A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

• NEWS HIGHLIGHTS
• BACKGROUND INFORMATION
• COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance—

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Thought for the Week: "When struck by a thunderbolt, it is then too late to consult the book of dates." - Old Chinese Proverb.

THE LULL BEFORE THE NEXT STORM: By Eric D. Butler.

The manner in which the Fraser-Anthony Government obtained re-election on December 10th contained the seeds of the Government's ultimate destruction. Two major factors operated in favour of the Government at the election: the widespread and deep fear and detestation of Mr. Gough Whitlam; coupled with the view that the Government should be given a "second chance". Prime Minister Fraser and his colleagues made specific pre-election predictions and promises which are clear in many people's minds. In a period of lull the Australian people now wait to see results.

Mr. Fraser no longer can exploit Mr. Gough Whitlam. He can no longer keep harping on what the Labor Party allegedly did, and how he needs time to remedy Labor's disasters. Mr. Fraser said before Christmas that Australia was now "over the hump"; that the economy was now on a sound basis; that unemployment would progressively fall, along with interest rates, in the first half of 1978; that there would be no further reduction in the inflation rate.

Irrespective of what Mr. Fraser and his colleagues say about Keynesian economics, the fact is that under conventional financial rules, the modern finance-economic system can only continue to be operated by the progressive injection of debt finance in such a manner that inflation is mathematically inevitable. Only a few years ago it was stated by Mr. Fraser's predecessors that an inflation rate of 3-4% was disastrous. As of course it was. But now it is argued that any figure less than 10% is acceptable. Mr. Fraser claims as a great achievement his Government's alleged reduction of the inflation rate to 9%. Assuming that this figure is a rough reflection of reality, it has been achieved only by inflicting upon the Australian people massive economic, social and spiritual damage.

The young Australian forced to accept social welfare because of a policy which denies him the opportunity of meaningful participation in the economic system, may be psychologically damaged for life. He becomes potential raw material for the violent revolutionaries. And what of the tens of thousands of smaller business organisations forced into bankruptcy because of the Fraser Government's policies for lowering the inflation rate? In the years not so far ahead Australians may pay a bitter price for the lack of an adequate defence programme. Even though there has been enormous unused production potential for defence, the Government has argued that the "fight" against inflation must take precedence over a maximum defence programme.

As yet large numbers of urban Australians do not realise that much of rural Australia is experiencing the greatest tragedy in its history. The widespread drought conditions have merely aggravated a deep-seated disease which must, unless tackled, have awesome national consequences. The Fraser-Anthony Government has argued that it could offer no financial relief, once again because of its "fight" against inflation. The pre-election gimmick of a Rural Bank will prove one of the cruellest hoaxes ever inflicted upon the desperate rural community. Eventually the back-lash against this hoax could be explosive.

Even now in the lull following the elections, with an atmosphere of "let us wait and see", there are signs of hedging by the Government. It has been discovered that the famous deficit is much larger than anticipated, and therefore it is suggested that the promised reduction in interest rates may have to wait. Government spokesmen did concede that the latest unemployment figures were disturbing, with Mr. Tony Street, ever clutching at straws, claiming that the drought was a major factor retarding the much-promised growth in the economy.

However, the general theme is that it is only a matter of time when the benefits promised before the Federal Elections will be experienced and appreciated by the Australian people. The truth is that unless the Government is prepared to challenge the bureaucratic financial "experts", and implement financial policies which will reduce financial costs and effectively increase consumer purchasing power, the current situation can only be described as a type of lull before the next storm breaks. Mr. Fraser has obtained, as did Mr. Gough Whitlam before him in 1974, a short-term political advantage which will prove as unreliable as his pre-election promises. When the inevitable storm breaks once again Australian electors will have the opportunity to press for policy changes which might ensure that Australia moves off the disaster course on which it is now travelling.

