



ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: "There is no such thing as an effective national responsibility – it is pure abstraction, under cover of which, oppression and tyranny to individuals, which would be tolerated if inflicted by a personal ruler, escape effective criticism."

– C.H. Douglas in *Social Credit*

CENTRALISM IN RETREAT? by Eric D. Butler:

One of the myths of Australian political history is that Federation was established to abolish the States and to bring Australia under one unified political system. So far from seeking to abolish the States, the framers of the Federal Constitution specifically made provision for the creation of new States. The major effort to create new States was in New England, N.S.W., where a major influence was the Federal Country Party Member, the Hon. Dave Drummond. If present-day National Party Members make an examination of the history of the Country Party, out of which the National Party evolved, they will discover that one of the major objectives of the original Country Party was the creation of new States in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Constitution. But along with many other laudable objectives, including support of the nation's original restrictive immigration policy, support for the creation of new States was quietly dropped. There is no record of a vote of members taking place. It is appropriate to recall this forgotten piece of Australian political history with the recent news that a new "politically incorrect" national newspaper has been launched with the backing of several former National Party Federal Members and at least one Federal Liberal Member, Tony Abbott. **The first issue of the paper calls for the establishment of new States.** There is no news concerning the reaction of Prime Minister John Howard, currently still protected by the smokescreen resulting from all the hype concerning proposed gun legislation. But the call for the creation of new States is, hopefully, a sign that there is a shift in thinking away from the collectivist philosophy which had prevailed for so long.

Genuine harmony and social stability requires that there is the maximum decentralisation in all spheres. Developments in all parts of the world confirm this fundamental truth. As predicted by "politically incorrect" observers like the writer, the grandiose plan to force the different diverse groups of South Africa into a unified State, was doomed to failure. Led by Chief Buthelezi, the Zulu people have been increasingly restive under a government dominated by the African National Congress Party. Violence has reached the stage where Nelson Mandela has had to accept that the scheduled Provincial Elections in Natal will have to be postponed. The announcement by De Klerk that the National Party are withdrawing from the coalition government is the latest evidence of a rapidly deteriorating situation.

Now comes the news that Italy is faced with a demand by the leader of the Northern League, Mr. Umberto Bossi, that there be a peaceful Czechoslovakia-type break up of Italy. Mr. Bossi has said, "The time has come to sit down around a table, to divide up the country." His statement has resulted in a national uproar with even the Pope appealing for calm. Italy was one of the founding members of the European Economic Community, whose problems continue to grow as the Common Market bureaucracy attempts to regulate ("harmonise" is the buzz word) all aspects of the lives of peoples of diverse backgrounds. The attempt to impose the metric system of weights and measurements appears to have at last produced a major backlash among the British people. Reports indicate that the backlash is continuing to grow.

Australia's most immediate and pressing foreign policy issue is right on its northern doorstep, in Papua New Guinea. After years of talk, and some military action, the problem of Bougainville continues to fester. The basic cause of the problem is known to those prepared to face reality: the people of Bougainville do not regard themselves as part of a unified Papua New Guinea. Once again centralisation has proved disastrous. As a general principle, effective decentralisation is the only way to any type of stability and harmony.

Australia is better equipped than most European nations to demonstrate this truth.

REDUCING PREMIER KENNETT TO SIZE: Premier Jeff Kennett of Victoria is the classic demonstration of the corruption of power. With no effective opposition in either the Victorian Legislative Assembly or the Legislative Council, he has been able to do almost as he likes. We are no friends of Senator Spindler, but the Kennett gibe that the Senator had been a member of the Nazi Party was outrageous. Under the threat of legal action, Kennett has been forced to retreat. We see no good reason why his Crown Casino friends should not be investigated by a Senate Committee.

EMBRACING THE TOTALITARIAN STATE by David Thompson:

"I can't pretend for a moment that this decision will prevent the recurrence of tragedies in the future but it does represent a practical, powerful, effective legislative and governmental response to a problem . . . This represents an enormous shift in the culture of this country . . ." Prime Minister Howard on new firearms legislation.

If this agreement among the States will not, as Howard concedes, prevent the recurrence of tragedies like that of Port Arthur, then what "problem" does it solve? It only solves the continual "problem" for the Commonwealth centralisers, that, in the matter of firearms, as in so many other State powers, **the Commonwealth has no powers**. There is no shadow of doubt, however, that Mr. Howard is correct when he states that the banning of some guns "represents an enormous shift in the culture of this country".

Until now, the "culture" to which Australia has subscribed rests upon the philosophy that the basis of the free society is individual independence, guaranteed by the **ownership of private property**. With a single decision concerning firearms, a "conservative" government has loudly and even proudly proclaimed that this is no longer the case. Further, the decision was deliberately hastened in an emotionally-charged environment of horror, grief, fear and ignorance, perhaps the worst combination of conditions under which to make such a fundamental decision.

As an exercise in representative government, Howard's firearms legislation is a classic disaster. No other minority group could expect such treatment. In the context of, for example, the AIDS threat to

public health, this type of decision would have resulted in all homosexuals being locked up. In South Africa, where the government is dominated by the communists, even the question of whether the Zulus, feared by the A.N.C. supporters, have the right to carry their deadly traditional weapons, the assegai, is **at least debated**. It is quite clear that this decision really does represent a dramatic change in Australian culture – from a basically confident, free society, to a fearful, totalitarian culture. Former Prime Minister Keating has been the subject of much ideological loathing in the last few years. While conceding that most of this is justified, we have constantly asked, "Is Howard any better?" This single act answers that question. Even at the height of his popularity, Paul Keating would not even have contemplated what Howard has done.

