



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET



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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"A whole nation is now huddled around one tribal bonfire to lament its bitter fate, mourn its dead and ignore the dead of the other side. As usual, it views itself as the victim, turns the enemy into Satan and waits, inactive and bravely unthinking, for the calamity that is about to befall it and for which it is in no small measure to blame."*

– Gideon Levy – *Ha'aretz*, 10th June, 2001

NEED FOR DISCLOSURE AND REFORM by Jeremy Lee:

Following a small but growing number of articles (from some of which we have recorded excerpts) about the unsavoury nature and size of donations to the major political parties, the Labor Party, together with minor parties has called for changes to the electoral laws to ensure full disclosure of all donations to political parties. Perhaps the trigger for this move was the news that the collapsed HIH Insurance, with liabilities, we're told, of a possible \$4 billion to be largely underwritten by taxpayers, donated about \$375,000 to the Liberal Party. Will that party, like Jodee Rich and Brad Keeling of One Tel, have its assets 'frozen' until the report of a Royal Commission? Somehow, we doubt it!

The scandal of corporate donations – some disclosed and others not – with funding of party conferences, 'auctions', \$1,000-a-plate meals and so on, has been the subject of critical articles in *The Australian*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian Financial Review* that we know of.

'Honest John', however, is not impressed. The *AFR* (14/6/01) reported: *"..... But the Prime Minister, Mr. John Howard, played down the need for reform and dismissed suggestions that the Government or his senior ministers could be influenced by corporate largesse to the Liberal Party."*

"Our donors do not control us. We listen to our donors, we listen to the business community but not any decision that I am aware of has been in any way influenced by a level of financial contribution," Mr. Howard said. 'I run an ethical government.'

"The renewed debate on political donations follows media reports exposing the link between corporate Australia and the major political parties"

It is now perceived by a growing number of Australians that, particularly in the area of free trade and globalism, both the major parties dance the piper's tune, and that there is no altruism in political donations by corporations, which are regarded as a straight-out business investment. Justice must not only be done, but must be *seen to be done*, and this applies just as much to political parties as any other bodies in the community.

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PRISON – THE BOOM INDUSTRY: A major review of Australia's prison industry by Geoffrey Barker in *The Australian Financial Review* (13/6/01) contained some disturbing statistics. Of Australia's 98 prisons 13 are privately-owned, all of which have been established in the past 10 years. The number of prisoners in all Australian gaols over the same period has increased by 52 percent. The imprisonment rate has jumped by 32 percent over the same period. The prison population is increasing at 4.2 percent a year – much faster than population growth. With a prison population of about 21,000 in Australia, average annual cost per prisoner is almost \$56,000. Overall theft throughout Australia has increased at about the same rate as the prison population – 4.5 percent a year.

Australia's private prisons are managed by three companies: Corrections Corporation of Australia, Australasian Correctional Management and Group 4 Corrections Service. All of them are wholly-owned subsidiaries of foreign corporations.

Sooner than simply building more prisons to house more criminals, sooner or later focus must be directed to the type of society which is producing increasing numbers of criminals. The sign of a healthy and happy society is ever-reducing rates of crime, accompanied with more security, responsibility and freedom for the individual. If ever there was a rebuttal of Costello's oft-repeated phrase: "Australia's fundamentals are sound" they can be seen in the prison figures, the growth in poverty, the reduction in debt-free home ownership, the diminishing opportunities for young people, the crime rate, the suicides and the family break-downs. Australia's record in the last 10 years is not a happy one.

THE POOR OLD NATS: That redoubtable figure Senator Ron Boswell, self-appointed leader of the glorious rural renaissance, addressed the Brisbane Institute on May 29th. An edited version of his address was carried by *The AFR* (30/5/01). The article quoted Boswell as saying: ".... we have a National Party that has served Australia well for more than 80 years. The present National Party has delivered more funding, services and infrastructure to the bush than any other government.

"The far Right's mantra persists that the state of the bush is one of unremitting doom; that we're pawns of an international conspiracy hell bent on imposing 'isms' – economic rationalism and globalism – that use National Competition Policy as part of a deliberate attempt to make rural Australia a basket case... The Nationals are not ideologically driven, we're realists who face the world practically...."

Boswell's assessment was in stark contrast with a full-page analysis of Queensland politics in *The AFR* (12/6/01) headed BANANA POLITICS, which said of the Queensland State election: ".... The Nationals numbers were reduced from 23 to 12 (they have since been reduced to 11 following a by-election) Just days after the appalling result, the now leaderless Nationals – Borbidge resigned on election night – met to discuss their future. Those left standing were largely from the party's right wing and immediately decided that middle-of-the-road politics, tolerated under Borbidge, had to go ... the Nationals suffered a 40 percent swing in the seat Borbidge had held for them for the past 20 years, one of the worst by-election results in history

A professor of politics at Brisbane's Griffith University, John Wanna, says the Labor Government now has a seemingly unshakeable hold on the State. "If we go into the next election with One Nation, the Nationals, the Liberals and Independents contesting every seat against Labor, Beattie could well hold all his seats My view is that One Nation should merge with the Nationals and then the Liberal Party should work out whether they could live with that arrangement or whether they join with the Democrats or Labor"

Wanna's view seems more realistic than Boswell's. The latest Bulletin-Morgan Poll – by far the most accurate of the various polls (June 2/3/01) – points out that, after a brief rise following the Budget, the Coalition's popularity has slumped again, with the Liberals dropping 2.5 percent to 28 percent, and the Nationals unchanged on 2.5 percent. One Nation, meanwhile, is polling 6 percent, 2 per cent ahead of the Greens and 3.5 percent ahead of the Nationals.

