



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET



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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"All too commonly, we think of money as having value in itself. Nothing could be further from the truth... Money could serve its purpose even if it were made of aluminum, tin or written on a piece of paper, or a byte in a computer data base..."*

"Let us think of money as a means of distribution. If the significance of the term is grasped, we have gained a whole new concept of the money question... Think of our total production as a gigantic pool into which a decreasing number of hands put more and more goods and services.

"Those who are able to put something into the pool are able to get something out...so to them money is still a means of exchange.

"Those who have nothing of marketable value must nevertheless have the right to draw their basic needs from the great pool of production... In this automated, computerised, technological society, it is not enough for money to exchange our production. Money must DISTRIBUTE it."

– "The Purpose of Money", Vic. Bridger, Australasian School of Social Credit Studies

SELLING OFF THE FAMILY FARM by Jeremy Lee:

With half a dozen or so elections due this 12 months one would think that the major contenders would pick up some of the key issues dominating the electorate. But the major parties are aping each other in only dealing with matters that are 'politically correct' as far as the general face of globalism is concerned.

The Queensland case is a typical example. The rort-riven Labor Party should be on the nose. But they are leading the Coalition Opposition in the polls. The Liberals and Nationals dare not tell it like it is. They won't really tackle the issues that are burning up ordinary voters – the continued loss of farms and small businesses, the despotic GST, water, continued and still growing foreign ownership, the illegal immigration fiasco, etc. They appear sympathetic on all these things without offering genuine challenges and alternatives.

A public meeting was recently held in the little country town of Yarraman in southern Queensland. It transpired that it was scheduled for the building of another detention centre for illegal immigrants. The local Federal Member, Mr. Cameron Thomson, was originally keen to claim credit for getting the project into his electorate.

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He can't have been watching the news; and was shocked when the public meeting strongly and bitterly opposed the project. Why endure the intrusion into a peaceful rural community of a multinational which had already demonstrated its inability to run existing camps without burning, sex-scandals and break-outs? The suggestion that it would be "good for the local economy" was met with hoots of derision. It is known, for instance, that such detention-centre administrations fly low-grade vegetables in from interstate, plus other supplies. Camp personnel are trained and brought in from outside. There was a lot of back-tracking and denials when the local mood was made obvious. The Federal Member has not improved his image as a result.

As this issue is written two other examples of foreign intrusion are gaining news – but not the attention of politicians. The giant international grocery chain ALDI, originally based in Germany, is making a foray into Australia, prepared to price-cut its way into its own niche. Its profits will join the \$100 million a day leaving Australia in profits and dividends.

The second even bigger issue is the massive new gas-find on Australia's north-west shelf, the target of a takeover by Shell.

Nigel Wilson, writing in *The Weekend Australian* (20-21/1/2001), said:

"... foreign investment, thanks to Shell's \$9 billion takeover bid for Woodside energy has become a cause celebre involving some most established of establishment figures. This week the Foreign Investment Review Board sought more time to consider the bid, which has reinvigorated an issue that caused stormy debates in the 1970s and 80s: at what point does selling off Australian-owned assets run counter to the national interest? It is an issue for which the Australian Government has no published policy"

Which sums it up neatly. Since when has "selling off Australian-owned assets" ever been in the national interest? Politicians carefully avoid the question as they live and breed off overseas money in one form or another.

The \$12 billion North West Shelf project is one of the biggest energy projects in the world. Already we export huge quantities of natural gas for as little as 4 cents per litre. The strategic implications are significant on their own. With Australia accused of being a major greenhouse-gas polluter, our resources should be used for a concerted push towards cleaner fuel for industry and household consumer alike. We should be anxious to unhook our domestic economy from dependency on world oil prices and the sheer international and domestic tax-blackmail that goes with them.

Yet politicians will avoid such issues as far as they can.

Once again, any minor party that attempts to raise these crucial matters will be shunted off into political limbo by media blackout. Which is why the growing non-party move to "Buy Australian" – already beginning to hurt the multinationals – is so important. If it steers clear of the party trap it is going to produce a new unity among all Australians, which in the end will begin to shape the agenda for future elections.

THE IMPACT OF IMPORT PRICES: With the quarter-century decimation of home-grown industries and farms Australia has been living off imports for a long time, as the balance-of-payments figures and the foreign debt figures attest. We are far more vulnerable to overseas price-rises than we need be.

The Australian Financial Review (23/1/2001) reported:

"Price pressures grew strongly in the December quarter with import and manufacturing input prices surging on the back of high oil prices and a low Australian dollar.

