



ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance —

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: "No method of procedure has ever been devised by which liberty could be divorced from self-government. No plan of centralisation has ever been adopted which did not result in bureaucracy, tyranny, inflexibility, reaction and decline ... Unless bureaucracy is constantly resisted it breaks down representative government, and overwhelms democracy. It is the one element in our institutions that sets up the pretence of having authority over everybody and being responsible to nobody." - U.S. President Calvin Coolidge, 1920.

THE VICTORIAN REVOLUTION by Eric D. Butler: The rest of Australia should take careful note of what is happening in Victoria, where the Kennett State Government is pushing forward relentlessly with a "Reconstruction" programme which it is claimed will be a model for other States to follow. When the Soviet system collapsed a type of euphoria swept the world, suggesting that the world was on the eve of a new era of peace and stability. But what has emerged is the reality that the collapse of the Soviet has not meant the death of the Marxist virus; that virus is more malignant than ever, spreading under different labels. The essence of Marxism is the "inevitability" of the progressive centralisation of power. The Federal Hansard of February 10th quotes an address by Labor Member Snow from Eden-Monaro concerning a strategy for transferring more powers from the States to the Federal Government with the States being ultimately phased out, and Local Government "reformed" by the creation of Regional Governments. A careful reading of the proposal reveals that these new "super-councils" would be little more than administrative conveniences for the Federal Government. This is a revamping of the Fabian Socialist strategy advanced by the Whitlam Government.

Not without significance is the fact that Labor M.P. Snow quoted the Business Council of Australia in support of his centralist theme. The Business Council of Australia represents Big Business, and takes

the view that with "Australia's international competitiveness at stake", "inconsistences" between the States must be eliminated. If Australia's major national policy is to "internationalise" the whole economy so that it can compete internationally, then the Federal system is an obstruction which must be removed. Mr. Snow mentioned the reluctance of some of the States participating in a proposed nationwide electricity grid system, as an example of the "inefficiency" of the present Federal System.

Speaking in favour of Mr. Snow's motion, his Labor colleague from McEwan, Victoria, stressed the importance of "re-structuring" Victoria's system of Municipal Government.

Mr. Cleeland said how the Cain Government had attempted the "re-structuring", but had been obstructed by the conservative rural Councillors "with their little patches of dirt..". But, said Mr. Cleeland, "Now the Kennett Government, to its credit, is doing that reform. It is not asking anyone - there is no consultation, but it is just ramming home the reform, which will, hopefully, reduce the number of Councils in Victoria." Having congratulated Premier Kennett, Mr. Cleeland repeated the same theme as that being used by the Kennett Government - the financial savings "can be huge". But a senior Minister in the Kennett Government, National Party M.P. Barry Steggall, said in opposing the Cain Government's "re-structuring" programme, "there was no solid evidence to support Labor's claims that amalgamations would save ratepayers money or improve the range of services available to residents". Mr. Steggall quoted from a study of Municipal amalgamations by the Rural Development Centre of the University of New England, which found that the economies of size "do not offset the non-economic costs". Can Mr. Steggall tell Victorians, particularly members of the rural communities, about those "huge savings" which only a few years ago they were saying could not be demonstrated.

The shape of things to come has already emerged in Geelong, where the Kennett Government rammed through its first amalgamation strategy without consulting the ratepayers involved. An editorial in the Geelong Advertiser of February 19th states, "Ratepayers in the City of Greater Geelong were probably aghast yesterday when they read of the salary packages to be given to the top eschelon of the new Council's staff ... What is difficult to understand is how the people appointed to these positions have earned a pay increase on the \$93,000 advertised salaries of between \$12,000 and \$27,000 even before they have started their new duties".

The Advertiser says that it has supported the concept of a Greater Geelong, and has no quarrel on salaries. "If the packages had initially been set at between \$105,000 and \$120,000 we may not have even questioned them, if they were in line with general municipal and industry levels. And, if the city achieves the savings we have been told it will, the officers will have earned their money. But we do

have to be careful not to create a highly paid bureaucracy which will indulge in empire-building."

