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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance—

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Thought for the Week: "Numbers are not crucial to any struggle. Strength and purpose are". Mahatma Gandhi

FAIR REPORTING? - OR STONE-THROWING?

(by Jeremy Lee, Assistant National Director, Australian League of Rights).

On November 1st, the most vicious attack yet devised against the League broke in the Victorian Parliament, launched by Dr. Coghill. Within 24 hours, major articles under sensational headlines broke in national dailies in Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland. On November 3rd, The Weekend Australian, carried a sensational article by Phillip Adams which has surely touched a new low in squalid journalistic propaganda and character-assasination. Mr. Butler had left for Canada before the article appeared, to meet long-standing commitments.

On November 4th, Mr. Jeremy Lee prepared the following answer to both Dr. Coghill and Phillip Adams, which was sent to editors and journalists in all States. We reproduce his reply as it was sent out for the consideration of readers.

We believe this material speaks for itself, and will mark an awakening in Australia of the nature of the battle, and the depths to which the enemies of freedom will sink. It should be placed in as many responsible hands of thinking Australians as possible. Extra copies are available.

November 4th, 1984

Background to the Current Controversy.

Two and a half years ago, the Australian League of Rights threw its weight behind a recently-published book, viz. "Red Over Black", by Mr. Geoff McDonald, who was expelled from the Communist Party in 1960. "Red Over Black" made the claim that exploitation of the Aboriginal Land Rights movement had been a basic Communist objective

for a number of years, and provided thought-provoking evidence to support that claim. Although it became a wide seller, it was never, as far as I am aware, reviewed by any national paper or journal until March 1984, when a highly-favourable review appeared in The Bulletin. Since that time a number of developments have projected the League of Rights, and the Land Rights issue, into a nation-wide controversy. These developments were:

- 1). A State-wide controversy in Victoria over the Aboriginal Land Claims Bill, introduced by the Cain Government, and later withdrawn after strong opposition from many quarters. Dr. Coghill, while unable to effectively answer criticism of the Bill, publicly held the League of Rights accountable for much of the opposition, claiming in the process that it was a Nazi-style organisation, with subversive and anti-semitic tendencies. These claims are not only untrue, but failed in any way to stem opposition to the Bill he was defending so inadequately.
- 2). The introduction in Federal Parliament of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage (Interim) Protection Bill, by Federal Minister, Clyde Holding, which immediately ran into the same opposition, this time on the national basis. Mr. Holding's claim - similar to that of Dr. Coghill - that the opposition to his Bill was the result of the activities of the League of Rights, did nothing to mute the widespread criticism.
- 3). The State Labor Government in Western Australia, led by Premier Burke, came out publicly against Mr. Holding's bill, and the general opposition to the Bill escalated to a point where the Coalition Opposition Parties, with a recognised reputation for vacillation and compromise, finally indicated they might themselves take a stand on the Land Rights issue.
- 4). The hiring by the Federal Labor Government, on the public payroll, of a former Communist and acknowledged Fabian Socialist, journalist Ken Gott, to be attached to the Aboriginal Affairs Department for the sole purpose of investigating and exposing the League of Rights. Mr. Gott was to be paid over \$1500 weekly for a six-month period for this task - an unprecedented move to use public revenue to attack the Government's political opponents.
- 5). A Government inquiry as instigated into the financial affairs of the Aboriginal Development Commission, after claims of corruption and mis-spending, some emanating from Aboriginal people themselves. The findings of this inquiry have yet to be tabled.
- 6). The calling of an early Federal election, at a time when the ineptitude and compromise of the Opposition parties, and their patent inability to grasp the real issues because of their own past departures from principle, has given the Hawke Government unnaturally high opinion ratings.
- 7). A major attack on the League of Rights, centred on the war record of its National Director, Mr. Eric Butler, launched in the Victorian

Parliament by Dr. Coghill on November 1st, obviously aimed at intimidating the Opposition Parties from speaking out on the real issues facing Australia.

8). The publication of the article by Phillip Adams in The Weekend Australian two days later. Mr. Adams is also a former Communist, and a Fabian Socialist, as is Mr. K.D.Gott.

Eric Butler's War-Time Record.

