



PER

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance —

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: "Yet science and technology have become ends in themselves and increasingly the very idea of progress becomes identified with the now self-sustaining and largely meaningless expansion of a technology which has subordinated science to its own indefinite ends, and displaced spiritual values in favour of economic indices. The end of Man is no longer ultimate union with God, but the part he plays in the expansion of the gross national product. All this is simply a reversion to a new but complex and highly dangerous barbarism."

- Dr. B.W. Monahan, in The Moving Storm (1969)

WHAT "IS" GOING ON IN THE MIDDLE EAST? "On the surface, the issues involved in the Middle East crisis are almost transparently simple. In reality, they are immensely complex, more riddled with subtleties and ambiguities than any war-or-peace challenge Australia ever faced."

- Peter Robinson, "Candid Comment", The Sun-Herald (Sydney), 12/8

Firstly, what of Prime Minister Hawke's (hasty?!) decision to send Australian war vessels to the aid of the United States in the latter's intervention in the Arabian Gulf imbroglio? Did he act without consultation with Cabinet? He probably did.

Senator Evans, Foreign Minister, has quickly come to Mr. Hawke's aid by announcing that the Prime Minister "consulted with some of his senior ministers" before making his decision. Perhaps he did; but that isn't consulting Cabinet.

The Labor Left is against sending naval vessels to the Gulf; indeed, we are confident they don't want Australia to become involved at all. The position of the Australian Democrats is similar, unless U.N.-backed. On current information, the United States is acting on its own initiative; it is not, as yet, a United Nations exercise.

Indeed, we are compelled to agree with Mr. Robinson when he observes, "The Prime Minister's decision to commit Australian naval forces to the Arabian Gulf 'peace-keeping' effort was no doubt taken after some considerable agonising, but it is one he - and we - may come to regret."

Further, he says, "But why we should be among the first nations to volunteer the commitment of our limited military strength to assist the U.S. in its oil-based strategies is difficult to understand." Indeed! Why us?

There appear to be adequate Western forces in the Gulf area, and the U.S. is sharply strengthening its forces, virtually by the day. In addition, there are escalating British and French military forces there, also. Why our small naval force from the other side of the world?

We are not getting the full story on the present threatened Gulf hostilities.

What is the position of Israel?

Israel seems to be almost distancing herself from the imbroglio. Shamir is talking tough, saying that any attack on Israel will meet with maximum response; but that Israel wants peace. This remains to be seen: there are some very hawkish political and military identities in Israel.

However, we can observe that Australia's position is extremely vulnerable whilst dependent on oil from overseas.

We are, we believe, 80% self-sufficient in oil now: we should make it 100%, urgently.

Why, exactly, should we be paying more for oil, at the bowser, now? Have the costs escalated sharply in the last week or so?

We have read that the Federal Government will reap a bonanza in increased oil revenue: we don't expect the Government to be making desperate efforts to keep the price of petrol-at-pump down.

Finally, we could observe that one of the roles of Israel has been that of an irritant in Middle Eastern affairs. The traditional pro-British Arab regimes through the Middle East have been alienated, and we are paying the price.

THE STATE BANK OF VICTORIA:

We have, from time to time, been questioned by supporters who are apprehensive concerning the viability of the State Bank of Victoria, in lieu of the Victorian Pyramid Building Society collapse. Some few people seem to have convinced themselves that the State Bank of Victoria, and even other State Banks, could collapse.

Some are claiming that the State Banks are not guaranteed by their respective governments.

Well, we have sighted an official letter from the Secretary of the Reserve Bank of Australia on this very issue.

In the letter he states that the liabilities of the State Bank of Victoria (S.B.V.) are guaranteed by the Government of Victoria (our emphasis). The guarantee is documented in Sections 40 and 41 of the State Bank Act, 1988.

The State Bank of Victoria is established under specific legislation of the State of Victoria. State banks are not generally subject to the Banking Act, 1959, which provides the legislative backing to the Reserve Bank's supervisory role.

The Reserve Bank of Australia and the Government of Victoria have recently reached an understanding about the future prudential supervision of S.B.V.

The Government of Victoria has agreed that the State Bank of Victoria will meet all the Reserve Bank of Australia's prudential standards. In return, the Reserve Bank of Australia will exercise prudential supervision over the State Bank of Victoria in the same way it does for banks authorised under Commonwealth legislation. The "R.B.A." will also meet from time to time with representatives of the Government of Victoria and the Board of the State Bank of Victoria to discuss matters arising from its prudential supervision. The Reserve Bank of Australia is able to make discretionary support available to banks authorised under the Banking Act, 1959, or to State banks (our emphasis).

The Reserve Bank of Australia's response to calls for support from any bank would be based on the need, at the time, to maintain financial stability, and confidence in the financial system generally.

To us, this puts the matter of the viability of State Banks, in particular, beyond any doubt.

RACIAL VILIFICATION IN VICTORIA: Committee to advise the Attorney-General on Racial Vilification.

There is a proposal to set up laws against "racial vilification" in Victoria. We, ourselves, do not believe that it is possible to legislate on attitudes, and that an attempt to do such will actually increase and fan hostility, where the former freedom of speech kept such at a tolerable level.

To its credit, the Victorian State Government booklet on "Racial Vilification in Victoria", does set out the arguments against such laws; they are:

- 1) There is no evidence that allowing the expression of racist sentiments causes racial violence. Freedom of speech is an important civil right, and should not be restricted unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the restriction will prevent serious harm being caused.
- 2) A racial vilification law will suppress the discussion of certain issues which are of legitimate public interest and should be openly debated, such as immigration policy.
- 3) A racial vilification law will not change the views of racists - attitudes are changed by debate and education, not by laws.
- 4) Suppressing the expression of racist views could drive racists underground, where their activities would be even more dangerous.
- 5) Prosecuting racists for breaking the law would allow them to use the courts as a platform from which to gain publicity for their views, and make martyrs of themselves.

Victorian supporters who do not want to see "vilification laws", based on race, introduced, should send their notice of disapproval to: "Committee to advise the Attorney-General on Racial Vilification", 232 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne, 3002. Phone number is (03) 412 6229.

BRIEF COMMENTS: More on the Gulf crisis. A factor which could have unknown consequences in any actual "war" in that part of the world. The situation is different to what it was in 1973; military hardware has become much more technologically advanced since that time. For example, numbers of troops, would not be as important a factor, now; with the actual hostilities being fought with high-tech, push button hardware. Iraq, Israel and the U.S. have all this state-of-the-art technology.

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The greenies are pushing too hard and too far.

Latest awareness is that Australia cannot afford to insist on setting too tough environmental standards because of trade competition, says the Business Council of Australia.

Naturally the Australian Conservation Foundation thinks this is awful, and its leader, Mr. Phillip Toyne, responds by saying that Australia cannot afford NOT to implement the most stringent environmental standards. So where do we go from there?

The B.C.A. has asked the Treasurer, Paul Keating, to include in his forthcoming Budget the Provisions for business, generally, to allow environmental costs to be tax deductible.

We don't like their chances.

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Some "pearls" from Victoria's new Premier, Joan Kirner:

"Let's get it clear. Everybody in the Labor Party is a socialist."

"Socialists are people who believe in public planning, public ownership of goods to the extent that it is in the best interests of the community, social justice. All those are party platform."

Who decides what are the "best interests" of the community? Why, silly; the SOCIALISTS!

And we have been assured (by the Fabians) that their Society is just a "debating group".