

# A PRYOR ENGAGEMENT FRIENDS IN APRIL

Australia has one of the strongest traditions of political cartooning in the world, and Geoff Pryor is one of Australia's greatest and most influential political cartoonists. His work covers over 20 years of Australian politics. Pryor's cartoons cut straight to the heart of political issues, presenting clear and incisive comment. Whether we agree or disagree with his point of view, his message is conveyed in a matter of seconds. In many ways this is in stark contrast to the reality of cartooning, where many hours are spent conceiving the idea and crafting the image.

In Pryor's work, the big personalities of politics leap to life, entertaining us with their antics as they face perils and predicaments on the political podium. Pryor's work allows us to laugh at the serious business of politics, yet also encourages us to reflect upon the personalities, issues and events. Looking back over the years, Pryor's cartoons for *The Canberra Times* do something more—they remind us that history sometimes seems to repeat itself. Through the cartoonist's use of metaphor and symbolism the cartoons carry much of their original power and relevance into a later time.

Born in Canberra in 1944, Geoff Pryor showed interest in drawing from an early age. Pryor's grandfather had been a freelance cartoonist in South Australia, working under the name of 'Cypher', and Pryor recalls many hours spent studying the works hung on his walls—works by *Bulletin* greats like Ted Scorfield, Norman Lindsay and David Low. Growing up in Canberra, Pryor was also imbued with a deep sense of politics. As a young boy he wandered through the corridors of Old Parliament House waiting for his mother who worked

as a stenographer for a South Australian Senator. These combined influences of art and politics provided a firm base for Pryor's future career as one of Australia's leading political cartoonists.

Pryor produced his first published work while a student at the Australian National University. He ran a short strip called 'Rastus' in the student magazine *Woroni*. Later Pryor learned that *Canberra Times* cartoonist, Larry Pickering, had shifted to *The Sydney Morning Herald*. The then editor of *The Canberra Times*, Ian Matthews, was looking for a suitable replacement and after some time spent doing a variety of artwork for the paper, Geoff Pryor got the job in 1977.

Over the next few years Pryor's style of cartooning gradually evolved to become what we recognise today as uniquely Pryor. His piercing analysis of political events, combined with stunning full-frame illustrations, featuring a host of personalities, have been a staple part of the nation's morning diet for 25 years.

The National Library has recently completed digitisation of a collection of approximately 2600 original political cartoons and illustrations donated by Geoff Pryor. Most of these cartoons were published in *The Canberra Times* between 1978 and 1987. Geoff has kindly agreed to talk

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 2004

Geoff Pryor, political cartoonist with *The Canberra Times*, will talk about his work and present some of his cartoons.

Tuesday 27 April, 12.30 pm  
Friends Lounge,  
admission by donation  
Bookings essential:  
(02) 6262 1698 or  
email friends@nla.gov.au

For bookings, details of membership and subscriptions, contact:

Friends of the NLA  
National Library of Australia  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
Tel: (02) 6262 1698  
Fax: (02) 6273 4493  
Email: friends@nla.gov.au  
Website: www.nla.gov.au/friends

about his work and present some of his cartoons to Friends on Tuesday 27 April at 12.30 pm, so make sure you book for this very special event.

James Halligan  
Executive Officer

Geoff Pryor (1944–)  
*What It Costs to Make a President  
of the United States 1981*  
Cartoon; 17.7 x 33.8cm  
Pryor Collection: Cartoons & Drawings 1978–88  
Pictures Collection nla.pic-an 23012997

