieve some means of overcoming it. The role of the state is, in the Third Way ideology, a changing one from past years. From ensuring a politically determined level of services and income to all its citizens (Jordan, 1998 p. 122) using a more unconditional provision of benefits it has become one in which the state uses a more conditional form to inculcate a sense of responsibility as well as to increase motivation among recipients (Jordan, 1998 p. 139).

The Third Way has been brought into the political debate by Mark Latham (2001, p. 1) and Pearson has clearly taken many of its central tenets as part of how Indigenous disadvantage and dependency should be countered. One of these is that it seeks: "to avoid a passivity and dependency developing among poor people" (Jordan 1998 p 139).

Although Jordan is not referring directly to the situation of Indigenous Australians we can see some of the themes Pearson has taken on to counter it among a group which has, for a significant percentage, already developed this dependency. This may well be why he has taken a path some would see as “catering to the redneck elements who believe that all Aboriginal people are lazy bastards” (Allum 1999). That is, he has been perceived as taking the Third Way orthodoxy further to the political right than many would feel comfortable with.

Whether this perception is a flawed one or not, he presents a serious challenge to the traditional Left of politics (Sanderson, 2000). It is a big assumption for commentators to put him on the traditional Right, but to look at why, I will discuss how Indigenous welfare dependency has developed over the years since Indigenous people first began to collect welfare payments. For many years preceding the 1967 Referendum, a watershed for Indigenous rights the: “Australian social security system...contained explicit provisions excluding Aborigines from...income support” (Altman & Saunders, 1991 p. 2). Add to this the exclusion of Indigenous Australians from the mainstream Australian economy as a result of forced separation during the era of the White Australia Policy which gave them a separate legal status (Altman & Saunders, 1991 p. 2) and you can see what Pearson referred to when he said: “after we became citizens...we lost the meagre foothold we had in the real economy” (Balkanu 2000). They were never in any real sense true members of the modern Australian welfare state as they were never fully integrated into the economy before 1967.

Pearson has other reasons for seeking a change in how Indigenous welfare dependency is addressed and these stem from other historical reasons as well as how non-Indigenous Australia sees the traditional role of welfare. Welfare sprung out of a compromise between labour and capital (Balkanu, 2000) and was therefore reciprocal in the sense that the money that was paid to welfare recipients would be recouped through taxes after the recipient gained employment (Balkanu, 2000). Today however the

circumstances that gave rise to it have changed and we now find that the political Left is increasingly: “unable to defend the welfare state against the influential, [which] no longer have a political or economic reason to maintain it” (Balkanu, 2000). In line with the attempts of the Third Way movement to seek a new solution we see Pearson realising in his speech that it is increasingly being seen as an impediment to economic growth (Balkanu, 2000).

This is how Pearson sees the: “origin and predicament of today’s welfare state” (Balkanu 2000) but the predicament for Indigenous Australians is an altogether different one with significant social issues attached to it. However it is important to realise in this context that welfare payments did not suddenly start after the referendum. Various forms of it had been paid for some time beginning with child endowment in the 1940s. Social security itself had begun to be paid in 1959 to: “all Aborigines except for the ‘nomadic and primitive’” (Altman & Saunders 1991 p 3). This provision seems to exclude large numbers of Indigenous Australians by leaving the decision as to who was nomadic and primitive and who wasn’t to the whim of bureaucrats.

For Pearson, the problem for Indigenous Australians within the Australian welfare state is that not only do Indigenous Australians face the same uncertainty given the current economic climate but they: “haven’t even benefited from the existence of the Welfare State” (Balkanu, 2000) and: “have only experienced the income support that is payable to the permanently unemployed and marginalised” (Balkanu, 2000). Welfare for Indigenous Australians became not the temporary solution it was intended to be and which, largely for non-Indigenous Australians it was, but a permanent destination (Balkanu, 2000).

