

**Theme: Australia - Quo Vadis?**

**Text A [listening comprehension]:** The World Today - Expatriates in London speak on selection of Governor-General, 9 June 2003

**Source:** [www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2003/s875427.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2003/s875427.htm)

**Text B [see below]:** G-G victim of witch-hunt: interview with Professor David Flint, 26 May 2003

**Source** [www.abc.net.au/public/s863943.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/public/s863943.htm)

I think a lot of things have been going on which many of us will be ashamed but the system has been resilient, the system has coped very well with this. I think we're lucky to have a constitution that works so well.

I think when people look back on this, when historians review it, it will be seen as a quite shameful 5 period in which a decent man who did more for the underprivileged than any other governor-general was so easily bought down by a constant, consistent campaign which was quite over the top and quite venomous. But [people] will also appreciate how strongly the system withstood that.

I think Australians understand that they have a very sound system.

They understand that from what they see in other countries. They're not exactly sure why because the 10 system of education in our country doesn't sufficiently teach the values of the institutions which we have and I think that our role really is to encourage education about the constitutional system in which we live.

I understand that the republicans believe similarly that there ought to be education about it. They think that if people, particularly the young, are educated about it they'll want to change it.

15 We think very strongly that once they understand it even more they'll be even more reluctant to make any fundamental changes to what is one of the world's most successful constitutions.

I have no suggestions [for the next governor-general]. I don't think it should be done immediately because there will have to be proper consideration given to the selection of a person who fulfils all of the requirements of the position, but I'm sure we can leave that to the Prime Minister as we've left it to the

20 Prime Minister or the premiers in the past.

**Annotations:**

Annotation: Michael Dodd, an Australian journalist, interviews a fellow Australian political activist; Geoff O'Connell, in London.

Vocabulary for listening comprehension: vacancy – unoccupied office; embrace – here: consult;



politically savvy – well-informed; shrewd; egalitarian – believing in equal political rights for all people; tamper with sth – interfere in a harmful way; straw boater – metaphor related to a straw hat that was part of a traditional British school uniform (see picture) – cf. anachronistic & anachronism; by and large – (German) im großen und ganzen; busy with fetes – parties;

Vocabulary print text: 2 resilient – ability to recover; 7 venomous – full of poison

**Assignments:**

1. Adduce as many details as possible to characterize Geoff O'Connell's political position concerning the Governor-General. [Listening comprehension]
2. Work on arguments and the words and phrases that are used in text B to determine if David Flint is on the same side of the argument as Geoff O'Connell or not. [Analysis/Comparison]
3. At the end of the interview [text A] Michael Dodd comments that “despite [the Queen’s] privileged role in [appointing the G-G], there's no sign in Britain that the matter is looming particularly largely in Her Majesty's mind.” Do you think that such an attitude also applies to John Howard, PM and leader of the Liberal Party? Give reasons in your answer. [Background Comment]

Listening Comprehension:

GEOFF O'CONNELL: The current vacancy should be filled by a process which would include discussions with the Leader of the Opposition, whoever that may be soon, and possibly the senior High Court judge.

5 MICHAEL DODD: So do you think the Prime Minister would be prepared to embrace the Opposition Leader amongst others into the decision-making process?

GEOFF O'CONNELL: Well the Prime Minister's proved to be very politically savvy in this issue and I think if he's looking forward and wants to take the country forward into the future, he should engage both the views of the Leader of the Opposition and the High Court judge and make this a more egalitarian appointment.

10 MICHAEL DODD: So how would you respond to the view that many Australian monarchists would have, that the current system isn't broken and therefore it shouldn't be tampered with?

GEOFF O'CONNELL: I think the Australian monarchists are tied up in, I think possibly their straw boater's fitting a little bit too tightly these days, they can't seem to see very far, they're lost in the past, in a very anachronistic position and I just don't think they're part of the future really.

15 MICHAEL DODD: But still, how do you respond to the actual argument that, well, the system by and large works so therefore it shouldn't be changed.

20 GEOFF O'CONNELL: The system by and large works possibly from a view, where I sit in the United Kingdom, the Queen of the country here works very well, and the family, well you know, they seem to be busy with fetes and what-not, but the Governor-General of Australia is second-best, you know, we're accepting number two. In a country that's got a population of nearly 20 million, I find it extraordinary that we cannot select and nominate our own Head of State