



ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance —

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: "In the last two decades we have witnessed a situation where our education has no longer been centred on the idea that the English language is an enormously precious legacy to be handed on with care. We have seen the abandonment of learning the rules of grammar and the parts of speech as boring and irrelevant. Learning poetry by heart has been abandoned, together with the idea of English as something really to be learned, by effort and application, by long and careful familiarity with those who had shown how to clothe their thought in the most precise, vivid and memorable language."
- Prince Charles in "A People's Prince"

THE QUEENSLAND ELECTION CAMPAIGN: Premier Goss has obviously called a snap election to avoid any possible odour associated with the A.L.P. as a result of the expected Victorian massacre on October 3rd. It may also be that Mr. Goss has been prevailed upon to go to the people early, in the hope that a good result for the A.L.P. in Queensland could even minimise the A.L.P.'s. electoral fall-out in Victoria.

While the Queensland A.L.P. is expected to win comfortably, this will be the first test of the new electoral regime recommended by the Fitzgerald Enquiry into corruption in Queensland politics. There are new electoral boundaries, new voting procedures, and it appears that the results in up to one-third of the seats are uncertain. Fitzgerald's answer to 'political corruption' was to dismantle the famous Queensland electoral "gerrymander", under which it is alleged that the National Party held unfair electoral advantages for decades, and introduce the "fairer" concept of 'one vote, one value'.

As other analysts have pointed out, the Queensland electoral structure was the result of the problem of trying to fairly represent Queenslanders under a "uni-cameral" system. That is, there is only one House of Parliament, the Queensland Upper House having been abolished by the A.L.P. in the 1920s. The system of electoral zones was an attempt to equate the weight of electoral numbers, concentrated in the south-east corner of this vast State, with important interests (but sparse numbers) in North Queensland. The League has consistently

pointed out that the answer to this electoral dilemma is the re-introduction of the Upper House of the State Parliament. We notice that the National Party has adopted this suggestion formally as part of their policy. Will they campaign hard for it? We doubt it!

NATIONALS FAIL TO GRASP THE NETTLE: Premier Goss has felt confident enough of his State budget to go into an election comparing Queensland's financial position with the Victorian disaster. It is true that Queensland is in better shape. The State debt is under control. But it is easily forgotten that much of the credit for this belongs to previous National Governments, who left substantial financial reserves. Whatever else Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen is accused of, he is never accused of Victorian financial disasters! Mr. Goss rarely refers to this. Mr. Goss' other asset is the steady stream of "immigrants" moving into the State from the south - many from the Victorian "rust-belt" economy. These refugees from Mr. Keating's recession hope the "recovery" will manifest itself first in Queensland. We will be surprised to see Mr. Keating campaigning much for Mr. Goss.

The once-powerful Queensland National Party is only a shadow of its former strength, due largely to self-inflicted wounds at the end of the Bjelke-Petersen era. A crisis of identity within the Party has meant a failure to grasp the Issues (Initiative and Referenda, an Upper House of Parliament to minimise the 'corruption', gun control legislation, etc.) and campaign fearlessly. Sir Joh was never highly articulate, but everyone knew where he stood, and knew he meant it. Perhaps the best that the National Party can hope for, is that no further seats are lost.

Nothing should be taken for granted in Queensland, and there is obviously scope for good independents prepared to campaign intelligently. There are also "sleeper" issues. One of these is the diabolical Anti-Discrimination Act, yet to be proclaimed. There are also the moral issues (homosexuality, abortion and prostitution) upon which Goss is vulnerable. The League will be making a contribution, designed to foster responsible grassroots initiatives, and emphasise issues such as the Anti-Discrimination Act. See "O.T. Bulletin" for details.

LIBERALS NERVOUS IN VICTORIA: While the A.L.P. is widely expected to suffer badly at the hands of the Victorian voters, the Liberal Party appears to be extremely nervous. They have much about which to be nervous. Perhaps Mrs. Kirner's greatest asset is Liberal leader Kennett, regarded as erratic, unpredictable and accident-prone. We also expect the A.L.P. to take a terrible hammering, but where will the votes go? Clearly this is exercising Mr. Kennett's mind as well, which is why he is warning about voting for Independents.

As soon as the N.S.W. Supreme Court absolved former Premier Greiner of the I.C.A.C. corruption findings, he was invited to Victoria. Greiner said he'd "be amazed" if Victorians, or anyone else, would vote for Independents after his experience in N.S.W. But even in N.S.W., where the three Independents who hold the balance of power in the Legislative Assembly forced Greiner's resignation, there are few tears about his departure. Greiner's defence, when accused of effectively "buying" back one seat by offering a lucrative job to an ex-Liberal Independent,

was that "everyone else is doing it". The I.C.A.C. simply gave expression to the common, grassroots view that this behaviour isn't good enough.

BLEEDING OFF THE VOTE: Clearly, Kennett is worried that the Independents can appeal to widespread disillusionment with party politics to capture a significant proportion of the vote. Perhaps bogus Independents will direct preferences to Labor, says Mr. Kennett. We would be surprised if the Liberals have not already organised similar schemes, irrespective of Kennett's dictum that "a vote for an Independent is a vote for Labor".

