

IS AUSTRALIA FASCIST ?

By George Venturini

10May,2011

Countercurrents.org

The word 'Fascist' has become a term of abuse, rarely employed in Australia, quite often by people who are short of arguments, and in many cases by people who do not know precisely what the word means. A clarification is essential before proceeding.

Fascism, historically speaking, was a bloody political movement which was linked with Syndicalist-Corporativism. It was born in Italy, existed just 21 years, between 1922 and 1943. There was a criminal 'coda' on the service of the German occupiers between 1943 and 1945. Any better definition has proved contentious. Historians, political scientists, and other scholars have engaged in long debates concerning the exact nature of Fascism and its core tenets.

Most scholars agree that a 'fascist regime' is foremost an authoritarian form of government, although not all authoritarian regimes are fascist.

In the recent past there have been at least three attempts at setting down the defining attributes of a fascist movement. One was seminal: L.W. Britt, 'Fascism anyone?,' *Free Inquiry Magazine*, Vol 22 no 2 (July 2003). Two others more specifically referred to Australia: A. Broinowski, 'A fascist Australia?' (2006), accessible at <http://webdiary.com.au/cms>. and: G. Hassan, 'The Rise and Rise of Super Fascism' (2011), accessible at http://axisoflogic.com/artman/publish/Article_61883.shtml. The two Australian scholars followed Dr. Britt's categorisations; they agreed on fourteen of them. And they had all been preceded by the eminent philosopher U. Eco in 'Eternal Fascism: Fourteen ways of looking at a blackshirt', *The New York Review of Books* (June 1995).

With respect, none of those efforts is completely satisfactory for reasons too long to explain here. Naturally, most of the basic elements on which they concentrate are present in Australia. None of those writers, however, provided a definition. One will be attempted by way of conclusion. Of course, there are many elements of comparison, and they are shared between Australia and Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and National-Catholic Spain. Comparisons could be drawn from time to time in the following presentation which respects the order of points common to the above scholars, particularly to Dr. Broinowski. But the presentation is more by way of a hypothesis than of a thesis.

1

The first element of an Australian Fascism is nationalism. This is expressed in its widest ramifications: ostentation of flags and lapel pins by way of re-assurance and self-confirmation of and in patriotism, uniforms from the cradle to the grave, an always ill-disguised sense of superiority and reference to 'race' - in Australia 'the white race', the cultivation, nurturing and indoctrination from early years of *cliché* views of life, accompanied with the use of symbols and slogans, sublimating in a quasi-religious respect for military 'tradition' and its representatives, all of which more often than not leads to an attitude to other people bordering and often culminating in xenophobia.

Since the arrival of the British to establish a penal colony in 1788, hence the invasion of someone else's land, Australians have participated, officially and unofficially, in conflicts in New Zealand 1845, 1860-61; Sudan 1885; South Africa, 1899-1902; China 1900-01; on several fronts during the first world war, 1914-18; Russia 1919-21; on several fronts during the second world war, 1939-47; Malaya, 1948-60; Korea, 1950-53; Indonesian 'confrontation', 1962-66; Malaya-Malaysia, 1964-66; Vietnam, 1963-75; Thailand, 1965-68; Somalia, 1992-94; East Timor 1999-2003; Afghanistan, 2001 -; Iraq, 2003 -. The loss of Australian lives is close to 103,000. On at least two occasions the Australian people was lied to by its governments: by Prime Minister Robert Menzies about Vietnam and by Prime Minister John Howard about Afghanistan and Iraq. In all other cases, barring some aspects of the second world war, the 'enemy' was 'over there', unknown and un-identifiable, except in the crassest way: it was brown, red, yellow. It was always a threat to 'the national interest' - from time to time invoked by politicians, disrespected at all times but when they sent the best of youth to the slaughter. At those times obedience became blind, un-questioned - the lack of it always considered un-patriotic. Such un-reasoned attitude to life, the result of planned ignorance, has been fuelling in a xenophobic attitude which has only recently been clothed but not suppressed by some un-defined 'multiculturalism'.

The figure of about 103,000 war dead does not include 'white' Australians who died in the wars against the original habitants, the Blacks of Australia - whose systematic extermination began in 1788 and is said to have terminated at Coniston, Northern Territory, where the massacre went on between August and October 1928. The fate of the Blacks continues in other forms of government 'intervention'. And this has left, in the memorable words of Henry Reynolds, "a whispering in our hearts."

Violence abroad is as Australian as drinking beer. Violence at home is accepted for the most incredible non-reasons. So it is 'alright' that, as Russel Ward wrote, "in April 1974 Her Australian Majesty's loyal opposition behaved more like a gang of fascist thugs than responsible politicians in a democratic country." It was even 'more-alright' that a tormented, just meliorist, twice-elected, Whitlam Government should fall victim in November 1975 to a *coup* by Royal-C.I.A.-Agrarian Socialists and other back-stage-powerbrokers, who had been scared out of their scanty wits, in an ambush performed by an habitually-drunk Governor-General. 'Respectability' and 'stability' would be returned by the hand of Malcolm Fraser, the beneficiary of the Royal Ambush, who for seven years as prime minister almost succeeded in his avowed ambition to govern so quietly that political news would be replaced in the headlines by 'sporting intelligence'.

The Australian is one of the most violent societies of similar physiognomy - probably the second most violent after the United States. Silence shrouds certain types of social violence. Suicide kills more Australians than die in road accidents - already at a pick. In 2008 - according to the most recent figures available - 2,191 people took their own lives, while the annual road toll has fallen below 1,400. For the past decade suicide numbers have hovered around 2,050 a year - on a population of 22 million. The facts are not widely known because of medieval stigma, prejudice, ignorance and a centuries-old taboo which once barred those who had taken their own lives from burial in the local cemetery. One should understand here: Christian burial.

Fascism being essentially irrational, un-reasoning and violent the tag fits a certain view of Australia.

Demonisation and marginalisation of those who are 'different' - 'difference' being an important concept which has a particular meaning in everyday's language as spoken in Australia - may lead to the acceptance in war and even in peace that respect for persons branded from time to time as 'the enemy' or 'different' is not necessarily owed - as it is said to be professed - to Australians. 'The other' is not necessarily Australian. S/he is not sufficiently patriotic, but Communist, terrorist, or as defined from time to time. The goals of such exclusion from civilised norms are furthered by the use of propaganda, often passed through the media: newspapers, private radio and television stations, even through the so-called 'education' system, which is, with rare exceptions, an 'indoctrination' system and strongly classist. The three levels of that system are essentially: primary = minding centres; secondary = bad jokes; and tertiary = solemn farces.

Disinformation is assisted by secrecy and official denials.

Human rights are occasionally spoken of, but more frequently ignored in the interest of 'national security' and according to 'need'. Conformism and indoctrination being the functions of 'schooling', it comes to no one's surprise that there may be cases when looking the other way is necessary 'in the national interest'. And if torture be complained of, it certainly does not happen in Australia - of course. Of course, there is a world of difference between summary executions as practiced in 'dictatorial regimes' and incarceration as practiced in Australia. But what of incarceration as practiced elsewhere, and favoured, tolerated and ignored when practiced by our 'ally', our Great-And-Powerful-Friend?

Every year Amnesty International Reports document the state of human rights: in 2009 it did so across 159 countries. The 2010 Report noted that, although important gains had been made, accountability and effective justice seemed a remote ideal for many, as people's lives continued to be torn apart by repression, violence and political stalemates. Events in 2009 confirmed that two formidable obstacles stand in the way to justice for all. The first is the fact that powerful states continue to stand above the law, outside effective international scrutiny. The other is that powerful states manipulate the law, shielding their allies from scrutiny and pushing for accountability mainly when politically expedient. In so doing they provide a pretext to other states or block of states to politicise justice in the same way.

Three cases in particular demonstrate that, when in difficulty over the alleged behaviour by some of its subjects, Australia abandons them.

David Hicks, Australia-born, was captured in Afghanistan in 2001, sold to American Special Forces by their allies for US\$ 1,000, transported to Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, repeatedly tortured, tried by a so-called special tribunal, found guilty and returned to Australia in 2007 under certain restrictive conditions. He had been abandoned by the Howard Government. That government's Attorney-General even went to the extent of writing that sleep-deprivation is not a form of torture.

