



ON TARGET

- NEWS HIGHLIGHTS
- BACKGROUND INFORMATION
- COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: "The characteristic of the hour is that the commonplace mind, knowing itself to be commonplace, has the assurance to proclaim the rights of the commonplace, and to impose them wherever it will The mass crushes beneath it everything that is different, everything that is excellent, qualified and select. Anybody who is not like everybody, runs the risk of being eliminated... and it is clear, of course, that this 'everybody' is not 'everybody'. 'Everybody' was normally the complex unity of the mass and the divergent specialised minorities. Nowadays, 'everybody' is the mass alone. Here we have the formidable fact of our times, described without any concealment of the brutality of its features."
– F.M.R. Walshe

A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR RURAL AUSTRALIA by Eric D. Butler:

Channel 9 TV and Ray Martin must be given "full marks" for last week's coverage of the grim realities of the worst drought in Australia's recorded history. Urban Australia was given a vivid picture of some of the heartbreak being experienced by families who make it clear that they are not asking for charity, but would appreciate a helping hand so that at the end of the drought they will still be on their properties. As has been so often pointed out, Australia is one of the driest continents in the world. In coping with this reality, Australian farmers have demonstrated that they are some of the most resourceful and innovative farmers in the world. It was Sir Sydney Kidman of "Cattle King" fame who, well aware of Australia's vulnerability to periodic drought conditions, sought to develop a series of grazing properties which would enable him to shift his herds from the drier properties to those which had experienced better rainfall.

From a national point of view, not all parts of the continent suffer drought conditions at the same time. Under a sane financial policy, it would be relatively easy to devise a national strategy which would ensure that both stock and fodder were easily moved to where required. Maintaining the present rural community, already badly decimated by the debt and excessive interest rates, should be regarded as a major feature of a national defence strategy. Australia needs more people, not less, along with a necessary infrastructure to serve them, living in rural Australia. Crowding more people into the already overswollen capital cities is a progressive undermining of the national

character of the Australian people. The bigger the human ant-heaps become, the less efficient they become in terms of human satisfaction.

The first essential step to meet the current drought crisis, is for a nationwide moratorium on all rural debts, for a period of at least three years, after which the situation could be reviewed. Adequate finance on a long-term, low interest basis should be made available to ensure that existing rural families are kept together. If a major military conflict erupted tomorrow, the Federal Government would be required to do what it has done in past conflicts: make available millions of dollars in new credits to finance whatever was required to defend the nation. The transport system would have to be revolutionised as quickly as possible. But why wait for a military crisis before such a national financial investment? The truth is, of course, that both the two major political parties, Liberal and Labor, are predominantly urban based. Recent statements by Prime Minister Paul Keating clearly indicate that his famous pig farm is about the closest he has got to rural Australia.

If the National Party would go back to its original roots, the farmers, graziers and small businessmen, and free itself from the deathly influence of a Liberal Party which has clearly shown it now lacks any type of a coherent philosophical base, it could become the rallying point for a new force in Australian politics. In going back to its roots, the National Party would discover that there was a time when its predecessor, the Country Party, advocated the establishment of a special bank to provide long-term low interest finance. There is a tremendous political vacuum to be filled in Australia at present. There must be a few Members of the National Party with the vision to grasp what is necessary, and to bring hope to a desperate rural community battling to survive against both drought and debt finance. The biggest enemy is debt finance and sooner or later must be attacked and defeated.

It was Abraham Lincoln who said during the American Civil War that he had two great enemies, the military foe and the bankers in his rear. He saw the enemy in the rear as his greatest problem. Australia's embattled rural community should heed what Lincoln said.

DOWNER'S LEADERSHIP FALTERS by David Thompson:

While we would be the first to concede that media "image" is no genuine indication of a person's real capacity, nothing can explain away Mr. Alexander Downer's dreadful handling of critical policy issues last week. His mishandling of the Aboriginal issue is an ominous indication that Mr. Downer is determined to confirm our own assessment of him as not having the capacity to give new heart to the Liberal Party by completely changing direction. The tragedy is that Mr. Downer not only bitterly disappoints the grassroots of the Liberal Party, but all those who desperately seek an alternative to the political betrayals and insufferable arrogance of Mr. Keating and the A.L.P.

At a time when the Liberal Party needs leadership of spiritual depth, courage to take a new direction, and faith in the judgement of the Australian people, it is conspicuously lacking. Mr. Downer's shallow dismissal of the Queen of Australia as "quaint but irrelevant", and his repudiation of Mr. Reith's proposal for initiative and referendum makes his short leadership record a sad one.

