



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"There remains to be considered, however, a false remedy common to the false history of the last generation. This remedy is the remedy of substituting words for reality: of pretending to preserve an institution by preserving its name... When a man tells you that a country is tenacious of its institutions because it has kept the mere names of these institutions while wholly destroying their essence, he is talking nonsense... There are two ways in which this trick of unreality might be played.*

"We might keep that name attaching, for instance, to a real King with a subordinate council. Or, again, the mere name "House of Commons" might be retained attached to a dead function, while some new organ was given the reality of power...

"We must distinguish between these two very different pieces of verbal trickery. Both are well-known and tried ways of keeping a name while you change a thing..."

– "The House of Commons and Monarchy", Hilaire Belloc, 1920

DOUBLE STANDARDS ON PAULINE HANSON by Jeremy Lee:

Two things have happened in Queensland in the last month – Pauline Hanson has been sent to jail for three years together with David Ettridge; and Mike Kaiser, former State Secretary of the ALP, who was found guilty of falsely registering votes, and was 'set aside' by his party, is now seeking office within the ALP at national level. It was decided that Kaiser should not face prosecution for his actions at the time.

It is all very well for Premier Peter Beattie to say so disarmingly that he won't interfere with the courts. But it is government legislation which has produced the double-standards on which the courts are required to rule. He would be much more convincing if he cleaned up Queensland's electoral act.

There was no intention by Pauline Hanson to deceive electors – and that is the only thing that counts. Most of the legislative hoops that candidates have to jump through have been fashioned into a gauntlet to frustrate genuine choice among voters, and to ensure the safety of 'big-bloc' government. The worst of many aberrations is compulsory preferential voting, which clearly flouts the original idea about elections set out in the Constitution. At least Queensland has not gone so far as the Commonwealth

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on this one. Canberra legislated for "compulsory preferential" as a direct result of the rise of One Nation. They should be ashamed of themselves.

Pauline Hanson has been foolish and naïve – but criminal? If the whole can-of-worms surrounding vote-fraud, big donations to parties, the improper use of tax-money at election time, perks for politicians, etc., was opened up, Pauline would emerge as one of the cleanest. Her finance was a genuine contribution from tens of thousands of battling Australians, rather than the favour-buying of vested interests.

CREAN RAPPED OVER THE KNUCKLES: Almost as though to emphasize the point, ALP leader Simon Crean has been taken to task from the most surprising quarter – sections of Australia's Jewish population. His crime? Gagging members of his own party on the question of Israel and the Middle East.

Under the headline JEWISH ANGER AT CREAN GAG ON PRO-PALESTINIANS, *The Australian* (20/8/03) reported:

"A prominent Jewish leader has urged Australian Jews, including many active members of the ALP, to protest to Labor leader Simon Crean about censorship of pro-Palestinian Labor backbenchers.

"Melbourne-based Jewish activist Sol Salbe urged 100 people, many of whom are members of the ALP and active donors, to apply pressure on Mr. Crean by 'flooding' him with letters of complaint to demonstrate that the Jewish community has diverse views on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

"At least three Jewish organizations will meet over the next few days to plan a formal response to Mr. Crean's move to stop two pro-Palestinian backbenchers from speaking on Monday in a parliamentary debate on the Middle East"

Which raises interesting questions, quite apart from the Middle East issue. Isn't the move by a party leader to stop an elected member of parliament from speaking his or her mind an interference with the duty of a member? And why would a leader do so, other than in subservience to some outside pressure? Spokesmen for the Jewish community have pointed out some time ago that they are the heaviest donors to party funds in Australia. Surely, this is a dangerous interference with the parliamentary process, likely to produce a result like that in America, where the Jewish pressure group AIPAC boasts it controls Congress with its financial and media patronage?

Wouldn't the efforts of the Electoral Commission be far better spent openly investigating the whole effect of money and media on the role and integrity of members of parliament, than hounding a woman for technical breeches which, whatever else is said, never compromised the integrity of elected members? The Electoral Commission "strains at a gnat and swallows a camel", and has much to answer for. No wonder electors have so little trust in the voting process and the type of representation they're getting.

It is heartening and commendable that sections of the Jewish community are prepared to demonstrate even-handedness. If the frightful Middle East conflict is ever to be solved, it is going to be through the efforts of moderates on both sides who genuinely provide a lead for peace.

Congratulations to those Jews who are prepared to speak out for genuine, open debate in Parliament!

THE FORTY-EIGHT-HOUR WEEK: It's hard to believe, but the ACTU has run into heavy weather in its demand for a forty-eight hour week. It wasn't so long ago that the 40-hour week was accepted as the norm. France has opted for the 35-hour week, and seems to be surviving!

With more and more Australians either faced with unemployment, or else casual part-time employment

if they're lucky, those still in full-time jobs are working harder, with longer hours each year. One reason is that employment benefits don't rise with the number of hours worked. Medical, superannuation, holiday-loading and insurance remain the same whether a worker toils for 40 or 50 hours. The more hours squeezed from a worker, the lower the indirect overheads associated with employment.

