



ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance -

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: "Modern thinkers have forgotten that cultural affinity is a necessary precondition of political allegiance . . . the vast centralised, multicultural nations have not demonstrated that their structures are stable. The Soviet Union has collapsed. And the United States has become a leviathan, partially paralysed by its centralisation."

— Sir James Goldsmith in *"The Trap"*

BEHIND THE FIREARMS SMOKESCREEN by Eric D. Butler:

It would be a manifestation of paranoia, of which there is plenty at the moment, to suggest that the Tasmanian massacre was arranged to provide a smokescreen behind which the Howard Government can proceed with its programme to tighten the economic screws on the Australian people. But, aided by a sensation hungry mass media, the Government has seized upon what it rates to be a short-term political advantage. It is attempting to set the stage for a double dissolution at which it feels it can strengthen its position in the Commonwealth Parliament. But eventually the understandable emotionalism associated with the Tasmanian tragedy will fade under the impact of those economic pressures which show no sign of diminishing. In his Melbourne address last Sunday, West Australian Independent Member Graeme Campbell made the point that political freedom without economic freedom was of little permanent value. Having studied the South African situation first hand, he felt he could safely predict that the nation was on a disaster course. A political vote was not the same thing as economic freedom. Only the politically illiterate would dispute that it has become progressively clearer that there is no basic difference between the economic strategy of the Paul Keating Government and that of the Howard Government. That strategy is firmly rooted in the new religion known as economic rationalism. The major feature of this religion is its lack of rationalism.

Irrespective of what criteria is used, it is clear that the real standard of living in Australia has steadily declined since the Whitlam Government took office in 1972. In drawing attention to this fact, some critics of economic rationalism make the mistake of suggesting that the Menzies era was better because of the lack of economic rationalism. The Menzies Government was fortunate in that it presided over a period when there was adequate scope for economic growth because of what had happened during the Second World War years. Sustaining something relative to "full employment" was much easier than it is today: the full impact of a technological revolution which has swept the world, resulting in millions of unemployed, was yet to be felt.

The main thrust of the case for economic rationalism and international free trade was that in order to make the orthodox finance-economic system work, it was essential to organise national and economic groups into bigger units. In some unexplained way, the "free market", if made big enough, would

solve problems which otherwise were unsolvable. C.H. Douglas, the author of Social Credit, had foreseen this type of development, stressing that it could only result in international monopolies, the steady destruction of the middle class, with the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. The creation of an underclass and the imposition of multiculturalism is a guaranteed recipe for disaster. Although still relatively stable compared with many other countries, Australia is manifesting all the signs of growing social instability. The very programme of gun laws proposed by the Howard Government is going to intensify the instability, as witnessed by the growing intentions inside the Coalition Parties.

What is needed at present in Australia is a new movement which seeks to put Australia first. It was a harbinger of hope that Graeme Campbell was able to announce at his meeting in Melbourne that he was well on the way to establishing a new type of political party, appropriately termed Australia First. Graeme Campbell's programme for Australian economic recovery may not have all the answers necessary. But they are a constructive start. They offer the prospect of starting to produce true unity instead of what is taking place today.

In his first address to the Slovenians, Pope John Paul warned that "unbridely capitalism was no less an evil than the Communism they had dumped in their bid for independence". This truth is dawning on the Russians and other former victims of Communism. Political freedom without economic freedom is the road to even greater disasters. That is why the economic rationalism of the Howard Government contains the seeds of greater problems for the Australian people. The fact that the Howard Government promises to do better in every sphere than the Keating Government, highlights the peril now facing the nation.

PROPOSED GUN CONTROLS GENERATE COMMITTED RESISTANCE by David Thompson:

Further debate last week on the issue of gun control begins to reveal deep divisions within the National Party on rural representation. Federal leader Tim Fischer suffers from the wounding allegation that he has "toed the Liberal Party line" and betrayed the interests of rural and sporting shooting constituents. National Party Premier Borbidge has been forced to resort to party discipline to quash resistance from his colleagues, including Ministers and the Speaker, Mr. Neil Turner, in Queensland. Fischer has clearly underestimated the scale of resentment the firearms decision is going to generate in the bush. The National Party is losing ground badly, with membership resignations and cheque books closing.

