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An Aussie blueprint for a new monarchy

THE PHOTOGRAPHS of a reception at Buckingham Palace for Australia provided deep thoughts to my heart. The occasion came before the Queen's visit to Oz next month to open the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne.

Millions abroad in the press were the usual suspects — impressively energetic Bill Harris, Clive James with his carefully prepared reports — and standing together were three of the most remarkable women of our time: Germaine Greer, Her Majesty the Queen and the beautiful gallery owner, patroness of Australian Aboriginal art and other culture, art and genius, Rebecca Hossack.

Looking at this emblematic photograph, during a week when the poor Prince of Wales is losing his trouble in the courts over the publication of slanders about the Chinese tobaccoist in Hong Kong, I realised that we were now in a new era of history. The time of the Whigs is, or should be, gone. In its past, it was the aristocracy or the governing class who sacked monarchs and ruled the rest of us. Now, in a



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photo-in-culture, where we all have our own monarchy just might be returning to its old function of being the one institution that can speak up for individuals against the power complexes, the bosses and the Whigs.

In Australia, there is a division between republicans and those Germaine is apparently one, who think that great and comparatively new nations can get by without a king or queen, and High Tories like the magnificent Rebecca, who see that there is an advantage in having a head of state who sticks up for you, whether you are an Abbe or an



Remarkable Australians: Germaine Greer and Rebecca Hossack

endangered species such as a Maudie, an organic farmer or an old-fashioned architect.

In our own country, whatever Mondays are made by the Prince of Wales, that is the constituency which he has been making out. The Whigs will fight like hell and even use an ally people like the Australian republicans to field Prince Charles, Disloyal Palace Whigs like the Lord Chamberlain Richard, Europhobic against him all the time, outbidding the old Whig masters that kings should be "above politics".

By this, they mean power should not only be in the hands of "the great and the good". Not so, say those of us — Rebecca our heroine — who see the monarchy as something much, much

more than the character of any individual. What it was perhaps of the Prince to complain that words in Club Class were "uncomfortable". Imagine Henry V. or even to that, George V. making such a pompous, silly remark. But, in general, the Prince's desire to move out fighting is a good one.

In Australia, he said his mother will spend other than the chance to choose their own future. That choice will one day face us, too. A country with a head of state with historic roots, who dare defy the rich, the architects, the old food conglomerates, the mass marketing Chinese — or a country run by a club of the new Whigs like Blair or Lord Liam, I know which I'd choose.