Mamdouh Habib, an Egyptian born Australian Muslim was kidnapped in Pakistan in 2001, 'renditioned' to Egypt, tortured there and subsequently at Guantánamo, where he was kept until 2005. According to Habib, an Australian consular officer was present to his torture in Egypt. The Howard Government's Foreign Minister publicly challenged Habib's claims to torture, saying "no evidence has been found to prove that torture has been used at the camp." Query: did the government ever inquire about the claim of torture ?

At the end of April 2011 the unrepentant former foreign minister found time to express his belief that both Hicks and Habib were "terrible people - absolutely shocking" !

A better known case is that of Julian Assange, presently under restricted residence in England, and awaiting the result of an appeal against a February 2011 decision by an English court to extradite him to Sweden for questioning in relation to a sexual assault investigation. He has said the allegations of wrongdoing are "without basis." The Australian Ambassador in Stockholm wrote to the Swedish Justice Minister and asked her to ensure that the "case would proceed in accordance with due process and the provisions prescribed under Swedish law." Assange laments that the Rudd/Gillard Government is not doing enough for him and has passed compromising information to the United States Government, which may want to send Assange to trial for treason.

What is important in all this is the 'flexibility' with which the Australian Government approaches its international law obligations: no respect of the Indigenous People, no respect of the human rights of asylum seekers, no respect of those who fall short of the accepted norms of 'good living' according to

Australian rules - in other words a self-definition of what constitutes law and order in the slogan 'law-and-order', which could be uttered by any authoritarian, un-democratic, ultimately fascist regime.

Hicks was a converted Muslim, Habib is the real thing, Assange is nothing less than a troublemaker. He abides by Orwell's *dictum* that "During times of universal deceit, telling the truth becomes a revolutionary act."

Amnesty International 2010 *State of the World's Human Rights* Report noted that Australia took positive action on human rights in 2009 by signing the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, committing to a National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, and ceasing to charge asylum-seekers for the cost of their detention. However, during the same period, Indigenous People continued to be discriminated against throughout the Northern Territory and asylum seekers who arrived by boat continued to be detained on Christmas Island, where they are granted fewer rights and less access to services than those who arrived by plane. These discriminatory policies remain in place. Protests and riots by asylum-seeker detainees have occurred every month in 2011.

In 2010 Amnesty International also highlighted the government's failure to implement a national *Human Rights Act* despite the recommendation of its own National Human Rights Consultation Committee, and the discriminatory freeze on processing of asylum claims from Afghan and Sri Lankan nationals.

"As a member of the G20, Australia has a real opportunity to lead by example, but to do this it must stop putting political self-interest ahead of its legal responsibilities and deliver on its commitments to human rights." Claire Mallinson, National Director, Amnesty International Australia said. By freezing the processing of asylum applications from people fleeing two of the world's most violent conflict zones: Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, the Australian Government failed to fulfil its international legal responsibilities. This is a glaring example of a government placing political self-interest above upholding its human rights responsibilities and the well-being of those in need.

Despite some promising steps, Australia is continuously failing to deliver sustainable, long-term solutions to human rights problems.

3

No authoritarian, un-democratic, fascist regime would refrain from scapegoating a minority as a tool of domination of the masses.

Examples are still staring in one's face: Mussolini blamed strikes on the workers because they were led by subversives, meaning by that Socialists - of whom he had been one - and Communists - to whose left he had been when he was an atheist-syndicalist. Hitler narrowed the 'targeted' group: it had been the Jews who, through their speculations, 'had lost the first world war for Germany'. Franco attempted to justify his *coup* against the Spanish Republic - and found great comfort in that from the Catholic Church - on the ground that it had fallen prey of Judeo-Masonic-Communists. In all this the wearing of the 'right' shirt against that of the 'wrong' colour - or no specific colour - is very important. So Mussolini prescribed his to be black, Hitler brown and Franco blue.

Depending on 'need', it is easy to see the progression in the famous statement by Pastor Martin Niemöller - roughly as follows: "First they came for the communists, and I didn't speak out because I wasn't a communist." Then he was not a trade unionist, and a Jew, a Liberal, an atheist, a secularist, *et cetera*. Finally, they - the Nazis - had come for him, "and there was no one left to speak out for [him]." But what if somebody is a homosexual - or a Muslim? Things may be quite different then.

There are often matters over which public 'discussion' is encouraged - if it can be controlled. They are, of course, just distractions from issues which really matter. But they make for good entertainment and find courageous paladins in the most august venues. Less than a year ago a 'Liberal' senator spent an inordinate amount of time, in the Senate, on radio interviews, and newspaper articles to advocate the banning of the *burqa*. The learned senator succinctly stated the grounds for his proposition: "Equality of women is one of the key values in our secular society and any culture that believes only women should be covered in such a repressive manner is not consistent with the Australian culture and values."

This is just a smoke-screen: equality of women is not a value in Australia - it does not exist; and the society is not secular - the head of state is still the defender of the Anglican religion; Parliaments still open with invocations to a Christian god; court witnesses are proffered a King James' Bible for oath-taking, *et cetera*. 'Culture' in every day jargon is a very fluid concept, more often than not an empty vessel; one would be very hard put to look for 'Australian values' anywhere.

To substantiate his case the 'Liberal' senator referred to a recent case of robbery in Sydney by a *burqa*-wearing bandit. As the learned senator reported, "The bandit was described by police as being of 'Middle Eastern appearance'." Balaclava wearing bandits are unknown to the senator. And, assuming but not conceding that the *burqa* is a requirement in professing one's faith, trying to take seriously for a short moment the senator's call, one wonders how many people he has actually seen wearing a *burqa* in Australia. What would the senator suggest next: that the Jews who congregate in certain suburbs, particularly in Melbourne, should not wear their *shtreimels* - the fur hat worn by many married ultra-Orthodox Jewish men - in public because it is 'un-Australian' ?

Of course the senator would not dare suggesting that nuns in traditional habit look very much like women in *burqas*, and monks moving about in sandals and dressing gowns are typically Australian. What would the senator say of those various eastern orthodox Catholic priests with their bizarre attires ? Would some priests and Jews with their 'un-Australian' funny little skull caps upset the senator ? And what to say of all those new Australian women subjects who came from Africa and continue to wear in public traditional African dresses ?

Translated into plain English what the 'Liberal' senator means is: curtail, and if possible stop the entry of Muslims, because they tip the well-balanced Judeo-Christian society on which Australia is said to be founded. The real substance is of a much cruder kind and is demonstrated by the shadow minister for immigration enjoining his ministerial colleagues, at a meeting of the Shadow Ministry in December 2010, to use community concerns about 'Muslim immigration' for the Opposition's political advantage. It is not a pleasant view, and the Opposition has no monopoly of narrow-mindedness, bigotry, and base calculations.

One of the most common tools of fascist propaganda is scapegoating of people from minorities. In Europe, even before the events of 11 September 2001, Muslims were identified as enemies, accused of ‘taking-over’ Europe. Those events offered an opportunity to justify attacking the scapegoats, Islam and Muslims. Following the bad examples coming from Europe, but also from the United States, and Australia, Muslims are often unfairly portrayed in Australia - by radio talk-show hosts who feature material which is deliberately offensive, vulgar, and sufficiently suggestive of racist views - as terrorists, anti-women and violent in order to justify social discrimination and to sustain injustices.

4

The following data are taken from a table of the top 15 countries with the highest military expenditure for 2009 published in the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute *Yearbook 2010* using current market exchange rates in 2009 US dollars: Australia ranks fourteen; it spent 19.0 billion, equal to a share of 1.8 per cent of 2008 Gross Domestic Product, or a 1.2 per cent of world share.

Australia’s defence expenditure has increased by 50 per cent between 1989 and 2007. The Government allocated AU\$ 22 billion to the Australian Defence Organisation in the 2007-08 financial year. In the 2006-07 budget, the Government announced that it would continue to increase real Defence spending by at least 3 per cent each year until 2015-16. The [Labor Party](#) promised during the [2007 federal election campaign](#) to maintain defence spending if elected to office.

As Broinowski noted: “Even when there are widespread domestic problems, the military is given a disproportionate amount of government funding, and the domestic agenda is neglected.” The ‘Australian Defence Force’ is a misnomer. It has mainly four functions: 1) to serve overseas in support of other governments’ decisions, 2) to employ weapons which are force-sold to Australia because of the power of the military-industrial complex of Australia’s Great-And-Powerful-Friend, 3) to pursue intimidation and/or invasion of other countries, while maintaining the ‘tradition’ of militarism as a source of male dominance if not of *machismo*, an expression of nationalism; 4) a limited function as coastguard.