Why has this situation been allowed to continue in the face of mounting evidence that it has produced a disaster within many Indigenous communities? Why has all the money that has been spent achieved very little real progress in the social position of Indigenous Australians? The

possible answer lies in the thinking surrounding the provision of welfare itself by governments and Indigenous Australian recipients alike. As stated before, welfare has been reciprocal in nature; the taxes recouped generally reimbursed governments for the payment of welfare. However this has not been the case for Indigenous Australians. A constant reliance on welfare within families and communities has resulted in: “an irrational economic relationship in which transactions between the provider and the recipient are not based on reciprocity” (Pearson, 2000 p. 141).

Among the Indigenous Australian communities Pearson refers to, and which are largely remote and removed from the real economy as much by distance as anything else: “it has become common usage to equate welfare with such unconditional cash payments to needy citizens of whom nothing further will be required” (Pearson, 2000 p. 137). Whereas non-Indigenous Australians understood the implied reciprocity of these payments this was not the case for Indigenous Australians who have only: “experienced a marginal aspect of [the] welfare state: income provisioning for people dispossessed from the real economy” (Balkanu, 2000).

This has been ignored, forgotten or even not realised in the drive to grant welfare in its totality to Indigenous Australians and around which a large bureaucracy has emerged. Less important than the bureaucracy, however, is the mindset surrounding it being that: “things are now going well, that all we need to do is more of what we are already doing... and the rest will come” (Stanner, 1992 p. 58). Pearson noted that: “with many of the statistics deteriorating rather than improving, Stanner’s questioning of this approach is relevant” (1993, p. 100) and that:

The test of credibility of a strategy is not whether the approach is conservative or radical, but whether it is smart or dumb, and whether it enhances or jeopardises the rights and interests of one’s own people (1993, p. 100).

What we are seeing in the welfare bureaucracy overall, and this has major ramifications for Indigenous Australians, is that:

we are asking our institutions to guarantee that people will not need to fend for themselves...when we should be asking our institutions to make people willing and able to fend for themselves (Schmidz, 1998 p. 22).

Another way of looking at dependency is to see it as an externalisation of responsibility for one's personal situation, in this case being unemployed (Schmidz, 1998 p. 8).

Schmidz saw a way of internalising the responsibility as being 'collective welfare' (1998, p. 8), as much in Latham's sense of a new collectivism with socialist overtones as one in which everyone takes a collective view of unemployment and in which it is not left to governments to provide a means of combating the problem in an era of economic restructuring (Altman & Saunders, 1991 p. 17). This makes it even more difficult for Indigenous Australians to overcome it, which makes Pearson's recent attacks on the passive welfare mentality gain greater significance.

The problem of Indigenous welfare dependence is a major one and an important policy issue for governments for many years (Altman & Smith, 1992 p. 1). Pearson is a very important contributor in the debate and others have followed his lead with Joseph Elu claiming that for many communities "dole cheques are as damaging as alcohol" and that one way to combat it is to look at commercial outcomes via investors to generate employment in these communities (Saunders, 2000).

Indigenous community leaders have in recent years, particularly since Pearson's speech, acknowledged many of the problems Pearson brought to light in his *Light On The Hill* speech and not only want real solutions, but action and need the collective support of the whole community to do so [*cf* – Jopson 2001]. Pearson had held his views since at least 1993 as his Boyer lecture indicates, but the desire to find new solutions has been felt even longer in the Northern Territory where community leaders have also identified dependency as an impediment to development (Lee, 2001).

Here also we see leaders calling for a break with the welfare approach to Indigenous Australian disadvantage and community development (Metherell, 2000).

Nor has it helped, according to Pearson, that the bureaucracies have singularly failed to cooperate in shifting Indigenous Australians out of their dependency on welfare in order to justify their own existence (Jopson, 2000). The amount of bureaucracy has lead to a muddle of thinking: "all we have is confusion dressed up as progressive thinking" (Balkanu 2000) and together with the contemporary cultural and academic are nothing more than: "a big confusion-producing mechanism in the service of social stratification" (Balkanu 2000).

