



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

Print Post Publication Number 381667 00258

Vol.35, No.13

April 9th, 1999

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul."*
– Christ

IS EASTER OF ANY RELEVANCE TO MODERN MAN? by Eric D. Butler:

The Easter Season concerns a basic feature of the traditional Christian Faith; a commemoration of the Resurrection; that He who claimed that He was of God overcame death and promised that those who believed in Him will enjoy everlasting life. Large numbers of those who can be best described as secular humanists, react to Easter as the acceptance of a recorded incident of history which, at first, is rather doubtful, and at worst defies scientific knowledge and logic. Those who accept the traditional Easter Story of Christ overcoming death are often charged with uncritically accepting mythology and superstition. Many who make this type of charge demonstrate that they themselves are the victims of superstition which in practice dwarfs any superstition which the traditional Christian accepts. There is, for example, what might be described as the Money Myth, which all the best "elected" people believe reflects a reality which is immutable. "Progress", with a capital P, is only possible by increasingly feverish material activity, preferably on a big and highly centralised scale, all of this associated with an escalating scale of financial debt. There is no such thing as debt in the world of Nature, of Reality. The acceptance of financial debt is a manifestation of superstition. Debt places the individual in the position where it is virtually impossible for him to take seriously Christ's instruction that he cannot worship both God and Mammon. Spokesmen for the organised Christian Church remain generally silent on this question. The result is that large numbers of younger people find it difficult, if not impossible, to believe that Easter and the Resurrection have any relevance for them.

They have been divorced from an understanding of how Western Civilisation is the partial incarnation of a revelation which stressed that the individual possesses within him the potential to discover the Kingdom of God. Using parables as His major teaching method, Christ enunciated a number of Truths concerning how the individual might enter the Kingdom. In the eyes of His most deadly enemies, the Pharisees, Christ deserved death for enunciating these Truths, the most vital being that institutions exist to serve the individual – "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath". Human relations should be governed by the law of love. The Easter Season is a most appropriate time for a realistic assessment of why the Pharisees demanded that Christ be crucified. But this requires that we

face the Truth that today's world is increasingly dominated by the spirit of Pharissism in many forms. The Easter of 1999 will be recalled in the future as one in which the major Western nations unleashed technical terror against the Serbs allegedly in the search for peace. As all informed commentators are now admitting, at the end of the use of this technical terror, there will be less genuine peace in the Balkans than there was before the terror was unleashed. The same type of terror was used against the people of Palestine over 50 years ago. The poisonous "fall out" from this terror still influences world politics.

The basic plight of the world may be summarised as follows: After 2,000 years of the growth of a Civilisation which held the promise to reflect Christ's teachings, that Civilisation has been progressively corrupted to the point where it is near to death. But is resurrection possible? The answer is YES.

But the first requirement is that there be genuine repentance and a return to a meaningful worship of God the Father. When this is done, there will be a re-birth of that Spirit which Christ spoke about. Christ's famous prayer concerned the creation of God's Kingdom on Earth. Easter is a most appropriate time to consider how the Kingdom can be achieved.

FINAL REPORT – MULTILATERAL TREATY ON INVESTMENTS by Jeremy Lee:

The Joint Standing Committee on Treaties in the Federal Parliament tabled its final report on the MAI in March. Its conclusions contain some surprising admissions. Treasury, which conducted negotiations with the OECD, did not come out well. While there is too much in the Report to provide a comprehensive covering, the following extracts from the conclusions are significant:

* *"It is difficult to argue against the proposition that this Agreement was being negotiated by the wrong group of nations. As a result, there must be significant doubts about the effectiveness of the draft MIA, had it proceeded in its original form . . ." (p.137)*

* *"Many of those who opposed the draft MAI saw any infringement of national sovereignty as against the national interest . . ." (p.138)*

* *"While Treasury and those it had consulted knew about the draft MAI from as early as May 1995, little information about it seems to have reached the Australian community until late 1997 or early 1998 . . . It was not until 20 February 1998 that a defence of the Government's position was released. The February 1998 text of the draft Agreement was not tabled in Parliament until 31 March 1998." (p.138)*

* *"Treasury was repeatedly accused of 'secrecy' in the way in which it conducted the negotiations of the draft MAI . . . For many people, the workings of the bureaucracy in Canberra are quite baffling. . ." (p.139)*

* *" . . . Many Australian citizens were outraged by what they saw as a secret process in which information was not made available to those who had concerns. Organisation after organisation told us that they had not been approached, and how they had found out about the draft Agreement by accident." (p.140)*

* *"We support the view, taken by many of those who participated in this inquiry, that the consultative process was inadequate. Too little information was made available publicly until too late in the negotiation process."* (p.140)

* *"Treasury's submission was of indifferent quality, given its crucial role in the negotiating process and to this inquiry. It made no attempt to spell out the detail in the text or, by using material in the Commentary, the likely implications of the draft Agreement for Australia . . ."* (p.140)

