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 prostitution of the role of money in the marketplace: There can be no adequate understanding of the suicide or the survival alternative facing humanity, without a proper perception of the financial reality that it is the abuse and prostitution of the role of money which is the root cause of all economic evil, and hence of most of the social disorders threatening the future of society. In a sense money must be priceless. It is the priceless lifeblood and catalytic reactor of the economic body. It is the priceless measurer of prices which the community uses to value its own real wealth of natural resources and talent. It reflects the priceless credit and faith which the community has in its own ability to produce goods and services."* – From ***"The Great Harlot"*** by Peter Lock 2002

TO PARTY? – OR NOT TO PARTY? It's hard to get excited about the Democrats. Quite apart from the affairs of a recent leading lady, the scratching and biting of the latest two is reminiscent of a sort of political 'Moll Flanders'.

And, apparently, it can't make up its mind whether or not it is a "real party". Prior to the last federal election Democrat candidates made a great play of signing a pledge of the things they would stand "rock hard" on, if only people would vote them into office. Such a pledge, obviously, is the sign of a 'tried and true' party which is there to keep the others honest.

The Australian Financial Review (10/7/02) told us: *" .... All the Democrat Senators and Senate candidates signed a pledge saying they would not support, among other things, an increase in the GST rate, or 'further privatization of Telstra' .... Most voters would take that to mean that all those Democrats would stick by that. But what about the party's platform and its history of Senators being allowed to vote individually?*

"The Democrats constitution says: 'An elected member of Parliament shall adhere to the policies formulated by this party: except that where the views of an elected member are in conflict with party policy, then the elected member may vote according to his conscience; and where, in the opinion of an elected member, his duty to his electorate is in conflict with party policy, then the elected member may vote according to his duty to his electorate....'"

That position is a good deal more enlightened than that held by the Nationals, the Liberals or the ALP, each of which insist on pinning their members down by the conscience into voting robots who do as their Party Whips tell them to.

But how did a Party with that sort of enlightened constitution ever allow Meg Lees to swing them behind the GST? And did Meg Lees, who is now obviously changing direction on the sale of Telstra, sign the pledge before the last election? In the dust blown around from the cat-fight, it's a little hard to sort this out.

THE NEW ZEALAND ELECTION: New Zealanders go to the polls before the end of the month. At this stage it appears to be the meaningless election that has become the norm in western democracies. Of interest – and sympathy – is the statement issued by a New Zealand organization called Campaign against Foreign Control of Aotearoa, which reads:

FOREIGN CONTROL – KEY FACTS

- Foreign direct investment (ownership of companies) in New Zealand increased from $9.7 billion in 1989 to $49.3 billion in 2001 – an increase of nearly 400%
- Foreign owners now control 47% of the share market. In 1989, the figure was 19%
- In 2000 alone, the Overseas Investment Commission (OIC) approved foreign investment totalling $4.1 billion (the OIC only has to approve company takeovers involving $50 million or more. Until 1999, the threshold was $10 million. So the totals were much higher).
- The area of rural land sold to foreigners has increased from 42,000 hectares per year in 1991 to 93,000 in 2000.
- Statistics New Zealand figures, as of March 2001, list the biggest foreign owners of New Zealand as, in order, Australia, Netherlands, US, UK, Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan. (Canada's figures are listed as "confidential").
- Transnational corporations (TNCs) make massive profits out of New Zealand. For the 2000/01 financial year, US-owned Telecom made a $643 million profit. It paid out 50% as dividends to its owners. Previously, it paid out never less than 70% of annual profits as dividends, and went up to 98% for the 1998/99 year. TNC profits can truly be called New Zealand's biggest invisible export. From 1995-98, TNCs made $10.6 billion profits: only 6% was reinvested.
- Foreign "investment", in the great majority of cases, is actually a takeover, not new investment.
- Foreign investors are not big employers – they only employ 18% of the workforce. Foreign ownership does not guarantee more jobs. In fact, it quite often adds to unemployment. TNCs have made tens of thousands jobless.
- Foreign ownership does nothing to improve New Zealand's foreign debt problem. In 1984, total private and public foreign debt stood at $16 billion. In 2001, it was $123 billion, more than 100% of NZ's Gross Domestic Product, despite all the asset sales and takeovers.
- Ownership means political power. Foreign control means recolonisation, but by company this time, not country.
- Nearly everything that has been done to New Zealanders in the past decade has been done to "make the New Zealand economy attractive to foreign investment". This is what it all means to ordinary New Zealanders – we are involuntary competitors in the race to the bottom.

(*For those interested in further information see:* http://canterbury.cyberspace.co.nz/community/CAFCA/)

Obviously, the same pattern in New Zealand as in Australia. The bureaucratic policy-makers must have attended the same international seminars. The facts about NZ Telecom are cause for reflection as Howard, Costello and John Anderson hustle us towards the unwanted sale of Telstra.

