



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"It has been said that conservatives neither write nor read books. If this is true then the domination of the printed word in book form lies with the scribblers of the left and those pseudo-conservatives whose chief value is political correctness. The republican issue has seen a clear domination of the field of popular books by globalists, multiculturalists, feminists and other nasties. Often conservatives can seemingly collapse, perhaps from mental strain. Tony Abbott got off to a good start with *The Minimal Monarchy* (1995) but by the time of his book *How to Win the Constitutional War and Give Both Sides What They Want* (1997) Abbott had compromised with republicanism:... Republicanism in the past... was based upon nationalism and a desire for independence. Republicans today are globalists and internationalists, who wish to be 'swallowed' up by the world..."*
– *"The Republic of the Rich"* by Bruce Ruxton 1999

THE ABBOT, THE LAW AND THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS by Jeremy Lee:

Sections of Australia are agog with recent revelations about Liberal Minister Tony Abbot and his slush fund, allegedly founded to save us all from a democratic fate worse than death. The only member of the trio who set up and ran One Nation to escape prosecution was former Abbot staffer David Oldfield. It is quite clear that Abbot did not trust the Australian public to make a wise choice about who they wanted to represent them. He, on the other hand, was wise enough to know, and his selfless act was to save us from ourselves. Or that's his line, at any rate.

How many dictators, dressed in the cloak of democracy, have believed they knew best?

And what of the law itself? A number of senior politicians have argued with a modicum of self-righteousness that the charge and sentence against Pauline Hanson was none of their making. It was simply the law running its course, and the law is there to be obeyed.

The argument becomes increasingly flimsy, and it is the law itself that should come under scrutiny. More and more regulations have been piled on top of each other when it comes to voting, and it is time to ask whether the whole process is beginning to interfere with genuine choice. But it is hardly likely the major parties are going to review a series of stumbling blocks designed to herd the voting electorate in a predetermined direction.

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The only part that comes under insufficient scrutiny is the registration and counting of votes – a process with so many loopholes that there is little belief among voters that the system is above board.

The following article is by Anthony Green, an election analyst with the Australian Broadcasting Commission, deals with some important issues in this connection and can be found on: <http://www.smh.com.au/2003/08/21/1061434983325.html>

Perils of Pauline: her breach of 'club' rules was technical rather than deceit – Anthony Green
August 22nd, 2003

"The jailing of former One Nation leaders Pauline Hanson and David Ettridge on Wednesday has understandably dominated talkback radio airwaves ever since. Hanson's supporters have been outraged at the three-year sentence, while her more vocal opponents have struggled to contain their glee.

The majority in-between have been astonished at this turn in the Hanson phenomenon, with general concern at the harshness of the penalty imposed.

It is important to remember that Hanson and Ettridge have not been convicted of offences under electoral law. The charges were of fraud under the Queensland Criminal Code, including dishonestly inducing registration of a political party and dishonestly obtaining benefit in electoral funding. No offence of falsely registering a political party exists.

Legislation governing political parties did not exist until the 1980s, and even now provides only a bare framework. Registration was introduced to facilitate the inclusion of party names on ballot papers, to allow the central nomination of candidates, and to regulate the payment of public funding and associated donation disclosure laws.

There are no rules on preselection, on the process of forming party policy, or indeed any requirement for internal democracy. Before the case that de-registered One Nation, the view was that almost any structure was valid for the registration of a political party.

Hanson's criminal charges came about as a result of a civil action by an ex-One Nation candidate, Terry Sharples. In August 1999 the courts backed his claim that One Nation had not had the required 500 members when registered, merely the triumvirate of Hanson, Ettridge and David Oldfield as members. The members' names put forward had been part of a Hanson support group. After the civil finding of fraud, a criminal case on who perpetrated the fraud was always bound to follow.

The Sharples case had been defended by the Commissioner Des O'Shea for the Electoral Commission Queensland (ECQ). One Nation had submitted 1000 members for registration. The ECQ verified 530 as being on the electoral roll, wrote to 250 of them to verify they were members of the party, and 217 replied that they were. On that basis, the commissioner ruled the party had the required number of members.

The finding in the Sharples case acknowledges that the constitution put forward for registration was in fact the one used earlier to obtain federal registration from the Australian Electoral Commission. As

Hanson was a federal MP then, the federal registration was valid even though the members had no say in the party.

Indeed, had either Hanson or Ettridge been state MPs, the registration in Queensland would also have been valid. In other words, the rules greatly favour parties with MPs in Parliament, but make it harder for outsiders to gain entry to the club.

