



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

- NEWS HIGHLIGHTS
- BACKGROUND INFORMATION
- COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS



The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"The idea of a long-term strategy on the part of a powerful group of men aiming at World Control is no longer one which can be lightly dismissed as fantastic . . . and it is becoming difficult to understand the mentality of those who insist that this particular group of men, all associated with banking and finance, acquired such a position by chance."*

"It is possible now in retrospect to see the key position in the Plan occupied by the financial depression of the 1930's and especially by the policy of the banks in bringing about agricultural depression, with its unavoidable accompaniment of destructive exploitation of the soil, in relation to the 'cure' offered by the financing with astronomical sums of . . . monopolistic agencies all over the world."

"On Planning the Earth" by Geoffrey Dobbs, 1951

TRUTH - THE FIRST CASUALTY by Jeremy Lee:

As the Timor situation develops, more unsavoury facts emerge. *The Bulletin* (12/10/99) published a series of previously unpublished diplomatic cables revealing a shortsighted and hypocritical response from the Australian Government prior to the Timorese referendum. The revelations do not reflect well on Foreign Minister Alexander Downer.

Not only did Australia argue strongly **against** a UN peacekeeping force in East Timor, but it was clearly advised that Indonesia was arming the militia, and there was a strong likelihood of violence before and after the referendum.

The Courier-Mail (24/9/99) gave the following assessment:

"...East Timor has been devastated; its population either dead or forcibly transmigrated; diplomatic and other relations with Indonesia frayed to the point of breaking; Australian troops, with others from the multinational force, committed to East Timor with no clear time frame and no clear exit strategy; crisis management defining defence and security policy and now the Prime Minister is talking of his 'Howard doctrine'..."

"How much is it going to cost and where is the money to come from? Don't know to the first. Ditto to the second..... And that's just for East Timor. A long-term 'regional-deputy' role will require a much larger standing army, another proposal on which the Prime Minister has been markedly silent"

So how ready is our army? A full-page assessment by Deborah Snow in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (2/10/99) gave a picture:

".....Army funding was so tight that in 1994 it couldn't even provide enough ammunition for logistics soldiers to undertake their annual firing of small arms on the Army's weapons rangesThe senior analyst Alan Dupont, a former veteran of both the Foreign Affairs and Defence departments says: 'We're talking about being more assertive in the region. But when people look more closely at what we've got, they'll laugh. We can deploy smart weapons in small numbers. We can deploy forces for short periods of time. But we lack depth and critical mass.....'

"Another retired Army chief, Lieutenant-General John Sanderson, says: 'The sacrifice in Army numbers was part of an overall sacrifice of civilian and military manpower to get more money for [high] technology. But before you go engaging [around the region] you have to build the stuff that you've sacrificed up again. It seems to me we're engaging before we've properly built up that capability to engage'

"One Army logistics officer told *The Herald*: 'Soldiers are sorely wanting for good basic equipment. They have not had good boots, they have had inadequate backpacks (which come in a single, non-adjustable size), they do not have proper body armour and they have sub-standard wet-weather gear and sleeping bags

"The immediate crisis engulfing the Army now is shortage of numbers. Should the Australian force in East Timor get to the projected 4,500, that would leave no other troops in a state of readiness for any other contingency that might arise. As Dupont puts it: 'That's your whole Army, thanks very much.'"

WHERE ARE THE EAST TIMORESE? We've had all sorts of wild media speculation as to the whereabouts of large numbers of East Timorese. For example, *The Australian* (4/10/99) under the heading FEARS FOR THE 'DISAPPEARED' 500,000, went on:

"Hundreds of thousands of East Timorese have simply disappeared off the face of the earth and humanitarian agencies are desperate to find them"

We think it very unlikely that the general whereabouts of missing East Timorese is not known to the Defence Department and its intelligence agencies. There are countless stories of atrocities. It is just as certain that there have been atrocities as it is that there has been media speculation and exaggeration. P.P. McGuiness (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 2/10/99) gave this information:

".....Lieutenant-Colonel Martyn Dunn, the commander of the New Zealand contingent of Interfet, was quoted in the *New Zealand Herald* on September 27 as saying, after having described progressive discoveries of murdered bodies, that the number of people the militia had murdered was not significant and there was no comparison with the slaughter in Kosovo. He added that there was no evidence to back reports that boatloads of East Timorese had been taken out to sea and dumped. In other words, one cannot accept all atrocity stories at face value. While no-one is claiming that everything is sweetness and light, there clearly is a deliberate whipping up of war fever still going on, with horror stories, as always, an essential element...."

THE NATIONAL PARTY SELL OUT by Phillip Butler:

All seats retained by the National Party in the Victorian Legislative Assembly have had to go to preferences, for the first time in some electorates. What does this say about a Party that is supposed to be

"looking after the bush" – also, they have gone from nine to seven seats. And yet, we have not seen pro-republican leader of the Nationals in Victoria, Pat McNamara, take advantage of the weakened position of the Liberals to wrest some real gains for rural Victorians.

Independent MP for Mildura, Russell Savage, summed up the results of the "hard bargaining" on the part of the Nationals with their Liberal Coalition partners:

"The positions they (Nationals) have been given have nothing to do with country Victoria, except for tertiary education . . . They have let Kennett ride roughshod over them.

