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## **Janine Haines Lecture, Hobart 2003: Reclaiming History: The Democrats contribution to Environmental Politics and how we helped save the Franklin River.**

### **Introduction: Senator Andrew Bartlett (Parliamentary Leader, Australian Democrats)**

Thanks everyone for coming along.

It's really great actually to be able to introduce our star speaker and performer this evening and particularly in this location actually, which is the place where we held our party's national conference in early 1996 leading up to the federal election which was a reasonably good election for us nationally.

But it was a very sad one for us here in Tasmania because that's when Robert Bell lost his seat and I believe it's been unfortunate for Tasmania to not have a Tasmanian Democrats voice in the National Parliament since that time.

But the Democrats have continued to be an effective force in the National Parliament particularly in the Senate - and at this time the Senate is under attack because it is the only clear check and effective alternative to the government of the day.

It is very important that we have a strong Senate to provide an opportunity for those voices that don't otherwise get heard. To provide an opportunity to properly scrutinize what the government is doing and give an effective alternative. That's essential for the whole country.

It's especially essential for Tasmania and I think everybody would acknowledge that the Democrats over more than 25 years now have performed an exceptional role in the Senate in making that an effective body.

It is, I think, particularly worth emphasising the significance that providing opportunity for alternative voices can play in the political spectrum particularly given a political system in Australia that is nominally a two party system and has the most rigid party discipline in the world. Perhaps except for Soviet Russia but certainly in the democratic world.

Usually the rigid party discipline basically means you are hearing two voices and that's about it and even those two tend to agree with each other a lot of the time. So it's pretty hard work being a third party in a two party system.

The Democrats have done it for longer than any other party in our political history and done it very very well. But what we haven't been very good at is actually acknowledging our history.

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I think it's partly because we're always so busy. We deal with an issue and then when that's dealt with we move on to the next thing and before you know it five years have passed and you can't even remember what you did last week let alone five years ago.

So that's part of why we established the Janine Haines Lecture Series not just to honour significant contributors to the Democrats and the political system but to also pull us back – to make us look at what we have achieved and to celebrate that.

It's not just a looking backwards thing. I guess it's a reaffirmation of some of the things that we have done in the past. Why we need to continue to look to be effective on a whole range of issues into the future.

Some of those issues are new and are unexpected and leap out of nowhere. Some of them sound depressingly familiar - without getting into the depression theme which I think Norm probably might do after spending a day looking at clear felled rain forest.

A lot of the issues of 20 years ago when Norm gave his first speech speaking about the pathetic aviation industry in Australia and how hopeless and uncompetitive it was are still around. As you heard before, the apology of Senator Lyn Allison this evening and Katrina, my media officer's luggage, I'm sure will turn up some time in the next week.

So yes some of those problems continue on and there are always new ones to tackle. That is why you need a committed group of people who will focus on that role and provide opportunity for different voices, different ideas to come forward and I guess one thing you'd certainly say about Norm is that he is different and he provides a different voice.

I think he himself said so in some of his earlier speeches. This noisy American, who just sort of migrated here, and spent a few thousand bucks on a few elections. Worked incredibly hard, I must say on a whole lot of things, but there he is not just in the Senate, but playing a critical role on the issues of the day and in that balance of power role.

And equally important being a voice of inspiration and despite lots of other things having changed, one thing that hasn't changed, having just spent a few hours with Norm, is that inspirational quality and indeed that energy that is still there along with his ever youthful appearance.

So I'm sure you'll all enjoy getting a dose of inspiration and energy from Norm. I welcome you all here. I particularly acknowledge the presence of some original members, some of those people who have been around for a long period of time.

It's great to have you here and I'm glad to have you all here to share in some inspiration and insights from former Senator and former many many other things. but still an all round fascinating person Norm Sanders.

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## **Dr Norm Sanders:**

Thank you Andrew. I hope I can live up to the introduction.

Gee it is good to see some of you people but you're looking older you know. (Laughter) Oh it is good to see you. You know I haven't been back here for probably over 10 years and I wouldn't be back here now except for Yulia.

