



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

- NEWS HIGHLIGHTS
- BACKGROUND INFORMATION
- COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS



The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance -

Print Post Publication Number 381667 00258

Vol.37, No.5

February 16th, 2001

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"Socialism, or to give it its correct name, Monopoly, is not a production system, which is exactly what one would expect from its origins. That this is a simple statement of fact is being demonstrated in this country at the moment. It is a legalistic system based on a power complex supported by a set of abstract slogans which its policies and results contradict, where these have any concrete meaning..."*

"Socialism is a restriction system, as any examination of Socialistic practice in the Trade Unions will confirm, and it has two well defined fundamental principles - centralisation of power, both economic and political, and espionage. That is to say, every advance towards Socialism is an advance towards the Police State..."

– **"The Big Idea"** by C.H. Douglas, 1941

CENTRALISATION THROUGH REGIONAL GOVERNMENT by Jeremy Lee:

Federation in Australia, whose centenary we are celebrating this year, allowed for a division of powers between Commonwealth and States. Local Government remained within the States' jurisdiction, and had nothing to do with Canberra.

Each tier of government was conducted by elected representatives, from the local Councillor to State and Federal Members.

Representative government along these lines has been distorted enormously, with power shifting as its wont to central government. There are a host of reasons, chief of which are (a) central control of tax revenue and borrowing requirements; and (b) the party system.

In 1972 the Whitlam government re-vamped an old fabian policy first outlined at the beginning of the century by the economist G.D.H. Cole, for the replacement of smaller elected governments by "regional governments". It was sold under the inducement that this would decentralise power, but in reality it aimed to replace elected representatives with appointment of 'experts' at regional level, who would simply administrate a centrally-devised policy. The federal idea would disappear.

Earlier members of the Liberal and Country parties opposed and exposed this programme. In more recent times the regional government idea has been fostered whichever major party government has been in power.

IN THIS ISSUE: • *Centralisation Through Regional Government* • *Indebted Students in New Zealand* • *Genetically Modified Foods* • *Automation in Transport* • *The Cold Logic of Sharon*

"ON TARGET"

February 16th, 2001

Page 1 (17)

The idea gained added strength with the development of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) which has now been given a place in the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), even though ALGA has no constitutional validity.

The programme has been graphically exposed by former Mayor of Narrabri, Councillor Bevan O'Regan, in two videos – "*Your Council The Target*" and "*Councils At The Crossroads*" (available from Pickford Productions, Box 1234, Toowoomba, 4350, \$20 each or \$35 the two including postage).

During the Keating era former ACTU Secretary was commissioned to produce a "regional survey" of Australia with a future regional government scenario in mind.

The concept has now re-surfaced with what is called the "Hurford Model", the brainchild of former Hawke government minister Chris Hurford.

A full page in *The Advertiser* (Adelaide, 20/1/2001) under the heading ADVANCE AUSTRALIA WHERE? gave details of the proposal:

- State and territory governments to be abolished;
- Regional governments to be established, blurring historic State boundaries;
- Each region to receive basic Federal Government funding for services including health and education, but funding topped up through regions' own taxation powers;
- Regions to elect chief minister to four-year term to represent them in a revamped Federal Senate.
- Other members to represent them in a revamped House of Representatives.

South Australian Attorney-General Trevor Griffin, commenting on the proposal, said there was no hope of such an idea being passed in the constitutional referendum necessary for such a change. Quite true. But, as with so many fabian ideas, by-passing the Constitution is quite acceptable. Once central control of money has been achieved, the States can be starved, and their finance simply passed to the regions, to be spent in carrying out the central government's policy.

There is some highly creative kite-flying to support the idea:

"....eliminating State governments in favour of a series of regional governments under the umbrella of a national government would save about \$25 billion annually, while more effectively delivering services. Under the Hurford 'Australian Peoples' New Commonwealth' model, States and the NT government would be replaced by a federation of 51 regions, as well as one territory around Canberra. Each region would represent a 'community of interest', in which economic interests would be tied to specific geographical areas"

Apart from anything else. If such a proposal succeeded it would place local government firmly under the International Treaty on Local Government, linked to the United Nations, which ALGA and Paul Keating were pushing before Howard's arrival. Since then, the gradual movement towards regional government has not abated.

WHAT SEATTLE ACHIEVED: Whatever else is said, the protests in Seattle and at subsequent international forums has forced a sea-change into current events.

