



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"I am a firm believer in apprenticeship. Education should be based on both theoretical studies and practical experience. I know many well meaning and capable teachers who have a serious deficiency. At no time are their ideas confronted with the real world. Those who practise a discipline, rather than merely teaching it, are constantly testing their ideas in the real world, and very quickly, if the ideas seem to be failing, changing them until a successful system is found. A theoretician can continue to believe in and teach the same theories without ever discovering whether they are effective."*

– Sir James Goldsmith in *The Trap*

HOT AIR "AT THE SUMMIT" by Eric D. Butler:

A feature of the post-Second World War years has been the growing number of international conferences. It appears that every problem afflicting mankind can only be solved by staging international conferences – now often described as "summits". The problems which give rise to the alleged necessity for international action are often the result of internationalism. Attempts to "globalise" the world's economies have created problems which are then used to justify moving armies of bureaucrats, along with politicians and their advisers from one centre to another. The staging of international conferences has become big business. As a result of the recent conference of the world's biggest industrial nations at Denver, U.S.A., initially known as the G-7 – The U.S.A., Canada, Japan, France, Germany, Italy and the U.K. – will now be known as the G-8, as a result of Russia being invited to join "the club". President Bill Clinton said at the conclusion of the conference that "We are stronger because we now have Russia as a partner". Russian President Boris Yeltsin enthused, "The G-8 has become a reality." As an old Communist, now known as a Social Democrat, he knows that bigger must be better.

But while the G-8 were pontificating on how to solve the world's problems, these ranging from the Middle East to Communist China's take over of Hong Kong, there was evidence of disharmony concerning the "global environment". French President Jacques Chirac made it clear that France was unhappy with President Clinton's resistance to setting targets for reducing "greenhouse gases", stating "that the U.S.A. was one of the world's largest polluters". Australian Prime Minister John Howard has come under attack by those who can best be described as eco-Fascists masquerading as conservationists. Environmental problems, real or exaggerated, are seized upon to impose more

international controls on the individual. Basic causes of genuine environmental problems are studiously ignored. John Howard is criticised for not putting in at least an appearance at the recent United Nation's Earth Summit, although his Minister for the Environment, Senator Hill, was present arguing that Australia, like the U.S.A., could "not afford" to reduce its industrial activities to meet the requirements of the international planners.

Senator Hill could have argued that Australia is doing its best to meet the demands of the internationalists by attempting to close down as many industries as possible. Taken to its logical conclusion, all secondary industries could be closed down with Australia importing all its requirements from countries in Asia. One of the features of the Asian nations is low wages and scant respect for damage to the environment. On my last visit to the U.K., I was privileged to participate in a morning conference at Edinburgh University with one of the nation's top environmental scientists, a man who attempted to advise the senior Eurocrats in Brussels. He said that he and some of his colleagues were appalled at the environmental damage threatened by mass industrial expansion in China and other Asian nations. "But," he said, "it appeared that financial problems were the main cause of environmental problems resulting from the philosophy of growth." I pointed out that he and his colleagues could provide no solutions for the problem unless they tackled the debt system of finance. It is significant that no international conferences are being held to examine this basic question!

Instead of arguing about what may or may not be happening to the ozone layer, genuine environmentalists and conservationists should be looking at ways and means of preventing pollution on the ground. Australian primary producers are technically capable of producing adequate food and clothing fibres for the Australian population while at the same time actually improving forests and soil structures. There has been much romantic rubbish written about how the Australian Aborigines were outstanding conservationists before the rapacious Europeans arrived. The truth is that the Aborigines destroyed rain forests and much native fauna with their indiscriminate use of fire. At the time they knew of no better way to survive. But the European knows how to improve soils with rotational cropping and the use of legumes and other grasses. But under increasing financial pressure, it has become increasingly difficult to practise what was once called sound husbandry. Given the financial incentive, Australian primary producers would readily "spell" much of their soils for long periods for the establishment of forests, if, for example, long term low interest credits were made available.

Gearing a dwindling rural population to concentrating primarily upon exports, makes genuine long term conservation impossible. The debt problem is linked with the most insidious forms of pollution. Quality production which lasts a lifetime is impossible under present financial rules. Herding large numbers of people into a few concentrated ant-heaps helps to foster every type of social disorder. The evidence has been documented beyond all argument that there is an optimum size of a city before social decay sets in. In his classic work, *The Culture of Cities*, Mumford showed that the greatest human satisfaction and genuine efficiency was obtained in cities no larger than 400,000.

Australia does face big environmental problems. But solutions will not be found at hot air summits where the "experts" repeat one another's absurdities. In spite of the warnings of genuine scientists, who demonstrated that mass fluoridation of the water supplies posed serious long term risks to the individual, the programme of mass medication, a form of pollution, was imposed in many countries

because yet another international organisation, The United Nations World Health Organisation, proclaimed that the policy was both safe and beneficial. Now comes the news that the American Foods and Drug Administration has ruled that toothpaste containing fluoride must be labelled as being harmful to young children. It is stated that dental fluosis is on the increase. Australian scientists like the late Sir Stanton Hicks were warning about the dangers of mass medication many years ago. This and other problems have only arisen because of the violation of natural law.