On the Aboriginal question, courage in particular was required. Facing a strongly pro-Aboriginal press (the Canberra press gallery **stood and applauded** the passage of the Native Title Act) it is difficult to confront the Aboriginal guilt industry without being accused of "racism". In the cities, where genuine Aborigines are seldom to be seen, most Australians seem to assume that "land rights" are actually of some benefit to Aborigines. Generations of left-wing teachers have ensured that most students emerging from city schools become grist to the guilt industry's mill. But where "land rights" have existed since the Fraser years in the Northern Territory, there is little evidence that Aboriginal conditions are much better than elsewhere. Downer must deal with these issues.

There is a **constructive answer** to the suffering of disadvantaged Aborigines, and Downer almost stumbled upon it when he referred to improving housing and educational conditions. Mr. Downer would benefit from a long discussion with A.L.P. backbencher Graeme Campbell on the Aboriginal question. Campbell, who has large numbers of Aboriginal constituents, provides realistic answers ignored by both the major political parties, because such answers do not pander to the careers of the (mainly white) lawyers, anthropologists, welfare workers, etc., attached to the Aboriginal industry.

THE FUTURE OF MR. DOWNER: Even before Mr. Downer replaced Dr. Hewson, we were asking the question: "What would the Liberals do if they win the next election?" Although the Liberal/National Coalition is still well ahead at the polls, **so was Dr. Hewson** 18 months before the "unloseable election" was lost in 1993. Mr. Downer's performance so far seems to confirm that the Liberals **don't know** what they would do with "power" if they do manage to win the next election.

In the meantime, Mr. Keating is anticipating the next Parliamentary sitting in September with undisguised glee. He is sharpening his surgical instruments for the day when Mr. Downer is delivered to the Parliamentary operating theatre to be comprehensively carved up. Mr. Downer's leadership of the Party cannot conceal the fact that the Liberal Party is adrift from its roots, and uncertain of what it believes.

INITIATIVE & REFERENDA DEBATE PROCEEDS:

The Downer/Fischer deal to terminate Mr. Peter Reith's campaign for initiative and referenda may have silenced Mr. Reith (temporarily), but with the massive amount of press coverage of the issue, the "cat is out of the bag". The electorate now knows that C.I.R. **is possible** and could be a substantial benefit.

Two excellent articles in the weekend press keep the issue alive. The *Weekend Australian* columnist Padraic McGuinness wrote an excellent piece "Sovereignty of the people is precious". He points out that most opponents to C.I.R. simply **don't trust the electorate**, and assume an elitist outlook: "we are elected to govern, let's get on with it". He also identifies the basic defect in the referenda provisions of the Constitution – that only Commonwealth Parliament can initiate changes. McGuinness asks why should State Parliaments be able to initiate change, or indeed,

why not an agreed percentage of electors by petition initiate referendum? He also notes that the referendum provision could provide the only satisfactory brake upon an activist High Court, whose decisions are almost impossible to overturn.

McGuinness' colleague, Humphrey McQueen, also writes strongly in favour of C.I.R. He correctly observes that C.I.R. could just as usefully be applied to State and Local Government. McQueen notes that in some cases, the **results** of referenda questions would be less important than the **debate** on the issues that leads up to them. That is, with the mechanism of C.I.R., issues that are presently not discussed could be forced onto the political agenda.

We note with interest that both columnists include a reference to the League of Rights – both in the usual obligatory, almost ritual, tones of condemnation. McGuinness, having just noted the League's support for C.I.R., describes the League as a "quasi-fascist" group. This, of course, is nonsense. The League opposes the **centralised power** structure typified by "fascism", and initiative and referenda is one of the most efficient mechanisms to **decentralise** power. Why is the League automatically condemned in the C.I.R. debate? Because our critics fear that if they concede that the League's contribution on the C.I.R. issue was constructive, then perhaps they will need to concede that the League is correct about other matters?

THE SOUTH AFRICAN CIVIL WAR:

Although little is appearing in the popular press, reports continue to leak out about an escalation of violence in South Africa under the A.N.C. Government of Mr. Mandela. It could best be described as a type of low-level civil war, mainly between blacks.

Earlier this month the continuing signs of impatience with the new Government's progress in providing housing and jobs for the huge disadvantaged black population appeared. Over 250,000 workers were on strike, demanding up to 30 percent wage increases, and improved working conditions. Immediate and massive changes were expected from Mr. Mandela.

It is significant that the **World Bank** issued an immediate warning to strikers, charging them with greed and impatience. International financial institutions are dismayed by the escalating violence accompanying the strike, and the explosion in violent crime. So far this year, 148 police officers were killed. The murder rate is 50 per month, and car theft rates are about 1,200 per month.

Mr. Mandela must continue the most delicate balancing act, in which he must keep the international financial interests assured of a stable investment environment, and also keep rioting blacks with high expectations quiet. His appointment of Mr. Chris Liebenberg to the Finance Ministry to replace Derek Keys recently, drew strong criticism from inside the A.N.C., who wanted a replacement from within their own ranks.