While the inflammatory comments from representatives of a number of Queensland shooters' groups have been highlighted by the press, the concerns of more moderate shooters have largely been passed over. Calling for mass civil disobedience is irresponsible, and the threat of bloodshed seriously undermines the interests of legitimate shooters, but part of the responsibility for this must be laid at Prime Minister Howard's door.

It is not news that politicians in general are held in contempt by Australians. But by clamping down with an iron fist on the vast majority of responsible shooters, and cobbling together legislation that will not prevent future massacres, **with no consultation whatever**, Mr. Howard and the compliant State Premiers are effectively bringing **the law itself** into contempt. Where the issue generates the depth of passion of firearm ownership, it is too much to expect that ineffective and authoritarian legislation will meet with other than committed resistance. The press continues to display a blatant bias, by deliberately choosing to highlight the most outrageous comments from shooters' groups in an effort to cast the shooting lobby in the poorest possible light.

THE 'RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS': The reaction of horror to the Port Arthur shootings has also forced the issue of violent videos and television onto the agenda. An inquiry into this issue will accept submissions on the connection between violent videos and violent behaviour. But in establishing this enquiry, Mr. Howard unintentionally highlights a damaging double standard.

Critics of the "gun lobby" deride the claim that Australians have a "right" to arm themselves – for any reason. Unlike the American Constitution, the Australian written Constitution is silent about gun ownership. Owning firearms is a **privilege**, the anti-gun lobby claims. No need for an enquiry about banning guns, **just do it**. But when it comes to banning violent videos or television, the ground begins to shift. This impinges on another sacred "right" – **the right to freedom of speech**. The same press that is baying for the banning of guns, and deriding any "right" to own them will quickly defend the "right" to freedom of speech, and dismisses the effect of violent electronic images on human behaviour.

A careful reading of the Australian written Constitution reveals that not only is there no mention of the right to bear arms, but **no right to freedom of speech**. and yet, in the last few years, the High Court has found what it calls "an implied right to free speech". Is it possible that a similar interpretation of the Constitution could discover **"an implied right to own guns"**?

The suggestion from some M.P.'s., like Bob Katter and De-Anne Kelly, that Australians need effective weapons to defend themselves in remote areas has also been dismissed. Self-protection is **no reason** to own a firearm. This is now the legal position in N.S.W. But the courts are not reflecting this position. In a number of recent cases where victims of crime have defended themselves with weapons, killing their assailants, **the courts have acquitted them**. Intruders in Adelaide and Brisbane have been killed by elderly men protecting themselves with firearms, who were subsequently exonerated. In the most recent case, a South Australian jury acquitted a man who shot an armed thief at a service station. Does it not seem that Australians enjoy the common-law right to defend themselves **with firearms**? Could this not be construed as **an implied right to own guns**?

POLICE WARNING ABOUT REGISTRATION: John Howard's response to the Port Arthur shooting is riddled with double standards. It reeks of political opportunism, and the exploitation of the Port Arthur tragedy for political purposes. And it will certainly not solve the problem of violence in the community. Last weekend the press reported several cases of firearms abuse. In a brawl in Sydney's George Street, several youths were shot and stabbed. The firearm used was a pistol – already the subject of tight controls. There are few effective controls on knives. The brawl was actually a fight between rival Asian gangs, and has happened before. Last year Vietnamese and Chinese factions waged a similar battle. Immigration controls would have been more effective than gun controls.