THE TROUBLED QUESTION OF 'FULL EMPLOYMENT': We have previously dealt with the implications of Gorbachev's "20:80" society, spelled out at his 1995 San Francisco conference, where he pointed out that technology had now enabled a world where all consumer goods could be produced with 20% of the world's existing workforce. The evidence for this has been clear since 1922, when C.H. Douglas gave his address on "The Breakdown Of The Employment System".

I have just received through the mail a copy of a quarterly magazine, printed and published in South Australia, called ***Australian Options***. It is a well-written, thoughtful production reflecting the views of what used to be called the Left. In fact, its front cover includes the words "Left discussions for social justice and political change". The back cover features three highlighted statements spurring immediate interest:

"Only a fraction of the available human labour in the world is now needed for the production of the total amount of consumption goods necessary for life.... Therefore the number of hours per week ought so to be reduced by law that unemployment is systematically abolished" – Albert Einstein.

"Modern methods of production have given us the possibility of ease and security for all; but we have chosen instead to have overwork for some, and starvation for others. Hitherto we have continued to be as energetic as we were before there were machines: in this we have been foolish, but there is no reason to go on being foolish forever!" – Bertrand Russell.

"The most profound danger to world peace in the coming years will stem not from the irrational acts of states or individuals but from the legitimate demands of the world's dispossessed." – From a statement by Francis Crick, Nardine Gordimer, Jose Saramago and 100 other Nobel laureates to mark the 100th anniversary of the Nobel Prizes last December.

To anyone with an inkling of Social Credit these statements are true and self-evident. But the Left, which has highlighted the problem clearly, has a jumble of confusing answers. Common to all of them is the idea that somehow we must maintain "full employment". They are enthusiastic about the road France has embarked on – that of 'reducing hours' employed. This fails to recognize that one of the greatest and most environmentally-damaging problems facing industrial societies is getting people to and from work each day. Whether it is for four or eight hours a day is immaterial.

Equally, trying to "share reducing work quotas" to maintain full employment keeps out of reach of those employed any choice about their own vocation.

And again, the cost of solving the problem is thrown directly onto employers, who are expected to pay the same or higher wages for reduced hours. Already, employers are expected to pay for workers' holidays, medical insurance, superannuation, pay-roll tax and now maternity leave, and can only include these extra costs in prices charged for production, compounding the real problem.

The alternative is to increasingly sever the direct connection between incomes and employment, substituting a national dividend which gives individuals an increasing choice over how to employ their own time. Thus "full employment" is increasingly replaced with "self-employment".

A limited example of what could be expanded can be seen in Alaska, where a cheque is sent to each citizen once a year, distributing the oil royalties that flow into the State. There are no State direct or indirect taxes. The intense competition for jobs has been diminished.

Using the audited and balanced increase in the money-supply, instead of taxation or royalties, currently annexed by trading banks for their own profit, should be the source of a national dividend, as automation increasingly shoulders the work-load that was once placed on human shoulders. In other words, technology, the result of past 'know-how', earns its own wage that should be shared by all.

ABORIGINES SHACKLED BY WELFARE CHAINS: West Australia's One Nation member Frank Hough, JP, MLC, has called for a serious look at what the current welfare industry is doing to Australia's Aboriginal people.

In a media release he says, "Indigenous people feel trapped by the current Aboriginal welfare industry", and the news comes as no surprise to him.

"I am constantly receiving correspondence from Aboriginal Australians with regard to Native Welfare. These are your hard-working, everyday men and women who can see the toll welfare dependency is taking on members of their community. Then there's the heightened levels of discrimination that Aborigines must contend with from others members of this society as a result of Native Welfare," he claims.

Mr. Hough has received several letters on the issue, including one from a self-employed Aboriginal who slammed ATSIC's role in depriving Aboriginals of the right to decide and achieve for themselves. The letter stated, in part:

"ATSIC, at its top end, is run by white people while self-serving and inexperienced indigenous people are the middle management. This naivety and greed lends to the misappropriation of millions of dollars from the Commission's funding, keeping Aboriginal people confused and disillusioned while ensuring their own existence is stable and futuristic...Aboriginal people want and need help, not handouts."

Indigenous Australians are also critical of the role ATSIC takes in negotiating Native Title claims and of the present way in which health care services are being delivered. There is a need to end the Aboriginal / non-Aboriginal dichotomy of the metropolitan health services which leads to duplication and waste. The money saved could be distributed to health services above the 26th parallel where it is most needed by Indigenous people.

The current system of catering for the needs of Aborigines does not work because it is discriminatory and based on the notion that Indigenous Australians should not be given responsibility for their own economic self-determination.

"In any society there are some individuals who may require help from time to time. Yet as a society of equals the trick is to provide for people's welfare needs in terms of equality and common sense. This means providing for all Australians whereever appropriate and on the basis of individual need. It makes the acknowledgement of Aboriginality a reflection of the desire for cultural recognition, not in terms of special benefits attached," said Mr. Hough.

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