So this case has nothing to do with any requirement in legislation for internal democracy in political parties. One Nation's party structure was Byzantine, but perfectly acceptable for anyone who is an MP. True, Hanson and Ettridge should have known the structure they were putting forward was suspect. But their breach of the rules does tend to look technical rather than deceit, and there is no doubt One Nation existed as a structure seeking to achieve political office.

At the 1998 Queensland election One Nation polled 439,121 votes or 22.7 per cent, more than either the Liberal or National parties, with 11 MPs elected, several of whom were unknown in their electorates. They were elected entirely on the back of endorsement by Hanson. Whatever the structure of the party, there is no doubt that One Nation existed, there is no doubt those involved thought they were members, and it is equally clear that votes were won by the association of One Nation candidates with the name Pauline Hanson.

In the end, Hanson and Ettridge received little financial benefit from claiming public funding. Perhaps they received inflated public standing, thanks to being satraps of their own political party.

But if self-aggrandisement is to be a crime in Australian politics, then there are many more politicians than just Hanson likely to find themselves in jail." (end of article)

Which raises a few questions. It seems logical that a candidate who wants to stand for either State or Federal election should pay some sort of application fee, simply to curtail frivolous nominations. Provided each pays such a fee, why should not those who wish to band together in a party or with a common policy, and be listed on the ballot paper, without the tenuous business of having to prove 500 members? It's just an added complication – which we never had for 80 years – to help the major parties. It is a misuse of the law.

And it is time the use of millions of dollars of tax-funds to pay some candidates was stopped.

CURRENT ACCOUNT DEFICIT BLOWS OUT TO A RECORD: Australia's trade balance blew out in the June quarter to the highest level in Australia's history – \$12.6 billion. During that three month period the amount Australia imported exceeded exports by \$140 million a day, or nearly \$6 million an hour. As has been pointed out, this takes us back to the level where former Treasurer Paul Keating declared Australia "a banana republic".

But this time, declared Treasurer Costello with portentous gravity, it wasn't his fault. The drought and the global crisis is to blame. Now that the drought is ended and America is recovering, Costello assures us, we'll soon be back on top.

All of which would be nice if it were true. Australia's economy is in an even weaker state than when

Keating was treasurer. More farmers have left their industry, our manufacturing is weaker, there is a greater degree of overseas ownership, more profits and dividends leave Australia. We have major defence and immigration costs that were not there when Keating's hand was on the tiller. The degree of poverty in Australia has increased as the divide between rich and poor has widened. Taxation is at the highest level in Australia's history. Household debt has more than doubled as a percentage of income.

All the slings and arrows cast by Costello at Keating while in Opposition have turned into boomerangs. Socially, we are in mess, with health, education and defence in trouble. We've cooked the employment figures to make things look better. But many more Australians are awake to what is really going on.

Each quarter's Current Account Deficit is added on to Australia's foreign debt, which now represents some \$18,000 for each man, woman and child in the country.

"Ah! But America's economy is recovering," we are assured. Pardon me? With total debts now rising towards \$50 TRILLION, half its States broke, mass poverty and unemployment, and an estimated expenditure of over \$1 billion a week trying to stave off chaos in Iraq, America's position is disastrous.

All of a sudden, Bush's popularity polls show a large drop. Half the population of the US want America to pull out of Iraq. About the same number no longer believe they were told the truth about the reasons for war. Afghanistan looms large among Bush's problems.

The Democrats, who were largely silent in the build up to the Iraq war, are now demanding answers. The knives are out for Bush. If he has to campaign for re-election while GIs are still dying in Iraq and Afghanistan, he will soon join Bill Clinton on the benches.

We are now entering one of the most turbulent and convulsive stages internationally for decades. It is in such a period that establishments begin to lose their grip on the reins of power, and ordinary people, *if they work together with some faith*, can make breakthroughs.

NEW ZEALAND'S MOST EMBARRASSING TAX by Bill Daly: New Zealand can't claim to have been the first to introduce a Goods and Service Tax, Canada beat us to that. But we can now claim a real first, though few would want to shout it from the roof tops.

The Clark Labour Government is introducing a Flatulence Tax. No, this is not a joke. We wish!

Some people with a better edumacation than myself say – and they claim to have science on their side – that the flatulence of cows is contributing to the atmospheric loss of ozone. New Zealand is the second largest milk producer in the world which means we have lots of cows which means our farmers are going to be up for a few more hundred dollars a year in tax. Somehow this tax is going to help stop the world from getting too warm.

In the meantime a few heroic farmers have been posting small parcels of another matter emitted by cows to members of Parliament.

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