



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"All the liberty we enjoy, the peace, the safety, the comfort, the well-being which our form of government secures for us, – all has been won for us by the efforts of those who went before us, and in some cases by their agony and blood. They fought and died to hand down to us what we accept almost without noticing it. And it is only by our own effort that this machine (government) can be kept running smoothly and doing its work well; it is only by our own effort that it can be improved, so that it may do its work better."*

– (Sir) Walter Murdoch, The Australian Citizen (1916)

SELECTIVE EULOGIES CONCERNING DON DUNSTAN by Eric D. Butler:

The flood of eulogies concerning the former South Australian Labor Premier, Don Dunstan, with Labor heavyweights like Gough Whitlam and Bob Hawke adding to the praise, reminds one of the comment by Kim Beazley Senior, who has been reported as saying that when he joined the Labor Party it was represented by the cream of the working class, but subsequently by the scum of the academic world.

In eulogising Don Dunstan as a great "reformer", Whitlam, Hawke and others neglected to point out that Dunstan played a leading role in having the long-standing Labor support for the Citizens Initiative and Referendum removed from the Labor Party platform. Dunstan's "reform" did not extend to allowing the electors any opportunity for vetoing legislation they did not want.

Discreetly overlooked was that Dunstan was forced from office by his Labor colleagues following the publication of a revealing book by a former "boy-friend" whom Dunstan said had "betrayed" him.

Dunstan's "alternative lifestyle" did not appeal to South Australian Governor Sir Marcus Oliphant, the famous Australian scientist who, on one occasion, ordered the Premier to go home and dress in accordance with tradition before meeting with him on official business. Labor's appointment of Oliphant as State Governor proved that while Mark Oliphant had some progressive views on some subjects, he was basically a traditionalist. On leaving office after serving two terms, Oliphant gave an historic address in which he said that genuine democracy was dead and had been replaced with a type of "elected dictatorship". So much for Dunstan's "reforms".

Sir Marcus Oliphant was a true gentleman and attempted to discourage Dunstan's proposal to replace him with the Victorian Aboriginal leader Pastor Doug Nicholls. Doug Nicholls was well known as a

successful sportsman in North East Victoria where I grew up. He was an outstanding Australian League footballer. He was a fine man, but Dunstan's attempt to appoint him as SA State Governor was a cruel attempt by Dunstan to use him for his own political purposes. Oliphant stressed in the kindest terms that Doug Nicholls and his wife would be placed in the most embarrassing situations. Sir Marcus was not "racist", but a supporter of Aboriginal advancement.

When Doug Nicholls fell seriously ill before taking up the proposed Dunstan appointment, Dunstan lost all interest in the unfortunate man and it was RSL leader Bruce Ruxton who befriended Nicholls while he was in hospital.

I only met Dunstan once, at a lecture I gave in May, 1962, following my return to Australia from my tour of the UK on the Common Market question. The lecture was sponsored by the History and Politics Club at the University. An American lecturer arranged the meeting. According to K.G. Gott's notorious booklet, *Voices of Hate*, the title of my address was "*The Jewish Bolshevik American Conspiracy Against the British Empire*". No such address was given. Gott repeats a false report in the University student newspaper, "*On Dit*".

The meeting was packed out and at question time a dapper looking student arose, posed himself and, in a supercilious manner, asked a question clearly designed to embarrass me. I did not anticipate the crowd response to my answer. "Sir, you sound like some of those half-baked lawyers I have been debating in the UK." The questioner turned out to be Don Dunstan, law student and already a rising star in the SA Labor Party. I was told later that Dunstan never forgave me for my reply to his question.

The evil that men do lives after them, said Shakespeare. If the Dunstan legacy is the best that the present day Labor Party has to offer the Australian people, the longer it stays out of office the better for Australia.

But with Liberal leaders like SA Liberal Premier Olsen also eulogising Dunstan clearly a deadly disease is afflicting the whole of the Australian body politic.

What is urgently required is a new initiative to create a grassroots movement which seeks to restore power to the Australian people. When the name Don Dunstan is mentioned, it should be recalled that he was one of the opponents of genuine democracy. He was never a genuine reformer. He reflected Governor Marcus Oliphant's description of an elected dictatorship.

FISCHER, A FREAK FOR FREE TRADE by Jeremy Lee:

National Party leader Tim Fischer gives every appearance of being an ideological robot. Put one idea into his head, wind him up, press the "Go" button and he'll crash or crash through – but he'll never deviate.