But this is exactly what is going to happen. In the meantime it has emerged that the Kennett Government's strategy is to wrap up its programme for the whole of the Victorian Western District within the next ten weeks. Then to push on to the Wimmera and Mallee. The North-East of the State is to be left until last, it being felt that this area has the potential for some National Party resistance. However, if the overall strategy is not halted in the Western District, it will eventually take in the whole State. The privatisation programme is scheduled to eventually take in all of the State's water supplies. We are informed that the French-based consortium which now controls the United Kingdom's privatised water supplies has already been investigating the Victorian situation.

It is not surprising that Prime Minister Paul Keating is co-operating financially with the Kennett Government's strategy. The real threat to Australia's future is now emerging clearly for those with eyes to see.

BASIC FUND PASSES TARGET: A last minute flood of support for the Basic Fund swept it past the target of \$60,000. The small surplus will be allocated to the 1994-95 Basic Fund. The National Director David Thompson wishes to thank all those who participated in what was a magnificent effort under very difficult circumstances.

THE DEMISE OF DR. JOHN HEWSON: Dr. Carmen Lawrence's convincing victory in last weekend's by-election in Fremantle adds further to the almost intolerable pressure upon Dr. John Hewson as Liberal Party leader. Against all by-election trends, when voters usually take the opportunity to protest against governments without unseating them, Dr. Lawrence actually increased the A.L.P. margin by more than one percent, about nine percent altogether. Despite Dr. Hewson's personal involvement in the campaign, his candidate was "unable to lay a glove" upon Dr. Lawrence.

Although the Liberals are expected to easily win next weekend's two Sydney by-elections, this will provide no comfort for Hewson, as the candidates are regarded as a threat to him. Former Senator Bishop has made no secret of her leadership aspirations, and she is surrounded by a number of interesting figures, including entrepreneur Harry M. Miller. Mr. Tony Abbott is a former adviser to Dr. Hewson, from whom he parted after a number of strong disagreements over such issues as 'economic rationalism'. Unless the Liberals can win this weekend's Bonython by-election in the 'safe' A.L.P. seat in South Australia, then it seems inevitable that Dr. Hewson's days are numbered as Opposition leader.

Essentially quite a decent person, and a good, perhaps even brilliant

economist/accountant under orthodox rules, Hewson has shown that he is no match for the gutter-brawling Keating. But Keating cannot be beaten by descending to his own gutter-brawling tactics; he can only be beaten by an Opposition that goes back to its philosophical roots, and once again offers policies that reflect those values. Dr. Hewson has shown no indication of any visceral passion for philosophical values of any sort.

50th ANNIVERSARY BROCHURE: The Liberal Party proposes to publish a special 50th Anniversary brochure, intended to re-establish their credentials for government. Federal Director Andrew Robb says, "We need to re-assert the strength of our convictions, the relevance of our philosophy I think our principles are long-standing and remain very relevant and it is a matter of confidently asserting them and drawing their contemporary relevance to families, workers, and the community." But what are those principles? Does anyone remember? Robb also claims that while the A.L.P. is seen as a party captured by many special-interest groups, the Liberals are a party of mainstream Australia.

However, Dr. Hewson is actively undermining the Federal Director's claims by trying to appeal to special interest groups like the homosexuals. Hewson's virtual endorsement of the Sydney Mardi Gras is the type of sickening hypocrisy that leaves a sour taste in the mouths of the traditional conservatives. To their credit, many backbenchers made this clear to Dr. Hewson. But his pandering to the ethnic lobby on the issue of immigration, and his dismissal of the proposal to minimise taxation for families by 'income-splitting' leave the distinct impression that the Liberals themselves are captured by special interest groups, and are prepared to betray "middle Australia" in search of elusive votes from marginal groups.

The question is not whether the Liberals can generate the votes to defeat Keating and the A.L.P.; if he continues in his usual abusive, divisive fashion, Mr. Keating could almost do this for them. Rather it is a question of whether the Liberal Party can even remember what it stood for, and give practical expression to this fearlessly. No leadership changes can do this for them. We await their 50th Anniversary brochure with great interest.

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