

ON TARGET

- NEWS HIGHLIGHTS
- BACKGROUND INFORMATION
- COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance -

Print Post Publication Number 381667 00258

Vol.32, No.20

May 31st, 1996

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: "Systems were made for men and not men for systems, and the interest of man which is self development, is above all systems, whether theological, political or economic."

- C.H. Douglas in *Economic Democracy*

HOWARD GOVERNMENT SHOWING ITS TRUE COLOURS by Eric D. Butler:

It has not taken long for the Howard Government to reveal its centralist colours. A rapidly growing number of Australians are starting to perceive the far-reaching constitutional implications of the proposed gun control legislation. John Howard and his advisers have resorted to brutal stand-over tactics to force State Governments to surrender powers which the framers of the Federal Constitution insisted should be exercised by the people of the separate sovereign States. Anyone who objects that this is too harsh a judgment concerning the Howard Government should consider the report that the Howard Government proposes to use the threat of financial sanctions to force Municipal Council amalgamations throughout Australia. Late last week the media carried the report that "Australia's more than 760 local councils have been threatened with possible cuts in Federal funding if significant rationalisation through amalgamation does not occur. Federal Local Government Minister Warwick Smith has warned that the Commonwealth may seek to limit funding to the number of Councils in a particular State" (vide *Courier Mail*, May, 1996).

Speaking at the Institute of Municipal Management Conference in Canberra last week, Mr. Warwick Smith said he had no doubt that much great efficiencies would result from "fewer but larger" Councils. Mr. Smith said that the evidence from Victoria was "inconclusive" at this stage, but indicated that "significant economics of scale had resulted from forced amalgamations of councils in that State". This will be news to Victorian ratepayers who have discovered that forced amalgamations have resulted in a reduction in services. The Howard Government's programme for Local Government in Australia is a continuation of the programme advanced by the Keating Government. There is little doubt that the statement by Mr. Warwick Smith was written by the same Federal bureaucrats who wrote the Keating Government's different statements.

The Howard Government insists that it is just as committed to Australia's "Asian destiny" as was the Keating Government. Australia's relatively small poultry industry is the latest to be threatened by the programme of economic rationalism. Communist China is starting to flood the Australian market with processed poultry. There is not even a whimper of protest from Federal National Party leader

Tim Fischer or his deputy Mr. John Anderson. Both Fischer and Anderson have expressed the view that an Australian Republic is "inevitable", Tim Fischer has distanced himself from the decision by the National Party Speaker of the Queensland Parliament to fly the Union Jack over the Queensland Parliament.

Any who think that the Howard Government is likely to hold up the programme to turn Australia into a Republic should note the views of former N.S.W. Liberal Premier Mr. Nick Greiner. Recently addressing the South Australian Branch of the Republic Movement, Greiner said that, "Far from the Republic being a dead issue with Paul Keating's departure as Prime Minister, he believed that the prospects had improved and we could well enter the next century with an Australian head of State." Like most shallow republicans, Greiner neglected to point out that Australians already had an Australian head of State. Greiner pointed out that John Howard is committed to a constitutional convention to set in motion a process which the Republicans are confident will lead to the establishment of an Australian Republic. Greiner told his South Australian audience that there was widespread support for a Republic among Federal and State leaders of the Liberal Party. He said that "Even in the National Party, individual attitudes were a far cry from the obdurate status quo position seen in public".

With every day that passes, it becomes clearer that the present controllers of the Coalition parties are convinced that these parties can be used to advance the same programme which Paul Keating was advancing. It is hoped that by the time it dawns on the Australian electors that they had changed little by voting against Paul Keating on March 2nd, it can be argued that what is taking place is "inevitable", and that the only sensible thing to do is to adjust to the inevitable. The future of Australia now depends upon sufficient Australians freeing themselves from the deadly effects of what in essence is psycho-political warfare. It may prove that the gun legislation debate will bring enough Australians back to reality in time to snap themselves free of what is in effect a philosophy of death and surrender. But time for action is short.