"Import prices jumped 15.8 percent over the past 12 months, with the December quarter bounce of 6.7 percent the largest for a decade Oil prices and the low dollar were the main contributors to the cost of manufacturing inputs which grew by 54.8 percent last quarter, and nearly 18 percent in the year to December Economists also pointed to a worrying profit squeeze for manufacturers facing growing input costs, but limited scope for price increases"

The only beneficiary, of course, is the Federal Government, which will take its GST without worrying whether the source is imports or not.

OUR POOR POLITICIANS: *The Australian* (23/1/01) carried an Editorial on a survey of 72 politicians the paper is undertaking, concluding they were overworked and underpaid. It said, in part:

".... Labor frontbencher and mother Cheryl Kernot will make the point in The Australian tomorrow that everyone needs to ask themselves whether work is threatening private life. People under pressure to put family second while working longer are likely to expect the same from their representatives. It may well be that most people earning a backbencher's salary of \$92,000 also regret missing family moments and get less than six hours sleep a night While some MPs concede there are duds on both sides, it is no surprise that only 26 percent of those surveyed reckon better pay would attract better politicians MPs have to cope with every day moral and philosophical compromises. Few people agree with everything a party does. Just to join one means jettisoning ideas, beliefs and preferences They face constant criticism and in the end usually have to submit to the majority opinion or the ruling party elite"

The survey is starting at the wrong end. Putting any individual into a situation where he or she has to "jettison ideas, beliefs and preferences" is fundamentally wrong. The pay-level or the hours worked are no compensation for an evil environment. A representative owes his conscience to his electorate – not to any "party elite".

The Clerk to the Senate, Mr. Harry Evans, put his finger right on the spot in 1997. He was reported in *The Australian* on March 10th of that year as saying:

"The real need for reform is not so much in institutions of government as in political parties They have become narrowly based, factionalised, undemocratic oligarchies controlled by too few people, closed to public view but open to manipulation and outright corruption"

Mr. Evans added that the current party system was breaking down parliamentary and representative government. If ever there was a time for an increased sprinkling of independents, it is now.

WHAT ARE THEY PAID? Current parliamentary salaries, quoted by *The Australian* (23/1/2001) are as follows: Basic backbencher's salary: \$92,000. Plus electoral allowance \$27,300 to \$39,600 based on size of the electorate. The Prime Minister earns an extra \$147,000 on top of the basic salary; the Deputy Prime Minister (John Anderson) an extra \$96,600; The Leader of the Opposition an extra \$78,700; Ministers an extra 66,700.

(The list didn't include such things as office or mobile phones – ask Peter Reith! – offices, research staff, travel and accomodation allowances, etc.)

The Superannuation entitlements are generous indeed:

- Members must contribute 11.5% of their salary for the first 18 years;
- To get a minimum pension, members must have:
 - (a) 12 years or more of service, or
 - (b) been re-elected three times, or
 - (c) retired involuntarily (e.g. for medical reasons) with eight years' service.
- For those who qualify, members receive a pension of 50% of their salary for eight years' service. For every additional year of service the pension goes up by 2.5%.
- Those who don't achieve the service criteria are allowed to take their own contributions multiplied by 2.33, as a lump sum.

The Australian's implication that politicians are underpaid would not be shared by the one-third of the Australian people living below the poverty line, or struggling to keep their business or farms afloat in the face of abysmal government in Australia.

THE CORRUPTION OF DEMOCRACY: It isn't often that the mainstream media draws attention to the corruption of true representation in Australia. Under the heading BIG PARTIES SERVED BY FLAWED VOTE, Ian Henderson wrote in *The Weekend Australian* (20-21/1/2001):

" What we get nowis a lower house of the federal parliament that is too often inhabited by party hacks, rendering it a backwater and irrelevant to the process of government. Only with proportional representation can we also achieve a relevant House of Representatives that reflects the modern profile of the Australian electorate, which is no longer so easily divided into left and right, conservative and non-conservative.

"Several elements of the voting system contribute to the problem. But just to illustrate its results, consider these aspects of the 1998 federal poll for starters:

- 588,088 voters cast their ballots for National Party candidates – 5.3 percent of the total – and that party gained 16 of the 148 seats in the Reps.
- Almost as many voters – 569,935, or 5.1 percent – voted for Democrat candidates, but that party failed to win a single seat in the peoples' house.
- A total of 936,612 voters 8.4 percent – cast their ballots for One Nation candidates, but even that level of popular support left that party – and its supporters – unrepresented in the House of Reps.

Quirks of the way the system works? Or evidence that it is fundamentally flawed? Take your pick"

Compulsory preferential voting, the party system itself, and the payment of millions of tax-dollars back to parties for votes – all contribute to the loss of democracy in Australia.

But they won't be changed from within the existing system. Only major issue-politics which cross artificial political divides, will change Australia for the better. This is beginning to happen.

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