



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET



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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"In the nineteenth century the North Country English had a saying of the mushroom rich – 'Three generations from clogs to clogs'. The explanation is fairly simple – riches and power are tools, and require a considerable apprenticeship to use wisely. There appears to be little doubt that some occult Power is willing and anxious that political adolescents should have sharp and powerful tools, and is determined that they shall not keep them when they have learned to use them wisely."*

C.H. Douglas – *"The Development of World Dominion"*, 1946

BEGGING THE QUESTION by Jeremy Lee:

The final question for the November 6th referendum has been chosen. While omitting to tell Australians of the more-than-sixty changes to the Constitution in the event of a "yes" vote, it does at least reveal that a president would be chosen by the politicians. The wording will say: (Do you approve of a republic) 'with the Queen and Governor-General being replaced by a president appointed by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Commonwealth Government'. All polls show that this is one option the people do NOT want.

This did not prevent one of the least popular politicians of the last 25 years – former PM Malcolm Fraser – pontificating on just why Canberra's politicians should elect the president (*The Australian*, 9/8/99):

"....We have a responsible system of government in which the prime minister and ministers are responsible to parliament. They can be dismissed by parliament at any time. It is parliament that is our elected instrument The point needs to be made that these members are elected. They are our representatives; we depend upon them to protect our national interest"

Fraser seems much too obtuse to recognise that a large and growing number of Australians do not see party politicians as representative of anything other than their parties and those who fund them.

Lamenting the widespread community indifference on the issue, and the farcical misrepresentations of the Australian Republican Movement (ARM), Susan Mitchell in an *Australian* article on August 9th commented:

".... Try as he may, Malcolm Turnbull cannot inject any fire into this debate. Most comments focus on his personal style rather than his line of argument. No one quite trusts what he says because he is a lawyer. And a banker"

"Given the average Australian's opinion of politicians, the more they are seen to be influencing the outcome, the less people feel involved. Who, apart from the media, really cares if Peter the Snarl (Reith) disagrees with Peter the Smirk (Costello)? Most people understand the minimalist model that is being proposed. What they don't like is the people who are proposing it. Direct election has become the most popular option of the electorate because it takes the final decision out of the hands of politicians, former politicians and the patriarchs of business, banking and the law. . ."

Take note, Malcolm Fraser! This is a much more realistic assessment, save for the assumption that "the most popular" option is for any form of republic.

The Editorial in *The West Australian* (9/8/99) went further: *"....Politicians generally hate the idea of direct election and once the referendum was agreed they would shove a minimalist republic through because it is the least threatening option to themIf this referendum fails – as it should – the groundswell of republican sentiment will ensure that there is a proper process to get a system which the nation will embrace Most Australians realise that the republic model is a loser. The time has come for the supporters of the Yes campaign to admit it"*

We have a strong feeling that, as Australians consider the six key questions in the League's pamphlet "Why not vote for a republic?" – now achieving a steady circulation in all States – and see Arthur Tuck's brilliant little video *The Service of Freedom*, there will be an increasing swing away from the froth and bubble of the Turnbull republic back to the time-tested stability of the monarchical system.

SELLING OUR BASIC RESOURCES by Phillip Butler:

The Victorian Government is in the forefront when it comes to 'flogging off' community assets. The sales will, we are told, reduce our debt load and therefore our credit rating will increase – determined by Wall Street – and then in turn (one would hope) our taxes would go down.

I must say I haven't noticed my taxes going down as Premier Kennett continues to amalgamate municipalities and places government services out to private tender, along with selling off the rail, tram and power services.

What Victorians have dis(un)covered is the fact that the Kennett Government is on a course of privatising (monopolising) the water supplies; which includes the right of private corporations to charge for water that falls on private property. Told that the rain that falls on his own property should be included as 'run-off' into the Wimmera River system – and therefore having an unearned advantage which should have a charge upon it – an Elmhurst farmer has been billed \$30,000 by Wimmera-Mallee Water authority even though he does not use their services!

