

1999 Dr Don Watson
The Politics of History (or, the History of Politics)

ABSTRACT

"Of course History has always been problematic. In any democratic society it is bound to be argued about. But its fair to say I think that it has never worn so many disguises. Never have there been so many stories from which to choose. We need a story, don't we? We need our own story. Read a child a familiar bedtime story - and change it. Make the first bowl of porridge just right, the second one too hot. The child will pick it up at once, and correct it for you, possibly angrily. This is the first flowering of political correctness. In its most basic form that is perhaps what history is. Its much the same with adults - and much the same with politics. Don't you dare change the story." Dr Don Watson

In this lecture, Dr Don Watson addressed the problems of writing political history. He concluded, somewhat ruefully, that even the most perfect mastery of the discipline is unlikely to save the historian who takes on modern politics.