There have, of course, been improvements over the decades since welfare was first imposed on Indigenous people. These however: "have had little impact on the everyday circumstances of many" (Thorp, 2000) since there has been and is a large gap between being seen to care and actually caring (Warby, 2000) and in this gap there have been many failures in doing anything concrete about the problem of Indigenous welfare dependency. A constant change of governments every few years, each claiming to know not only what the problem is, but how to go about fixing, it has not helped either.

This confusion produces no solutions of note and has left Indigenous Australians at the bottom of the social safety net (Lateline, 2000). What is needed is a degree of lateral thinking that would make use of solutions that at first glance would seem to be the opposite of what we should be doing (Lateline, 2000). It is in this context of the apparent failure of our traditional view of welfare being the panacea for all members of society to help improve their social position by assisting them into employment, that we have to see and understand Pearson's concern about Indigenous social and economic welfare (Botsman, 2000). The dependency Indigenous Australians have on welfare has another side to it and that is that this

dependency has become part of their identity. How this has come about is the focus of the next chapter.

Pearson and the Discourse on Identity.

The construction of Indigenous identity lies within a much greater discourse, one which acts to constrain the production of knowledge, dissent and difference (Seidman, 1996 p. 215). This is in line with the Foucauldian view of discourse and raises questions about how some discourses maintain their authority, how some get heard and others are silenced (1996, p. 215). We have seen examples of how Indigenous identity has been shaped and the historical turning points that have caused society to change its perceptions of Indigenous Australians and absorb these changed perceptions into the mainstream reality. This chapter shall look at how the past and the present are changing the very identity of Indigenous Australians.

Foucault is particularly relevant here even though he did focus more on madness and punishment, but if we look at how discourse acts to create identity we can draw parallels with Foucault's theories (Seidman, 1996 pp. 215-217). What Foucault did essentially was to describe a system of social control that operates more by the cultural meanings and self-identities it produces (Seidman, 1996 p. 227). In the case of Indigenous Australians it was the dominant white discourse that produced the meanings and identities and within which Indigenous Australians were constrained.

Said takes this a step further. The first colonists in New South Wales, through the use of known socio-political structures, made the initial basic distinction between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups and this served as the starting point for the theories, descriptions and accounts we have used ever since (1995, p. 2). This is a simplification of a more complex interaction but is made to highlight the point at issue here. These were the means for the first imposition of identity upon Indigenous Australians; an identity that was one of contrast to the English colonists and convicts and which over time became the culturally hegemonic view

(Said, 1995 p. 7). This view has changed over time but has always reflected what Said called:

a flexible positional superiority, which puts the westerner in a whole series of possible relationships...without [ever] losing the upper hand (1995, p. 7.).

This is particularly noteworthy when we realise that the changing names we use for Indigenous Australians from the term 'native' to the current 'Indigenous Australian' has always been done with the consent of the hegemonic discourse. Reid and Lupton in their work on Indigenous health used the term that has recently gained currency when they spoke of Indigenous communities being "fourth world communities [existing] within a first world [country]" (1994 p. xiii). This again shows the Indigenous population of Australia being put into a contrasting position, what Mudrooroo called "the Other" (1995, p. 2) and unintentionally doing the job of placing Indigenous Australians into a form of common identity (1995, p. 8) which is far from the truth.

However what we are seeing now, with the rise of vocal and, in a sense, powerful Indigenous voices is the rise of an identity from within the diverse Indigenous community. The diversity of Indigenous Australia is reflected in how the voices that have been heard since Pearson's speech come from both sides of the traditional spectrum and moreover have caused mainstream Australia to come to terms with the fact that Indigenous Australians no longer fit the neat pigeonholes to which we have consigned them for so long. Two Indigenous leaders who feature prominently in the debate, Pearson himself and Aden Ridgeway, typify this diversity.