Now she rang me up out of the blue and said look Norm would you like to come back to Tasmania for a Lecture. I thought 'oh jeez I don't know', but she persisted and she prevailed and I am here. I must say it is a very bittersweet experience.

But before I do get into that I would like to say something about Janine Haines.

Madam Lash.

Now I was fortunate to serve with two extraordinary Leaders. Don Chipp and Janine Haines. They are as different as chalk and cheese but both wonderful people, wonderful people. Don Chipp is well... Don Chipp. We all know Don Chipp.

I was kind of his henchman or foil or something because he is a very polite man, as you know. We had in the party at that time a person named John Siddons. Now John Siddons was our spokesperson on economic matters and treasury and stuff and there was this long boring, boring discussion about economics and treasury and what we were going to do with these bills.

And John Siddons, a nice guy - he makes a good wrench or spanner - but as thick as two planks and he went on and on in the party room. There is still probably in the old Parliament House a grease spot on the wall where I used to sit and lean up against and go to sleep. (I always promised not to snore.)

But John Siddons was going on and on and on and on and on and finally Don Chipp said 'well are you coming to the point' and John Siddons said 'I'm not going to take this anymore, you're not listening attentively, I'm not going to contribute' and I said 'John don't let the door hit you on the arse on the way out.' And he stormed out the door and Don Chipp said 'Norman you shouldn't have said that'.

We had good times in the old days.

And then of course we had Janine.

Janine was absolutely different from Don but still a tremendously inspirational Leader and so clever and smart and able to grasp things immediately and put them out to the public in an understandable way.

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She was always fighting migraines and I really admired her pluck for hanging in there like she did and coming across as strongly as she always did with her migraines. She is an amazing woman. Just amazing.

She and I bailed out of the Parliament at the same time. She bailed out to try and do a very difficult task. I was going to say impossible. It is very difficult to get into the Lower House of course.

She bailed out of the Senate from her position as Leader to try and win the seat of Kingston in South Australia. And she would have except that the Labor Party and the Liberal Party ganged up on her and she didn't get in.

I bailed out simply because I had had enough flying back and forth on jet aircraft and getting my luggage lost and stuff like that and also I had been in Parliament in total about seven years and some days.

I didn't get a Parliamentary pension, I missed it by 100 days service but in order to get the extra 100 days I would have had to stand again and do another three years and I thought I'd be damned if I'm going to do another three years.

So I bailed out and I didn't come back to Tasmania for a very long time because I'm a pilot and I flew around a lot and I saw what was happening to this place. You get a pretty good view of things from the air.

You know when I came here in 1964 on a Fulbright Fellowship it was almost a mistake. I was actually trying to get to Scandinavia to study the fjords and through a long series of mishaps I ended up in Tasmania where I was told there was a fjord but there wasn't. Port Davey is not a fjord.

But I did love the place and I stayed here for four years and got a PHD at the University. I got a PHD in Geography and for reasons I've never thoroughly understood I was the first ever PHD in Geography. Although they have never put my picture on their wall - I don't know why. But I loved the place.

I went back to America in 1968 with my hot little PHD in my hand and I got a job as an Assistant Professor of Geography at the University of California. Got involved immediately in the environmental movement of the seventies in America. In the Santa Barbara Oil spills. I worked very hard and long on oil spill problems and trying to stop off shore oil drilling.

Then we had the Vietnam war thing of course. That became my ultimate difficulty after stopping the Chancellor's pet freeway project because it was going across the local wildlife refuge. But then my students went out - and I didn't tell them to and I certainly wasn't in favour of it - and they went out and burned down the local branch of the Bank of America in Isle of Vista and I got fired.

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So I thought well what do you do? I'll go back to Tasmania. So I bought this yacht and sailed back out here with my wife and four year old daughter and I love the place still.

I got a job through another series of interesting connections on *This Day Tonight* the last great current affairs show. And I did 264 film stories of Tasmania and I got angrier and angrier and angrier.