John Howard and other Australian politicians will not find any answers to the major problems confronting Australia by blindly heeding the internationalists. Following his recent visit to the U.S.A., Prime Minister Howard met with President Clinton and the chairman of the influential Federal Reserve, Dr. Alan Greenspan. As a result of what he heard from these two prominent internationalists, John Howard was able to pronounce that Australia and the U.S.A. were going to share "the good times ahead". And there was similar "hot air" from the Australian Prime Minister, who should be reminded of that old adage about the eyes of the fool being on the ends of the world.

OLYMPIC CURSE BEGINS TO EMERGE by David Thompson:

The spectacular event that the modern Olympics has become owes more to the big money attached to the rights to televise the Games than anything else, often leaving the host city with gigantic debts. The Games also provide enviable opportunities for local politicians to strut the international stage for a few moments, which can be marvellous for the ego, and invaluable in a tight election contest.

The advent of the Olympics can also offer opportunities for political point-scoring. The question of who is to open the 2000 Olympics is already an issue, with republicans insisting that "an Australian" should open the Games, not the Queen of Australia.

If the assumption is made that Mr. John Howard will be Prime Minister when the time comes, what will be his position? Would he invite the Queen, thus enhancing the "image" of Australia's constitutional monarchy and enraging republicans, or would he elect to avoid inviting the Queen? Is Mr. Howard prepared to risk his political future in a real fight for the Monarchy, or is political survival more important than one more betrayal?

How could Mr. Howard avoid inviting the Queen, without insulting the large number of monarchists in Australia? It would appear impossible. But in politics, nothing is impossible. While he was in Britain, the tabloid press floated a story that Mr. Howard had invited Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair to attend the Sydney Olympics. Is this true? It was also reported that British convention dictates that the Monarch and the Prime Minister **are never out of Britain simultaneously**. Is this also true? If Mr. Blair has accepted an invitation to be in Sydney, does this mean that the Queen might be obliged by convention to decline an Australian invitation to open the Games as the Queen of Australia?

The political timetable is instructive. If Mr. Howard is to survive politically until the Olympic Games, an early election would be invaluable. In a double dissolution of Parliament, with elections in, say, February 1998, he stands a good chance of remaining Prime Minister. The following election would not be due until February 2001. By this time the Olympics would have been held,

with Mr. Howard having the chance to bask in the reflected light of Olympic glory, perhaps even opening the Games himself. Any annoying problems like punitive unemployment or balance of payments deficits may be overshadowed.

Olympic status for John Winston Howard sets him up for election campaign advantages in the latter part of 2000, or just after the official turn of the century, which is on January 1st, 2001. John Howard, having betrayed most of the principles which he formerly held in order to attain the Prime Ministership, can now only aspire to occupy office for a long period. We can be sure that the Liberal Party numbers men are already casting ahead for any political advantages that might be wrung from such things as the Olympic Games, the new millenium, and the hypothetical introduction of a republic.

IS THIS THE END OF THE REPUBLICAN CONVENTION? The fact that Senator Nick Minchin's bill to permit the election of delegates to a Constitutional Convention in December failed to pass the Senate means that, for the moment, there can be no convention.

The bill is yet to return to the Senate for a final vote, and the Senate must decide whether the Convention can go ahead with delegates elected by a voluntary vote as the Government proposes, or whether the bill is defeated, and provides the Prime Minister with a "trigger" for a dissolution of both Houses of Parliament, and an early election.

Is this, then, the end of the Constitutional Convention? The answer to this question is almost certainly "no". One of the reasons that Mr. Howard was forced to honour his election promise for a convention is that there are enough republicans inside the Liberal Party to force the issue onto the political agenda. They are quite capable of keeping it on the agenda, and embarrassing the Government. If the Convention is to go ahead at all, the Coalition can still resurrect it.

Deputy Prime Minister Fischer, with his talent for painting himself into a corner, is adamant that the process should proceed. *"I am determined to see one thing: I'm absolutely determined that that undertaking which was to give the Australian people a vote on the matter of the Constitution and the matter of the republic will be honoured by the Coalition Government,"* he said.

Already negotiations are taking place between Greens Senator Bob Brown and Mr. Minchin, with a view to Mr. Brown changing his strong stance against voluntary voting, and supporting a voluntary postal vote for Convention delegates, enabling the bill to be passed. Brown, however, proposes to insist that an "indicative plebiscite" on a republic should be held simultaneously with election of Convention delegates.

A voluntary election, however, would also mean a voluntary plebiscite, which the republicans are unlikely to accept. It is estimated that a voluntary vote may elicit a response as low as 30% from the electorate, which would be a massive blow to the republican argument that Australians are now clamouring for a republic. We have not yet heard the last of the Constitutional Convention.