

August 30, 1997

# WEEKEND

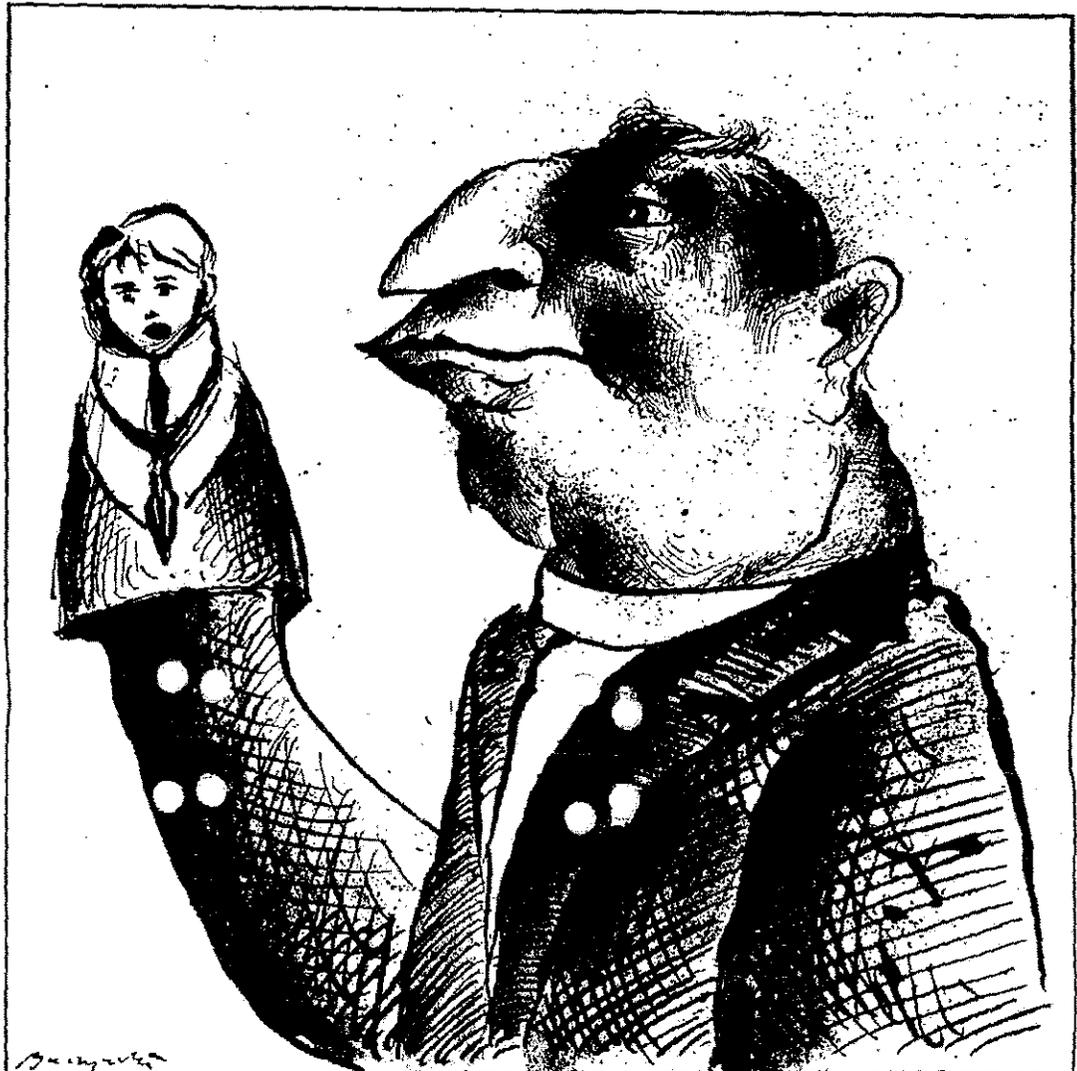
**S**imon is intelligent, articulate, outwardly successful and confident.

He has an important managerial job in the service industry, has been married for 10 years and he and his wife Judy are contemplating starting a family.

But for more than 20 years, Simon has endured a mixture of anguish, shame and guilt.

Today, with the national focus on paedophilia and child abuse, Simon bravely tells his story.

He is speaking out as a means to seek justice, not only for himself but the countless other innocent children abused and brutalised by those entrusted with their care. JOHN BRIGGS reports.



## A The cloistered acts of shame

At the age of 11, 25 years ago, Simon was an innocent, almost naive schoolboy, an altar boy at a Hobart church and with no knowledge of sexual matters.

But in the next year, he says, he was sexually abused on several occasions by an Anglican priest, a boys club leader.

"This was somebody I trusted — I was confused and told to feel I had done something wrong — he even offered to hear my confession," said Simon.

"I had no homosexual tendencies and didn't even know what that meant, but I knew something was very wrong and had nowhere to turn."

He declined to tell his parents, as much from a feeling of guilt and self-loathing but mainly because he knew they wouldn't believe him.

"As far as I knew, priests, parents, teachers and other adults just didn't do things, like that — they were the people you trusted," said Simon. He said he was a very

confused, distressed and upset little boy with no idea of how to handle his dilemma and hoped that it would stop.

It seemed like his hopes had come true — after about four incidents over two months the priest left him alone.

That might have been the end of the story.

Simon believes he might have been able to recover and hide his

dark secret and, just maybe, forget the feelings of disgust and shame.

Then within a year Simon, now 12, was abused by not one, but two other Anglican priests and that abuse continued during the next few years.

This was the worst thing of all and fuelled his conspiracy theories of a network of paedophiles acting within the church.

"It's hard to prove but I'm con-

vinced these two must have known of each other's activities — I certainly never spoke of it, despite my despair," says Simon.

To this day he cannot understand why he was chosen by these men — he has never been attracted to those of his own sex.

"The methods of control were similar — I was always made to feel like the guilty one, despite things happening against my will," he said.

One of his abusers was strong and manipulative while another acted only in an alcoholic state.

"I believe he (the alcohol user) was genuinely ashamed and contrite about his actions," said Simon.

Outwardly, Simon has coped admirably, but during his late teens and early 20s he had no friendships

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