Both are concerned with the position of Indigenous people in Australian society but approach the goal of achieving real changes from diametrically opposed positions. The positions the two men occupy also show how they believe Indigenous people should identify and how different discourses arise in different sites with a particular and unique history of oppression,

rights and equality [*cf* – Gergen, K 1995, Pinkus 1996]. The position of Pearson and Ridgeway in the main political arena may well influence how their views are taken and absorbed into the dominant discourse. Recent interviews in *The Bulletin* with the two are enlightening in this regard.

What Pearson is saying in his speech and subsequently, is the need for change by taking responsibility not just through fighting for rights:

...a 'rights agenda' based on laws and political settlements, even treaties is all very well, but how does that help Aboriginal babies who come into the world with foetal alcohol syndrome? (*Bulletin*, 2001 p. 38).

[Our] people are suffering because of a lack of responsibility. It's a simple equation. It's about rights and responsibilities (*Bulletin*, 2001 p. 39).

Pearson also sees that although Indigenous people have been grossly victimised in the past, they are not victims and have the power to change (*Bulletin*, 2001 p. 39). The identity is one that has been imposed by mainstream society and Pearson is a local example of a growing trend that sees this identity as being one that is as much for white society to feel good about itself as it is for achieving any real change in their position. The ideology of victimhood for Pearson has to be fought in real terms and those Indigenous leaders who do not identify themselves, as victims have to show that this identity is a false one. Shelby Steele is one black writer in the USA who has argued for some time that real change in black identity is one that can only be achieved by economic uplift [*cf* – Gergen, 1995], a point which Pearson has also made in order to “transcend the ideological divide” (*Bulletin*, 2001 p. 39).

For Ridgeway, the position is a different one. Rather than blaming the victims as he sees Pearson doing and, in doing so give “succour to the enemy” (*Bulletin*, 2001 p. 46) Ridgeway speaks of promoting rights, diversity and difference and promoting a cultural renaissance among Indigenous people in Australia (*Bulletin*, 2001 p. 46). Ridgeway states

that Pearson's way is not the method by which you overcome the victimhood mentality:

Where people have been bludgeoned into oppression and into feeling inferior, then bludgeoning them even more, particularly from an Indigenous perspective [is] counter-productive (*Bulletin*, 2001 p. 46).

Ridgeway believes what must be done is to encourage rather than coerce people into overcoming this identity (*Bulletin*, 2001 p. 46). It is not enough to simply say what many non-Indigenous people want to hear. The solutions are far more complex for Ridgeway than for Pearson, both want to see real change in Indigenous societies but both are separated by a wide conceptual, if not a political gulf.

The question now is, what does it mean to be identified as being an Indigenous Australian and how is Pearson confronting this sense of identity and what identity, if any, he is proposing to put in its place? The identity that non-Indigenous Australia has put upon Indigenous Australians today is one of being victims - victims of past government policies, victims of racism and victims of their status in society. It is a victimhood based on various social indicators; standard of health, rates of arrest and imprisonment and unemployment and education to name those most often used to compare them with the rest of the population.

The indicators we have of disadvantage are socially constructed and serve not only to show how badly off Indigenous Australians are, but how comparatively well off non-Indigenous Australians are. Pearson, in his speech spoke of how the position of his people was not due to an innate incapacity on their behalf, but has been the result of many years of an overwhelming reliance on passive welfare that determines everything they do and everything they are (Balkanu, 2000). It has become part of their very identity and their everyday life that is, it is taken for granted and is self-evident (Berger & Luckmann, 1967 p. 23).

For Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian alike social reality is most of the world around us, which we divide into sectors that we comprehend as a matter of routine (Berger & Luckmann, 1967 p. 24). These sectors form our symbolic universe, which is legitimated by their integration into a whole and in the process new meanings are produced (Berger & Luckmann, 1967 p. 92). Thus what was one social reality pre 1788 became another as European reality came to be the dominant one and a new identity that did not exist here previously was imposed upon Indigenous Australians.