One high-profile Independent, Mr. Les Twentyman, is campaigning in Melbourne's western suburbs, articulating the electoral disgust. "People out here have had a gutful of being kicked around by chardonanay socialists," he is quoted as saying. There could be many like Twentyman whom Kennett should justifiably fear. It is not often that the League would find itself in agreement with John Halfpenny, Secretary of the Victorian Trades Hall Council. But on this occasion, we agree with Halfpenny, who, having given up any hope of a Labor victory, says that the most preferable result for the unions is a Parliament where Independents hold the balance of power.

WHAT ABOUT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL? The Victorian Legislative Council, perhaps the key to the next Parliament, is presently controlled by the Liberals. Will this automatically continue? Not necessarily. The experience at Commonwealth level, first exploited by Don Chipp, was that while voters are prepared to risk one Party in control of the Lower House, they are not prepared to equip them with control of the Upper House as well. The Parties are not to be trusted. This message has come through loud and clear, even to the politicians.

We have yet to see any intelligent assessment of the numbers for the Legislative Council, but given the Commonwealth experience it is possible that a number of Independents, or minor Party figures, could be elected. We are aware that several extremely presentable Independents are running for the Council, in Gippsland and the North-West Province in particular. We draw attention to such possibilities, and suggest that supporters also approach Legislative Council Independent candidates, with a view to assisting genuine, sound candidates.

COALITION IN DEEPENING POLITICAL TROUBLE: While the budget has not provided the A.L.P. the platform they required to launch an election campaign from a strong economic statement, it provides little comfort for the Coalition. At this stage, it still appears that Mr. Keating would have little chance of convincing voters to re-elect the man who gave us the "recession", but appearances can be very deceptive. We believe the Coalition is already in serious trouble, and this can easily deepen.

Post-budget discussion went badly for the A.L.P., but it is clear that the electorate does not believe the Coalition can do better. Some of the polls support this, with only 32 percent believing Mr. Reith could produce a better budget. Fear of the G.S.T. (justifiably) is perhaps the key. Even more ominous for Dr. Hewson is that the polls not only showed support for Labor rising one percent, but support for the Coalition dropped three points, to around 45 percent! Support for Independents seems to have remained steady at about 10 percent.

The budget figures themselves seem to have been obscured by the "budget response", and the Treasurer's attempt to "sell" it. It provides for

an increase in public debt of around \$13,400 million. Even this may be wishful thinking - budget deficits frequently 'blow out'. But even the projected deficit lays an additional debt burden of about \$800 per person. The last deficit was about \$9,300 million, so together this means the average family of four (if this is still 'average') carries an extra debt burden of about \$5,300 plus interest.

KEATING TURNS BLOWTORCH ON HEWSON: The strengthening debate on the issue of industrial protection further exposes Coalition difficulties. It is clear that Dr. Hewson, and his spokesman on Industry Mr. McLachlan, have locked themselves into a policy of 'negligible tariffs by 2000'. Keating has clearly identified this as a weak point, to be skilfully exploited. Given the Coalition backbench discomfort over the tariff policy, Keating hopes to drive a wedge between the Liberal and National Parties, perhaps even splitting the Coalition.

The battle between the four major car manufacturers and the Coalition over tariffs simply adds to Keating's comfort. Malcolm Stewart, Director of the Federation of Automotive Products Manufacturers, said that the Coalition has alienated part of their traditional base because of this dogmatic position. "They just won't deviate from his textbook economics - it's like what Hewson used to teach at University. All we can do is keep talking to them. . ."

Dr. Hewson presents a ruthless proposition to manufacturers: either shape up, or disappear. Any resistance, as from the car manufacturers, simply hardens his position, almost as one journalist described it, "as an act of economic self-righteousness". Keating simply exploits such inflexibility, and the Coalition suffers electorally. The signs are that Hewson and McLachlan are already an asset to Keating's chances of yet another A.L.P. election victory that he certainly doesn't deserve.

BRIEF COMMENTS: The gutter campaign against the Royal family, with Prince Charles and his wife the main targets of a campaign whose real purpose is to destroy the Monarchy. Much of the "peeping Tom" material can be dismissed for what it really is: shameless fabrication. But a new item is one which merits serious consideration; the publication of private correspondence which allegedly demonstrates that the Duke of Windsor, King Edward VIII, was "pro-Hitler". The truth is that King Edward made it clear that he was most concerned with the threat of a Second World War, resulting from misunderstandings between Britain and Hitler's Germany. It might be fairly said that Edward felt that all efforts should be made to avert a war which he foresaw would be disastrous for the British world.

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The continuing increase in Australia's foreign debt demonstrates how the nation is being undermined by a type of drug. Net foreign debt grew \$3.69 billion over the June quarter. The increase was \$12.84 billion over 1991-92, taking the total to a record \$150 billion on June 30th. Much of the increase in debt has been the result of new loans taken out to pay the interest on previous loans. The only solution to all forms of drugs is to stop taking them. All new foreign borrowing should be halted immediately along with steps to pay off the debts as they fall due.

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