



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"On the surface America appears lost. But the animalisation of the body and the brutalisation of the spirit, the desecration of the environment, the venality of politics, the drug and homosexual plagues, the taste-destroying shock waves of pornography, the ghetto savagery, the degeneration of the military, the torrents of illegal immigrants, the apostasy of the professors and journalists, the mindlessness of the students, the phobic materialism and Babbitry of their parents – all these, perhaps, are not the irreversible regressions they seem but merely short-term roadblocks or detours on the Great Trek to a higher and more luminous life form. In the sequence of organic rebirth, what is to be done must be first undone. Unthinking must precede rethinking... Degeneration alternates with regeneration."*

– "The Dispossessed Majority" by Wilmot Robertson

BRIBING US WITH OUR OWN MONEY by Jeremy Lee:

Having budgeted for a Budget Surplus of \$7.8 billion, the Howard Government now finds itself in a position where the Surplus has burgeoned to \$12.7 billion (*Weekend Australian*, 30/9-1/10/2000), about \$1,000 per average family of four. Part of this growth is from the 'windfall' of indexed excise taxes which have automatically risen with world oil prices. Any suggestion that some of this should be returned to beset taxpayers, or that the excise take should have been pegged to pre-rise oil prices has been refused by Prime Minister Howard.

A nice, 'politically-correct' set of budget figures is obviously a priority of Treasurer Costello. But nowhere is there any estimate for the resulting hardship in the community – the extra costs of unavoidable transport and travel; the obvious lack of adequate funding in many public areas such as health, education, roads.

Small business and farming continues to be crucified. The former is grappling with the first real impact of the GST – the Business Activity Statement, and the ensuing payment of accumulated GST "takings" to the ATO. It is hard to know what to say about farming. The loss of the wheat harvest in Queensland already has the banks foreclosing on dozens of farmers. The misery of dairy deregulation looks like handing control of the industry overseas. The prospect of higher interest rates – the result of a falling dollar – may well be the last straw for a viable agricultural industry in Australia.

But so long as Howard and Costello have their huge Budget Surplus – an electoral treasure-chest for the election which must be held within a twelvemonth – the politicians may be nervous, but they are happy.

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COSTELLO AND THE DONG: With the Australian dollar lurching from one record low to the next, Treasurer Costello was hard put to it to find another currency which had fallen to such levels. *The Australian Financial Review* (4/10/2000) reported on a question put to Costello by shadow-treasurer Simon Crean:

"The question by ...Mr. Simon Crean was aimed at challenging the Government claim that the \$A is only losing ground against the rocketing US dollar.

"Mr. Crean said that in the past month the dollar had fallen against the Mexican peso, the Vietnamese dong, the Venezuelan bolivar, the Algerian dinar, the Bulgarian leva, the Bangladeshi take, the Mongolian tughrick, the Botswana pula and Swaziland's ligangeni"

Mr. Costello was able to find one currency which had fallen further – the New Zealand dollar!

ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF CORPORATE BULLYING: The issue of corporate control and political manipulation of political parties has received an added twist with the latest news from South Australia: *The Weekend Australian* (14-15/10/2000) reported:

"Some of Australia's most successful companies have threatened to uproot their South Australian operations and take jobs to other states if they are not granted taxpayer-funded packages.

"Government sources have confirmed the state Government has paid out millions of dollars to subsidise highly profitable companies' local operations – many of which have donated funds to the Liberal Party – in expensive bidding wars against other states"

What does this mean? That 'other States' are offering bigger inducements? What a pathetic and immoral use of taxpayers' money!

The new immorality of Australia's corporate-business elite was well captured in a two-page essay by John Carroll, Reader in Sociology at LaTrobe, and author of the hard-hitting book *Shutdown*. Carroll's theme is that the old service motive in business leaders of yesteryear has been totally replaced by greed in the new corporate leadership – *Australian Financial Review* (6/10/2000):

".... A first principle of government should be to protect the people, and especially those less able to look after themselves. Yet there was little interest shown in counterbalancing the running down of manufacturing industry, the pauperising of much of rural Australia, the undermining of permanent full-time jobs in favour of unreliable part-time ones – and thereby compromising the chances of people in their 20s moving towards buying their own homes"

The cynicism produced by the gap between word and deed had, John Carroll said, spread throughout the community, particularly amongst the young, producing a "complete collapse of civic idealism among those entering adulthood ..." This had finally produced the eradication of values society needed for survival.

Carroll drew attention to the following passage in *The Communist Manifesto*:

"....The bourgeoisie ... has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash-payment'. It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy waters of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless infeasible chartered

freedoms, has set up a single, unconscionable freedom - Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by political and religious illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation"

" It means the country, served by its current elites, is in deep trouble."

The fact that Marxism-Leninism offered an even worse alternative does not alter the fact that, in this case, Marx's analysis was apt. Without a regeneration of morality, which stems from a preliminary spiritual regeneration, Australia's society is now sliding into chaos.