Dr. Coghill's attack in the Victorian Parliament on November 1st, and Mr. Adams' article on November 3rd, between them make some sensational charges: they can be summarised thus:

- a). that Eric Butler undermined Australia's war effort.
- b). that there was damning evidence of the League's role in subverting Australia's national security,
- c). that Eric Butler, and Australia's deadly enemy, Japan, were in League.
- d). that a letter written by Mr. Jack McEwen in July 1940 is evidence of Eric Butler's disloyalty.
- e). that a judicial inquiry - the Reed inquiry - established by Dr. Evatt during the war, was an indictment of Eric Butler's writings.
- f). that the League of Rights is supporting National candidates, including Mr. Sinclair, in the imminent election.
- g). that Eric Butler's paper, The New Times, was possibly directly subsidised by the Japanese (this from Phillip Adams).

The truth could hardly be more different! The charges made by Messrs. Gott, Adams, and Coghill (two former Communists, and a politically-embarrassed Labor spokesman on Aboriginal Affairs) constitute the most disgraceful example of muck-raking and character-assassination it is possible to conceive.

Far from "undermining the war effort", Eric Butler served on active service throughout the war. In 1940, while lecturing on the need for a stepped-up war effort and the need for more realistic ways of financing the requirements of a mobilised Australia on a war footing, Eric Butler was doing national service training along with other Australians. All his writings and lectures were subject to censorship as was the case generally, and officials from the Censorship authorities attended his lectures in the usual way. A careful reading of Mr. McEwen's letter, cited so brazenly by Phillip Adams, will elicit the fact that McEwen made no charges himself, but merely passed on to the Attorney-General the allegations of unnamed electors. That no action was taken, either then or subsequently, obviously refutes the implications of Adams' baseless accusation. But some background is necessary. Eric Butler lectured publicly at that time that Australia should not allow the war effort to result in the impossible debt situation afflicting Britain as a result of World War 1; a debt, incidentally, which Britain will

still be paying after the year 2000. He stressed that Nazism and Communism were twin evils, at a time when there was a big Communist attempt to undermine the war effort, which resulted in the internment of two Communists, Ratcliffe and Thomas, for sabotaging the war effort. Mr. Butler's lectures led to some controversy, obviously alluded to in the McEwen letter, which resulted in a packed debate in the town of Tongala, where Eric Butler refuted the ridiculous charges of a few critics, and earning a standing ovation from the large audience. All this was reported in the local press of the district, thus making absolute nonsense of Coghill's and Adams' insinuations. Immediately following Pearl Harbour, Eric Butler enlisted full-time in the 2nd A.I.F., serving both in Australia and overseas throughout the war, receiving an honourable discharge at the conclusion. Throughout this time he was writing regularly for The New Times, all his articles being subjected to the Censor's scrutiny. He served for a period as a Gun-Officer in the Torres Strait, and was later posted as an instructor at the famous Canungra jungle training school, and from there to an Officer Training School at Seymour. Thus the man who Coghill and Adams - both of whom must have been small children at the time - allege was "undermining the war effort" was, in fact, training fellow Australians for combat duty towards the end of the war.

The War-Time Reed Inquiry.

Dr. Coghill made some remarks concerning a war-time inquiry in 1944 in such a way as to imply the inquiry was into Mr. Butler. But this was not so. The Reed Inquiry was into the activities and allegations of a Mr. Angus Dean, of Hobart, who had written on monetary reform. During the Inquiry, Eric Butler was called as a witness, as were many others. Not only did the Inquiry fail to condemn him in any way - as Dr. Coghill so unjustly implies - but in its findings, presented to the Attorney-General on March 6th, 1945, Mr. Justice Reed went out of his way to compliment Eric Butler and others for their loyalty and public concern!

How strange that both Coghill and Adams should have missed this point in their scurrilous "investigations"!

Section 61 of the Reed Inquiry findings in 1945 reads:

"Practically all those who are interested in these matters (i.e. of financial reforms) are very active in spreading their views and engage in what without offence may be called propaganda. Most of them devote a great deal of their time to studying the questions in issue and are intensely interested in political, social, and economic matters - an attitude which we venture to suggest might very well be emulated by a great many more of the citizens of this Commonwealth. We say at once, that apart from slight suspicion regarding one or two individuals, those who have come under our notice are loyal to His Majesty the King and are actuated by a sincere desire to improve the lot of themselves and their fellow men and to bring about a better state of society.