At the end of January the World Economic Forum again met at Davos in Switzerland. The usual high-

fliers from all over the world attended, from Bill Gates to Oprah Winfrey, from Yasser Arafat to George Soros. From Australia were Foreign Minister Alexander Downer and NSW Premier Bob Carr, and corporate chiefs John Ellice from SANTOS, Telstra's Ziggy Switkowski, Western Mining Corporation's Hugh Morgan and JB Were's Terry Campbell. Also attending was the ACTU's Sharan Burrow, one of 12 labour leaders from Australia.

Absent, however, were any representatives from President Bush's new administration. As usual, huge security measures had to be taken:

" WEF organisers have also endeavoured to be seen to be listening to the critics of globalisation at the same time as 300 Swiss Police and up to 600 soldiers have sealed off the ski resort against demonstrators with barbed wire, car searches and machine guns" (Australian Financial Review, 29/1/2001)

Among the anxious topics discussed at this year's sombre gathering was the almost complete standstill in the programme of the World Trade Organisation.

"The backlash against globalism is central to this year's conference theme" (AFR, 29/1/2001).

INDEBTED STUDENTS IN NEW ZEALAND: A recent article sent to us by a New Zealand reader pointed out that the total debt incurred by tertiary students to the government for their university courses was now almost \$NZ4 billion. That's over \$1,000 for every person in the country! The article added: *"The loan scheme is forecast to grow to \$15.5 billion by the year 2015, and is described in the report as a 'significant government asset'"*

There's creative accounting for you! The indebtedness of young New Zealanders regarded as a government asset!

Unfortunately, many young graduates are heading overseas, leaving their debts behind them. Some asset!

GENETICALLY-MODIFIED FOODS: An alliance of scientists and religious leaders in the United States is now suing the Food and Drug Administration for covering up scientific concern about the safety of genetically modified food. The *Australian Financial Review* (6/2/2001) reported:

"As part of the group's legal case against the FDA, the regulator has handed over 44,000 pages of documents, some of which are available at www.biointegrity.org which reveal serious scientific disquiet about the new technology.

'The documents uncovered by the legal case show some scientists and officials questioning the view that GM foods are essentially the same as conventional foods, an assumption strongly promoted by industry which has underpinned the regulatory response in Australia and the US.

"One FDA microbiology expert wrote: 'There is a profound difference between the types of unexpected effects from traditional breeding and genetic engineering.'

"In a 1992 memo, the FDA's Director for Veterinary Medicine said his department 'believes that animal feeds derived from genetically modified plants present unique animal and food safety concerns'

and that residues of toxic substances in 'meat and milk products may pose human food safety problems"

Sounds like a case of mad foot-in-mouth disease from genetically modified bureaucrats!

AUTOMATION IN TRANSPORT: We have drawn attention more than once to the implications behind Chris Corrigan's move to replace human labour with automated robotics on the wharves. A few operators sitting at home will direct by computer the unloading, sorting and stacking of shipping containers.

Three years ago Chris Corrigan confronted the Maritime Union, resulting in the wharf strikes which hit the news. In 1998 the corporation headed by Corrigan – Lang Corp. – lost \$65 million and its shares were worth \$1.17.

At the end of January Lang's shares touched \$13.03 and have settled now at \$12.66. A recent share float has been oversubscribed, with interest coming from overseas.

Why? Because Lang is now poised to expand its "workerless" handling operations into shipping wharves round Australia – plus its aim to acquire National Rail and Freightcorp. It also has its sights on the Port of Adelaide and six regional ports being sold by the South Australian government.

It looks as though Corrigan's "workerless revolution" is doing better than Howard's promise of "full employment". Of course, we could always build more government departments. How about a "Ministry of Beauty" to Australia's future colour co-ordination? Under "international guide-lines" – without question.

THE COLD LOGIC OF SHARON from (c) - www.MiddleEast.Org:

Many Israelis just stayed home. Others cast a blank vote. But a considerable minority thrust Ariel Sharon into the greatest electoral landslide in that country's history – obviously as well as an overwhelming majority of those who did vote. And the "Israel Arabs" turned their backs on both of the Zionist parties and managed a near complete "boycott" of the election, also for the first time and interestingly the exact opposite of what Arafat and the "Authority" advocated.

Now the soothing songs and tailored campaign slogans give way to ideological, political, and military realities. The major media primarily trumpet the politicians and spin-masters from hither and yon. But behind the scenes preparations for a spasm of intensified low-level conflict and stepped-up repression are in motion; and any spark could now bring about a cataclysmic eruption. From "Tehran to Aswan", as Sharon's own henchmen warned even during the campaign, those in charge of military plans and preparations are indeed sharpening their knives, not their pencils and television persona. – (from Neil Baird's website).