



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

- NEWS HIGHLIGHTS
- BACKGROUND INFORMATION
- COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS



The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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VALE TWO GREAT AUSTRALIANS ELMA BUTLER and THOMAS FIELDER

It is with great sadness we report the passing of both
Elma Joyce Butler
who died on 31st December, 2003,
and
Thomas Fielder
who died on 2nd January, 2004.

IN THIS ISSUE: • *Vale – Two Great Australians* • *A Blast From The Bishop!*

"ON TARGET"

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Page 1 (1)

ELMA JOYCE BUTLER – Betty Luks: The fifth child and second daughter of Charles and Thirza Turner, Elma Joyce Butler was born in the Colac district of Victoria over 82 years ago.

Fate took an early turn in Elma's young adult life, when on a 1938 trip to Melbourne she acquired a copy of the social credit journal *The New Times*, which she then took home to her father. In time her father went through a radical change in his political understanding and allegiance.

Her mother died when she was seventeen and it wasn't long before Elma became the mistress of the Turner household where her amazingly competent talents as a homemaker and hostess were developed and honed.

Elma's brother Cedric tells us, "In due course Eric Butler entered the Turner scene, his trips to the farm becoming more frequent and he was often found at the kitchen table, tapping away at his typewriter, surrounded by the fruits of Elma's lavish cooking."

Even though her looks and talents ensured a competitive field, Eric won her hand in marriage. The calibre and character of the woman is better understood upon knowing that one of the conditions upon which they married was that Eric's work was to come first – and to this Elma agreed.

Elma Butler kept her word, she gave her all, her everything, in time, energy, faith and loyal support to her husband and the social credit cause he espoused. The petite, attractive woman with the porcelain complexion belied the energetic and indestructible personality it contained.

A hard taskmaster to herself, at times she was impatient with others who couldn't keep up with her. Her brother Cedric said, "Elma Butler asked no quarter and gave none. She went into battle boots and all, and those who underestimated her strength did so at considerable peril."

THOMAS L. FIELDER – Betty Luks: It was in 1996 that Tom and his son Douglas undertook a pilgrimage to the German prison camp Stalag IVB for Tom to lay to rest the ghosts of the past which, as a result of spending almost two years as a prisoner-of-war in the camp, still haunted him.

Tom said memories of the place haunted him for over fifty years until, upon returning, he found the site a peaceful natural birch forest – and the ghosts were then laid to rest.

In his book *Candle of Light* Tom Fielder recalled that although the Second World War, during which he served as a wireless operator in an R.A.F. bomber command, was allegedly "triggered" to defend the integrity of Poland, the 'victors' in the end (the West) didn't 'liberate' Poland at all – but handed Poland over to the iron grip of a Communist terror regime.

As a Numurkah, Victoria, soldier-settler dairy farmer, Tom sold his farm to devote more time to continue the outstanding work he had carried out, with the help and support of his late wife Peggy – his childhood sweetheart – through his MEA Tapes. Right to the very end of his life Tom strove to introduce and educate his fellow-Australians to what really went on behind world events and what can be done about it.

Tom travelled many thousands of miles over many years, faithfully recording League lectures and speeches delivered by such men as Eric Butler, David Thompson and Jeremy Lee, and guest speakers such as Ivor Benson and Patrick Walsh, and many, many others. He had some hair-raising tales to tell of the time he drove historian David Irving around Victoria on tour.

It was written of Tom: "While he has been privileged to make recordings of some speakers of exceptional courage and awesome intellect, and has trod the road of dedication and self-sacrifice in the company of some great Australian patriots, it is at times a lonely, uphill journey, and Tom can be forgiven for wondering, sometimes, if there is anybody out there listening." Well done true and faithful servant.

The rest of the tributes to both Elma Butler and Tom Fielder will appear in the coming January 2004 edition of The New Times Survey. Readers of On Target can purchase a copy of The New Times Survey from the Melbourne Office by sending a cheque/money order to: The Australian League of Rights, G.P.O. Box 1052, Melbourne, 3001. Cheques to be made out to: The Australian League of Rights. Single copy\$3, or five copies for \$10.

A BLAST FROM THE BISHOP! from a Canadian Correspondent: There has been a lot of Tom Wright around recently. The new Bishop of Durham of the United Kingdom has arrived with a bit of a bang. In a Christmas Day sermon, which was broadcast nationwide by Radio 4, the man who is now the fourth most important bishop in the Church of England (he comes after Canterbury, York and London in precedence) launched a thinly-veiled attack over the war in Iraq on Tony Blair and George Bush as people who "still invoke Jesus to support plans that look much more like those of Augustus", the imperial power of Christ's day.