Militarism and nationalism are like twins joined at the side. They live and thrive on rhetoric with frequent recourse to the Crown, the Dysfunctional Family, the (foreign) flag, and the totally melancholic, often morbid, tribute to the dead which takes place ‘that one day of the year’ , 25 April - Anzac Day. That is the day - as Dave Warner once said - when ‘we march our march and we drink our beer’. It is on that day that everyone who is said to have died for Australia is ‘honoured’ - by marching and getting high on beer.

Anyone who knows a little history would remember that marching has always been regarded by dictatorial regimes as a needed substitute for thought. Large consumption of beer helps to blur fact from myth. Thus the landing at Gallipoli, which is the name of the place Australians, New Zealanders and British invaded in 1915 with absolutely disastrous consequences, has become a ‘sacred day’ in ‘secular’ Australia. And thus the confusion between history, myth, reminiscing and *fabulae* raves up, with the risk of serious consequences if one were to attempt to re-establish the truth on the occasion. After that, everything is permitted, in the name of laconicism and that grand, all embracing, all soothing resource which is ‘mateship’. This, of course, is regarded as an exclusive Australian quality. No other returning soldiers, whether volunteers or conscripted, in other countries are allowed to possess it.

Gallipoli was an ill lost battle from which no good came; it never ‘tested a young country’s mettle’ and did not ‘show what game young men can do.’ It gave Turkey a nation founding hero, Ataturk, and Australia almost a century of bloodstained hypocrisy. And there seems to be no end to it.

Questions are never asked, of the simplest kind such as: why warring against Maoris in New Zealand in 1845 ? and what on earth were ‘colonial’ Australians doing in Khartoum in 1885, or against Boers in South Africa, or ‘federated’ Australians in Russia in the 1920s ?

Treasonable would be to ask: why should *our* youth continue to be cannon fodder for the financial advantage of weapon-manufacturers, offending countries and people they have never visited, defending on someone else’s land *our* power *élite*, *their* miners, banksters, money-makers, pimps, and establishment *we* hardly ever use to *our own* advantage ? Asking that would be, and so is, taught from cradle to grave to be un-patriotic, un-Australian.

Rampant sexism was early identified as one of the characteristics of a fascist regime. Modern authoritarian regimes may pretend to be outwardly egalitarian, and anyway it is 'popular' to appear nothing but egalitarian.

The reality is quite different. 'Traditional' gender roles remain, albeit covertly, quite rigid. Women remain unequal at all level of life. There is unequal economic treatment, despite the fact that for about forty years the 'right' to equal treatment has been preached by every aspiring politician.

There is social inequality. It is implied in the *machismo* which still pervades certain occupations, even in such limited fields as life-saving formations. It is fuelled by the media, seventy per cent foreign-controlled, and profusely devoted to the representation of women as objects of sexual, even if only visual, satisfaction. Coincidentally, publicity of all kind exploits and emphasises a woman's beauty as a lure for selling everything: from furniture to vacuum-cleaners, not to mention cosmetics, of course.

Such inequality 'slides' not so gently in areas as the military, where women may be excluded from the very beginning - example: 'cadet' training at school, and - if admitted - may continue under the unfair, discriminatory, and often abusive treatment to which women are subjected in the Defence Forces. There is currently the periodical investigation of sexual harassment of women in the Australian Navy. The latest foreign adventure, in Afghanistan, was 'justified', at least initially by the 'mission to liberate women'. Presently, the mission is that of training part of the Afghan Army - and a woman Prime Minister said so in the Australian Parliament as recently as March 2011. At the end of April 2011 she has hardened her uncompromising position on North Korea's nuclear programme, at a time when diplomats say that the isolated regime is reaching out to talk, and despite North Korea's attempted overtures to American and European diplomats about restarting those talks. Zeal ? Bloody-mindedness ? Stupidity ?

On 24 March 2011 all media were abuzz over the latest scandal: allegations of Australian soldiers serving in Afghanistan having posted 'racist' remarks and videos on a social network site. Because the word 'racist' has become as abused as others in the new-language, one should begin by clarifying that the soldiers had referred to the Prime Minister as a 'fucking *ranga*'. Now, *ranga* is a local corruption of the word *Orangutan*, a red-haired animal, well-known for its fiery temper and pale skin

- carrying the implication that the female of the species is good in bed, combining its natural aggression with its lack of appreciation for its looks. In lavatory language, it refers specifically to a redhead female, who presumably has red pubic hair. People of light complexion and with red hair are likely to sunburn easily. Discrimination against people with red hair and pale skin stems from English name-calling of Celts.

Some videos recorded the soldiers as referring to Afghanis as 'rag-heads', 'dune coons', 'niggers', 'sand niggaz' and 'smelly locals'.

The former prime minister and now Foreign Minister was also not spared some lurid comments.

By the evening of 25 March the television stations hosted a procession of personalities: the Defence Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Air Marshall Chief of the Defence appeared, and all with the customary air of contrition mixed with embarrassment to explain how they had apologised, and all to display a sense of surprise. Alas, people old enough remember that the deplored terms are on par with those used forty years ago by Australians, particularly during the Vietnam invasion, with reference to the local: 'coons' and 'gooks', as well as 'chinks' - broadly for people with an Asian appearance, 'niggers' - for people with darker skin - including American Blacks, 'Lebo' - with an assumed Lebanese background, *et cetera*.

If the 'mission' in Afghanistan is that of 'winning the hearts and minds' - as it was in Vietnam - all one can say is: it failed in Vietnam. From Afghanistan ? it is time to bring the troops home.

At home behaviour was no better: early last month a young woman, barely 18, was standing before the commander of the prestigious Australian Defence Force Academy. She was in trouble for having had sexual intercourse with an army cadet who had thought no better than broadcast the event by Skype to half a dozen fellow cadets sitting in a nearby room. Distraught, the young woman went to a commercial channel and told the story - in anticipated self-defence.

Once again the Minister for Defence and the Chief of Defence Force went on television and radio to express their puritanical indignation - “abhorrent” but “isolated” said the Chief, to welcome an investigation, to threaten vindication as if the item was news. Perhaps what was news is that the victim this time went outside the system. There had been episodes of improper behaviour and investigation of predatory sexual practices, drunkenness and indiscipline in the Navy, with a report released just in February. Radio and television had a field week, with much ado and salacious ‘revelations’ - porno really. Seriously, a former cadet at A.D.F.A., now a prominent barrister, wrote a piece to describe the physical, sexual and psychological abuse to which he had been subjected twenty years ago. He did so, needless to say, under condition of anonymity. In his view, after all the investigations, “a culture of abuse ... has not changed in 20 years.”

Collaterally, a male-dominated parliamentary system - at all levels, whether federal or state - is reluctant to recognise the right of women to decide on matters which relate exclusively to their own body; an anti-abortion attitude, solid under all circumstances, is maintained by parliamentarians of the major parties. Simultaneously, a subtle homophobic attitude pervades the view of those parties. Of course, it is not declared, because that may have serious electoral consequences. Both behaviours, anti-abortion and homophobia, are grounded on the ‘traditional values’ of a society which proclaims itself founded on Judeo-Christian principles and, at the same time, wishes to be seen as ‘secular’. That is a *maladroit* attempt at having things both-ways - and damned the inconsistencies. Only those who know nothing of the essential Philistinism which pervades Australian society would find it difficult to believe it.

There is educational inequality: education of women is second best in a system which already is not at the internationally competitive top universally respected, and is blocked in the opportunities that real education could open.

A fascist regime is essentially ‘virile’: domestically, it sells beer, abroad it fights wars.

Media ownership laws in Australia have remained unchanged for over a decade, although debate on the desirability of reform has continued - desultorily and inconclusively. This debate has been fuelled by the impact of new media technologies, a number of inquiries proposing regulatory changes, and the self-interest of those media organisations which report the controversy. The Australian Government has long indicated that the rules are anachronistic, but hardly any meaningful change has been proposed.

The declared purpose of the legislation is to encourage diversity in the ownership of the most influential forms of the commercial media: the daily press and free-to-air television and radio. That is the theory, the practice is something else. The intended, major effect of the laws is to prevent the common ownership of newspapers, television and radio broadcasting licences which serve the same region. The justification for the rules is that the effective functioning of a democracy requires a diverse ownership of the daily mass media to ensure that public life be reported in a fair and open manner.