The Unions have agreed to fight for a 48-hour week, including overtime, and a 35-hour week in the building and manufacturing sectors.

It is a desperately myopic policy. There is nothing wrong with trying to maintain and, if possible, improve incomes. But in reality this is an attempt to ration a diminishing amount of work.

The whole economy has shifted from the original wage-type system, firstly to a "service" type economy, as productive jobs fell; and, secondly, to an increasingly expanding "part-time casual" economy – all described by the government, for the sake of convenience, as "full employment".

The problem has been increased even further by the fact that families can no longer live on one wage, with more and more women forced into the work-force for the sake of survival, producing a host of youth problems in the process.

The final straw has been the shift of IT jobs overseas to such places as India and the Philippines, plus the importation of labour forces from overseas in certain sectors, 'expatriate labour forces' who work for a fraction of what Australians are used to. All this has happened as a result of the global free market, and will be made worse under such international treaties as GATS – the General Agreement on Trade in Services.

The Editorial in *The Australian* (20/8/03) was starkly realistic about the result:

"The ACTU's idea of inserting a clause into industrial awards capping the working week at 48 hours, including overtime, is a bad one: bad for the economy, bad for workers and above all bad for those seeking work. It is a job-killer"

Quite right. But the solution offered in the Editorial – better productivity in a more flexible work force – begs the question. Better productivity in a highly automated world has been attained year after year by cutting the workforce and reducing real wages. As the WTO delegate from China pointed out at the Melbourne World Economic Forum conference, we are now competing with giant economies that can undercut our wage-rates by as much as a factor of 30!

True efficiency, in the jargon of globalism, would mean reducing the standard of living in Australia to Third World levels – a bowl of rice each day, no home-ownership, and slave-like conditions.

This problem is bursting in industrial economies throughout the world, with levels of poverty and hunger never disclosed in the figures for GDP.

The August *New Times Survey* contains some detailed and horrible evidence about the burgeoning poverty in the United States, where as many as 40 million people are going hungry, homelessness is a desperate problem, and unemployment rising. The problem has been compounded by huge illegal immigration, greatest in the California which has just gone into insolvency. (*New Times Survey*, August 2003, \$5 posted from our Melbourne office)

The problem is vastly greater than the attempt to share the limited amount of work. The ACTU, whose intentions are obviously to protect the worker, is in reality contributing to greater unemployment, and a rise in the number relying on part-time jobs that are inadequate for reasonable living.

The idea of the "full employment" economy, with its corollary of "no income without a job" has been redundant for some time. To pretend it is still a valid objective is a denial of reality.

How much greater must the problem of inadequate employment and poverty in Australia become before we re-examine our options? Surely the two main questions we should be asking are "Are we capable of producing enough for all? Even with such a small productive workforce?" and "If so, how do we distribute the abundance at our disposal if we don't need everyone working?"

This takes us back to concepts we haven't really considered since the early years of the 20th Century – that of the Distributive movement, and then the Social Credit idea developed by Clifford Hugh Douglas.

The strangest and most ominous silence is that of the Christian church, which has evaded this question so successfully that it now doesn't even know it exists. It once pronounced strongly on such questions as "usury", "the Just Price", the alleviation of poverty and much else.

Now, the Church passes by on the other side, debating endlessly such issues as homosexuality and abortion which, important though they may be, are symptoms of a larger breakdown in the whole structure of society itself.

Even sections of those in full employment are hard put to it to make ends meet. What of those who have been made redundant by technology, overseas competition and cut-throat labour conditions? They have the makings of the largest social revolution in history.

SICK US VETS SUE COMPANIES, BANKS – New York, Reuters website news, August 19th, 2003: Veterans of the 1991 Gulf War filed suit on Tuesday against banks and corporations they say helped former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein build chemical weapons that poisoned them and caused birth defects in their children. (I would think this news would be of interest to our own Australian Vietnam Veterans...ed.)

The suit, filed in Brooklyn federal court, seeks class action status on behalf of some 100,000 veterans suffering from illnesses including memory loss, deterioration of the central nervous system and chronic fatigue.

The case seeks unspecified damages and a court order forcing the defendants to pay for medical monitoring of the veterans and their children. Among accusations in the suit is a charge that the defendants violated international laws barring the use of chemical weapons.

The plaintiffs say that they were exposed to sarin nerve gas, mustard gas and other chemical agents manufactured and obtained by Saddam Hussein's government. They said they were exposed to the chemicals when US and allied forces blew up hundreds of Iraqi ammunition dumps.

Defendants include 11 companies that supplied chemicals and equipment to Iraq and 33 banks that helped finance the transactions. Most of the defendants are based overseas but do business in New York. Some lawyers involved in the case filed a 1994 suit in Texas on behalf of Gulf War veterans injured by chemical agents

Plaintiffs' lawyers said the Brooklyn case includes defendants whose identities were recently revealed in Iraqi disclosures made to United Nations weapons inspectors.

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