He also criticised Israel's "savage" policies towards the Palestinians, even quoting the words of the Jewish prophet Isaiah about "God himself fighting on the wrong side".

A withering swipe at last generation's theologians: On Christmas Eve, in an article in *The Independent*, he took a withering sideswipe at "so many of last generation's theologians", including presumably his famous predecessor at Durham, Dr. David Jenkins, who were eager to reduce the Christmas story to the status of a myth.

That morning, on the programme, he locked horns with the leading Jewish scholar, Geza Vermes, on the significance of Jesus's Jewishness.

And on the same day, writing in *The Times*, he launched a full-frontal assault on what he calls the "shrill secularists" who every year "discover" Christmas is "really" an ancient pagan festival in an attempt to cut Christianity down to size and screen out its revolutionary political implications.

As well as all that, Dr. Wright is one of the key members of the international commission recently appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, to avoid schism in the Anglican Communion over the issue of gay bishops, to whom Dr. Wright is fairly stoutly opposed.

Yes, you can expect to be hearing a lot more of Dr. Tom Wright: If his combination of strong stances falls a little oddly on your intellectual template then that merely shows, so far as Dr. Wright is concerned, that you are thoroughly immersed in the unquestioning presuppositions of our culture. Which makes you, I am afraid, a part of the problem.

"The faddish culture of our day is still clinging to the threadbare pseudo-moralisms of the late Enlightenment world," he told me in a study of towering bookshelves in Auckland Castle, the former hunting lodge which has been the home to the prince-bishops of Durham for 800 years.

"The Church has to say, 'Sorry there's a more sophisticated way of doing society, culture, ethics,

ethos and so on', said the man who was an Oxford theology lecturer then canon theologian of Westminster Abbey before being appointed to Durham with its long tradition of scholar-bishops. Dr. Wright is probably evangelicalism's cleverest contemporary thinker and communicator.

"The way we line up issues owes much to America, where things are still seen along old Civil War fault-lines. You are either a liberal Yankee in favour of gays, abortion and all other right-thinking causes. Or you're a Southern fundamentalist redneck who believes in guns, the death penalty and shooting people outside abortion clinics," he said.

But life is more complicated than the Mason-Dixon line suggests. "The position of someone such as Rowan Williams is seen as inconsistent only by those who accept that tick-all-the-boxes package deal. And yet this left/right polarisation is only as old as the French Revolution. It shows that our assumptions are still those of the world of the late Enlightenment and of the Whig idea of history [that we progress constantly to a future better than the past].

"Post-modernity is assumed to be on the 'left' side of the equation, although it re-inscribes empire rather than undermining it, allowing the bullies and the bosses to create facts on the ground to their own advantage. (All those years of Derrida and we still get George W Bush!)

"But post-modernism flourishes only where we can create our own private spaces, put on our headphones and be in our private world. There's no post-modernism on the West Bank. The lines there are real and drawn in the sand."

All of which gives some hint of the package of simultaneous radicalism and conservatism, faith and reason, which constitutes Dr. Wright's world view.

It gives non-evangelicals some sense that a philosophical position, rather than outdated homophobia, lies behind the opposition to gay bishops by many in the Church. And it says something about the complex interweaving of religion and politics in the Church of England, which should remain established, Dr. Wright believes, partly to "keep alive the rumour of God in society" but also to speak truth unto power. The medieval church excommunicated Holy Roman Emperors over the death penalty "and there are people in Texas today who need to be reminded of that".

Bishop likens Bush and Blair (and by inference John Howard) to white vigilantes: Dr. Wright himself has not been coy in this area. Before the invasion of Iraq, and before he became a bishop, he said: "It is horrendous that two leaders of the Western world who profess to be of the Christian faith are the two who are leading us towards war against an Islamic state. It is going to mean the whole of the Islam world will think this is a Christian-against-Islam war. America's notorious support for Israel only exacerbates that."

Today he adds: "For Bush and Blair (and Howard...ed) to go into Iraq together was like a bunch of white vigilantes going into Brixton to stop drug-dealing. This is not to deny there's a problem to be sorted, just that they are not credible people to deal with it. The world now needs a U.N. army in the way that Britain 200 years ago needed to turn its bands of militia in each town into a national police force"....

*The full article on the Bishop of Durham's public statements was too long for this edition of **On Target**, but because we regard it as important – Truth speaking to Power – we will publish the rest next week.*