Quite a number of witnesses served their country in the last war. Quite a number have sons or relatives fighting in this war, and in some cases the sons have lost their lives. We may give one or two examples. Mr. Dean served in the Navy during the last war. Mr. Partington has lost three sons in this war. Mr. Maddern has three sons in the 2nd A.I.F. Mr. Byers has served in the Merchant Navy during the present war. Mr. Bruce Brown has lost a son in this war. Mr. Eric Butler is a member of the 2nd A.I.F. Mr. Brock is a returned soldier from the last war and is doing military duty at the present time...." (emphasis added).

The Japanese.

The quite appalling allegation that the Japanese were using The New Times for propaganda purposes, and may have been directly subsidising its production, is a sordid untruth. To twist this into a barb to be used against a man who was on active service against the Japanese is unforgiveable. It can be said that, long before the outbreak of war, there had been some interest in Japan in Social Credit, some of the tenets of which were perverted into Japan's famous "subsidised exports" policy which prevailed in the thirties. Any other insinuation is nothing more than a smear of the most perverted kind.

Ian Sinclair.

Dr. Coghill's suggestion that the League of Rights is supporting Mr. Ian Sinclair by circulation of material in his electorate is so far from the truth as to be amusing. Many Australians in rural areas know well that the League has never had a high opinion of Mr. Sinclair, and has been the subject of attack by him. The League's special issue of its monthly Intelligence Survey contains a trenchant criticism of Mr. Sinclair. Dr. Coghill knows all this perfectly well. But with tongue-in-cheek, he is simply using the League as a club to batter a fearful opposition into silence, or to provoke a "knee-jerk" attack from a Liberal or a National on the League, which can be used for political purposes. Ironically, this tactic - so obviously the old Left-wing "guilt by association" technique - has cowed the Opposition effectively - and this is quite obviously the major purpose in both Coghill's and Adams' sleazy material of the moment.

Conclusion.

It seems to me a sad day when an individual's reputation can be torn to ribbons for mere political gain in the way we are seeing today. The fact that the individual now under attack is my friend and director, who has withstood far more than his fair share of this filth, obviously adds to my anger and concern. But it spurs the hope that, generally, Australia's "fair go" attitude still exists, and will eventually discern truth from political propaganda.

EXPERT COMMENTS: Mr. Malcolm Mackerras is a very well known Australian identity. Apart from being the brother of Sir Charles Makerras, the eminent Australian conductor of Symphony Orchestras, he is regarded as Australian leading psephologist, a little known word, meaning "election expert".

He is normally studiously impartial in his electoral comment, but there is an issue which bothers him, and upon which he comments heatedly, and that is the Simultaneous Elections referendum. According to The West Australian (November 6th) he was brought to Perth by the Liberal Party (W.A. Branch, we presume) to argue against the "Yes" case, which he says "is a series of lies". Specifically here, he refers to the "Yes" case, "as presented by the Government". He states that he is not an apologist for the Liberal Party, but is concerned for political stability. He adds, and we must take full notice:

"The referendum proposal offers no benefit whatever to the Australian people. The only beneficiaries are the politicians in power at the federal level.

"The main purpose of the proposal is to increase the Prime Minister's power over the Senate.

"Since I believe the Senate performs a useful function as part of the checks and balances of the Constitution, I see no good reason why its power should be reduced.

"We have already, and very wisely, said 'no' twice before. to Mr. Whitlam in 1974, and to Mr. Fraser in 1977. We were right both times, so let us be right a third time by saying 'no' to Mr. Hawke in 1984 and, hopefully, Prime Ministers might learn to take 'no' for an answer. Mr. Mackerras said that half-Senate elections were fixed to be held in particularly financial years.

In practice, elections for the House of Representatives were tied to half-Senate elections.

"Passage of this proposal would do away with that element of fixing and totally destroy any element of stability and predictability,

"In every major respect, the proposal does the exact opposite of what is claimed on its behalf by its promoters. It would make the calling of elections easier, not more difficult.

"Governments don't give a damn about the cost of elections", Mr. Mackerras said. He would only be campaigning in Western Australia because the vote in W.A. would determine the referendum's fate. We agree with all this comment.

BASIC FUND: Over the past week 11 supporters donated/pledged \$2337 which makes the progressive total \$25,706.

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Electoral comment authorised by J.W.D. Lee, RAVENSBORNE, Qld., 4352.

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