Whoever programmed him managed to install a complete software package which says free trade is the solution to all the world's ills. It looks more and more like backfiring.

A feature article in *The Bulletin* (26/1/99) on the Fischer agenda suggested Australia, with its Fischer trade policies, was the keenest free trade nation in the world:

"... *'Australia is taking perhaps the most forceful liberal position of all those nations that want a comprehensive new multilateral trade round to start in 2000,' one insider of the World Trade Organisation in Geneva told The Bulletin. 'Australia has clearly signalled it wants a full deal on agriculture with export subsidies removed. It also wants industrial tariff cuts to be part of the deal. Australia is basically saying that everything is on the table, let's talk' ...*"

Tim Fischer is at least consistent, if misguided. If free trade means the destruction of existing Australian industries and jobs, so be it. The trouble is that Fischer is dealing with bigger and more powerful trading partners who are not so "simon-pure".

For example, *The Australian Financial Review* (11/2/99) reported a major row brewing about Australian exports to the US:

"... *The US International Trade Commission's six-member panel voted unanimously yesterday that increased lamb imports, the bulk of which were from Australia and New Zealand, were a 'substantial cause of threat of serious injury' to the US lamb industry. ... The US Administration is under growing pressure to protect local industry from low-priced imports, as manufacturers and commodity producers round the world look to the US as an alternative market in the wake of the collapse in demand from Asian economies ...*"

Personally, we believe the US has every right to protect its own producers before those of other countries, just as Australia should.

If we are going to narrow our options down to the Fischer version of "export or perish", we are in deep trouble. The Asian collapse is now beginning to bite hard. Another article in the same edition of *AFR* said:

"*Australian exports slumped dramatically in 1998 as the impact of the regional economic crisis finally hit with a vengeance, according to figures released in Canberra yesterday. The sobering assessment of Australia's trade prospects was contained in the '1999 Trade Objectives and Outcomes Statement' launched by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade Mr. Tim Fischer. Australian goods and services exports grew just 2 percent in calendar year 1998, while merchandise imports surged 16 percent ...*"

The ever-growing disparity is, of course, financed by the ever-growing foreign debt. The logical

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policy should be to curb imports at least to the point where our foreign debt starts going the other way. We should again start producing the things we once produced but now import. Apart from anything else, this would do more than all the "job-starts" to give our young people a chance of employment.

In a major address more than 50 years ago, the late C.H. Douglas pointed out that the "export-or-perish" mania was one of the root causes of war. The alternative is not, as Fischer claims, to retreat into fortress-like isolation. But it does involve putting the home market first, with surpluses exported in order to import equivalent requirements, rather than a distorted belief that exports are the only purpose of economic activity.

(Audio-tape *The Causes of War*, available from MEA Tapes, Box 184, The Basin, Vic., 3154 – \$5.00 posted.)

BUGS AND BREAKDOWNS: Among other dire predictions at the recent World Economic Forum (on which we reported last week) were major concerns about the millennium bug. *The Australian Financial Review* (3/2/99) reported:

"... *The chief executive of Sun Microsystems Inc. Mr. Scott McNealy, set the dark tone on Monday when he urged businesses to start stockpiling computers ahead of January 1, 2000. Mr. McNealy said his company had discovered that key computer component suppliers in Asia were 'so disastrously behind' in fixing their year 2000 problems that there was likely to be a shortage of hardware at the start of the next millennium.*

"*We have done some quite scientific surveys of our supply base and Asia is statistically way, way behind in terms of their preparations for Y2K' he said ... Mr. McNealy's concerns did receive strong backing from the influential chief economist and managing director of Deutsche Bank Securities in the US, Mr. Edward Yardini. He warned that the world's unpreparedness for Y2K might be the event 'that sets us up for a major correction in the US stockmarket' in the first two months of the next millennium. When it came to fixing the millennium bug 'there are still an enormous number of countries in the 'clueless' category'.*

Something of the size of the problem can be gleaned from the fact that, in the last 12 months in Australia, two million personal computers were sold – more than five-and-a-half thousand every 24 hours. *The AFR* (12/2/99) commented:

"... *But in an early sign of the impact of the year 2000 problem, sales of corporate PCs eased in the fourth quarter of 1998 as companies diverted their budgets from hardware to making their software millennium-compliant ...*

