



ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"The history of modern political society is in large measure the history of the struggle of the ordinary citizen to exercise some influence upon government – and of his repeated failures to achieve that modern ambition. All governments control the governed."*

– Professor (later Judge) G.W. Keeton in *The Passing Of Parliament* (1952)

LIBERALS PLAN NEW THREAT TO THE SENATE by Eric D. Butler:

The basic feature of the British constitutional system, which is shared by all English-speaking countries including the United States of America, is the division of power. The genius of the founders of the Australian Federal Constitution was to provide the people of the sovereign States with a Senate which would give some protection against the inevitable tendency of the Federal Government, irrespective of label, to centralise power. Over the years both Labor and non-Labor Federal Governments have attempted to erode the power of the Senate. Now another attempt is to be made, this time by the Liberal Party. Writing in *The Bulletin* of May 6th, political writer Laurie Oakes comments on what is termed as a "secret plan to break Senate deadlock". The plan has been prepared by Andrew Robb, retiring Federal Director of the Liberal Party, who, while satisfied with his achievement in modernising the Liberal Party campaign machinery and managing John Howard's electoral victory (giving no thanks to the major contribution of the universally detested Paul Keating) believes that it is urgently necessary to break the influence of the minor parties in the Senate. Robb believes that steps have to be taken to alter the method under which Senators are elected. Robb is quoted as saying that he has been discussing the matter with John Howard for some time, who has encouraged him to work on it. Robb's complaint is that neither the Coalition nor the Labor Party can gain a majority in the Senate under the present method of election.

Robb's totalitarian philosophy is revealed in his statement that the present method of Senate election virtually guarantees that the minor parties will always hold the balance of power. *"Australia is going to be condemned to second class status if governments can't govern,"* says Robb. *"The situation in the Senate could hold us back as a nation. Solving it is absolutely fundamental."* Mr. Andrew Robb, who says he is going into business but could stand for Parliament later, has at least made the thinking of Federal Liberals clear: They want big strong governments. He says, *"To stay ahead of our competitors in the region (Asia) we've also got to have the capacity to act and not have interminable debate and compromises and committees and inquiries."*

Robb correctly points out that no major constitutional alteration is required to change the method of electing the Senate, that it can be done by legislation. The Liberal strategists believe that they could obtain the support of the Labor Party for such legislation, with the Labor Party looking ahead to a time when back in government they would not be faced with the problem of dealing with a Senate in which power was divided. The Constitution does require that the Senate be, as near as practical, half the size of the House of Representatives. When the Hawke Government swept to power in 1983, Labor strategists Graham Richardson and Robert Ray advanced a scheme for increasing the size of the House of Representatives by 24, this also requiring an increase in the number of State Senators from 10 to 12. The Labor Party believed that the change would help them to consolidate their electoral situation. It is worth recalling that on this occasion, while the Liberals opposed the change, the Nationals supported it, taking the shortsighted view that it would help increase their representation in the Senate. But the Labor strategy did not work out. And so now we have Liberal strategists seeking to achieve the same result, but with different tactics, the essence of which is to keep the present number of Senators, but to divide the States into six regions, each region electing two Senators.

With increasing talk about the necessity for some type of Constitutional reform, it is an appropriate time to go back to the roots of the Federal Constitution and what its framers envisaged. In order to do this, it is essential to clear away an enormous amount of mythology. So far from the framers of the Constitution proposing to eradicate the States, as is often claimed, they showed considerable vision by proposing that as the continent was developed, there should be the creation of new States. The philosophy of the framers of the Federal Constitution was that the Federal Government was being created to serve the States, who were to retain their basic sovereignties.

Section 121 of the Federal Constitution reads: *"The Parliament may admit to the Commonwealth or establish new States, and may upon admission or establishment make or impose such terms and conditions, including the extent of representation in either House of Parliament, as it sees fit."* Sections 122, 123 and 124 deal with measures governing the creation of new states. At one time the Country Party, now the National Party, had the creation of New States as a party policy. Long forgotten is the number of New States movements, the most influential being the New England State Movement, with local Federal Member Dave Drummond one of the major driving forces.

The 1929 Royal Commission on the Federal Constitution, generally known as the Peden Commission, established by the Bruce Government, canvassed the New States issue, but pointed out the difficulties in that the existing States would be required to agree to losing some of their territory. But the time may be coming when the issue of New States can be revived as a means of starting to effectively decentralise power. As the pressure of centralisation grows, all over the world local communities are demanding greater local sovereignty. But in the meantime it is essential that Australians grasp the danger inherent in any proposal to weaken the power of the Senate. Clearly the centralists are fearful that the Senate does provide the means whereby the electors supporting Pauline Hanson and Graeme Campbell may further break up the monopoly of power now exercised by the major parties.

HANSON SPOOKS THE ESTABLISHMENT by David Thompson:

Both the major political parties were shaken from their complacency last week by reports that a major opinion poll had documented the depth of support for Pauline Hanson, finding that around **one quarter** of voters would consider voting for the Oxley Independent's **One Nation** party. Such a staggering result comes as no surprise to those of us who work at the grassroots of politics, and often sense the political currents long before "the Establishment".