FOREIGN DEBT OUT OF CONTROL: As if to reinforce the article by John Carroll, the latest figures show Australia's gross foreign liabilities approaching \$700 billion. Net foreign debt is now about \$400 billion. Bill McConnell, writing in the *AFR* (6/10/00), said:

".... The \$A has languished below US60c. for three consecutive months, recording nine record lows against the US dollar. It seems the longer the \$A remains anchored to its lows, the greater the number of analysts suggesting the current exchange rate may be long-lasting rather than temporary"

"In August this year, US financial giant Salomon Smith Barney/Citibank circulated a report examining the flow of funds into and out of the Australian dollar. The report concluded that the \$A 'is particularly vulnerable because of the continuing large current account deficit'. A 15 percent rise in net foreign liabilities during the 1990s has meant that the 'growing call on foreign investors' portfolios is only possible if either demand for \$A assets is growing similarly or the \$A adjusts down to make \$A assets cheaper'."

The latter is now happening with a vengeance! John Howard and Peter Costello, so keen on foreign investment, will only receive this in return for asset sales and takeovers. Brenadan Pearson (*AFR*, 6/10/00) pointed out:

"Global flows of foreign investment will top \$US1 trillion (A\$1.8 trillion) this year, driven by a wave of cross-border mergers and acquisitions, according to a new report from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development"

What's the betting this will include the sale of the remainder of Telstra at any price, by an increasingly transparent Howard Government?

CONTINUING DAIRY DISASTER: Developments are tragically unbelievable. A report in *The Chronicle* (Toowoomba, 4/10/2000) said that local milk was being dumped by the tonneful on the local rubbish tip. On October 5th, the same paper said the Calvert family of Nanango – dairy farmers for three generations – had started bottling their own milk under the label "Same Day Fresh Milk" and had been run off their feet by the demand. The milk was being sold across the Downs and into Toowoomba. The Parmelat/Pauls truck which previously collected milk from the Calvert's farm now no longer called. Some retail outlets were now refusing Pauls milk in favour of Same Day Fresh.

Whether this local effort can match the huge monopolies forcing untenable prices on dairy farmers remains to be seen. It seems clear that if consumers are given the facts and the choice they will take the local product every time!

Meanwhile, the New Zealand Dairy Group has started buying heavily into Australia's National Foods, making it clear that the war between Parmelat (Italy) Dairy Group (New Zealand) and National Foods

(currently Australian but for how long?) to control Australia's stricken Dairy Industry is gaining in intensity.

GLIMPSES OF OBJECTIVE REPORTING: It is heartening to see some objective reporting on the tragic events in the Middle East. Reporting has been so routinely slanted in favour of the US and Israel over the years that any change is welcome.

Scott Burchill, lecturer in international relations at Deakin University, had a realistic article published in *The Australian* (12/10/2000) BETRAYAL OF A LOOTED PEOPLE. It presented a fair case for the Palestinians. Burchill made the point:

"....The spin-doctors in Washington and Tel Aviv want us to see Arafat as a violent recalcitrant who cannot match Barak's generous concessions and compromises offered at Camp David recently. Palestinians on the ground live a different reality"

He pointed out how similar current Israeli policy is to the old apartheid regime in South Africa.

Robert Fisk, who has always reported on Middle East affairs without bias asked, in an *AFR* article (20/10/2000) the obvious question:

"....Why couldn't Barak control the Israeli "security forces" who shot and killed more than 100 Palestinians, including children as young as nine, who fired missiles into a Palestinian apartment block and who then – according to an uncritical BBC reporter – threatened to use machine guns?" (For a deeper look at events in the Middle East, see the October edition of *The New Times Survey*, obtainable from the Melbourne office, \$3.00 posted).

MORE DOUBLESPEAK by Antonia Feitz:

Witnesses said that the two suicide bombers who damaged the naval destroyer USS Cole with a distressing loss of life, stood and saluted just moments before their craft exploded, literally blasting them into eternity as well as a hole in the ship. People will have different opinions on the morality of their act, but for President Clinton to describe it as "a despicable and cowardly act" is surely a misuse of language. It's not cowardly to die for your beliefs.

But then, as we've noted many times, Doublespeak is already with us. Clinton also said the attack would not deter the US from its mission of "promoting peace and security in the Middle East" (*Australian*, 14-15/10/00).

Hmm, so sending a naval destroyer armed with cruise missiles to join other US warships in the Gulf to stop Iraqi attempts to break the UN sanctions is "promoting peace and security".....?

As a recent SBS programme showed (13/10/2000), some nations including France and Russia have begun to ignore the US bullying and the "UN" embargo. Increasingly, decent people can no longer in conscience tolerate the fact that after nine years of the embargo, Iraqi hospitals have no antibiotics and that millions of people are malnourished. The sanctions are not hurting Saddam – once a US star protege – they are hurting ordinary people.

True to form, the US defence secretary William Cohen managed to describe this growing concern and compassion as a "lack of international willpower" to maintain the embargo.

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