The legal position is complex. Under *placitum* 51(v) of the Australian Constitution legislative control of broadcasting is contained in the *Broadcasting Services Act* 1992. Generic controls relating to commercial activity are covered by the provisions of the *Trade Practices Act* 1974 and the *Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers Act* 1975, both as amended, and both badly administered. They are supported by the Commonwealth's powers regarding trade and corporations under sections 51(i) and 51(xx) of the Constitution.

Australia mass media are concentrated into the hands of a very small number of proprietors. For example, 11 of the 12 major newspapers in Australia are owned by News Ltd., a subsidiary of News Corporation Inc., which is a foreign entity controlled by Rupert Murdoch and his family.

News Ltd. has interests in more than one hundred national, metropolitan, regional and suburban newspapers throughout the country. In terms of its share of circulation, it has: 68 per cent of the capital city and national newspaper market, 77 per cent of the Sunday newspaper market, 62 per cent of the suburban newspaper market, and 18 per cent of the regional newspaper market. News' holdings include Queensland Press Ltd., jointly owned by Cruden Investments - Murdoch's own company

- and News Corporation. Other News Ltd. media interests are AAP Information Services - jointly controlled with Fairfax, a 25 per cent stake in Foxtel - pay TV, and News Interactive - an online service.

Most of the other newspapers are controlled by John Fairfax Holdings, which is an Australian publishing group with no single dominant shareholder, although there is a sizeable foreign participation. Fairfax newspapers have the following circulation shares: 21 per cent of the capital city and national newspaper market, 22 per cent of the Sunday newspaper market, 17 per cent of the suburban newspaper market, and 16 per cent of the regional newspaper market. Other Fairfax interests are AAP Information Services - jointly controlled with News Ltd., and the [Fairfax Interactive Network](#) - an online service.

Much of the everyday main stream news is drawn from the Australian Associated Press. Rural and regional media is dominated by Rural Press Ltd. which is held by John Fairfax Holdings. Daily Mail and General Trust operates the DMG Radio Australia commercial radio networks in metropolitan and regional areas of Australia. The company currently own more than 60 radio stations across New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia.

In practical terms, Murdoch - who incidentally is an American citizen - controls the Australian media: News Ltd. dominates regional and suburban newspaper publishing industry. In addition News Corporation controls Fox News - popularly known as *Faux* News.

The Australian people have fewer different voices upon which to make their decisions than almost any other people in the so-called free world. Murdoch does not mind and, with indifference worthy of a sultan, is quite happy that some Australians feel like living in a Murdochcracy. There is, however, a suffocating supply of sport services. And 'that' matters: some bread and many circuses.

For years some journalists have complained about Murdoch's autocratic and unprincipled style of demanding that his newspapers publish distorted accounts of the news to suit him. True or not that

that may be, particularly in that it is hard to provide proof of the assertion, it is not hard to conclude that, in the presence of a proprietor who controls seventy per cent of the press, democracy is bound to suffer. Even if positive proof were readily available, there is no court before which such evidence can be adduced or which could decide on the issue. The Australian people are not interested.

The media and the 'entertainment' industry important tasks are the coercion and indoctrination of the population from early childhood. Most successive governments of both available hues are timorous of doing anything to guarantee freedom of the press and information for fear of losing Murdoch's support come election time. If all else fails, economic pressure, appeals to patriotism, and implied threats are put to work.

Some constraint to such power might have been tried by introducing regulations which forbid holding more than two media outlets - whether print, radio or television - in a single area. The latest timorous experiment was tried in 2007; it failed and nothing has been done since.

The Howard Government 'discovered' in the Internet a new source of diversity, and a pretext for doing nothing. The reasoning is fallacious, and demonstrably so: Internet may be an alternative source of information, but is not accessible to everyone and cannot be regarded as a competitive force against the oligopolistic power of corporations such as News Inc.

Almost by way of definition, concentration of the power of information in a few hands is the antinomy of democracy.

The profession of journalism has been so discredited by owners such as Murdoch in Australia, or Berlusconi in Italy, and other mono/oligopolists elsewhere, that work at a newspaper now is - by and large - no more than an ultimate exercise in public relations. Very often the printed press reports nothing more than what is concocted by public relations corporations.

Some Australian political representatives may occasionally complain about the tyranny of the 24 hour news-cycle, but most of them have adjusted to the 'new reality' and almost all of them have made it a dutiful part of their anointment to go in pilgrimage to New York and dine or sup with Murdoch. Rudd did it, and Gillard followed the ritual in March 2011. Upon their return they settle down at the place designed by The System, and the 'spin' begins in earnest.

Objectivity does not exist in corporate media, and 'free speech' is free if the ruling *élite* likes it. While the rhetoric of 'free media' is prevalent in most 'western' countries, a culture of censorship - if not self-censorship - is widespread even by the most 'independent' and 'alternative' media outlets.

Good journalism, a very honourable profession in different times, is very demanding. It calls for dedication, wide and continuing education, effort, time and money. Except for money, holding the other elements is not necessary and could provide an unemployment card for many aspiring journalists. The last thing a fascist regime would want is the type of journalism which has the dignity of an old profession, cares about the facts, is capable of distinguish them from propaganda, and talks the truth to power.

According to *Reporters Without Borders* in 2010 Australia was in nineteenth position on a list of countries ranked by *Press Freedom* - well behind the first five: Finland, Norway, Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland, quite behind New Zealand, Ireland and Malta and just one step ahead of the United Kingdom and two of the United States. The ranking is somewhat affected by the limited diversity in media ownership. The problem has even created a show in itself - *Media Watch* on a government funded station Australian Broadcasting Corporation, which is one of two government administered commercial channels, the other being Special Broadcasting Service.

National security, a concept which travels together with that of terrorism - and anti-terrorism, is as old as history, is not subject to definition, but has almost always been used by those in power. It has become a matter of expanding interest and mushrooming legislation which are directly proportional to the decrease of basic resources.

It is now placed well beyond doubt that the assault on the Greater Middle East has been motivated by an increasing search for oil. A planned 1,800 kilometre pipeline from Turkmenistan to a seaport to be built on Pakistan's Arabian Sea coast had been on the drawing board years before the outrage of 11 September 2001. That outrage was simply the pretext for armed intervention. Australia followed the leader without questioning, as it becomes a vassal state. Needless to say there have been serious 'blowback' consequences - broadly speaking a further reduction of the already limited civil liberties in Australia.

That does not seem to be a matter of great concern to the even better than average Australian, who is told - and would mindlessly repeat - that there are sufficient guarantees in the common law, and if one has 'done nothing wrong, one should have nothing to worry'. This poses a serious contest between knowledge and ignorance, in which who and what 'wins' does not really matter, because a power *élite* - and not necessarily represented by governments - has concluded that it is so: there is 'the law' to protect civil liberties, and there is a multitude of defences in the numerous anti-terrorism laws enacted since 2001, and supplementing the already draconian provisions of laws such as the *Crimes Act 1914*.

Federal legislation relating to terrorism as at 11 September 2001 was already available in 32 acts of Parliament. In addition there are in the **criminal law of Australia** provisions relating to the crime of **sedition**. Effectively dormant for nearly half a century, these provisions were returned to public notice in 2005.

New provisions have been added. They are, principally:

- short term detention for named individuals: without evidence, and without criminal involvement. The detainee may be interrogated by the [Australian Security Intelligence Organisation](#) - A.S.I.O. Disclosing that an individual has been so detained or interrogated is, in almost all circumstances, a crime.
- [control orders](#): potential for almost unlimited restrictions on named individuals: freedom of movement; freedom of association - including one's lawyer; banning the performing of named actions and owning named items - including actions and things necessary to earn a living; unlimited requirements to be, or not to be, at specified places at any or all times of the day and week;

wearing a tracking device; and including encouragement to submit to 're-education'. These restrictions may be inflicted for a period of one year before review.

- significant restrictions on the right of any person to express certain opinions: including criticism, or 'urging disaffection', of the sovereign, the constitution, the government, the law, or 'different groups'. Exemptions may exist where the target of criticism is agreed to be 'in error'. Exemptions appear to exist where the claim is that a feature of a group of people is in some way offensive to the mainstream of society; onus of proof of goodwill is on the defendant - there is no presumption of innocence.
- It becomes a crime, punishable by life imprisonment, recklessly to provide funds to a potential terrorist. Funds include money and equivalents and also assets. It is not necessary that the culprit know the receiver to be a terrorist, only that s/he is reckless about the possibility. It is not even necessary that the receiver be a terrorist, only that the first person be reckless about the possibility that s/he might be.
- Police can request information from any source about any named person: any information about the person's residence, telephone calls, travel, financial transactions amongst other information. Professional privilege does not apply. It may be an offence to disclose that relative documents have been obtained.
- A legislative provision for 'hoax offences' will create a more serious charge for people who cause chaos for the public and emergency services by dreaming up devastating terrorist-inspired hoaxes.