The more I saw of what was happening to this place the angrier I got and finally when they wouldn't run my last story, which was about how the Forestry Commission regeneration burning got out of control and burned down all the King Billies on Mount Field, I resigned and that's when I got very much into the environmental system here.

I'm going to tell you a little story and then go back and tell you why I think it's significant. It was an interesting story perhaps at the time.

Some of you may remember Kevin Kunan and Phil Whittam. Well they had started a little group. A little gorilla group, called the Tasmanian Wilderness Society. Because they thought that there needed to be a group which was really not all that attached to a membership, that could move fast - and we used to - and then they brought me on as a Director.

I think Kevin Kunan was kind of Director and Phill Whittam couldn't be a Director because we wanted to fight the Hydro and his father worked for the Hydro, being Tasmanian.

So they brought me on to make statements for them and I got stuck into the Hydro and started off the whole argument about wind power. I challenged them, being a former aerospace engineer, on the scientific basis of wind power and really worried them.

But our main activity was on Monday nights. We'd sit around and write letters to the editors under assumed names and if we'd get one published then we'd attack it under another assumed name. And we'd keep issues running that way. We'd get a few cans of beer and we'd sit around and write these things and maybe some press releases and that was good fun.

But then the organisation got bigger and bigger and then somebody said we'd better have an agenda for our Monday night meetings. So all right yeah. Well we'll have a Monday afternoon meeting to set up the agenda for the Monday night meeting. Oh yeah. So they did that.

And then the final straw was when they wouldn't allow us to drink beer any more on Monday nights. So I quit as Director and that left the position open and so they decided to elect a new Director. And they said how did you get elected and I said I wasn't elected I just became Director. So then they went through a process and elected Bob Brown as the Director of the Wilderness Society.

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At that time I thought maybe it's a good idea to go out and try and shake the political tree a bit. Now I once wrote a book in America called *Stop It* with pictures of a little old lady sitting in front of a bull dozer stopping rampant pollution and development and it was a guide to the defence of the environment. Citizens defence of the environment.

I said buy a politician, sell a politician but never be one. My theory then and still is - with apologies to politicians who may or may not be in the room - that if you're interested in an issue it's really better to support a politician who is going in the right direction, maybe oppose who isn't and concentrate on the issue itself.

But I thought well nothing is written in stone so I'll try this. So I tried to get into politics and Tasmania was never quite the same because in my first go I managed to force the one and only by-election under the Hare-Clarke system ever held in the world.

That came about because being a good Democrat I think I spent something like \$2,000 on my campaign and the election limits were something like \$6,000. Every other candidate overspent and so the Labor Party and the Liberal Party got writs out against each other for overspending and I was the only one in the whole election that hadn't over spent.

So the Labor Party and the Liberal Party realised they were creating a terrible mess for themselves and they started trying to untangle this and it came down to me.

They asked me did I want to remove my writs? So I went to the people. I got on, I don't know what it was, it wasn't DDT, maybe it was Nationwide or whatever and I got on camera and I said OK people out there in Dennison what do you want me to do - write me a letter.

We got something like 1500 letters saying hang in there Norm. Don't withdraw your writ and that forced the by-election. And in that election I got elected. I beat the party whip John Green by 800 votes.

Now this brings me to a point which I will enter into at this time and it is the rewriting of history of that era.

Not by Bob Brown but around Bob Brown, by the Greens. And there is an awful lot of rewriting of history. And I think it is sad because there were an awful lot of people involved in those early days who just don't get credit for it anymore. They just don't get mentioned.

In my own case there was an article in some magazine. Its grounds for the rise and fall of the Greens and the only reason I bring this up is because it said in it that the first green activist elected to an Australian Parliament, Dr Norm Sanders, was elected to the Tasmanian House of Assembly in 1980. He joined the Democrats and subsequently served as a Democrat Senator because there was at that time no Greens Party to join.

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Rubbish. The Democrats were a green party and that's why I joined it. And I think that it is sad that this is not recognised. The Democrats were formed very early on with Jeffrey Loftus Hill and such, around the premise that this is one earth. That this is the only one that we've got, everything is connected to everything else. We are going to have to take care of it. And it is a green Party. It always has been. It annoys me.

