

Bernard's Bugbears

Richard Ackland - *Gadfly: The Saturday Paper* - 20 April 2019

<https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/opinion/diary/2019/04/20/gadfly-bills-joint-adventure/15556824008025>

The O'Regan Arts and Cultural Common Theatre at the Monte Sant' Angelo Mercy College in North Sydney was brimful last Saturday for the launch of Professor **Clinton Fernandes's** book *Island Off the Coast of Asia*.

It's an alternative history of Australian foreign policy with special emphasis on how corporations define our "national interest" and influence foreign policy. Woodside and **Fishnets Downer** immediately spring to mind.

There was rapt attention as lawyer and former ACT attorney-general **Bernard Collaery** launched the book. Bernard faces charges of conspiracy relating to alleged violations of the Intelligence Services Act over information received by journalists about the bugging of the Timor-Leste cabinet office by the Australian Secret Intelligence Service.

A former ASIS officer known as "**Witness K**" is the co-defendant in this nasty prosecution, egged on by the attorney-general **Christian Porter**.

The O'Regan Arts and Cultural Common Theatre was seething with indignation about the whole ghastly abuse of the law. Collaery and K have the status of terrorists and are not allowed to see the brief of evidence, even though the summons was issued in May 2018.

The government wants a Soviet-style secret trial and a Canberra magistrate is yet to decide on that. Collaery said if there is an open trial, there won't be a trial. The last thing the government wants is for K's evidence about the Timor-Leste bugging operation to be made public.

Former diplomat **Richard Broinowski** told the gathering he knew **David Irvine**, the head of ASIS at the time of the bugging, from his Foreign Affairs days. He asked the old spy whether he had read Clinton Fernandes's book.

"No, and I don't intend to," came Irvine's reply.

That should be used as an endorsement on the front cover.