Australia as a country has no direct interest in Central Asia Gas Pipeline, Ltd., CentGas or its successors. The Prime Minister confirmed as recently as March 2011 that Australia's 'mission' will be that of training the troops which will guard the pipeline as it passes through Afghanistan in the province of Uruzgan. The training should be completed in two-three years. The 'mission' is likely to continue indefinitely, its purpose to be redefined as necessary. No one seems to have thought that such training is designed to have cousins kill cousins, as soon as the 'liberators' will have departed, if ever - and the futility of it all.

Australia has suffered several acts of terrorism. The connection between al-Qaeda and such acts has never been established with certainty. As a result, some egregious outrages have been committed in the name of 'national security' and in the pursuit of anti-terrorism legislation. Any government would be embarrassed just on hearing the name of Dr. Haneef - not the Australian.

Dr. Muhamed Haneef is a thirty year old Indian doctor who was wrongly accused of aiding terrorists, and left Australia upon cancellation of his visa amid great political controversy.

Haneef was arrested early in July 2007 at Brisbane Airport on suspicion of terror-related activities. He is the second cousin once removed of Kafeel Ahmed and Sabeel Ahmed, the operatives in the 2007 Glasgow International Airport attack. Haneef's ensuing detention became the longest-without-charge in recent Australian history, and caused great controversy in Australia and India. Public outcry over the incident was further increased when the Australian Government denied Haneef the presumption of innocence. At the end of December 2010 the Government issued a 'quiet apology'. The now Opposition, responsible for that gross violation of civil liberties, displayed an aggressive refusal to apologise.

There have been other cases, not as glamorous, of victimisation of persons in Australia - and not all so visibly foreign.

Around lofty proclaimed intentions on 'national security' there has developed a veritable industry. Next February IIR's National Security Australia Conference will convene in Sydney for its Tenth Anniversary. This is how the event is advertised: "Now in its 10th year National Security Australia is the nation's leading National Security Forum. It provides a highly dynamic opportunity to market your products and services in front of the most senior Australian and international security experts. This year, the event boasts a larger exhibition area and the commercial opportunity available for organisations is exceptional. Your presence is a critical move toward positioning yourself as a key player in the industry." The Conference will be organised by IIR Conferences, which offers high quality business information for the Australian and New Zealand market. Business operators, academics, government representatives, police representatives, and anyone properly 'screened' by IIR will be able to attend. Presumably, persons regarded as un-patriotic, un-Australian - even treasonous - would not be accepted.

Surveillance, interception of communications - in all forms, 'profiling' - particularly of foreign and 'Muslims' - even those who are in fact Australian, are the tools to establish 'loyalty'. The Attorney-General has listed 19 groups as 'terrorist organisations'.

As Hassan noted: "In the current case of WikiLeaks, a number of U.S. Congressmen and journalists have called for the prosecution of Julian Assange under the 1917 Espionage Act for breaching U.S. security. This is not something out of the blue, but has been used in the past to prosecute American citizens. It is reminiscent of Nazi Germany's prosecution of people - labelled 'traitors' - who criticised the Nazi Party or made jokes about the Führer." Is that the behaviour of a Great-And-Powerful-Friend? The Australian Government said not a word.

According to civil rights groups and privacy advocates, the growing 'culture of surveillance' poses great threat to civil liberties and personal freedom. The aim is to have total control of society by whatever means, and to force people to submit to draconian laws. Furthermore, the obsession with 'national security' is also a corporate business which benefits the manufacturers of surveillance cameras, scanners, *et cetera*, and their lobbyists. 'National security' is simply a pretext for no personal security.

8

Most Australians would regard themselves as tolerant; they would also claim to be eclectic, if they knew what it means. That would sit well with people who see themselves as both secular and living in a 'Christian country'. This leads, among the general indifference, to the assertion of certain 'values' which are shared by government and prevailing religious organisations in order to manipulate public opinion. If a prime minister declares her/himself atheist, the government is likely to meet strong disapproval at an election. The result is loss of votes, and seats in Parliament. That connection is not subject to proof, but there are *indicia*: Queensland at the 2010 federal election. Therein is the rub.

Tolerance is often mistaken for indifference to what 'the other' thinks, feels, says - so long as that happen quietly, privately, and in the general expectation of social irrelevance.

From this point of view, it is difficult to sustain that Australia is fascist. Fascism was born from anarchoid groups, runaway maximalist socialists, adventurers and broadly speaking people who were opposed to religion - meaning by that the Catholic Church. Soon, however, Fascism found support in the large landowners and latifundists, in the captains of industry, the banksters, and in part of the city *bourgeoisie*. In a short time it transmuted into a 'respectable' party which became conscious of the values of property, order and the sanctifying support of the Catholic Church. Within three years most fascists had turned monarchist, and their economic views had shifted towards Corporativism. Much of that, and large concessions allowing interference by the Catholic Church into the affairs of the Italian State, setting up civic discriminations amongst Italians, as well as large payments of money and assumption of financial obligations to the Church, led to the Concordat of 1929. The *Duce* of Fascism and the Pope of Rome recognised each other's authoritarian regime.

No such formality has ever been sought in Australia, not even by the Anglicans and the other Protestants who, together, are a majority. Many things are assumed in Australia: after all the head of state is a Battenberg of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha lineage and recently camouflaged as a Windsor, Anglican by definition; Christian denominational schools are financially rewarded on the irrational 'justification' that they relieve a burden which otherwise would fall on the States - which have responsibility for 'education' - and that subtle piece of blackmail works persuasively to the point that Australians prefer to send their children to denominational, better still, non-government schools. Many 'aspirational' families scrap money together to send their children to these schools so that they may make friends with 'nice people', who might be useful to them in later life. Many such schools give no better an education than could be had elsewhere, but they do much to accentuate class division - in a so-called 'classless' society - and to produce snobs: some of them go around with 'boaters', an English headgear popular in the late 19th century and early 20th century, and in fancy uniforms.

Catholic schools have always taken 'religious education' - and *there* is an oxymoron ! - seriously. Protestant ones often try to emulate, but in practice their boys and girls learn to set more store by 'good form' and 'right thinking' than by the values of what is assumed to be a 'Christian country'. Most parents are happy enough in the knowledge that progress in all fields did not involve any falling away from what they regard as Australia's 'natural pre-eminence' in tennis, swimming and other sports. The 'new' and 'newest' Australians have added to that soccer - and the consumption of good food, which has mostly replaced the time-honoured steak-and-eggs.

For a long time pupils were taught to look to Britain as their true homeland; now they confusedly look - when they so do - at the home of the 'free market', wherever that may be. Of course, it is estimated that the cost of such discrimination is well worthy, in that private schools are seen as 'one slice above the rest', and secretly regarded by every 'aspirational' parent as a step for 'better connections' in the future of a child. Society responds to these expectations - literally from the cradle to the grave.

The States renounce to the vaunted secularism, allow religious indoctrination in their schools, later in civic organisations and finally in the Armed Forces. The clergy, overwhelmingly Christian, enter into the life of the pupils distorting their education with notions of gods and creation. About a third of State schools have a chaplain. 2,000 of them - 98 per cent Christian - are formally employed. A case against that prevarication, presently before the High Court of Australia, will be heard on 10, 11 and 12 May and a decision is expected towards the end of 2011 or early 2012.

In August 2010 the 'Labor' Government announced that an additional AU\$ 222 million would extend the 'chaplaincy' scheme until December 2014, and fund chaplains for 1,000 more schools.

As for equality, there are uniforms. They are a good thing, Prime Minister Gillard said during a press conference in July 2010. And she went on: "I believe having a school uniform gives people a sense of self, a sense of discipline, a sense of how to present yourself to the world. I also think it undercuts some of those unhealthy things that can happen at schools when there's a competition for the latest, most fashionable items."

Official religion accompanies an Australian from the cradle, through the scholastic system, into the Armed Forces and by social convention into the professions, and down to the return of the body of a soldier from the war front. The coffin invariably carries a symbol of religion, which is assumed was in the wish of the soldier and whether s/he in fact liked it or not. Political representatives set aside their profession of faith, attend ceremonies, display a *visage* of circumstantial solemnity, and whether believers, atheist, agnostic or indifferent reaffirm their gratitude for the Church's support.