Yes I did get elected as a Democrat and I don't think I could have got elected if I hadn't been a Democrat frankly in those days. Cause the UTG wasn't getting up. They couldn't get up. So you know, I was positively a Democrat and I owe my victory to being a Democrat.

Well that started the most horrendous period of my entire life. Being a voice of reason in the Tasmanian Parliament. Now you've got your job cut out for you trying to be a voice of reason anywhere, but the Tasmanian Parliament of those days was really a bear pit. And poor old Doug Lowe didn't understand two things.

One is that I couldn't understand Australian insults and he'd call me a bloody Galah or something. Well a Galah is a really nice bird isn't it? And the other thing is he said he'd put me in Coventry. And I said oh yes where's that? And the way he put me in Coventry was to put me in an office that was nowhere near the Parliamentary Offices. He put me in the middle of Hansard in a triangular broom closet and that was the biggest mistake he could have every made.

Because when I would go in to the chamber and make a speech, of course they would all stand on their seats and yell and scream at me. And the Hansard people always knew when I was making a speech because I'd come staggering out of there - nobody is bullet proof. You know I mean everybody said I had a thick hide. I didn't I just had a higher tolerance, but my hide wasn't all that thick.

So I'd go in and make a speech and come out and the Hansard ladies would be there with a cup of tea and a biscuit and they kept me going.

I used to love to ask questions. In those days, I don't know how it still is, but you used to be able to - if you could leap up and get the jump - you could ask as many questions as you wanted and so I asked an awful lot of questions.

One of my favourite questions was when I was flying over the southwest and I saw an oil spill on the Gordon River by a Hydro working - a hydro operation that was in progress there.

So I took pictures of it and I came back and I asked the Premier of the day, Robin Gray what about this - please explain? Why is this oil spill there? So he went to Rush Ashton of the Hydro.

Rush Ashton came back with this statement well it's from an underwater chainsaw, a spillage from an underwater chainsaw. I said oh yeah. I said

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well I suppose if you are going to woodchip and build dams at the same time you're going to have to have an underwater chainsaw.

But then it turned out they had spilled something like 10 barrels of diesel and Rush Ashton had to tell Robin Gray that and then Robin Gray came back and had to admit that to the Parliament and he was ropeable. And he called Ashton and you could hear him yelling at Ashton all the way from the Chamber. And I thought well that's a nice outcome, a nice outcome.

Oh but I must explain about Robin Gray and why he's there. As you probably remember or maybe you don't, we had a referendum. The famous referendum on the Franklin.

Now we had kind of oversold the Gordon and we hadn't sold the Franklin well enough, so when we had the famous referendum they said OK where do you want the dam? Do you want it, where was it, the Gordon above Olga, or the Gordon below Franklin.

But no 'no dams' options at all. And we said no you can't not have a no dams option. And they said no we're not going to have a 'no dams' option. So we said right. People can write in 'no dams'. And then it became a historical thing because more people wrote in 'no dams' in that referendum than in any other referendum ever in the world, anywhere, where they had had a write in.

And I said that if more than  $33\frac{1}{3}\%$  of the people of Tasmania write in no dams I will move to bring down the Government of Tasmania because by that time Doug Low had been rolled by the Labor Party and was sitting in the middle along with Mary Willie who came across as his Whip.

And there were three of us and we had the balance of power, except that as you well know, you don't have a balance of power if the Labor Party and the Liberal Party all want the same thing - like a dam. Then you don't have the balance of power.

But we had the balance of power in one thing and that was moving a motion of no confidence. So Harry Holgate paroled Parliament for five months, and he wouldn't come back and he wouldn't come back and he said 'Norm are you going to do it?' And I said 'yes I am going to do it'. And he said 'no you're not, you won't do it.' And I said 'yes I am.'

And just yesterday I saw Michael Weldon who was a Labor party parliamentarian who reminded me, or I reminded him actually, that he was ready to give the address in reply speech on the day that Parliament opened.