A division was created between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians which was a “willed imaginative...division” (Said, 1995 p. 201) which was based almost entirely upon a: “sovereign Western consciousness” (Said, 1995 p. 8). The various words we have used to describe Indigenous Australians:

...later accrued to [them] a wide field of meanings, associations and connotations...that did not necessarily refer to the real...but to the field surrounding the [words] (Said, 1995 p. 203).

The words and the identities they described became idioms and the idioms took firm hold in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia (Said, 1995 p. 204). As Searle put it; “Language seems...not only to represent these facts to ourselves; but in a way...the linguistic forms in question are partly constitutive of the facts (1995, p. 37). Indigenous Australians are therefore constructed by the words we use to identify them, be they natives, Aborigines, Indigenous Australians or whatever we may decide to call them in the future.

The use of words to create an identity for Indigenous Australians, an identity that is imposed by the dominant hegemonic thought as to what Indigenous Australians are allows the state to put in place a “codification of a multitude of power relations which render its functioning possible” (Foucault, 1979 p. 39) and what we regard as truth is related to these

systemic power relations which produce, sustain and validate it (Foucault, 1979 p. 47).

The dominant power in Australia, which is non-Indigenous society, produces its own truth about Indigenous Australians and this becomes the truth as accepted by the majority, even by Indigenous Australians. Non-Indigenous society bestowed its own form of Indigenous Australian identity upon what it first called 'natives' and did so by its: "own understanding [of] the contrasting portraiture of the Aboriginal world" (Paine, 2000 p. 77). But how does this come to be how Indigenous Australians see and identify themselves? How do a minority group come to accept the identity that others place upon them. The answer lies in how social groups self-reference themselves within the larger physical world they live in

Feinman defined social referencing as: "a process in which one person utilises another person's interpretation of the situation to formulate [his] own interpretation of it" (1992, p. 4). Used in its strict sense it refers to how infants and then children find their place in society but it adequately serves to see how Indigenous Australians have come to interpret their place in society according to our dominant interpretation. The constant bombardment of information and ideas that Indigenous Australians have been subjected to cannot help but lead them to utilise it to construct their new reality and to identify themselves within it (Feinman, 1992 p. 7).

In social referencing the process by which the individual is part of: "a temporal sequence in the course of which he is inducted into participation in the social" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967 p. 129) depends on how: "one person serves as the base of information for another and, in so doing, facilitates the other's efforts to construct reality" (Feinman, 1992 p. 4). This process is further assisted by the interpretations of others (Feinman, 1992 p. 4).

For Indigenous Australians in the traditional sense there was a tight interlocking of personal and group relationships which together with the ramifications of the myth/ritual complex, held the totality of their society together and identified them within the land in which they lived (Berndt & Berndt, 1978 p. 121). This had profound consequences for the processes of socialisation with its emphasis on status derived from birth (Berndt & Berndt, 1978 p. 122-123). Children were born into a prearranged position within the society and which in turn led them into the complexity of adult life and the roles they were expected to perform (Berndt & Berndt, 1978 p. 125).

Indigenous Australian children were prepared from early childhood for participation in adult life, adults built up a picture of their world and their identity was based on the complexity of their relationships within the society and the mythic life (Berndt & Berndt, 1978 pp. 127-128). It can be seen then that as their social and physical environment changed, the socialisation of the children took these changes into account and they came to identify themselves within this new environment as the jigsaw fell into place around them (Berndt & Berndt, 1978 p. 143).

The process of social referencing among children has certain ramifications for many Indigenous Australian communities, which suffer the effects of relative deprivation as: "people's attitudes, aspirations and grievances depend largely on the frames of reference within which they are conceived" (Runciman, 1966 p. 9). Indigenous Australian children come to identify themselves as members of a group in which the members have little or no expectation of any real improvement in either the short or long-term (Runciman, 1966 p. 9).

Australia is a stable society with a system of power relations that has contributed to this stability. Power relations and stability are however, based on a non-Indigenous system. Runciman tells us how in: "stable societies it is not difficult to see how the aspirations of the underprivileged could be kept low enough for the pattern to remain undisturbed" (1966, p.

