

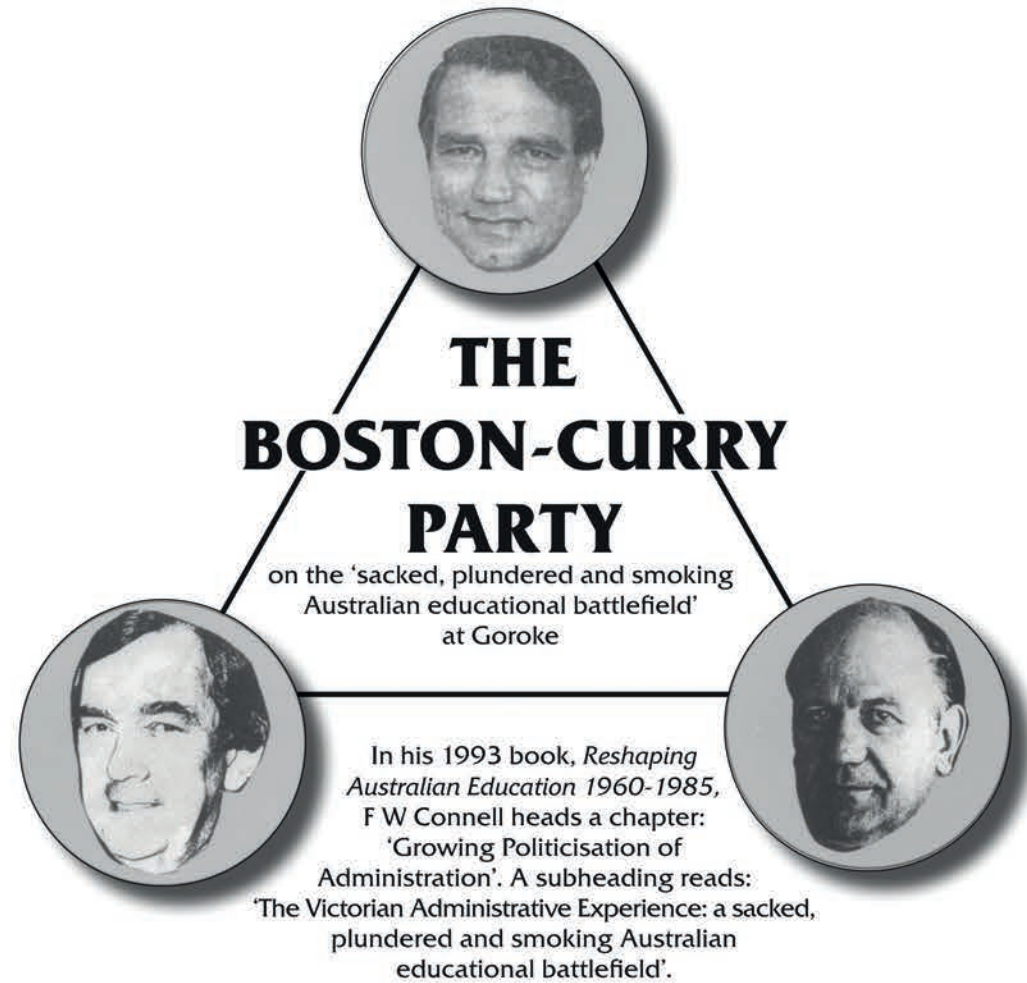
A senior state educator, who requested anonymity, admitted that 'it's not a fair world ... Toben was not the worst teacher in the system and there are hundreds who are the same ... Toben may have been unlucky'. Bad luck or injustice? Professor Lauchlan Chipman, of Wollongong University, said that 'even awkward and unpopular people have rights'. He said Toben's case 'typified the fate of the one-off model in Australia'. While school authorities are making determined efforts to lift teaching performance and elaborate procedures are in place to ensure that this does not occur at the expense of teachers' rights, it would be ironic if one of the few sacked for incompetence turned out not to have deserved it. Tony Abbott, *The Bulletin*, May 1987.

Late this year he did, for two days a week, gain a job tutoring nurses in sociology at Warrnambool Institute of Advanced Education, making round trips of 500 kilometres in and among his school bus driving between Goroke and Edenhope. But Dr Toben wants more. Specifically, he seeks exoneration and reinstatement at Goroke, where his family lives.

Bureaucracies, however, are always loath to admit that they might have been even a little bit wrong.

A nagging thought is that had Dr Toben been a homosexual, female or black, a vociferous lobby group might well have already precipitated a review. Perhaps incompetence of sorts does feature in his sad story. The question is, whose? And how does a person caught up in a system like this ever clear his name, once given that it deserves to be cleared?

Michael Barnard, *The Age*, 15 December, 1987



On 19 April 1998 W F Connell wrote Fredrick Toben a letter:

Dear Dr Toben

I have been interested to read your manuscript on part of the 'Australian educational battlefield'. You write well and your account of your experiences is vividly expressed.

I am afraid, however, that I cannot empathise enough with your views and activities to write an appropriate 'couple of paragraphs' for the cover of your book.

With best wishes for your venture,

*Sincerely yours,
W F Connell*

What are Toben's views and activities?
Read on ...

THE BOSTON-CURRY PARTY

Fredrick Toben



PEACE BOOKS

THE BOSTON-CURRY PARTY

on the 'sacked, plundered and smoking Australian educational battlefield' at Goroke

Fredrick Toben

Having set off with his brother for a European adventure when they were in their mid-20s, Toben stayed abroad longer than he had intended. In Zimbabwe, observing British expatriates, he realised to his horror that he was, in his mid-30s, at risk of becoming like them - a man without a home. He married the girl he had been going out with in Zimbabwe, and jumped at the chance of a teaching job in Goroke, determined to establish himself in a part of the world where he felt he belonged.

The Toben affair smells when one learns that 30 out of the 40 Goroke parents whose children Toben had taught signed a petition praising his work with them.

It smells when one considers how markedly different Toben's teaching philosophy is from the one that has prevailed in Victoria.

There is a stink around when a teacher union official publicly declares: 'I don't think Mr Toben will be employed again by the Education Department. He has criticised the department. He has even criticised the union'.

Once at a social gathering Toben managed to seize the ear of the then education minister, Joan Kirner, and plead for her intervention.

She said: 'You'd be surprised how little influence a minister has in such matters'.

Surprised? If that is true, I am terrified.

Frank Devine, *The Australian*, 18 April 1991