Prießnitz, Horst (1995):

Report
Veröffentlichte Version / published version
https://doi.org/10.35515/zfa/asj.09/1995.20
Madam,

As a subscriber and contributor to *Australian Literary Studies* I have been deeply shocked by the bad news that the Literature Board of the Australia Council is considering cutting funding of the so far only internationally acclaimed scholarly journal of Australian literature. As I understand it, these considerations are not grounded in an alleged lowering of standards but in the by no means surprising fact that *ALS* is, as it has always been, an 'academic' journal with a comparatively small number of subscriptions.

I am not quite sure what the term 'academic' means in your country. I sincerely hope Marcus Clarke was making fun when in *The Future Australian Race* (1877) he prophesied that "The Australians will be freed from the highest burden of intellectual development." (p. 27). In this part of the world 'academic' has no pejorative connotations; on the contrary, the term stands for solid top-quality research which has always been a matter that only a small qualified and influential minority has been able to enjoy.

Talking of minorities: I find it extremely hard to believe that it is the Literature Board of all institutions which is turning the fact that *ALS* is a minority-orientated publication, into an argument against its editors and contributors. If the institution, which is to represent the literary culture of a whole country, feels it should reduce the possibilities of a small, highly qualified - 'academic' - minority to express their
views and to have them discussed internationally, then there is
something rotten in the state of Australia.

May I also remind you that the number of subscribers to ALS is
in no way identical with those who read it. You may well regret
that so few European libraries subscribe to this publication, -
a situation which I have been trying to change (see the enclosed
bibliographical article) - , but those which have, will
certainly not buy any of the so-called 'majority' journals you
seem to be in favour of.

Given Australia's poor cultural reputation in this part of the
world, and given the poor supply of books and publications which
can be quoted to counteract this, and also given the many
prejudices which have been sown by British literary criticism
and taken root, you could do your country and its literature no
greater disservice than to stop ALS from disseminating reliable
and unbiased views of its literary culture. Instead of tinkering
about with what sounds like the prelude to its final abolition,
you should be discussing means and ways to secure its long-term
survival.

Let me assure you that for me and my colleagues, who have been
working hard to rid Australia of her fools'-paradise-cum-
holiday-island-type of cultural image and to write it into the -
academic - curriculum, the death of ALS would mean the end of
Australia as an - academic - subject. I can see no alternative
 whatsoever to the patient, unobtrusive, and self-critical
presentation of Australia's specific contribution to world
literature in English. No Australian Studies Centre in any part
of the world will be able to replace the loss should the journal
be abandoned.

As it happens, your Government has chosen 1995 as the year in
which Australia is to present herself to a wider public in
unified Germany. I happen to be involved in some of the -
academic - activities, which will accompany the event. It may
not be totally without interest to my listeners to learn that it
is the most 'academic' of all Australian scholarly literary
journals that is going to be sacrificed in favour of some
dubious purposes. And I shall not hesitate to add that, as far
as I am concerned, the end of ALS will mark the end of
Australia's - academic - career in my university. There are many
other exciting areas of academic study waiting around and ahead
of us.

With the expression of utmost incredulity, I remain,
yours truly

(Professor) Horst Priesnitz