THE WIDER ASPECTS OF SECURITY: One of the most important comments concerning the developments which have followed Premier Dunstan's sacking of Police Commissioner Harold Salisbury has come from Victorian Acting Premier, Mr. Thompson. Mr. Thompson correctly observes that Members of Parliament should not be immune from the Law. "Once somebody's elected to Parliament it does not necessarily mean that he has entered the arena of the arch angels", he said. Mr. Thompson was replying to reports that the Victoria Special Branch kept records on State MP's and prominent citizens.

Former South Australian Governor Sir Marcus Oliphant, in a strong defence of Mr. Salisbury, describes him as a man of tremendous integrity Sir Marcus also says that he is pleased to know that the South Australian Special Branch had a file on him, observing that a Special Branch should have all possible information on prominent individuals. For our own part we can see nothing sinister in those charged with Security and Intelligence collecting information on individuals and organisations We were not surprised to learn that the South Australian Special Branch had a file on the Australian League of Rights.

If a State instrumentality is to be created for Security and Intelligence purposes, then obviously that instrumentality, if it is to be effective, must be allowed to operate in secret. It is no doubt true that much material collected is, with the passing of time, irrelevant. Security officials are human and their assessments can be wrong. Our own impression is that many Security officials have only a superficial understanding of Marxism. But it is nonsense to assert, as Victorian Senator-elect Mr. Gareth Evans does, that the South Australian Special Branch affair shows that people's rights are at risk. The history of subversion during this century reveals that the most unsuspected individuals have turned out to be traitors. A few have been politicians. One of the most notorious traitors, Mr. Kim Philby, was himself a senior member of British Intelligence!

It is right and proper that all individuals employed by Governments, particularly those holding sensitive positions, should be subject to security checks. Provision can be easily made for any individual to seek redress if he believes that he has been denied, for example, a promotion because of an inaccurate security report. The greatest threat is the politician, even if a Premier, who insists on having direct access to Security files. We share the concern of Victorian Acting Premier Thompson, who points out that Mr. Dunstan is proposing to destroy all police Special Branch files which did not meet with his Government's approval. Mr. Thompson insisted that Governments should not interfere in security matters, leaving these to the discretion of the Police Commissioner.

As there appears to be no doubt that Premier Dunstan has known for years of files kept by the South Australian Special Branch, the important question now is what was the Premier's real motive in sacking Mr. Salisbury in a manner which, even if legal, denied Mr. Salisbury the most elementary natural justice. But, as happens so often, the "democratic socialists" who prate so much about individual rights and freedoms, are masters of the double-standard. In his formal public statement, Mr. Salisbury raised a most important question: "..whether a person as Commissioner of Police should be liable to peremptory dismissal by the political party currently in power", going on to say that "For a long time there has been a wish on the part of certain elements and influences in South Australia to penetrate the special branch systems...."

We would urge that all our South Australian supporters join or support all movements designed to ensure that some type of official investigation, preferably a Royal Commission, takes place to examine all aspects of the Salisbury affair. Whether or not Mr. Salisbury handled his clash with the Premier as effectively as he might have, is not for us to say. But we wish to be numbered amongst those who admired Mr. Harold Salisbury for his high moral standards, his integrity and his deep sense of loyalty to the values of traditional society. If South Australians do not make the effort to ensure that he is given natural justice, they will be contributing to a rot which, unless checked, will eventually destroy Australia.

BASIC FUND LAGGING: Since our last report, just prior to Christmas, 33 supporters have donated $1,632, taking the grand total to $21,178. This means that the Basic Fund has not even reached half the objective of $45,000. With the purchase of some relatively in-expensive equipment, the League is now completely set up for decentralised leaflet, brochure, booklet and magazine printing. We have developed a first-class volunteer printing team. But paper and ink does cost money. And there is much more on our programme for 1978. Many of our loyal rural supporters have been hit badly by the drought. This means that others must take up the slack. We have reached the situation where there is no alternative but to keep fighting forward. We must have the balance of the 1977-78 Fund, by the end of May at the very latest. All that is required is for 1000 supporters to contribute an average of $26 each. All Queensland and Northern NSW contributions to Mr. Jeremy Lee, Kingstown, via Armidale, N.S.W. The balance to Box 1052J, G.P.O., Melbourne, Victoria. 3001.

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