NATIVE TITLE COP-OUT BY HOWARD by David Thompson:

The Government, which seems to be anxious to capitalise on its "mandate" to sell off Telstra, is carefully ignoring other "mandates" that are not quite so convenient. The promise not to introduce any new taxes is obviously going to be quickly broken. The undertaking that only a certain number of public service jobs will be sacrificed is another. And Mr. Howard is ducking and weaving on the question of Native Title, which at least **by implication** was certainly to be tackled when in Government. Mr. Howard has been comfortable with the more popular attempt to make the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (A.T.S.I.C.) more accountable, but when it comes to certainty on land title, Mr. Howard has washed his hands. In essence, he is saying "let the High Court handle it".

This is a cowardly irresponsible way of dealing with an issue that has to be faced. It is not only pastoralists who need to know, **for certain**, whether Native Title is extinguished by pastoral leases. Others, like Local and State Governments and mining interests need to know with whom they are negotiating over land use. Mr. Howard attempts to squirm out of making an unpopular decision on an emotive issue.

It is quite clear what the former Government's intentions were over Native Title. Former Prime Minister Keating, in introducing the Act to Parliament in 1993, said: "*validated freehold grants, residential, commercial and pastoral leases . . . will extinguish native title.*" Right from the horse's

mouth. But did the legislation actually achieve this? A superficial reading of it by a layman would assume it did: Section 229 (3) states: *"A past act consisting of the grant of a commercial lease, an agricultural lease, a pastoral lease or a residential lease is a 'category A past act'."* A *"category A past act . . . extinguishes the native title concerned"* according to Section 15 (1a), with only a few minor (listed) exceptions. Why does Mr. Howard insist that the High Court needs to rule on this?

It is now argued that the only certain way to ensure that pastoral leases extinguish native title, is to introduce new legislation to that effect. This Mr. Howard has declined to do. Why? Because of the Racial Discrimination Act (1975), which gives effect to a United Nations Convention. If Mr. Howard was to legislate to ensure that pastoral leases extinguished Native Title, he has two problems. 1) The powerful Aboriginal lobby and their sympathisers – particularly in the city, where few people have ever seen a genuine Aboriginal. 2) The Racial Discrimination Act, which requires that any group discriminated against by legislative action must be compensated. Such compensation would be massive, and the horse-trading would go on for years. A blank cheque, which could make the present "black hole" insignificant. Mr. Howard could legislate to alter the Racial Discrimination Act to protect himself from the blank cheque, but this would require a sustained and bruising battle. No politician will willingly touch this Act, for fear of being labelled, by definition, a **racist**. Mr. Howard does not have the stomach for the battle, so he proposes to palm off his responsibilities to the High Court. Miners and graziers have been at the mercy of the High Court before, and they don't like it.

Premier Borbidge, however, believes he has a loophole through which Mr. Howard could still squirm. He claims to have received legal advice which confirms that while **the Commonwealth** is obliged to pay just compensation under the Constitution, the same did not apply to the States. If the States extinguish Native Title, the States could then legally decide what compensation was payable. Whatever the legal argument, it is clear that Mr. Howard faces a massive revolt within the Coalition at both Federal and State level over his position on Native Title.

"HOW TO MURDER" TAUGHT AT SCHOOL: The Committee of Ministers examining the portrayal of violence in various forms of electronic media, chaired by the Federal Minister for Communications and the Arts, Mr. Alston, will examine any linkages between violent behaviour and the availability of violent material from media sources. It is alleged that some 2,000 violent or sexually explicit videos were removed from the home of the accused of the Port Arthur massacre. But little attention is given to the State education systems that often actually **teach** material that could predispose children to premeditated violence on a massive scale.

