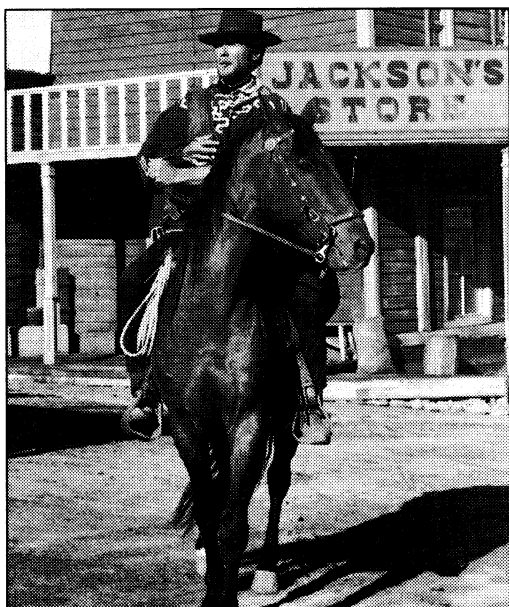


ROUND EM UP MOVE EM OUT RAWHIDE

The Wild West has always held a special fascination for me. I reckon I've seen most western movies from "High Noon" and "3.10 to Yuma" through to the Sergio Leone classics like "Once Upon a Time in The West". I've got a lot of favorites but two in particular are "The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence" and "Unforgiven". Consequently I usually read a good western when I can get my hands on one.

Having an interest in the Wild West and living in the Northern Territory are mutually inclusive pursuits. The Territory has a lot of real cowboys but they are not common in places like Darwin. Rather the type that one is more likely to come across in the urban areas is the self constructed political cowboy much in the style of Ronald Regan absent the comedy routine.

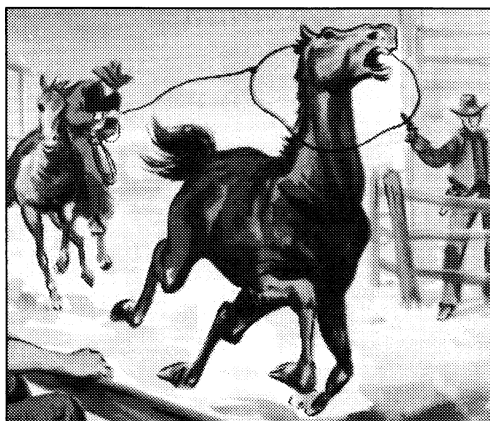
Not many of these cowboys have taken to wearing obvious apparel like Bob Katter's big hat but they have developed a use for the word "Territorian" that in tone and syntax describes a unique human whose origins are but remotely Australian.



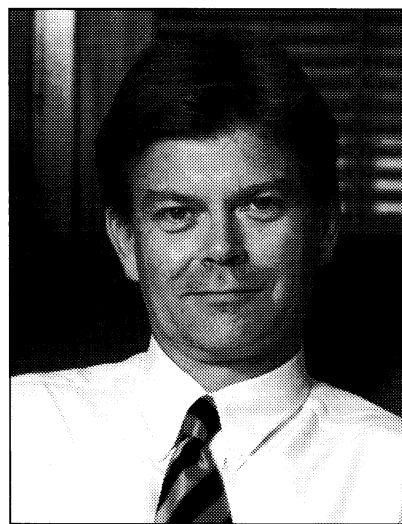
Clint Eastwood — as "The Man With No Name" in the western film "For a Few Dollars More"

They also use the word "Southerner" in a special way that is more reminiscent of its use in America in the period 1861 to 1865 than in a modern federation.

Geoffrey Blainy had an explanation of sorts for that kind of behaviour but in my view the tyranny of distance doesn't wash anymore. That behaviour fits more comfortably and descriptively into a yearning for the unfettered frontier. Like when Uluru was still Ayres Rock and Matt Buchanan was driving bullocks down



the Gun Barrel Track. A frontier in which the rule of law is whatever the public deems it should be provided the cowboys get to make the laws. Where the idea of law being "a public good of immense value" is drowned by attacks upon judges and incitement of the general populace with perceived notions of escalating crime rates blamed on the failure of the courts to do their job properly. And while that is going on the cowboys are quietly cutting out the rights of ordinary people to damages for future economic loss if they are severely injured in a car accident, like a steer is cut from the mob on a moonless night (see the most recent amendments to section 4 of the Motor Accidents (Compensation) Act).



Mr Jon Tippett, Law Society President

When Andrew Tackes, Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame, compared the American West with the Australian "Frontier" in "The Oxford History of the American West" he came up with some interesting conclusions. He determined that sheep "ranches" composed the typically Australian "big man's frontier". He found that "In Australia, as in the United States and Canada (and for that matter Scotland and Ireland), something about sheep made people nationalistic." He makes no mention of what that something was or of New Zealand where So apparently it was sheep that gave us good government and a sound legal system.

The Territory experience is that sheep don't work here. They were tried but they didn't thrive. If Professor Tackes is right, however, we can put the difficulties presently faced by the Northern Territory legal community down to a lack of sheep. It is the lack of sheep that accounts for the presence of the cowboys which in turn explains a lot of the crook legislation this community has had to endure of recent times.

My suggestion then is that every member of the legal community buys a sheep. Maybe they don't thrive here but we may as well try it. All other steps based upon reason and rational have failed. We are in the unique situation of having nothing to lose but our sanity. Yee Hah!