The symbiosis guarantees power to the parties against the people. The majority of the people do not know, have no time for distinctions, and/or are not interested in establishing the real cost of such alliance between Church and State.

9

Collusion between business and government is as old as Australia.

In 1789, one year after the establishment of the penal colony, a regiment was formed in England and called the New South Wales Corps. The remote destination and the function of policing convicts attracted part-time officers, troops of ill repute and adventurers. The regiment began to arrive in 1790 and completed the military rule of the place. The distribution of 'other people's' land began amongst officers of the Corps. Produce was sold to the government store. There being no local currency, rum was substituted as the medium of trade. The officers in charge arranged the first monopoly and earned for the Corps the moniker 'The Rum Corps'. The related social consequences continued until the arrival of Governor Macquarie. It was under his regime that the first hospital was erected by a public-private partnership which was funded on the rum trade monopoly. That trade began to decline twenty years later.

Corruption in public life continued. The 'free-market' illusion arrived almost two hundred years later, while governments remained actively 'pro-business'.

An aspiring politician would court suicide by declaring that s/he favours regulation of business in the interest of the community. That would quickly be branded as 'socialism'. On the contrary a clear statement of being 'pro-business' could increase the chance of success. Business operators would appreciate that, though they often appear to be torn between a desire to be left alone - and thus avoid any oversight - and the expectation that, as 'producers', they should receive special favours. These come in all shapes, as even recent events concerned with the euphemistically-called Global Financial Crisis demonstrated: subsidised loans - which often benefit small business, direct subsidies for all kinds of corporate exercises, resource privileges, monopolies when necessary, *ad hoc* legislation and

trade protection, and when all other things fail: bailouts - especially for banks, insurance corporations, and car manufactures.

While there may be an appearance of division between two sides of Parliament under the Westminster System, that 'system' should realistically be regarded as a bird trying to fly with two right wings. In Australia they are called the Labor Party and the Coalition - made up of the so-called urban 'Liberals' and the Agrarian Socialists.

Early in the life of the recently longest period of Labor-in-office, it had become a truism to observe that the Haw/Keating Government of 1983-96 was managing the country in the interests of big business far more effectively - to those business, of course - than those who trumpeted the importance of private enterprise had ever been able to do.

It is those interests which make and break governments, while setting the tone for a corrupt society. Three recent examples will be briefly referred to.

In October 1984, not quite two years after the election of the federal Labor Party government headed by Bob Hawke and the Western Australian state Labor government headed by Brian Burke, the two leaders hosted a lunch for a newly formed fundraiser. Both being essentially from Western Australia, they called the new organisation the John Curtin Foundation, in memory of a third, and this an honest politician from The West and second world war prime minister. The effort was aimed at replenishing Labor's election war-chests.

Operating through the Western Australia Development Corporation, the founders gathered around themselves some of the wealthiest and most 'daring' business operators - many of them already covered with international reputation: Alan Bond, for instance. They represented all fields of activity, from building to high industry to banking to pastoral to horseracing.

Four years later a Royal Commission was appointed “to inquire into and report” whether there had been “corruption, illegal conduct, improper conduct, or bribery” on the part of any person or corporation in the “affairs, investment decisions and business dealings of the Government of Western Australia or its agencies.”

At the cost of AU\$ 30 million, and in a huge seven part Report, the Commission found conduct and practices on the part of certain persons involved in government in the period 1983 to 1989 “such as to place our government system at risk.” ... “Some ministers [had] elevated personal or party advantage over their constitutional obligation to act in the public interest.” ... “Personal associations and the manner in which electoral contributions were obtained could only create the public perception that favour could be bought, that favour would be done. We have observed that the size of the donations was quite extraordinary. In his approaches the premier was direct to the point at times of being forceful. He nominated the amounts he expected. They were far in excess of amounts previously donated in campaign fund-raising in this state.”

Several of the protagonists, eventually, ended up in gaol - including former Premier Burke, although not on grounds directly related to WA Inc.

In 1983 the recently elected Prime Minister Bob Hawke had flown across the continent to Perth on time to congratulate the winners of the America’s Cup at daybreak. It had been arranged with ‘other people’s money’ by Alan Bond, who had been inflated by the media almost to folk hero status for it. In 1987, as Russel Ward put it, Bond’s name was “emblazoned on a huge ovoid captive balloon floating in the polluted air above some Australian cities. Five years later he was made bankrupt and began serving a two-and-a-half-year gaol sentence for fraud.”

Another example of collusion relates to the Australian Wheat Board. Incorporated in the late 1930s, ‘to regulate the wheat market’ - in truth to establish a government-monopoly on the sale of wheat through a ‘single desk’, it was intended to remedy the excesses of the Great Depression. In July 1999 it was restructured into a private company.

In 2004, after the invasion of Iraq, evidence was circulated that during the conflict the A.W.B. had continued to supply wheat for oil and obtained favour against other competitors with the Saddam Hussein regime by paying large sums of money as ‘transport fee’ - about AU\$ 300 million - to a transport company in Jordan, that money being covertly transferred to the personal control of Saddam Hussein. In simple words, it was a bribe in violation of the agreements of the Oil-for-Food programme established fourteen years earlier and ending the year before. The kickbacks also breached the [O.E.C.D. Anti-Bribery Convention](#).

The United Nations investigated the matter. A U.N. 2005 Report confirmed that “little doubt remains that AWB made large numbers of payments to Alia [the fake transport company], and these payments in turn were channeled to the Iraqi regime.”

In response to the U.N. Report, the Australian Government appointed a Royal Commission. The Commission concluded that from mid-1999 A.W.B. had knowingly entered into an arrangement which involved paying kickbacks to the Iraqi Government, in order to retain its business. It cleared Government bureaucrats and ministers from wrongdoing, and recommended criminal prosecutions be begun against former A.W.B. executives. It came to that conclusion after have having heard the Minister for Trade, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister, all at the time from the ‘conservative’ side of politics, whose departments had issue the necessary paper work. Mountains of cables and papers were produced.

During his first term of office Prime Minister Howard had deliberately ‘enfeebled’ the so-called ‘doctrine of ministerial responsibility’, which is supposed to be central to the Westminster type of responsible government. The new ‘doctrine’ was tortuously expressed as follows: "Where [the ministers] neither knew, nor should have known about matters of departmental administration which come under scrutiny it is not unreasonable to expect that the secretary or some other senior officer will take the responsibility."

At different times, from many sources, there had been warning of the kickbacks. Application of the Howard’s ‘doctrine of ministerial responsibility’ led to the conclusion that the ministers should be

held responsible only if they actually believed the substance of the warnings, should reasonably have believed the substance of the warnings, or should reasonably have investigated the warnings, which in turn would have led to them discovering the veracity of the warnings.

The Labor strategy began in a whirlwind of hyperbole which talked of corruption and government impropriety, and led the media to focus on the existence or otherwise of a 'smoking gun', unwittingly making anything less seem acceptable. Labor Opposition was unable to meet the required standards of proof, and everybody got away scot free. No one from A.W.B. went to gaol. No minister resigned over the scandal.

There is a third example of the failure of 'parliamentary democracy' in the Australian system.

In June 2010 Prime Minister Rudd, who had been commissioned on 3 December 2007, was ousted, through a series of backroom manoeuvres by a cabal of apparatchiks and trade union functionaries of his own party, the Labor Party. Discontent had been brooding within and outside the government for some time at least from the beginning of 2009. During that year the government had faced the so-called Global Financial Crisis by providing a *stimulus* to the economy at the tune of AU\$ 42 billion. The government would since take credit for 'saving' the country from the crisis. In reality if there was a saviour for Australia it was China, which continued to buy - certainly not the United States, where the fraudsters had caused the crisis. Incidentally, in three years since the G.F.C., which - it is guesstimated - might have cost the world US\$ 40 trillion, no Wall Street executives have been gaoled.

Essentially, in Australia, too, the government had acted to support the financial and corporate *élite*. Not all government initiatives connected with the *stimulus* had been a success. A proposed Emission Trading Scheme had been moribund since December 2009, but had collapsed after the failure of the U.N. Climate Change Conference at Copenhagen and the collapse of the agreement on the E.T.S. with the Opposition due to the replacement of the leader Malcolm Turnbull by a more aggressive Tony Abbott after a harsh campaign led by the Murdoch press. There were also other causes for the decline in popularity of the Rudd/Gillard Government.

