

**NORTHERN TERRITORY
COUNTRY LIBERAL PARTY**

COUNTRY LIBERAL WOMEN

**INVITE YOU
TO
BREAKFAST**



*fax 89816023
Wendy (c.v.)*

GUEST SPEAKER - Josephine Stone

**to be held
at the
Plaza Hotel, Darwin**

Saturday 8th November

6.45am for 7.00am

\$15.00 per head (must be paid by Wednesday 5th November)

***Come along and meet other delegates, guests, professional and business
people as well as a great breakfast (that you haven't had to cook
yourself)***

**RSVP Sue, CLP Secretariat phone: 80 819988
(payment can be made by cash, cheque, visa, bankcard or mastercard)**

To NTCLP Secretariat, GPO Box 4194, Darwin NT 0801

**Payment of Country Liberal Women Breakfast
(to be paid by Wednesday 8th November, 1997)**

**Please find enclosed my cash/cheque for
or debit my Visa/B/Card/M/Card no**

WOMEN IN THE 90'S - THE NEW CHALLENGE

Australians like to work. Or so the Australian Institute of Family Studies in its Australian Family Life Course Project has concluded. This project looks at how families combine work and family.

According to the study, 65% of men and 69% of women surveyed agree that both partners should contribute to the household income. But in married couples and couples living together, 59% of men and 62% of women believed the male should be the main breadwinner.

Household chores remain the responsibility of women in most cases with 80% of women taking the lionesses share when they are not in the paid workforce. Where both partners are working fulltime 56% of women say they do most of the housework.

Having babies remains popular with 253,834 babies born in Australia during 1996. A 4% increase compared with 1986 figures.

So what does that say about women in the 1990's? It says that we are having, collectively, more babies than we did 10 years ago, we are still doing the lioness's share of the housework AND we are expected to contribute financially to the household income.

Some women are spectacularly successful in combining family and work.

Brenda Barnes, at the age of 43, had managed to have 3 children and a husband and become president and chief executive of the soft drink giant Pepsi Cola North America with a reported annual salary of \$2 million US (\$2.8 million AUS).

Recently Ms Barnes resigned from her job to become a housewife. Whilst her extremely well paid job enabled her to afford

a country mansion, designer wardrobe and chauffeur driven limousine it also required her to begin work before dawn, attend regular dinner meetings and travel extensively.

Her 3 children all under the age of 10 years and her husband saw her briefly each week. She saw her children's milestones such as birthdays and school plays on video replay.

She made her decision to resign from Pepsi Cola after one of her children told her he didn't mind her working so long as she promised to be home for their birthdays.

Ms Barnes explained her decision in these terms. "I suppose a lot of chief executives can find a way to balance work and family but I couldn't figure out how to do it with 100% commitment to the Company... in a way that would give me a role in my children's life... I am not leaving because my children need more of me, I am leaving because I need more of them".

Her decision was reported widely around the western world including the Australian newspapers and magazines. It rekindled a lively debate, particularly in the United States where there are many high profile women about the ability of dual career couples to juggle family and work in an era where 2 income households are increasingly the norm.

Ms Barnes is one of several prominent women in the US and elsewhere who have either given up or interrupted their careers for family. In 1995 Penny Hughes caused a stir when she gave up her job as head of Coca Cola in the UK and Ireland at the age of 35 to give birth to her first child. Around the same time Linda Kelsey the Editor of She magazine - a publication devoted to women who juggle family and work - also quit her job to spend more time with her young son.

This very week in the Australian newspapers it was reported that Anna Booth, one of Australia's most powerful corporate women

(former ACTU heavyweight and current Sydney Casino spokesman) is quitting to spend more time with her family. She has 2 children aged 6 and 3. Although she hopes to attract positions on company boards, she envisages that it will not entail up to the 60 hours per week that she presently devotes to her corporate job. She is keen on Federal politics but has decided to defer that career move for another decade because of her children.

“You have to spend time with them at this age. Sometimes it takes Angus 12 hours to come out with important information about what has happened to him at school. Things you need to know. It’s a personal choice - I don’t want to miss that”.

Brenda Barnes did not see her resignation as a gender issue saying that men also feel torn between the responsibilities of family and work. President Bill Clinton apparently regularly interrupts White House meetings to take phone calls from his

teenage daughter Chelsea. Our own Prime Minister Howard upon his elevation to that office declined to follow his predecessors and move his family to Canberra, preferring to leave his children's schooling intact in Sydney where he conducts a major portion of the business of being Prime Minister.