Mrs. Dianne Teasdale, who has for many years been involved with the Concerned Parents Association, and lectured on matters concerning education, points out that an element in the Victorian school syllabus could help account for a number of mass murders. Julian Knight, convicted of the Hoddle Street murders of 1987, was born in 1968. Frank Vitkovic, convicted of the Queen Street murders in 1987, was born in 1968. Martin Bryant, accused of the Port Arthur killings, was born in 1967. Robert "X", who was apprehended on a tram with a firearm on his way to "take out" the Police at Prahran Central, was born in 1966.

All of the above young men would have been at school at the time that the *"Message Way 1"* book was used as part of the school curriculum for Year Seven English or Social Studies. This book proposes that children act out a number of outrageous scenarios, or write essays about them. It asks the question, *"How old do you have to be before you are ready to kill someone?"*. It suggests that students "act out" a situation, in which someone has to be **eaten**.

Under the heading "*Killers and their victims*", "*Message Way 1*" issues the following instructions:

"Tell a story. YOU are a murderer. WHOM do you murder? WHY? (You may think you are completely justified.) HOW did you do the terrible deed? Describe it in detail. How do you feel – as you work out your plans? – as the victim's last moment approaches? – at the instant of the slaying – afterwards? What happened?

"TURNABOUT. YOU are the victim of a murderer – the same or another one. How did you feel – before the murder took place? – as your killer attacked? – In your last moment? What do you think and feel now? Mime EITHER a murder or a victim. Do not have a partner. Show how you felt as well as what happened . . ."

As Mrs. Teasdale says, **this material is really sick**. Did Julian Knight study this at school? Did Martin Bryant study this at school? Did your children study this at school? "*Message Ways I*" was used from 1977 to at least 1984, and perhaps longer. What might teachers expect such material to do to immature and possibly even unbalanced minds? Julian Knight was 19 at the time of the Hoddle Street killings, as was Frank Vitkovic. As well as investigating "any linkages between violent behaviour and the availability of violent material from media sources", perhaps Senator Alston should look at school curricula.

ASIAN WARNING TO THE WEST: Malaysian Prime Minister, Mr. Mahathir, offered a sharp criticism to western countries last week for imposing their own values on Asian nations. In view of Mr. Howard's apparent determination to rival the Keating drive to make Australia "a part of Asia", perhaps Australia should thank Mr. Mahathir for the warning. In particular, Mahathir was pointing out that **the West ranked personal freedom above social harmony**.

Mahathir, who was addressing Pacific-rim corporate and government leaders, cited a 1994 study that found East Asians, whose Confucian traditions place great value on social harmony and filial piety, but are less inclined than Americans to cite **free expression** and individual success as top priorities. According to press reports (*The Australian*, 23/5/96) he also disputed the notion that Western values held universal appeal, and that "Asian values", of which he is a long-time champion, served primarily to justify repressive authoritarian rule. But he also stressed that where Western governments applied economic sanctions on Asian countries where human rights records were poor, Asian nations had never called for sanctions against the West for failing to reform itself according to Asian values and standards.

Those who understand Asia have long warned that Asian standards and norms are **different to those in the West**. For many years the then Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr. Lee Quan Yew, stressed that Asian emphasis was more on **order and discipline** than on individual freedom of speech and movement. This is true right throughout the Asian world, from aggressively pro-Western nations like Japan, to the aggressively totalitarian nations like China. In Asia, totalitarianism is not seen as the evil that it is in the West. The denial of individual freedom in the interests of "order" and national "success" may not be confined to Asia, but Australians who wish to become "part of" this region must understand that those who live in Asia subscribe to **fundamentally different philosophical standards**.

It is not our responsibility to change those standards, but we cannot expect Asians to be anything other than they are. As Christ said, *"you cannot get figs from thistles"*.

"ON TARGET" is printed and published by The Australian League of Rights,
145 Russell Street, Melbourne. Telephone: (03) 9650 9749, Fax: (03) 9650 9368.

Subscription \$30.00 p.a.