By mid-April 2010 the government had decided to shelve the E.T.S. in order to remove provisions for compensation of major corporations from the budget and so assist in returning it to surplus faster than previously planned. Similar considerations suggested the introduction of a Resource Super Profit Tax on the mines “which are owned by all Australians” - the government emphasised, as part of a Future Tax System review. Announced ‘without consultation’ as the miners claimed so unjustly, and with the support of the trade unions, the proposal soon became the target of a ferocious media propaganda by the miners - mainly the three gigantic corporations: BHP Billinton, Rio Tinto and Xstrata. BHP Billiton is a global [mining](#) and [oil](#) and [gas](#) company headquartered in [Melbourne, Australia](#) and with a major management office in [London, United Kingdom](#). It is the world's largest mining company measured by revenues and, as of February 2011, the world's third-largest company measured by market capitalisation. Rio Tinto plc is a transnational corporation registered in London and there with subterranean connection with, and benefits to, The Firm with headquarters at Buckingham Palace. Xstrata is a global diversified mining group based in Zug, Switzerland. To these transnational corporations Australia is but another quarry. The three behemoths were determined to show the government ‘who really owns’ the mines - and much else in Australia. For the purpose, the Minerals Council of Australia announced that it was amassing an AU\$ 100 million war-chest to defeat the proposed tax and began an aggressive media propaganda. All told ‘the miners’ spent AU\$ 22.100,000 million + AU\$ 1.9 million to the ‘Coalition’, according to figures released by the Australian Electoral Commission.

The government attempted to react and planned to spend a lot of money in the process. By this time even some Labor members of Caucus were publicly questioning the Prime Minister’s wisdom. In that they were aided by the powerful media - particularly the Murdoch’s outlets.

By early June 2010 opinion polls began to turn out unfavourable to the government. At this point a Right-wing *clique* of Labor bureaucrats pressed the Deputy Prime Minister - once a ‘campus radical’, to challenge the leadership. At first she appeared reluctant, but on the evening of 23 June she was ‘persuaded’ of her mission and indispensability, met Prime Minister Rudd, failed to persuade him that the government ‘had lost its way’, and then ‘made herself available’. On 24 June a tamed Caucus, fearful of losing office, concocted a unanimity and elected Ms. Gillard uncontested.

Transnational capital had won. What followed was a progressive retreat by the Australian Government, continuously under pressure from the press, 'public opinion', and above all the relentless pursuit of mining foreign as well as domestic interests.

The Resource Super Profit Tax was turned into a Mineral Resource Rent Tax, the details of which were left to a committee under a former BHP Billinton chairman. Big business returned to what it does best: making money, with the connivance of the government if possible. The Murdoch press 'glamourised' the new Prime Minister as the first woman in that post. The electorate went back to concluding that 'politicians are all crooks' and - in the process - to the customary indifference to its own very interest.

Towards the end of 2010 WikiLeaks cables confirmed that the removal of Prime Minister Rudd had been orchestrated by formerly 'faceless number men' who have been secretly informing officials at the United States Embassy in Canberra. Australia's foreign policy under the Gillard 'Labor' Government is not at risk of departing from the unquestionably subservient neo-colonial stance it had held for so long under the Howard 'Liberal' Government. Australia's vassalage state has been confirmed in a March 2011 address to the American Congress by the present Prime Minister. It was a sycophantic performance.

As Susan George of the Transnational Institute in Amsterdam observed, "The ruling élite have chosen to serve the narrowest possible private minority interests of transnational financial and industrial corporations." The merger of corporate and government powers in Australia, very much like in America, is no different from the Italian fascist experience.

During most of the twentieth century unions were the dominant force of Australian industrial life. For most of that time they were the point of convergence of many employees. Between 1914 and 1990 at least two in five workers were members of a union.

At its first meeting on 1 August 1890 the Council of the Australian Labor Federation had written the first plank in its parliamentary platform as “Universal white adult suffrage for all parliamentary and local elections”; and in 1905 the federal parliamentary platform proclaimed the following: “ Objective – (1) The cultivation of an Australian sentiment based upon the maintenance of racial purity, and the development in Australia of an enlightened and self-reliant community. (2) The securing of the full results of their industry to all producers by the collective ownership of monopolies and the extension of the industrial economic functions of the State and Municipality.”

There would be some membership fluctuations, with more members in the 1920s, after the second world war and during the Whitlam years, and there had been considerable contractions during the Great Depression and in the 1960s. At the middle of last century 50 per cent of the workers were unionised; today the figure hovers around 20 per cent. Casual employment, the arrival of the computer, and the opening of jobs to more women have brought about de-unionisation. Strikes have now become extremely rare.

For a long time since its formation, the Labour Movement has, very much like the Labor Party, stressed the importance of some basic values: Australian nationalism, ‘racial purity’, and practical reformist measures, rather than any kind of general, doctrinaire socialist programme for rearranging society.

In preserving ‘law and order’, at first the colonial governments and after federation the state governments collaborated with employers’ organisations, while the press, almost unanimously, denounced those of the employees.

News of the French Revolution arrived in the colony with the Second Fleet in 1790. Most colonies during the 1890s set up some kind of early corporative, legal machinery for compulsorily arbitrating disputes between employers and employees. Labor’s view was by no means solidly enthusiastic; its more realistic view of the state’s role in strike struggles was, rather, that state arbitration might prove another employers’ device for coercing the wage earners.

When union numbers increased during the 1970s, Australians became more likely to tell the pollsters - more often than not under the control of corporatist media - that unions had “too much power.” The evidence was never requested.

But there was another, and more insidious reason for the fall of unionism: the ‘Accord’ which was the product of the corporative effort of the Haw/Keating Government. Unions declined then, or - rather - they lost their real *raison d’être* in an enfeebling innovation of capital-labour collaboration: the Third Way. The ‘Accord’ and rapidly moving international conditions brought about four consequences: changes to laws governing unions, greater market competition, structural change and, as a result, structural inequality.

It was no longer possible to feel a sense of real solidarity and equality over such uniting common *clichés* as ‘equality, solidarity and mateship’. They had come from some mythical presentation by William Guthrie Spence that “Unionism came to the Australian bushman as a religion. ... It had in it the feeling of mateship which he understood already, and which always characterised the action of one ‘white man’ to another. Unionism extended the idea, as a man’s character was gauged by whether he stood true to union rules or ‘scabbed’ it on his fellows. ... The lowest form of reproach is to call a man a ‘scab’.”

Long before the end of the twentieth century, solidarity had all gone, with Hawke against the air pilots to favour his ‘mate’ ‘Sir’ Peter Abeles in 1989, and Howard organising the ‘scabs’ against the maritime workers to favour his ‘mate’ Corrigan in 1998.

Of the three characterising myths only the last remained: the right to call everybody by her/his first name. That the salary of the boss was a huge multiplier of the meagre salary of the employee - when s/he was engaged in work - still did not matter. What mattered was such pervasive uncouthness.

By this time television had arrived, and very successfully, to expand the myth, dispense vulgarity, and console that “We are all in it, together.”, in the general dumbing-down of what really matters in life.

Before the turn to this century, employers had arranged what could have become the final stroke against unions: the election of the Howard Government. It is not a popular view, but there was something to make Howard ‘one of us’, rather ‘one like us’. He is ordinary, modestly educated, with little ambition to refine the condition of life, a sense of self-satisfaction, uninterested in improving one’s intellectual baggage, self-deprecating, a ‘nationalist’, constitutionally a racist, a monarchist, and profoundly a Philistine.

Howard long period in government had a firm programme on a limited number of points: maintain the ‘alliance’ with the Great-And-Powerful-Friend, defend the national borders - that is keep attempting refugees out, protect the ‘producers’, and subjugate the workers. He was particularly vicious when it came to the most resistant of unions.

Against the building workers he erected the Australian Building and Construction Commission - A.B.C.C., an anti-union tribunal which has for eight consecutive years embarrassed Australia by earning the condemnation of the International Labour Organization.

The U.N. I.L.O.’s Committee of Experts, an eminent body of labour law jurists, noted - this year for the eighth time - that: “the manner in which the ABCC carries out its activities seems to have led to the exclusion of workers in the building and construction industry from the protection that the labour inspection system ought to secure for these workers under the applicable laws, ... the Committee urges the Government to ensure that the priorities of the ABCC (or the Fair Work Building Industry Inspectorate) are effectively reoriented.”