* *"Treasury stressed the benefits of the draft Agreement, but never presented the need for Australia to be involved . . . Treasury stressed that Australia's negotiations were on the basis that the draft MAI would not impinge on this country's sovereign right to regulate and discriminate against international investors in areas where country-specific exceptions would be taken out. It was also clear, however, that the intention behind the draft Agreement was progressively to remove all exceptions and, in fact, to use a peer review process within the OECD to do this . . ."* (p.141)

* *"Treasury seemed to believe that it owned this document to the point where it did not accept the validity of the concerns of those who opposed it. These people were simply seen as 'misinformed' and largely ignored . . ."* (p.143)

These and other conclusions sum up all the corruption that has perverted the proper function of Parliament. Above all, the duty of elected representatives is to act as watchdog on the Executive. Yet here we have a situation in which a government department – Treasury – negotiated a Treaty with major implications for the whole democratic process for two years before any details were tabled in Parliament. It is likely that politicians would never have examined the proposals at all, had it not been for the strenuous efforts of a growing number of concerned citizens and organisations.

From Edmund Burke on, statesmen have warned of the consequences of a dereliction of responsibility by politicians if the Executive was allowed to act without constant surveillance. The following report in 1993 highlights the dangers:

" . . . In a series of interviews with The Weekend Australian, the commissioners warn that the increasing power of executive government over parliament and the unwillingness of some politicians to take responsibility for their actions has undermined public respect and made government less accountable. . .

"The former head of the Queensland Criminal Justice Commission, Sir Max Bingham QC, said he believed the political process was in transition and the Westminster system – in which the executive is responsible to the parliament and ministers take responsibility for the performance of their departments – was no longer followed.

"Mr. Peter Brindsen QC, one of three commissioners in the WA Inc. inquiry, said the main difficulty was 'too steadfast adherence to the party, to the detriment of one's independence as a parliamentarian'.

"He said this 'seems to be the basic cause of the problem throughout the Westminster system'.

"The former South Australian Supreme Court judge who headed the State Bank of South Australia royal commission, Mr. Samuel Jacobs QC, said Australians 'talked glibly about the Westminster

system, but we don't practice it. To a large extent we've got executive government, parliament is a sham . . . I just observe the fact that the man on the bus thinks all politicians are bloody idiots'."

Over 900 submissions by ordinary Australians were made to the Treaty Committee. Some were more detailed than others. But it is safe to say that, without the efforts of ordinary concerned men and women, the MAI would have been a *fait accompli*. They were actually doing what the elected politicians were failing to do.

It is doubtful if the MAI has gone away. Sooner or later, when it is hoped the people have gone back to sleep, it will come again. The multinational banks and corporations believe the world is their oyster, and no-one else's. They are used to ignorant, compliant, grovelling politicians. They don't like to be thwarted by ordinary people.

But they also fear the truth, and dread those who fearlessly espouse it.

STRONG ANTI-PARTY BIAS IN NEW SOUTH WALES: The first impressions of a comfortable Labor win in the New South Wales State election masked a number of significant developments. A major survey in *The Australian Financial Review* (Easter Special edition, 1-5/4/99) offered these conclusions:

"... There are a number of important implications for the Federal Government, the Federal Liberal Party, prospects for economic reform and Australia's international image. First the depth of anger in the bush with reform policies such as privatisation, and with the major parties, which has once again let Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party out of the box . . . Second, the relatively poor showing of the major parties in the bush, leading to the rise of independents . . . The NSW election showed support for the major parties all but collapsing in rural areas, with the Labor vote falling below 10 percent in some places and the National vote as low as 11.2 percent. Instead, voters turned to independents and One Nation. Independent Tony Windsor in Tamworth . . . attracted almost 70 percent of the primary vote. In some traditional National Party seats, One Nation was able to record significant levels of support such as 22.1 percent in Barwon . . . One Nation's Legislative Council vote of 123,327, or 6.2 percent, was twice that of the Australian Democrats' vote of 64,209 votes, or 3.2 percent . . . The election result in the bush exposed an anti-privatisation vote which One Nation and independents were able to successfully exploit . . . Federal MPs report numerous phone calls and letters to their electorate offices about the privatisation giveaway scheme . . ."

The fact that One Nation, after all the ructions and examples of internal ineptitude, was able to make significant gains, with David Oldfield securing a seat in the Legislative Council, is a stunning example of the anger and the disillusionment with the major parties. One Nation is now an instrument of protest on a scale not seen for a long time in Australia. If it does no more than force some accountability onto the Executive and the lazy, faceless "hacks" in the major parties, it will have served to give Australia a breathing space.

THE BUG GROWS: Latest estimates for cost of Y2K compliance have burgeoned from last month's estimate of \$10 billion to \$19 billion (*Australian Financial Review*, 29/3/99). That's more than \$1,000 for each living Australian – a lot of money and effort for what some people still think will be an inconsequential problem.