Harry didn't think I would move my motion. We opened Parliament. I got up. I said 'I move a motion of no confidence in the Holgate government.' That brought on an election. We thought with a  $33\frac{1}{3}\%$  referendum result we'd get a whole bunch of no dam people in but the media made a

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mockery and the Examiner did a number on us and we didn't get a whole bunch of people in.

But what we did get was the Robin Gray government, which I had felt very bad about for a very long time until a few years ago.

I got on a bus in Bateman's Bay going up to pick up a motorcycle with Moss Cass who was the Minister for the Environment in the Whitlam government. I said Moss there's one thing I would like to know. Would Hawke have stopped the Franklin if this had been a Labor Government because as you recall Whitlam would not stop the flooding of Lake Peddar because of the Reece Labor Government down here. And Moss Cass said No, Hawke wouldn't have moved if it had been a Labor Government. So I said oh thank God. You know my conscience is eased.

Well anyway I stayed in Parliament for a long time and suffered these people but eventually I bailed out. If you recall there were two Franklin blockades. There was a short blockade. A weeklong blockade before Christmas and then the real blockade was starting and we were getting desperate about the Franklin.

And I went down there and I saw these good honest people getting arrested. Very sincere people. Pierre Slicer and Nick Goldy had gotten arrested and had gone to gaol and I went to dinner with them. Parliament was sitting that night. These people had just come out of the slammer. Pierre Slicer is now a High Court Judge. That's amazing. But anyway time moves on.

And so I went back to Parliament and these bloody politicians were going ah ra ra ra and I thought I cannot sit with these people. After seeing real honest to God people who cared about the world and the future and then having to go into the chamber and sit with these. I called them drunken bums in my final speech. And the next day I hopped on my motorcycle and went over to Government House and resigned. So that was the end of that. I went back into the blockade and flew around with my aeroplane and got in people's way but that ended my Tasmanian parliamentary career.

Then Don Chipp said, well run for the Senate. Get in the Senate. So I tried a couple of times and I finally made it by 800 votes. I think the 800 votes I finally won by were due to the fact that I was the State President of the Motor Cycle Riders Association of Tasmania, which had 800 members. So don't neglect any portion of the electorate.

And I got sent off to Canberra and that was an amazing experience. Canberra. We were in old Parliament House. My office was about double the size of this lectern perhaps, but we had Don Chipp and later Janine Haines. I think the Democrats at that time, were very lucky, we had a good bunch of Senators.

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I always thought it was amazing the number of good Senators that the Democrats could throw up and we were actually doing a lot of good things. We had an awful lot of portfolios to manage but we tried. And I think we accomplished things.

But back to Tasmania, I kept trying to work on the Tasmanian issues, the forestry issues especially and of course with the dams, the Franklin. We saved the Franklin but they went on built the Cethana and the King and the Pieman and we have the forestry issues.

I kept working on all this stuff. I also had a lot of other portfolios. I also had civil aviation. It fell upon me to decide whether the whole air transportation system, air and regulation system in Australia would be changed from the DOT to the CAA.

I was the Australian Democrat's spokesman on Aviation and I had to decide so I went round to Dick Smith and said 'Dick "what do you reckon' and he said 'yeah look things couldn't be any worse'. So on my own, or with the Democrat's backing, but they depended on me, we changed the whole aircraft regulations of the country and it was good for about two years until the bureaucrats figured out how to get around what we had done and went back to the old ways. So we did have some power in those ways and we did a lot of talking.

But in all that time the environmental issues of Tasmania were still running and the forestry industry was still going and by that time of course I was dealing with forestry issues in south east New South Wales, dealing with the Daintree and working pretty hard.

I stayed in the Senate for a long time and finally just ran out of energy. Frankly it was very hard in Tasmania for me because there was no way I could disguise my presence. As soon as I opened my mouth people would say 'aha we know what you are doing, we know what you are on about'.