There are examples of high flying male executives giving up their jobs for lifestyle reasons yet the women who do this get the majority of attention. They tend to get this attention from other women.

I am struck by the fact that our newspapers and magazines carry an amazing number of articles about women who are achieving. These stories are not necessarily about women trying to do it but who are doing it.

Some brief examples:

- Jenny Thompson a 39 year old Financial Consultant from Canberra, the only women racing in this year's Bathurst 1000 (the Australian 3/10/97)

- Jane Bennett, a 28 year old cheese maker from Tasmania who has never eaten butter or cream and who gave up drinking milk when she was 6 years old. Jane has recently become this year's Australian Rural Woman of the Year (Australian 3/10/97).

Not to mention the numerous articles on several prominent Australian politicians - Amanda Vanstone, Carmen Lawrence, Cheryl Kernot, Pauline Hanson, the list goes on.

I found 2 such articles particularly interesting. They were articles about women by women, not necessarily critical of women or their achievements but continuing to focus on the gender issues that affect high profile women.

The first was an article in the Cairns Post (3/10/97) bi-lined through AAP in Adelaide about Pauline Hanson. The article purported to quote Anne Ellison a PhD student from Melbourne University who attended the Australasian Political Studies Association Conference in Adelaide in early October. It was Ms Ellison's view, as reported, that being a woman helped Ms Hanson gain her high profile but her gender would also be her downfall when it came to long term leadership of her One Nation Party.

"Her ultimately demise will come from within her own ranks of the far right movement in Australia because she is a female leader of what is essentially a male movement".

Ms Ellison said female leaders like former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Britain succeeded in right wing politics because they were in a party structure rather than the founder of a party. She went on to suggest Ms Hanson would do better in a party structure than as a leader of party of her own creation.

What I found interesting about this particular article was the suggestion that a female politician in a leadership role could not succeed or succeed for very long without a party structure to support her. No credence appears to be given to the individual traits of either Pauline Hanson or Margaret Thatcher other than gender.

In fact this could be said of many women politicians. How often have we read articles which appear to focus more on looks, clothes or gender personal traits of Bronwyn Bishop, Joan Kirner, Carmen Lawrence or Amanda Vanstone and yet the obesity or appalling dress sense of many prominent male politicians is so rarely mentioned? Unfortunately, many of these derogatory or critical comments about high profile women come from other women.

The second article or series of articles featured Jeanette Howard, Mrs Howard as the Prime Minister's wife has been described as

a public figure and yet she has striven, successfully in my view, to retain that essential personal privacy which appears to be part of her make-up and which is so incredibly difficult to achieve when in public life.

Mrs Howard was recently ridiculed by some segments of the press and feminist groups for firstly publicly admitting that during moments of stress she resorts to doing the washing and secondly for describing her role as the Prime Minister's wife as "supportive" rather than a position of influence.

The comment which raised so much discussion was this:

"I am most happy in the back blocks organising something or other - seeing that raffle tickets are being sold, checking everyone is at the right table or that type of thing. It is supporting my husband and making sure that the family stays in good order - I have always seen it as not a

particularly political role. That does not mean that I am not interested in issues; it just means that I am very conscious of not being elected”.

This comment provoked a heated debate amongst Australian feminists in much the same way as Brenda Barnes resignation from Pepsi Cola did in America - the struggle to balance family and work. Mrs Howard was unfavourably compared with Cherie Blair who has continued her role as a barrister upon her husband's election to British Prime Minister. There can of course be no comparison. Ms Blair chose as her life's work the role of working lawyer whilst Mrs Howard chose family. What is to be noted in both cases is that both women chose their life's work.

Yet Mrs Howard copped it for being a good wife and mother. Why is it that it is only selected domestic images which are acceptable in public life such as, children and yet the day to day mechanics

of keeping it all together such as housework put one in the sin bin?

One of the criticisms of Mrs Howard was her apparent failure to acknowledge the power and influence that she is expected to have and exercise upon her husband, the Prime Minister (Susan Mitchell - Australian 4/10/97).

Conversely, Hilary Clinton provides a most vivid example of what happens to professional women who do try to exercise their influence in their husband's political roles. She is a high profile and highly regarded lawyer who is forced into the good wife and mother role, complete with new hair-do, wardrobe and contact lenses, the very role for which Jeanette Howard has been criticised. But then Hillary Clinton hasn't admitted to doing the laundry.