"They have accepted two-bob ministries and proven to me once again that they are only interested in limousines, the perks of office and privileges that come with being an MP . . . When are they going to get out of their comfort zones and listen to what people said?

"I'm disappointed because I thought they were going to exert some influence in the new government. Why have they abandoned that? They don't seem to be prepared to put the country first . . . There's been no indication of anything other than a focus on selfish self-interest.

"The Nationals are prepared to do anything to stay in power, to be in this untenable situation and keep their snouts in the trough . . ." (Sunday Herald Sun, 3/10/99).

It is obvious that the Nationals are nothing more than transparent Liberals. Where were they when the Kennett machine ran over rural Victoria destroying the municipalities and service infrastructure? Where were they when the Kennett machine flogged off Victoria's assets and prepared the ground for the "commodifying" of its water resources? The Victorian Nationals have sold out the rural communities – just as their Federal counterparts have sold out rural Australia in the push for tariff reductions and the "level playing field".

The Nationals had a golden opportunity – supported by the Independents – to place power back in the hands of the electors thereby decentralising government – and most Victorians would have supported them. They have now blown it.

KENNETT FINDS UPPER HOUSE REFORM "TOO HARD": One of the key demands in the Independents' "Charter for Good Government" is the reform of the election of Legislative Councillors. They are demanding that the Legislative Council be elected along the lines of the Federal Senate. This could mean we would see more independents and minor-party candidates in the Upper House. This would most certainly break the stranglehold the Coalition has had over the House for the last seven years.

However, Kennett is baulking at this reform claiming it was not an issue at the recent elections. He omits to mention that when first elected to Parliament he campaigned against forced amalgamations of councils and municipalities, using the numbers in the Upper House to defeat the ALP's legislation, but when in power he was the driving force behind forced amalgamations. He assured the electors when in opposition, "no municipality would be forced to amalgamate" unless it was agreed to by a binding referendum.

Minority governments could have an effective role to play, history has shown this. The Country Party, as it was known then, formed part of a minority government in 1950. The breakdown of the election result show: Liberal 27, ALP 24, Country Party 13 and one Independent. The ALP agreed to support the Country Party (not in Coalition) on three issues, one of which was the reform of the Upper House. The right to vote for the Upper House was widened to include all Victorians 21 years and over; previous to this, only property owners (houses and/or land) to prescribed values, or those educated to a certain level, had the right.

The Independents should be encouraged and canvassed on other reforms. Queensland's and West Australia's Constitutions cannot be changed without a Referendum, but the other States have no such safeguard. Victorian actionists – it's over to you.

"COMMODIFYING" OUR WATER RESOURCES by Betty Luks:

Over the last few years little snippets have appeared in columns of newspapers and segments over radio and television expressing concern for the sustainability of future water supplies. Gradually we have been conditioned to the realisation that the world's water supplies are in jeopardy, and at the same time, traitorous governments, the world over, have been busy preparing the ground for the takeover of the water supplies by multinational monopolies – but calling it "privatisation".

At the same time, multinational companies have aggressively taken over most sections of the world's food chain. They are now poised to concentrate on the takeover of the world's water resources. The publication *"Soil and Health"* (Sept-Oct/99) spells it out for us. The chemical company Monsanto – typical of the strategy adopted by the multinationals – having positioned itself as an agricultural company through control of the commercial seed supply, the first link in the food chain, now wants to control water – the very basis of life.

The crisis of pollution and depletion of water resources is viewed by Monsanto as "a business opportunity". For Monsanto "sustainable development" means the conversion of an ecological crisis into a market of **scarce resources**.

Robert Farley of Monsanto explains, *"The business logic of sustainable development is that population growth and economic development will apply increasing pressure on natural resource markets. These pressures, and the world's desire to prevent the consequences of these pressures if unabated, will create vast economic opportunity. When we look at the world through the lens of sustainability we are in a position to see current and foresee impending resources market trends and imbalances that create market needs. We have further focussed this lens on the resource market of water and land."* (Emphasis added – Ed.)

According to Robert Farley: *"What you are seeing is not just a consolidation of seed companies, it is really a consolidation of the entire food chain."* Since water is as central to food production as seed is, and without water life is not possible, Monsanto is now trying to establish control over water. During 1999 this multinational conglomerate plans to launch a new water business, starting with India and Mexico since both these countries are facing water shortages.

Non-government Organisations currently spend around \$300 million for water development projects in India and Mexico alone and the need is growing at 25-30 percent a year in rural communities. The Indian Government spent over \$1.2 billion between 1992-97 for various water projects while the World Bank spent \$900 million. Monsanto is pushing for the diversion of this public money from public supply of water to establishing its own water monopoly in these countries. Dr. Vandana Shiva observes in the article, *"A more efficient conversion of public goods into private profit would be difficult to find. Water is however too basic for life and survival. The right to water is the right to life. The privatisation and commodification of water is a threat to the right to life . . . Water is a commons and must be managed as a commons. It cannot be controlled and sold by a life sciences corporation that peddles death."*

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