



ON TARGET

- NEWS HIGHLIGHTS
- BACKGROUND INFORMATION
- COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance —

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: "When Poverty comes in the door, Love flies out the window."

- Old English Maxim

THE VICTORIAN ELECTION: There was an aura of deep and sullen anger over the Victorian State election. A community which had been savaged and economically bastardised for a long period of time took the opportunity to say what it thought of the corruption, indulgence and the strange mixture of hedonism and puritanism which passed for government policy under the A.L.P. The vote said one thing - "NO more".

The Opposition under Jeff Kennett happened to be in the right place at the right time to pick up the pieces. Pre-election polls indicated no enthusiasm for a coalition alternative. There was no indication that Jeff Kennett was regarded as a heaven-sent alternative. The electorate simply wanted to say as strongly as possible what it thought of the State A.L.P. Government - and it did so overwhelmingly.

After polling well in the early part of the campaign, the record field of 184 independent candidates made little impression. This confirms our view that the independent label makes little impression unless carried by an outstanding candidate with a track-record known and appreciated by the electorate.

The Liberal-National Coalition has an overwhelming majority in both the Assembly and the Upper House. It has an electorate keen for a soundly-built recovery and the re-establishment of Australian industry and production. Such a government, with the courage to face the debt question could make a mark in Victorian history. The incoming Victorian Government deserves the chance to show what it can do, and deserves the best wishes of the electorate. But its time is limited - more limited than it may understand. Australians are in no mood for play-acting and political gamesmanship. The Australian crisis is too deep for any delay in the return to sanity.

THE AUSTRALIAN FIRE SALE: The new Victorian Government under Premier Kennett would be foolish to believe the massive swing was either enthusiasm or a mandate. It was essentially a repudiation of the

mis-management and corruption of a Labor Party which started under John Cain and whimpered into ignominy under Joan Kirner.

The new Government's problems are legion. The State's debts are now in excess of \$61 billion - more than \$14,000 for every Victorian, or \$56,000 for the average family of four.

The indications are that, like their Federal counterpart, the Victorian Liberals will be relying on "privatisation" to satisfy the debt merchants. Much of Melbourne already rides on city trams which are not Australian-owned. The rolling stock of the Victorian Railways has also been sold and rented back. Politicians are now sorting through the depleted furniture to see what remains to be taken to the pawn shop.

It was once a joke to imagine the salesman who could sell the Sydney Harbour Bridge. New Zealand is even offering the dams which store Wellington's water for privatisation.

Foreign investment in Australia now stands at \$299 billion - over \$17,000 for every Australian - \$68,000 for the average family of four. The nation's birthright is being pawned by politicians too frightened to tackle the debt system which has produced such a travesty.

IT PAYS TO LOSE: A number of Cabinet Ministers in the outgoing Labor Government in Victoria lost their seats, cast into the outer darkness by a disenchanted electorate. They won't, however, face straitened circumstances. The Herald-Sun, October 5th, reported: "Retiring former Premier John Cain, 61, will get \$650,000 ... High-profile Minister for Tourism, Mr. Crabb, 49, will get \$620,000. Transport Minister, Mr. Spyker, will get \$570,000. Former Labor deputy leader Robert Fordham is entitled to \$610,000. Labor Minister Mr. Pope, is understood to be entitled to \$380,000. Defeated Community Services Minister Mrs. Setches will get \$370,000, Finance Minister Harrowfield \$310,000, and Health Minister Maureen Lyster \$170,000..."

NATIONAL FARMERS' FEDERATION ABDICATES: In 1969 the A.B.C. published a small booklet "Small Farmers in Trouble", drawing attention to the fact that Australia's 252,000 farmers (at that time) were in big trouble as a result of the cost/price squeeze. The elimination of 10,000 small producers would stabilise the industry. Those who had to leave would be "helped to do so with dignity".

Between that time and 1990 - a 20 year period, 127,000 farmers left the land - an average rate of 17 every 24 hours, or one every 84 minutes over the 20 year period.

On August 26th, 1992, the Weekly Times (Victoria) reported that another 25,000 farmers were likely to go in the next short period. The article continued:

"National Farmers' Federation President Graham Blight conceded last week that during his term he would preside over the greatest exodus of farmers from the land. Speaking at a 'Future of Australian Agriculture' conference in Wagga Wagga, Mr. Blight said 6,500 to 7,000 people

left the land in 1990-91 ... He expects at least the same number of people left the land in the financial year just past. It may seem wrong to some of the farmers, but my job as president is to save agriculture, not every farmer," he said. "My aim is to see that the farmers who leave the land do so with dignity..."