GOVERNMENT BY CONSENT ABANDONED: Contrast Howard's actions with the British response to the Scottish shooting at Dunblane. Perhaps the most senior peer of the realm was appointed to head a commission of enquiry to recommend a sensible, workable **solution** to the Dunblane tragedy. Consultation with interest groups will take place. Submissions will be heard. The issue will be debated. How British. And in the end, **how successful**. If it is finally decided that the banning of guns will prevent further tragedies, then at least shooters, farmers, doctors, etc., will have been consulted. It was the British, of course, who refined the concept of **government by consent**. The multiculturalists claim that we are no longer British, and to our cost, we continue to demonstrate that we are throwing away the best of our heritage.

Of course, Mr. Major is faced with annihilation in a general election in less than one year. Mr. Howard is exercising a form of superior self-righteousness that comes from a thumping majority less than three months ago. But Howard knows that in a few short months, we will need all the political capital he can find. The Coalition has no basic solution to the economic and financial problems faced by Mr. Keating. So every "motherhood" issue is being beaten to death to accrue political brownie points for when the economic crunch hits.

But the firearms issue will certainly rebound on the Coalition. First, it has deliberately offended some of its core constituents on a fundamental issue that no amount of gratuitous apologising will satisfy. Second, the debate about the merits of this decision will take place **after it is made** rather than before. When the dust settles, grief and shock subsides, common sense will begin to set in again. If this spells "trouble" for John Howard and the Liberals, it almost certainly spells "disaster" for the National Party. Tim Fischer has wilfully and pathetically betrayed the interests of the one group he claims to represent – rural people. On such a fundamental issue they will not readily forgive and forget.

A CULTURE OF GUILT AND DISTRUST: Lack of debate ensures that a vast array of unforeseen problems will undermine Howard. What about defence? A feature of our history has been that shooters' clubs produce a certain type of person. Those who train the military – especially in wartime – readily concede that recruits who are already thoroughly familiar with firearms are far, far ahead of others in the armed forces. Debate in the State Parliaments will now produce points of view that a blatantly biased press overlooks. There might be agreement between police ministers on guns, but there is not yet nationwide legislation.

Urban Australians in general cannot be expected to properly understand what is taking place here in their fear and ignorance, they make unjust demands upon rural people. What the politicians are telling hundreds of thousands of more-or-less law-abiding Australians, is that because they own firearms, **they share the guilt for Strathfield, Hoddle Street and Port Arthur.**

Further, Howard, who himself does not understand the issue, is telling such people that **Australia doesn't trust them any more**. Further still, as a function of that guilt and distrust, the most potent symbolic gesture of all is to be invoked: we are to be disarmed as if by a victorious conqueror. Before we even shoot a rabbit we are required to complete an environmental impact statement, apply for a permit, pay the bureaucratic fees and levies, and probably complete a TAFE course in animal rights. Is it any wonder that rural people begin to feel a sense of injustice that eventually will be expressed in bitterness?

INCENTIVE, NOT COMPULSION: Will John Howard's legislation work? No-one seems particularly interested in this question. Even Mr. Howard concedes **that it won't work**. In every State where a firearms register has been arbitrarily introduced, much less than half those who own firearms have complied. Those who have were never a threat to others anyway. It is yet to be demonstrated how a national register of firearms achieves **absolutely anything** in the pursuit of safety. In our view, it is the responsibility of every Australian citizen to obey the law, but regrettably the sillier the law becomes, the more it is observed in the breach. A major result of the Howard legislation will be to translate contempt for politicians into contempt for the law, which is at the very least unhealthy.

If it was agreed that banning some guns would stop "massacres", why is compulsory confiscation of firearms necessary? Why not reflect the principles of the free society, and use incentive to collect the guns? Why not permit the anti-gun lobby to make a useful contribution, and offer a genuine incentive of, say, \$5,000 for every firearm of any sort more powerful than the air rifle? The anti-gun lobby demands "whatever it takes" to collect the guns. Let them "put their money where their mouths are". Such a proposal solves almost every "problem" associated with firearms. 1) At least there would have been **some debate**. 2) Enormous numbers of unused and unnecessary guns would be collected. 3) No black market could compete with such prices. 4) All guns would be kept in absolute security, for fear of them being stolen for the bounty. Such a proposal would not stop future "massacres", but as Mr. Howard concedes, nor will his.

The present situation leaves one question as yet unanswered. Who will represent the legitimate interests of those who wish to own firearms? A politician of courage and common sense can secure a committed and determined core of solid, nationwide support on this issue alone. All it takes is the political will.

AUSTRALIA: TWO FLAGS, OR ONE? The head of the Australian Olympic Committee, Mr. John Coates, has confirmed that no objection will be raised if sprinter Cathy Freeman were to carry both the Australian and Aboriginal flag should she win an Olympic medal. But many other Australians will object. Those who support the Olympics with their tax dollars and their goodwill are not all likely to welcome a symbol of racial division. Is Cathy Freeman competing as an Australian, or as an Aborigine? "Tolerant" Australians would perhaps be prepared to suffer a dual flag in a moment of unthinking euphoria, but to suffer what could be regarded as a calculated slight is another matter.

The Olympic rules are clear. "Political, religious or racial demonstrations" during Olympic medal ceremonies were forbidden after gold medallist Tommie Smith and bronze medallist John Carlos gave a Black Power salute on the dais in 1968. If Freeman indulges in the use of the Aboriginal flag she is doing two things. First, she is making a political statement. Second, she is downgrading the status of the Australian flag. Neither is acceptable to Australians. If **Australia** is sending Freeman to Atlanta, then the Aboriginal "flag" should be left home.