The same thing is happening to other farmers in the area as the Government moves towards controlling local water supplies, so that, like the road systems, transportation and energy supplies, the water supplies can be 'sold off' to multinational foreign-owned companies.

In South Australia the sewage works were sold off to a French company and said company was not maintaining the works as needed, with the result that a foul stench (known as the Bolivar Pong) began to pervade areas of Adelaide – depending on the direction of the prevailing winds. It was discovered the Government would have had a hard time suing the French company for any damages as the head office was back in France!

This push to sell off all our assets, so we are told, is so that we can be debt free! What will happen when all our assets are gone? The following letter to the editor from Mr. Neil McDonald of Geelong (*Herald Sun*) sums up our situation:

"This is the 50th anniversary of the greatest engineering feat of the 20th century, the Snowy River Hydro-electric Scheme that has harnessed the waste waters of the Snowy Mountains for the benefit of Australia.

"The mighty project employed the toil, enterprise, mateship and vision of a team of 100,000 workers in dangerous conditions that claimed 121 lives on site. It was the result of concepts from more than 60 years of proposals from people like Freddy Kindred and Trygve Olsen, the drive from politicians like Ben Chifley, and took 25 years of building at a cost of 25 million pounds.

"The Snowy scheme indeed played a major role in forging our mighty nation out of the rugged wilderness. But now, as the new millennium draws near, we move closer to losing this great possession of the people to private investment and foreign control.

"Ten years of preparation by myopic politicians has seen the scheme carved up and corporatised, for sale. This essential utility, which is part of the soul of this country, is to join the growing list of what once was owned by every Australian. And, despite the political catch-cry of selling the farm to alleviate debt, that very same debt is ballooning out of control...we have shed all that we once owned for absolutely no advantage.

"Our children and their children will be tenants in a country that has disposed of all means of earning 'real wealth'. Australia will never be able to trade at a profit as we could do in the 1950's and 60's. Politicians have done no favours by transforming us into a nation of shopkeepers and taxpayers, where more and more Australians must depend on welfare."

GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR WIDENS FURTHER: There has been a further widening of the gap between Australia's poor and those at the top end of town. During 1997-98 (the latest figures) the bottom 20 per cent of households in Australia accounted for 3.8 percent of all wages, salaries, pensions and benefits, superannuation benefits and business incomes. The top 20 percent received 48.3 per cent. The bottom 60 per cent received only 27.8 per cent of all income – a drop of over one-half percent on a year earlier (*The Australian*, 6/8/99)

CONTINUING RUSSIAN DEBACLE: Since Boris Yeltsin took over from Mikhail Gorbachev in 1992 the IMF has bailed out the ailing Russia to the tune of \$US27 billion. Most has disappeared without trace amid continuing deterioration. With a foreign debt of over \$US150 billion (almost on a par with Australia's), Russia is expected to default on most of the \$US17.5 billion in principal and interest due this year. Commenting, Ariel Cohen of Washington's Heritage Foundation said: ".... Thus, Russia has all but joined the sorry roster of economic basket cases that includes Afghanistan, Congo, Iraq, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan and Yugoslavia . ." (*Australian Financial Review*, 16/8/99).

The sorriest story, however, concerns the \$1,000 shelf-company FIMACO, set up in the Channel Islands. Ariel Cohen continued: ".... The Paris-based Eurobank, owned by the Russian Central Bank and some Russian tycoons, set up FIMACO in 1990 using \$US1,000 in start up capital. The Shell company never did have its own office or staff.

"Beginning in 1993, FIMACO handled up to \$US37 billion and approximately \$US13 billion in other currencies from the central bank reserves, including the IMF credits. With these funds FIMACO executives played the highly lucrative Russian short-term bond (GKO) market, where yields were up to 280 percent per year. Nobody knows where these astronomical earnings or FIMACO commissions went" (It makes Christopher Skase look like Mother Theresa!)