However, even his appalling situation may be understated. The recent Catholic report on poverty in Australia, compiled over a 2-year period, reports 70 percent of farmers to be technically bankrupt. If this is so, the number who will leave if the problem is not tackled will exceed 80,000.

The Catholic report added that 3 out of 10 Australians now owe more than they own.

JUDGE EMPHASISES REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT: Last week the High Court handed down its reasons for ruling last month that Australians have a right to free political speech. In striking out the ban on political advertising, Australia's most senior judge, Chief Justice Sir Anthony Mason, also delivered a stern reminder to politicians of their primary responsibilities. Six of the seven judges on the full bench of the Court found that Australia's system of representative government clearly implied the right to speak freely on public and policy issues.

In his judgement, Sir Anthony Mason expanded upon these responsibilities in language that should be recorded, in order to remind Members of all Australia's Parliaments that they owe their position and loyalty to their constituents. Sir Anthony said that the very concept of representative government and representative democracy signified government by the people through their representatives. He stressed that such representatives were necessarily accountable to their constituents for their actions. Further, they had a responsibility to take account of the views of the people on whose behalf they acted.

In a report in The Australian (1/10) Sir Anthony is quoted as saying: "Indispensable to that accountability and that responsibility is freedom of communication at least in relation to public affairs and discussion."

DOUBLE EDGED WARNING: This High Court ruling would appear to make it much harder for politicians and public bodies to take legal action over criticism of their views or political activities. It also comes at an appropriate time to remind new Members of Victoria's Parliament of their reason for being elected. In view of the abysmal performance of the previous Victorian Government, and others (both State and Federal) Sir Anthony's remarks are really a ringing call for more political accountability. But they also imply that the responsibility of voters is not confined to the polling booth. In his ruling, he also noted:

"Only by exercising that freedom can the citizen criticise government decisions and actions, seek to bring about change, call for action where none has been taken and in this way influence the elected representatives." (Emphasis added)

Thus, the most senior judge of the highest court in the land re-enforces the view that not only must politicians do as they are told by their constituents, but implies that constituents are expected to take the trouble to tell their representatives what results they require. In terms of freedom of speech, it is unclear how widely this judgement may later be applied. For example, the High Court confirms the freedom to speak openly on political matters, which cover a wide field. Does the discussion of multiculturalism, immigration, and the racial composition of Australia's immigrants come within such protection? What will be the impact on the new racial vilification legislation, soon expected to be introduced to parliament? This High Court decision is a landmark case, of great constitutional significance for political freedoms.

BRIEF COMMENTS: Conrad Black, the "new" media press baron (ex-farm machinery, Canada) now has controlling interest in three Australian influential newspapers, viz. The Age (Melbourne)/The Sydney Morning Herald/and The Financial Review; via his holding company, the "Tourang Consortium" .. He now has his sights on the New York Daily News. Mr. Black has a low opinion of journalists.

So do we, in general (always the exceptions). Mr. Black says:- "My experience with the working press is that they're a very degenerate group." He has in the past dubbed them "ignorant, lazy, opinionated, intellectually dishonest and inadequately supervised". That certainly has been our experience with the vast majority of them. The quotes we have taken (above) were published in the Canberra Times, 19/8/1992.

FROM NEW ZEALAND "ON TARGET", September 10th: As we have often stressed, all forms of monopoly are anti-social. The trade union monopoly is one example, but while it is easy to point to the evils which flow from this monopoly, as it is to point to the evils associated with other monopolies, the "economic rationalists" claim that the trade union monopoly is the source of most of New Zealand's economic problems. This is a dangerous and superficial view, completely ignoring basic causes. The power of all forms of monopoly is eroded if financial and economic policies decentralise power and place the individual in the position where he is economically secure and can make decisions for himself. Some of the much-publicised "go-slow" work practices stem from the fear that greater real efficiency would deprive wage earners of their jobs and incomes. If men are not required for economic activities, then the simplest thing to do is to pay them a "social dividend".

* It was the Marxist strategist Lenin who said that one of the basic requirements for a completely socialised State was a centralised, State-controlled electricity grid, with all dependent on the one source for electric power. The monopolists claim that this leads to efficiency. In this sense "efficiency" must mean that New Zealanders have no control over the cost they pay for electricity. If there is one fact shown by the recent electricity shortage crisis, it is that monopoly is not only not necessarily efficient, but when bad or short-sighted decisions are made by those controlling the monopoly, the effects will be very widespread.

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