In fact, I was paddling sea kayak two years ago off of the coast of New South Wales and I paddled into a cove and there were two yachts anchored in there and I went over to say good day. I said where are you guys from and they said oh we're from Tasmania and were taking these boats down to Tasmania from Sydney. I said oh that's interesting. The one of them said 'I know that voice' and he went below and wouldn't talk to me.

Anyway I stayed in the Senate and I did a lot of interesting things. Now Andrew being a responsible Leader, doesn't go on junkets much. I took every junket going. It was an amazing experience. I sat across the table from Andrea Gremiko discussing nuclear disarmament issues. I sat down with General Yurosowski in Poland and discussed the occupation and the solidarity and the marshal law situation.

But my most stirring achievement was in China with Michael Macklin, Australian Democrat Senator. I was Janine Haines because Janine didn't

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want to go but there was a position going so I went as Janine which confused the Chinese a bit but all us foreigners are a bit strange so they didn't mind.

We were in the great hall of the people and I was sitting next to one of the high officials of the communist party of China, a woman sociologist in her eighties who had actually studied in the United States and spoke great English. And I was sitting next to her and we were talking about things and I said where did you go to university? She said she went to the University of Southern California USC and I said oh well I went to UCLA which is an across town football rival and she threw her chopsticks down and said well then we are enemies. The Australian Ambassador blanched and we all had to explain that this was a friendly football rivalry.

So I advise you Andrew, use those junkets, they're good. You get criticised by the media but you're going to get criticised by the media anyway.

So along came 1990 I think it was and I thought 'oh God'. Getting on the jet and flying back and forth and all that.

I thought I will try and stand in the ACT so I don't have to go on jets any more. And I tried, and I came close but I didn't make it and then I actually went off and lectured at the ANU in Human Ecology whatever that is.

I'm now on the South Coast of New South Wales building sea kayaks. So that's what I've been doing.

Now what I am concerned about still and the reason I didn't come back here for ten years was the state of the forests and I know too much about this place. Geoff Law and I were driving around today and he brought it up and I agreed. He said I can't appreciate this landscape anymore because every time I look I know that the area is earmarked for forestry or that is earmarked for whatever.

And it is true.

I feel that we saved the Franklin but we lost Tasmania. And I was really sad about that. I had a dream for Tasmania.

My dream for Tasmania years ago was (because I was a former aero space engineer and I knew how the system worked) people may remember, I kept saying take that money and put it into modern development not hydro electricity which was a 1920s theory and it was a great theory when it came up. But let's put it into something modern. Let's put it into something high tech. Like the set-up silicone valley was then, built by taking a whole bunch of millions of dollars and finding the best experts in transistor technology, hiring them and bring them out to California.

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I said let's do the same thing for Tasmania. We could have done it. We wouldn't have the huge debt. We wouldn't have all these dams and forestry stuff.

But it didn't happen so basically I was just burned out. It broke my heart. I had failed to save Tasmania, which I had really set out to do from my first time here in 1964. That was my ambition to try and do that.

So I went of to New South Wales and got involved in south east forests there and other things but my heart was always in Tasmania but I felt I couldn't come back until now. I thank Yulia for getting me here because it is nice to see you people again and it's a good place to be.

But the other thing that really disturbs me is the fight between the Greens and the Democrats. Because I have got a lot of friends in both camps and it is such a waste and I think I made the point on radio or some place that as far as the Greens displacing Democrat Senators goes, it is like kicking own goals.

You know you can make a big score but you can't win the game that way. We have to work together. We have got a common enemy. We shouldn't be fighting each other and it does disturb me. I don't know the answer. I know there is lots of history involved in it. But I kinda wish we could work together because Tasmania is still beautiful, it is still worth saving, it's still out there.

There are still bits of it that sticks today. When we went into the areas that hadn't been logged it was the same old magic. It really brought tears to my eyes getting down in there and looking at that water, you know the brown water, the Peter Dombrovskis swirls on it.

Magnificent country, still worth saving and fighting for and I guess my final message to you is don't give up like I did. Hang in there it's worth doing. It's a lovely place and I thank you all for your friendship over the years and supporting me as you did.