



ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance -

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: "The more he spoke of his honour, the faster we counted our spoons."
— Emerson

QUEENSLAND: AN EXPERIMENT IN REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT? by David Thompson:

After 10 days of counting the votes cast in Queensland's State election, the result was still uncertain, with only a handful of votes to determine who will be able to form a government. But what is now quite certain, is the fact that whoever is Queensland Premier, has **no mandate for anything**. The Queensland electoral landscape is now more similar to that in N.S.W., where the Labor Premier, Mr. Carr, has only a small majority, and does not have control of the Legislative Council.

This is very different from, for example, the Victorian situation, where Mr. Kennett runs a type of elected dictatorship, with a massive majority in both Houses of Parliament, and believes he has a "mandate" to do as he pleases, including virtually abolishing local government.

Some journalists have described the Queensland Opposition's tactics, in concentrating on the Goss Government as the major issue, rather than alternative policies, as "worrying". A possible Coalition Government being elected "by default" is also described as "worrying". Mr. Goss as Premier with only a wafer-slim majority is described as "worrying". The balance of power held by a genuine Independent, Mrs. Liz Cunningham, is described as "worrying". But, in practice, any or all of these results could produce a novel environment for the run-of-the-mill party political hack: **the necessity to represent Queenslanders** rather than simply obey the Party whips like so many sheep.

The new Member for Gladstone, Mrs. Liz Cunningham, appears to be a genuine Independent. Her public remarks have been very encouraging, especially her comment on political parties: **"party politics get in the way of government for the people . . ."**. Although she agrees that she holds quite conservative political views, being against abortion on demand, and in favour of capital punishment, Mrs. Cunningham strongly rejects the suggestion that she is a "National dressed up as an Independent". She describes as "presumptuous" the proposal that she take the Speaker's chair, pointing out that she had been sent to Brisbane to **represent the views of local people**, and as Speaker, might compromise that trust.

In reality, a Premier with a bare majority in Brisbane may find that Independent Mrs. Cunningham may act in a similar way to an Upper House, which Queensland does not have. All legislation would have to be negotiated with a view to satisfying Mrs. Cunningham that it really is in the best interests of Queenslanders, rather than a political party. Queensland politicians may become accustomed to the novel idea of representative government by this election result, and Queensland voters may see the principle of a check upon the power of the executive government being quite attractive. Attractive enough to support the proposal of re-investing Queensland's Legislative Council.

Mr. Keating's incredible comment, that the results of this election "contained no lessons for Federal Labor" is bluntly rejected by his own colleagues. Keating's arrogance, together with his comment that "there's no prize for hurting a good (Goss) government", alone will damage his own re-election chances. After a similar attitude to the earlier A.C.T. by-election in which the A.L.P. suffered a savage swing against it, perhaps Mr. Keating's ego has obscured his judgement.

If the Queensland result was translated to a Federal election, the A.L.P. could expect to lose seven seats in Queensland alone. Even half of the 6.3% swing against the A.L.P. would almost certainly sweep away four A.L.P. Federal seats, including that of Attorney-General, Mr. Lavarch, who holds Dickson.

The Queensland election provides major headaches for Mr. Keating, as a new mood in the electorate, which first emerged in the A.C.T. by-election, is being confirmed. It reveals a much less forgiving electorate, which expects, after all the rhetoric like "beautiful sets of numbers" and "bringing home the bacon", **some constructive political results** to show from the economic pain of recession. Even the conventional economists now agree that as time before the next election runs out, economic conditions will deteriorate, not improve.

But with Mr. Howard and the Opposition slowly demonstrating that, despite their own rhetoric, they have few alternatives to the Keating centralist programme, any change in government offers bleak prospects. The only present opportunity for angry voters to demand better representation is to look to the Senate. If a small group, like Australians Against Further Immigration, and perhaps others, can generate sufficient support to win even only two Senate seats, the next Commonwealth Government may offer some hope in an increasingly gloomy outlook.

BOSNIA: REALITY INTRUDES UPON 'NEW WORLD ORDER': It is not for nothing that the term "to balkanise" has become a part of the language, to mean a state of political fragmentation and instability. This region, centred on the former Yugoslavia, on the Adriatic, was known as "Europe's storm corner" even before World War I, and has long been of strategic importance, and for minerals and agriculture.

Australians can learn much from the present Balkan conflict, in which the aggressive Bosnian Serbs have shown the United Nations to be of little practical value as "peacekeepers". Multinational peacekeeping forces suffer from divided loyalties, language and cultural difficulties, and uncertain chains of command. The U.N. effort in the Balkans has been hampered by the chain of command passing through not one, but **two international bureaucracies**: the United Nations as well as NATO.

It is only three years ago that the Bosnian city of Sarejevo was a relatively normal European city.

But the television images of streams of distressed refugees, together with widespread reports of atrocities of the most gruesome type, simply reflect the bitter underlying political, cultural, ethnic and even religious divisions that have exploded the entire region into a charnal-house that even approaches anything seen in Africa.

It should be noted that those on the receiving end of the Bosnian Serb aggression, the Bosnian Moslems, who have so far been deprived of weapons under the arms embargo, have again been offered international support from other Moslem countries. Malaysia has offered to send arms in defiance of the "sanctions" which the U.N. seems powerless to uphold. In addition to this, if the Serbs take the northern Moslem pocket of Bihac, the Croatians threaten to re-enter the conflict, escalating the war yet again.