25). This has been accomplished by the concerted use of welfare to retain a sense of dependency among Indigenous Australians and against which Pearson is fighting. Welfare has been a method of social control (Gibbs, 1981 p. 59) in which not only the behaviour of Indigenous Australians has been modified but also their identity has come to be linked so closely to welfare that it is almost impossible to separate them.

Pearson is using his own sense of relative deprivation and how Indigenous Australians identify this as being the normal state of affairs to call for a significant change in what must be done to overcome it. To do this we must realise that to invoke a sense of deprivation we must compare one group with another (Runciman, 1966 p. 11). As Runciman said:

A person's sense of relative deprivation will be affected not only by which of several membership groups is the basis for his chosen comparison; it will also be affected by what he feels about its relation to his comparative group (1966, p. 31).

Pearson has to identify himself as belonging to a relatively prosperous group in order to make other Indigenous Australians aware of a better standard of living than they would otherwise be able to hope for. It also means that in order to attract assistance to help his people achieve this standard of living he has to hold himself up as an example of what Indigenous Australians are able to achieve for themselves (Runciman, 1966 p. 25). In effect he has to become a social reference point for other Indigenous Australians, a reference point that can be used for self-improvement. Not only this, but it will affect how he sees Indigenous Australians achieving this and how it will change their self-identity from one which accepts welfare as a way of life to one in which self-sufficiency plays a greater role.

Conclusion.

Several conclusions can be drawn from Pearson's speech and the debate about what it means for how we approach the issue of welfare dependency among Indigenous Australians. These issues are of a theoretical nature and do not involve analysing the rates of imprisonment, mortality and unemployment as these are socially constructed facts that are not relevant in this thesis. It is that these facts are socially constructed and form part of the identity of Indigenous Australians that is the relevant issue.

The background to this thesis looked at the issues that drove the research, and three events which set the scene for today, and from within which Pearson emerged. These events were indicative of a growing protest movement concerned with the social and economic position of Indigenous Australians from these events emerged a new social reality that had to be confronted by non-Indigenous Australians. The same theoretical issues took place then and this shows that as the debate Pearson has initiated is ongoing, the processes behind them are also dynamic.

The theoretical issues in this thesis revolve around critical discourse analysis, social reality, dependency and identity and what Noel Pearson's speech means in terms of these issues. Critical discourse analysis is possibly the most important because it is through this that we can understand how the language of media; press, television and the Internet presents our reality to us, revealing the cultural influences upon the subjective meaning we extract from it (Hoenisch, 1998). From it we decipher the messages that is communicated to us from the news we see (Dellinger, 1995). Slembrouk gives a good definition of discourse analysis when he says that is:

(1)... concerned with language use beyond the boundaries of a sentence/utterance, (2) concerned with the interrelationships between language and society and (3) as concerned with the interactive or dialogic properties of everyday communication (2001).

This reveals what is behind the Pearson's speech, how what he is saying is attempting to change society and how people are reacting to what he has said according to their own reality.

The use of media discourse is one way we make sense of and construct our own social reality and how we place ourselves within it. Language is the major means by which social reality is constructed [*cf* – Berger & Luckmann 1967, Searle 1995] and in turn is originated in and has as its primary reference, in everyday life even though we use it to refer to other social realities in terms we understand (Berger & Luckmann, 1967 p. 38). It is also how we are first made aware of a problematic section of this everyday life and by its use we render it unproblematic and part of the everyday (Berger & Luckmann, 1967 p. 24). Language as our primary reference system means we have to understand language in order to use it and thus we become a part of the collective intention or consensus [*cf* – Searle 1995]. We are in a process of changing the co-dependent reality of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and in doing so changing the institutions and definitions that we use to define welfare and those eligible to receive it.