It will be interesting to see how Cherie Blair copes in Britain. She became the good wife during the campaign by giving up her job which she has now resumed but I suspect in a much reduced capacity.

It appears it is acceptable to be the good wife and mother so long as one's publicly proclaimed virtues are not too domestic. Nor does it appear to be acceptable if one is too successful or too influential.

Senator Amanda Vanstone has had to implement some of the most politically difficult decisions of recent date and has done so in style that would be seen as good tactics in a man. She has recently been demoted. Of this she says "I don't bother to look back, that's a disaster. You'll waste a lot of time in life if you're always looking back and one of the big mistakes you'll make is you'll forget to look forward".

Senator Vanstone who has been tormented by both male and female opponents in Parliament said the political environment was tough for women. It's a boys game which you have to be prepared to play if you want to be in it. However, she asserts that as the number of women in Parliament increase, the running of Parliaments would improve.

Amanda Vanstone embraced power as did Carmen Lawrence and Cheryl Kernot and Pauline Hanson and all have been criticised. Jeanette Howard was criticised for not embracing power, of being afraid of the "P" word.

"Too much modesty can be a dangerous thing and Jeanette Howard has been hiding her light behind the OMO. It's time to come clean" (Susan Mitchell - The Australian 2/10/97).

This comment came from the same woman commentator who also said when comparing Jeanette Howard and Cherie Blair that

“One is not better than the other or more right than the other. The issue is choice.”

What then is a woman to do. She is damned if she does and damned if she doesn't and she's is damned no so much by men but by women commentators.

And what then is the challenge for women in the 1990's?

To remind ourselves of and to reaffirm that most basic tenet of feminism.

It is a woman's right to choose what she does with her life, be it the traditional yet largely undervalued role of homemaker OR the high flying career woman executive

That's all very well, you might say, but what about the increasingly large number of us who have families and who work, not as a matter of choice but as a matter of necessity?

What about those women who are not in extraordinarily well-paid jobs or high profile public positions and who never aspire to those heights?

What has this notion of "choice" got to do with them?

As I recall the early goals of the Feminist Movement, they were all aimed at acceptance of women as equals ie. equal to men.

This meant

- acceptance of the right to work, if that was one's choice or need.

- acceptance that a woman's labour in the paid workforce was worth the same as a man's, in monetary terms.
- acceptance that women have the intellectual and emotional capacity not to mention physical stamina to undertake those types of employment traditionally reserved for men eg. welder, soldier, truck driver, company director, corporate spokesperson, Premier of the State or Prime Minister.
- and more latterly, acceptance that equality doesn't necessarily mean being the same as a man, that is, an acceptance that there are gender differences between men and women and these differences are in fact advantageous and do not constitute a handicap.
- For example, the fact that women these days are expected to work may mean a certain drudgery for many. It also means economic power and independence. It means that

women have a greater say in the disposal of not only the family income but the nation's income. Economic power, I believe, is more significant than political power although political power is quite often a by-product.

- Acceptance also that there is often some individual pain involved in exercising this right to choose and that our choices have a wider impact than just on our individual lives.

In short, I see the challenge for women in the 1990's

- to remind ourselves that we have choices
- to accept the validity of the choices that we and other women make
- to move beyond the "victimology" of womanhood which prompted and inspired the early Feminists and accept that

we are the Mistresses of our own Fate, and if we do not stand up and make our voices heard, we have no-one to blame but ourselves.

The road to success is not an easy one. No-one promised it would be. Whilst we may achieve what men have always had and want to keep for themselves - money, power, position and decision making - we will also face the same consequences - stress, difficulty with relationships and juggling family commitments.

How women face these challenges will be less of an individual choice or burden if, collectively, we support each other.

I'd like to believe that women's inherent nurturing skills and teamwork approach to problems will enable us to achieve better solutions than our male counterparts.

One of the most notable characteristics of successful women is that they play the game, run with the ball and then seek to effect change from within. That in my view is much more effective than refusing to play but standing on the sidelines hurling insults.

Remember, whether you are the lioness at home protecting her cubs or out hunting with the pack I AM WOMAN, HEAR ME ROAR.

Josephine Stone

8-11-97

C.L.W. Breakfast