Never mind! Senator Boswell is on the war-path!

A 'HAWAIIAN SUPREME' VICTORY: An all-Australian fast-food chain, Eagle Boys pizzas, has gained a major victory over the foreign-owned Pizza Hut chain. Pizza Hut took Eagle Boys to court for daring to claim that Pizza Hut profits went overseas, while those of Eagle Boys stayed in Australia. The Eagle Boys advertisement to this effect apparently upset Pizza Hut.

In an interim judgement, Judge Murray Wilcox of the Federal Court in Sydney ruled that Eagle Boys could continue the advertisement over the next four weeks until a full hearing of the case.

Whatever the final verdict, by the time full judgement is given most Australians will know which is the Australian-owned-and-made pizza, and which is foreign-owned. There's no doubt that the fast-growing "Buy-Australian" campaign is hurting the multinationals, and they don't know what to do about it. Going to court is not going to help their case.

THE POSSIBLE DANGERS OF MEDIA MONOPOLY: We have no brief for Jodee Rich and Brad Keeling, directors of the collapsed One Tel. Both have had their assets frozen, and may only leave the country under strictly-controlled conditions.

Their fellow-directors on the Board of One Tel include Lauchlan Murdoch of News Ltd. and James Packer of Consolidated Press. Each of these are empires far larger than the apparently shonky One Tel.

Is there any suggestion that the young Packer and Murdoch also have their assets frozen? And can we be sure that news articles in the papers controlled by each will present the full facts completely objectively?

As we said earlier, justice must be seen to be done, and both Rich and Keeling have copped plenty of flak in the Murdoch and Packer press, owned by their fellow directors.

UNKIND CUT: Most unkindly, *The Australian Financial Review* (5/6/01) reminded us of Costello's remarks about Australia's foreign debt while Labor was still in power. The article said: *"In February 1996, the then shadow treasurer, Peter Costello, claimed that the rise in Australia's net foreign debt to \$180 billion, or 39 percent of GDP, was 'the final indictment of [then prime minister Paul] Keating's economic mismanagement.'*

"The release yesterday of data showing Australia's net foreign debt at a record \$317 billion, or 48 percent of GDP, either says something about the economic management skills of the Coalition over the past five years or an error of judgement by Costello in 1996.

"The foreign debt issue has assumed a low profile in recent years, despite the sharp deterioration in the debt position. But it is being reflected implicitly in the performance of the Australian dollar, which in recent weeks has reached a record low"

A net foreign debt of \$10,000 per head of population during Paul Keating's last period was, as Costello pointed out, "economic mismanagement".

A net foreign debt of \$16,000 per head of population under Howard and Costello? Well, how would you describe that?

NO TO HOMOSEXUAL 'MARRIAGE' by Antonia Feitz:

Back in April it was reported that two Australian homosexuals planned to 'marry' in Amsterdam and then challenge Australian law when they return in a couple of years time – *Weekend Australian*, 14-15/4/01.

One of them, Darren, said, "Basically if we fill out any forms that asks about our marital status we'll be ticking married." And Tom said, "Darren will legally be my husband and we both want that acknowledged. It's not a political statement ..."

For the moment the Australian Tax Office thinks differently. It does not recognise homosexual marriages and a spokeswoman said, "As far as we're concerned they would be treated as individuals." But what will happen if and when the pair squawk discrimination and take their case to the human rights commission at the UN?

Let's have a reality check about marriage. The Oxford Dictionary gives the following definitions for the word 'spouse':

1. A married woman in relation to her husband; a wife, a bride.
2. A married man in relation to his wife; a husband, a bridegroom.

It's pretty clear: the state of being a husband or wife – i.e. of being married – only exists in the union of two sexes. A man can no more have a husband than a woman can have a wife because the words, 'husband' and 'wife' only have meaning in relation to the opposite sex.

Homosexuals and even the UN itself have no authority to unilaterally change the commonly understood meanings of words. Nor does the UN have any authority to proclaim that homosexuals have a 'right' to marry. St. Thomas Aquinas, the 'angelic Doctor', held that human laws bind from the fact that they aim for the common good. Once laws don't have the common good as their aim they lose their power to oblige.

A government's true role is to protect individuals' rights such as the right to property and to freedom of speech and association. Granting spurious socialist rights to minority groups – such as homosexuals' 'right' to marry – is nothing but social engineering against the expressed wishes of the majority.

PST, DON'T MENTION THE JAPANESE by Antonia Feitz:

Back in February, journalist Paul Toohey wrote a telling article on the anniversary of the 1942 bombing of Darwin by 242 Japanese planes. It seems that none of the dignitaries attending the ceremony – including the Governor General Sir William Deane, the Prime Minister Mr. Howard, the Leader of the Opposition Kim Beazley nor the US ambassador Edward Gnehm – could bring themselves to utter the J-word.

As Toohey wrote, "Those planes were Japanese. And we should be allowed to say it – not so as to foster hate, but because polite political sidestepping belittles those who were here." *Australian*, 20/2/01. Toohey is right. How utterly contemptible that our so-called leaders were so craven. As there weren't even any Japanese people present at the ceremony, why our leaders were all so inhibited and politically correct is a mystery.

Nevertheless none of them dared mention the J-word. Deane spoke about un-named "foreign aggression"; Howard talked about the ANZUS alliance; Beazley said Darwin people knew that they had to defend themselves and bury the dead, but he didn't say against whom or who killed the dead they buried; and the US ambassador said that the military attack that day threatened the very existence of the Australian nation, but he didn't say who attacked Australia.

The Asian nations must despise us for being so disrespectful about our own history. The Japanese especially, who honour their own ancestors, must be appalled.

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