One year ago, Prime Minister Howard's advisers were confident that Pauline Hanson was a political shooting star; a spectacular flash of fiery light, but quickly extinguished, and little evidence of its passing. They are far from confident about this now, and a distinct note of panic emanates from the backrooms of both the Coalition Parties and the A.L.P. Could Howard's "mob" be in revolt?

Such is the depth of concern about the undoubtable support for Hanson, and interest in the issues she raises, that the major parties have been panicked into mounting a bi-partisan campaign of assault against Hanson. Howard's advisers have apparently convinced the Coalition leadership that prominent Ministers should condemn Hanson in order to minimise **One Nation** continuing to undermine them. The first to comply was Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, who lauded the "triumph of cultural diversity", and claimed that Hanson and **One Nation** were "offensive to people of all backgrounds". Tim Fischer betrayed the general cultural shallowness that has led top-level politicians to misjudge the "Hanson phenomenon" so badly when he said that Hanson would "rip up our bread-ticket". Immigration Minister Phillip Ruddock whinged about Hanson "misunderstanding" the immigration programme.

Latest to be wheeled out to attack Hanson is Malcolm Fraser. In last Monday's press, Fraser is quoted as intoning that there "is an ugliness abroad that must be rejected", and speculated on whether **One Nation** was simply a "front" for the League of Rights! This week, Prime Minister Howard is expected to attack Hanson publicly when launching the Asia Society in Sydney.

The hysterical tide of abuse, from rent-a-crowd protesters throwing tomatoes in W.A. to the Prime Minister and ex-P.M. hurling verbal abuse, is not likely to destroy the "Hanson phenomena", but to strengthen it. Howard risks alienating even more Australians who turned to him following the disasters of Hawke and Keating. Malcolm Fraser is correct when he claims that there "is an ugliness abroad", but it is coming not so much from an elected Independent Queensland Member of the Parliament, but from those who deny her the right to represent her constituency.

Fraser's suggestion that **One Nation** is a "front" for the League is almost comical. If the League of Rights exercise influence in the Hanson team, she would hopefully be much better advised than she appears to be at present.

ABORIGINAL CANNIBALISM WAS COMMON KNOWLEDGE: The vituperation heaped upon Pauline Hanson and other authors of **"The Truth"** (regrettably now out of print) indicates that this explosive book is feared in all the right quarters. The section on firearms is extremely telling, and the well-researched sections on immigration and Asianisation would merely generate further support for Hanson. As a consequence, the reference to Aboriginal cannibalism has been

seized upon in order to divert attention from and discredit other sections of the book. In the attitudes of some of Hanson's critics, reference to cannibalism is an obscenity.

The historical record, however, tends to favour distinct and widespread evidence of cannibalism. One of the most reliable observers was Mrs. Daisy Bates, who came to Australia as a correspondent for *The Times* to investigate the Aborigines in Queen Victoria's reign. In her book *"The Passing of the Aborigines"* published in 1938, she recorded her experiences over 35 years of living in or adjacent to Aboriginal settlements. Trusted by the desert tribes, and revered for her compassion and healing knowledge, Bates was known as "Kabbarli", or Grandmother.

Bates' book records many instances of cannibalism, and that the Aborigines themselves took it for granted. Having lived for 16 years in the Ooldea region, Bates wrote the following:

"It was not an unusual sight to see up to 100 of these cannibals, men, women and children, several of them but a week in civilisation, climb aboard an empty truck and go off to an initiation ceremony further up the line. Every one of these central natives was a cannibal. Cannibalism had its local name from Kimberley to Eucla, and through all the unoccupied country east of it, and there were many grisly rites attached thereto. Human meat had always been their favourite food, and there were killing vendettas from time immemorial"

"Every one of the natives I encountered on the east-west (railway) line had partaken of human meat, with the exception of Nyerdain, who told me it made him sick. They freely admitted their sharing of these repasts and enumerated those killed and eaten by naming the waters, and drawing a line with the big toe on the sand as they told over in gruesome memory the names they dared not mention . . ."

There is much more in the same vein, and of even more disturbing detail. Bates records the life and death of the feared cannibal "chief", Dowie, who by the age of nine had eaten four infants, and who later killed and shared the consumption of his five wives. Daisy Bates describes how she personally dug his grave.

What is the point of all this, divisive and thoroughly revolting argument? If it serves any purpose, it disposes of the thoroughly romantic vision of "the noble savage", who should be left to return to a much more wholesome, pre-European lifestyle. How dare we corrupt them with European ways. What arrogance to impose Western standards upon such people! But the record of British settlement, although occasionally accompanied by brutality or misunderstanding, has been to stamp out widespread barbarity and brutality. For example, the practise of suttee on the Indian sub-continent, whence a wife was burned alive on her husband's funeral pyre was condemned and almost stamped out.

Brutal tribal warfare throughout Africa was suspended while British influence prevailed. Such is the record in many parts of the world, including Australia. It is clear that the Aboriginal industry is keen to belittle white settlement in Australia as a psychological weapon in making demands for such concessions as native title, and "land rights". Pauline Hanson is condemned because she refuses to be intimidated by such propaganda.

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