NO ROOM AT THE TOP FOR EXPRESSION OR THOUGHT by Alfred King:

The British press this week reported a striking illustration of the fact that there are no basic differences between major 'contesting' political parties of Western nations. Margaret Thatcher disclosed at the weekend that she believes it is time for Britain to leave the EU because it is becoming a federal superstate. The policy of the Conservative Party that she once led is for Britain's full membership of the EU. The *Times* newspaper reported the very next Monday that "Labour and Liberal democrats issued an unprecedented joint challenge to the Conservatives to denounce Baroness Thatcher over Europe... urged William Hague (Conservative Party leader) to 'slap down' the former prime minister's view that Britain should pull out of the European Union. In a joint statement they said there was no room at the top of British politics for those who thought Britain should leave Europe".

These 'representatives' of the people in parliament are making it clear that they actually refuse to represent in parliament any view of their electorate that does not agree with that of their party. Who sets the party line? Note also the timeliness and aggressive tone of the joint statement. In reply, the Tory chairman merely whimpered that the party's policy was to be in Europe. This shows the difference between the so-called left and right of mainstream politics. The former is continually on the offensive; it is aggressive, noisy and demanding. It will not take what it sees as injustices lying down. By contrast, the so-called 'conservatives' are continually on the retreat. They are passive and cowardly, declining to battle for anything.

As we see in the Australian Liberal Party, surrender has been developed into a fine art. Furthermore, it is the most insidious party in Australia because it is the least honest in the declaration of its objectives. The Liberal Party poses as the conservative, patriotic party, while in fact it is working for the very opposite aims. As it has been said, "a Labor man is always preferable because you are in no doubt he is the enemy. He will come rushing at you with dagger raised. The Liberal is different. He will smile and shake hands with you, and then, when your guard is down, he will stab you in the back." The New World Order policies that could not be achieved by Keating's up-front aggressive, abrasive style have been achieved under John Howard's leadership. GST, Republic Referendum, gun control, massive cuts in public services to the point that Australians are literally dying, etc., etc.

We cannot look to the main political parties for salvation. They do not consider the needs of the individual to be more important than the 'greater good' the Establishment elite are determined to impose on us. Regeneration can only come from the bottom up - from individuals working together voluntarily in grassroots movements.

DE-AMALGAMATION OF COUNCILS? As Australia's population has grown - we're about 19 million now - the number of local councils has dropped. For example, in 1910 there were 324 Councils in New South Wales. Today there are 177. In the first six years of the '90s the number of Councils in Australia dropped from 826 to 658. In this period Queensland's number dropped from 134 to 125, South Australia's from 122 to 107, Tasmania's from 46 to 29.

However, the number in New South Wales rose from 176 to 177, despite desperate attempts by both Labor and Coalition parties to enforce amalgamation in the '70s against fierce community resistance; and WA's from 138 to 142.

The most drastic reduction came in Victoria in 1993, when Premier Jeff Kennett cut the number from 210 to 78, besides vastly increasing State Government control.

In the Sydney area the Councils of Balmain, Leichardt, Annandale and Glebe amalgamated in the late 'forties. Now Balmain is seeking to re-establish itself as a separate Council. *The Australian Financial Review* (6/8/99) commented: " *There is a view that small may be beautiful, and that it is not size that counts but how to get value for money. Lawyer and town planning expert Mr. John Mant said that in a big city like Sydney, tiny councils with a good ratepayer base might be more efficient because they could shop around for the best deal for their services, even from the council next door*"

Efficiency is not the only reason for smallness. The late Professor Gates from the University of Queensland, an expert in local government, said that once a council has a population exceeding 10,000, Councillors rapidly lose touch with ratepayers. This is even more true today, when local government receives so many instructions from planning departments and bureaucrats at State and Federal Government level. Councillors need a sharp reminder from time to time that they are elected to serve ratepayers as their first priority. In other words, they are the elected servants of local people - not faceless bureaucrats.

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