This consensus is in the process of being challenged, and it is our consensus of what welfare is, that as a result of Pearson, may be changed for the foreseeable future. We are in the process of seeing an emergent discourse on welfare, from it being centralised and uniformly applied (Wright, 1996 p. 110) as a way of reforming society, to a more conditional form, thought to increase employability (Jordan, 1998 p. 139). Pearson is taking that a measure further: "poverty needs to be overcome via the development of real economies for our society" (2000, p. 151) and: "for

Aboriginal people, the present analyses...are destructive" (Balkanu, 2000).

This is the current debate regarding welfare dependency among Indigenous Australians: a debate based on ideology and one which is spreading to include other forms of welfare. Pearson has initiated the debate on the danger welfare dependency poses for Indigenous Australians and how this dependency has arisen from historical factors, not least of which is the how our social reality has shaped the role welfare plays.

The reform of welfare for Indigenous Australians is still imposed from the top down and will not alter the fact of dependency or its attendant problems. A new approach is necessary, which, for Pearson, has strong elements of the Third Way embodied in them. Elements such as being a form of empowerment, finding new forms of service delivery and reducing the role of the state, involving private enterprise and the need for new strategies for addressing social welfare are strongly to the fore in Pearson's ideas [*cf* – Wright 1996, Latham 2001].

The final conclusion is that Pearson is using his speech and his plans for Cape York to change the discourse about what it means to identify people as Indigenous Australians and having part of that identity as being permanent welfare recipients, by offering a new identity: an identity derived from his socialisation as a child and as an adult. As a child he learned about the objects that were recognised within the culture in which he grew up (Hewitt & Livingstone, 1986 p. 124). As an adult he entered different groups with different frames of reference (Runciman, 1966 p. 9). He became aware of a different identity, which could be achieved by Indigenous Australians if the proper processes were to be put in place to achieve it.

This thesis has described how the discourse of Indigenous identity has been constrained within a much larger discourse, which has imposed the

identity of Indigenous Australians as victims and non-Indigenous Australians as the guilty and how the debate is able to reassess these identities. I also showed how the dominant non-Indigenous Australian discourse has always used common labels to identify Indigenous Australians and that Pearson is challenging this by offering a new identity. Finally the words and idioms we use to label Indigenous Australians have become part of common usage and in time have become part of the social reality infants are brought up in and in which they identify themselves and their place in Indigenous and non-Indigenous society.

These issues of discourse analysis, social reality, identity and dependency are not emerging by a conscious decision by Pearson or the people who have entered into the debate to push their own agenda for change. Like many they would not even be aware these issues lie behind the debate at a deeper level. Pearson is looking at these issues as not only initiating a new debate but of bringing into the public arena a discourse derived from his upbringing and his adult life which is using these issues to challenge the dominant discourse and if successful, bringing about a new social reality with which Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia will have to come to terms.

In this context of events where the prevailing reality has been challenged and debated and from which a new reality may be emerging, we can see the debate initiated by Pearson in a different light. One in which he is fighting a sense of stalled politics, that welfare for Indigenous Australians is seen as an end in itself, not as the means to one it was originally intended to be. Opposing this sense, Pearson has entered as a new form of politics, borrowing his ideas from alternative political thought.

Pearson has taken significant elements of the Third Way and adapted and modified them to suit how he sees taking concrete steps in improving the position of his people in Cape York by utilising private enterprise as well as governments to build the community capacity via social and economic investment (Botsman, 2000). This method can be used elsewhere but

Pearson has been at pains not to raise hopes that Cape York should be a model for elsewhere.

Finally I suggest that the debate Pearson has initiated is an ongoing one and may be heading in a direction of which Pearson may not intend. What may happen as a result is that governments will use it as an opportunity to divest themselves of responsibility, responsibility for the wellbeing of individuals and communities. They may, as a result, divest it onto a group which is the least capable of handling it, and is more likely to fail as a result and which, in the current climate of blame assignment, can easily be blamed for its failure to cope with it. Only the future will tell what the result will be.

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