The Victorian experience with firearms registration demonstrates that it is ineffective. An extract from a police report on Victorian gun laws in 1987 said: *"It (registration) seems just to be an elaborate system of arithmetic with no tangible aim. Probably, and with the best of intentions, it may have been thought that if it were known what firearms each individual in Victoria owned, some form of control may be exercised, and those who were guilty of criminal misuse could be readily identified. This is a fallacy, and has been proven not to be the case"*

The author of the report, the then Registrar of Firearms Chief Inspector Mr. Lex Newgreen, said, *"Unless the objectives of the exercise are determined, the results have no meaning."* His successor, Chief Inspector Peter Keogh, stated, *"The gun laws as they stand now will not prevent another Queen Street tragedy"* (*"The Sun"*, 27/9/88).

The Victorian policy warning was prophetic. The result of Mr. Howard's legislation will be the same.

DEATH THROES OF THE UNITING CHURCH: After 12 months of consultation, a Uniting Church task force set up by the Church Assembly has produced an Interim Report on Sexuality that seeks to change the church's position on basic issues. The report recommends that openly homosexual clergy, same-sex marriages and sex outside of wedlock be adopted as church policy. The authors argue that the church is often silent or even negative about "sexuality", that "living in sin" was an alienating phrase, that homosexual relationships should be **recognised and affirmed** in church services, and that divorce was sometimes "the only creative and life-giving direction".

It was impossible for the authors to ignore that such attitudes fly right in the face of all Biblical injunctions, so it has been suggested that the church "distance itself" a little from the Bible. After all, same-sex relationships can be mutually supportive and meaningful, and the world's standards had changed. Better to move with the times, remain relevant to the worldly concerns of today's youth, and keep the numbers up. Such rubbish from the Uniting Church is not surprising. The union of the Methodist, Congregational and Presbyterian Churches was adopted on the basis of accepting the "lowest common denominator" of all three. What the faithful in the pews do not understand is that according to Geoff McDonald, a long-time Communist Party operative, the decision to unite the three churches was made in the Communist Party **20 years before the union took place.**

A large part of the social condition in which we find ourselves today is **the result** of the church abandoning its mission: to bring the light of Christ to the world. Christ directed Christians to be "in the world, but not of it" and that His kingdom was "not of this world". Obviously the Uniting Church has surrendered to the darkness of the world, and is prepared to suffer the light of Christ to be extinguished. No wonder the church's Evangelical Members group sees the new attitudes as "the end of the church as we know it". In an age when a lost generation of youth is crying out for a clear declaration of standards, the church is failing them.

THE ROLE OF MILO DUNPHY: The death of the environmentalist Milo Dunphy, who established the Total Environment Centre, was mourned by his good friend and bushwalking companion, Premier Bob Carr of N.S.W. By reading the laudatory press accounts of Dunphy's exploits, we could be forgiven for assuming that this apparently saintly man was a moderate, conservative "green". This is not exactly the case. The truth is that Dunphy was right at the cutting edge of the use of the environment as a weapon to be wielded for political purposes. Dunphy was one of the key figures present when the Australian Conservation Foundation was hijacked by the radical greens. It is generally forgotten that the A.C.F. was once a highly conservative organisation, with former Chief Justice Sir Garfield Barwick its first president. The A.C.F. membership was infiltrated by the radical greens, and *"The Financial Review"* (20/7/89) reported: *"A group of rebels then met before a council meeting in Canberra chaired by Prince Philip (A.C.F. Patron). They included the now Australian Democrat Senator John Coulter and the veteran Sydney-based environmentalist Milo Dunphy, who worked out a strategy to vote out the secretariat and then the A.C.F. Council. The instigators remember watching the shocked look on Prince Philip's face while it slowly dawned on him what was happening, as council and secretariat members were voted out one by one . . ."* Since then the A.C.F. has been in the forefront of urging more and more central controls on environmental issues, and led the campaign against the damming of the Franklin River in Tasmania, resulting in the watershed High Court decision which paved the way for the introduction of thousands of international treaties to be adopted without consulting parliaments. Milo Dunphy was a skilled and committed revolutionary.

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