The principal lesson for Australia in all of this is that it is practically impossible to "unscramble" an egg. If the Balkans are an example of the end result of a form of multiculturalism, then every effort should be made to **prevent the "balkanisation" of Australia**. And if serious conflicts begin to emerge as a result of racial, religious or ethnic divisions, any involvement of international forces simply intensifies the problem rather than reducing it. It should be noted that Bosnian Moslems were demonstrating in Sydney last weekend, in support of their own people in Europe. Balkan tensions can easily erupt here, unless the experiment of forced multiculturalism is abandoned in favour of a policy of one, united, homogenous, Australia.

Conditions in the former Yugoslavia make a mockery of the concept of a 'new world order', in which national boundaries begin to disappear (as in the European Union) and nationalist realities are ignored. They also make a mockery of any suggestion that the United Nations can offer any sensible form of international government.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMALGAMATION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA: Under the Council of Australian Government agreement for a national competition policy (the Hilmer reforms), the South Australian Liberal Government has identified local government as a key area of "reform". Premier Brown is urging council amalgamation, resource sharing and competition. Such reforms, argues Premier Brown, will lead to lower rates and better local government services.

However, an independent study into S.A.'s metropolitan councils has found that such measures **do not lead to greater efficiencies**, as Mr. Brown hopes. The study, commissioned by Kensington and Norwood Council, was undertaken by Adelaide University applied mathematics lecturer, Mr. David Clements, and found that larger councils certainly do not uniformly charge lower rates than smaller councils. For example, in 1992/93, Tea Tree Gully Council, with 82,000 residential properties, had an average residential rate of \$525. This was 25 percent higher than Payneham Council's \$420 average, with 6,700 residential properties. Some bigger councils, like Noarlunga, have the same rating level as smaller councils, like Henley and Grange.

The five biggest S.A. Councils are arguing that their size gives them the capacity for large-scale development projects, and participation in "broad area strategic planning" with other spheres of government. But this appears to be exactly what some ratepayers wish to avoid. Salisbury Mayor, Mr. Plumridge, argues that huge councils can maintain close links with those they serve with enhanced customer service programmes, and good communication. But any housewife knows that **this costs money**. The Clements study disproves Mr. Plumridge's claims.

It is ironic that while the Big Five Councils argue for even bigger local government regions, one of them, Tea Tree Gully, which is the third largest in South Australia, recently divided its area into **three individual districts** in an attempt to become more efficient! And yet, one proposal to the Ministerial Advisory Group was to eliminate the 27 metropolitan councils, and create **five councils of populations around 250,000 each**. Clearly, the battle for local government is just beginning in South Australia.

MR. DOUG COLLINS IN SWITZERLAND: British-born Canadian journalist, Mr. Doug Collins, who writes for the Vancouver *North Shore News*, has recently returned from a tour of Switzerland. His conclusion was that the "Swiss know more about politics and politicians than we do. That's why they have a cabinet of only seven ministers and a referendum system of government. . .".

Mr. Collins, who will be in Australia in September and October, and will address a number of meetings, as well as the League's *New Times Dinner* on October 6th, quotes from his research in Switzerland: "Parliament does not create new laws, but only submits them. It is the people who decide whether or not they will be passed and implemented. Not long ago they pondered whether they should join the European Union, which is controlled by socialists and bureaucrats in Brussels. In spite of the wishes of their betters, they voted against it. The most recent referendum was on "holocaust denial". By a narrow margin the country voted to make it a crime. Which just goes to show that nobody's perfect . . .

"There have been referendums and initiatives on immigration, refugees, and a host of other issues . . . The result is that special interest groups can't get very far by being cozy with M.P's. They have to be cozy with at least 51 percent of the country . . .

"In Switzerland the system is universal. The cantons (like States) and the municipalities also have referendums. The result is that the Swiss may be called on to vote many times a year. No doubt it's a lot of trouble, but at least they have no-one but themselves to blame if things go wrong . . ."

"Something else: every Swiss (male) must serve in the army and when he goes on to the reserve, he takes his weapon home and must be responsible for it. I saw many of them doing just that. What I didn't see was soldiers using their guns to rob banks or murder people. Which shows that guns and their use are a matter of culture. . ."

DR. LAWRENCE IN THE DOCK: The extraordinary efforts to which Health Minister Dr. Lawrence is resorting in order to prevent the W.A. Royal Commission enquiring into the circumstances of the suicide of a W.A. woman as a result of issues dealt with in the W.A. Parliament and Cabinet while she was Premier, almost points to her guilt. What is Dr. Lawrence attempting to conceal, or is she suddenly genuinely concerned with the finer points of constitutional law and parliamentary privilege? On the evidence presented before the courts suspended the enquiry, Dr. Lawrence certainly has questions to answer. In view of the damaging evidence that has emerged against her so far, perhaps Dr. Lawrence, whose massive legal costs are being **paid for by taxpayers**, would be better served to answer the charges. Whether she is guilty as accused, or not, under present circumstances she continues to be an electoral liability to Mr. Keating and Mr. Beasley.

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