Some unions have bitterly criticised the attitude of the Rudd/Gillard, and then of the Gillard Government. One of them, in particular, the [Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union](#), has made its view known in fourteen broad, well reasoned and argued, propositions which bear upon the

performance of the Rudd/Gillard Government 2007-10 and Labor's performance in the 2010 general election.

Prime Minister Gillard comes from the Socialist Forum and the 'Left' of the Labor Party; yet her election was managed by a group of Right-wing operators, many of them very close to reactionary forces. In modern times, distinctions between Right and Left have no longer any meaning. 'Right' used to mean - broadly speaking - supporting capitalism and opposing any move to socialism. That much is still true, but 'Left' used to mean its opposite, *i.e.* overcoming capitalism and moving towards socialism. That has not been true of the 'Left' of the Labor Party for quite some time.

In addition, Ms. Gillard demonstrated in her role as Workplace Relations Minister that she can put aside her 'Left' credentials and push the neo-liberal agenda with the best of them. Before the 2007 election she was clear about keeping a 'tough cop on the beat' of the building and construction industry. She was also intransigent in dealing with public school teachers in their campaign against the publication of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy, NAPLAN - testing results in reading, writing, language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and numeracy - on the *My School* website, the league tables which followed and the overall privatising agenda of the government.

Part of the Gillard Government's agenda is increasingly to inflict the burden of the financial crisis onto the backs of working people: this in large part will be used to deliver the government's stated objective of a budget surplus in 2013. This will also mean a growing offensive against workers and their unions.

Most of the anti-union provisions established under the Howard Government's WorkChoices have been retained under the renamed Fair Work Australia. The purpose-built anti-union A.B.C.C. is still in place. The widening of its powers to include the policing of unions in industries other than construction, and the beefing up of existing anti-union laws, are options on the government's table. Only the Australian Workers' Union, the Right-wing manipulators of which delivered Gillard her position, will be excluded from this offensive.

As Bernard Smith, well known academic and art critic, wrote just after the second world war, “support of rich industrialists, post-war chaos, world depression, rising resentment and radicalism, capitalist crisis were present in Australia as in other countries [after the first world war]. They provided the social basis for an indigenous fascist development in Australia. But, in addition to these local factors, there were overseas influences - the writings of Nietzsche, Spengler and others - who gave a measure of theoretical credence, and the sanction of ‘authorities’ to the local developments, particularly in the realm of art comment. It will be possible to deal only with these attributes of pre-fascist mentality that are in some way connected with art comment and criticism. What are these attributes? ... Some of those which are relevant to our purpose here include: the doctrine of racial supremacy, the belief in society as an organism, a hatred of democracy, the fascist praise of rural life, the identification of modern art with Bolshevism and Jewish exploitation. Have these attributes revealed themselves in the ‘culture climate’ of Australia?”

And he went on: “Nationalism in its heightened forms is usually identified with the dominant ‘race’ of the nation. In this way, nationalism tends to transform itself into racism. We may note symptoms of this transposition in the phrase of [art critic] J. S. MacDonald: ‘the racial expression of others will not be ours’, the supremacy of ‘British-blooded stock’, and similar statements. The same writer gives evidence of his belief in the possible development of an Australian racial élite when, in dealing with the art of Arthur Streeton, he writes: ‘If we so choose, we can yet be the elect of the world, the last of the pastoralists, the thoroughbred Aryans in all their nobility’. Such a statement combines the fascist love of rural life, emphasizes the Aryan myth of racial supremacy, and champions racial purity.”

One of the minor attributes of fascist thought is the idealisation of rural life as compared with the life of the city. Such view was fundamental to the philosophy of B. A. Santamaria, an Australian political activist and journalist, and one of the most influential political figures in twentieth century Australian history. He was a highly divisive figure with strongly held anti-Communist views and medieval Franco-like Catholicism. His corrosive influence lasted much longer than that of figures such as artist Norman Lindsay, who had occasion to lament that “the lower orders have taken to practicing art themselves” and to belittle ‘The Wharf Lumper in Art’.”

Wharf labourers have been blamed for many things, but only Lindsay would blame them for the art form of, for example, Salvador Dalí. Hitler, of course, felt very much as did Lindsay in the matter of modern art. He passed laws against it, called it Jewish, international, foreign, degenerate. He forced modern artists such as Beckmann, Kandinsky, Klee out of their art schools, and drove them from the country. Their works were removed from museum walls and hidden or sold abroad.

The private view of certain 'races' in the Australia of the 1930s was very much close to that of the Fascist and Nazi regimes. Coincidentally, the holders of such views shared the same hatred for democracy as displayed by Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain. Many of these 'urbane' racists had quite a lot in common: hatred for Communism, for Bolshevism, and a 'discreet' dislike of the Jews - and all of such social evils as purveyors of 'Modernism'. 'Urbane' racists regard the Enlightenment, Payne's *Age of reason*, as the beginning of modern depravity.

Fascism brought with itself two elements: irrationalism, which depends on the cult of action for action's sake, and decisionism, which could be regarded as the theoretical justification for that action's cult. In fact, Fascism has an irrational element which rejects modern thought because it conflicts with traditional beliefs of the Christian religion. Evolution is seen as modernist and is rejected in favour of Christian creationism.

This debate re-emerges in present-day Australia's equivocal attitude to the attempt to give equal value in education to evolution and creationism. The federal government is not concerned about it: education is a state matter. Nevertheless, it assists both state and private schools - and these in larger measure - just as in a 'both-way bet'. It goes with the possible 'privatisation' of everything. It also responds to the figure of the 'action man' as a doer and not a thinker - the contrary being the prerogative of females.

All this makes for a populist view of reading and studying as antithetical to sport and athleticism. And that view of life, inevitably, flows into a stolid and determined anti-intellectualism.

Anti-intellectualism in Australian is one of the few activities to which the populace is seriously committed. It manifests with a scorning hostility towards and mistrust of intellectuals, and intellectual pursuits, usually expressed as the derision of education, philosophy, literature, art, and

science as impractical and contemptible. ‘Intellectual’, ‘impractical’, ‘academic’, and similar words are terms of abuse in Australia. In public discourse, anti-intellectuals usually perceive and publicly present themselves as champions of the common folk - populists against political elitism and academic elitism - proposing that the educated are a social class detached from the everyday concerns of the majority.

As a political adjective, 'anti-intellectual' variously describes an education system emphasising minimal academic accomplishment, and a government which formulates public policy without the advice of academics and their scholarship. Because ‘anti-intellectual’ can be a pejorative, defining specific cases of anti-intellectualism can be troublesome; one can object to specific facets of intellectualism or the application thereof without being dismissive of intellectual pursuits in general. Moreover, allegations of ‘anti-intellectualism’ can constitute an appeal to authority or an appeal to ridicule which attempts to discredit an opponent rather than specifically addressing her/his arguments.

Anti-intellectualism carries a feeling of *ressentissement* of, combined with a secret envy for, persons who have obtained a certain degree of formal education and do not relinquish the pleasure of continuing it. It goes with the feeling that the ‘intellectual’ is not ‘one of us’, may be dangerous, and is suspect with having no feeling for the ordinary person. Therefore, an intellectual is by definition arrogant, detached from the common person - not a ‘mate’. Many intellectuals in Australia have foreign background, or education - or both. Often they belong to groups who ‘think otherwise’, are often non-conformist and, therefore, suspected with being atheist, of loose *mores*, of disapproved sexual behaviour, in the Australian jargon: *poofers* - who more often than not are Jews. For that ‘reason’ alone, but also because intellectuals encourage discussion, specialise in ‘verbal virtuosity’ rather than leading to tangible, measurable products and services, are ‘secularist’, care about ‘the humanities’, and if given *carte blanche* would ‘prepare students for life’ but instill in their pupils thoughts and views which are not conducive to ‘making a living’, intellectuals are a ‘race’ apart.

Dictatorial, authoritarian, self-absorbing governments find it convenient to accuse intellectuals of being socially uninvolved - that is of rejecting the one-single-thought view of life, politically-dangerous, unsatisfied with the *status quo* and received beliefs, hence by definition ‘subversives’.

Some examples will suffice. It was John Thomas Lang - admittedly a Labor 'apostate' - who was once heard to admonish a keen young Labor member discovered reading in the Parliamentary Library with the words: "Reading eh? You'll soon get over that nonsense, son. No time for it, here." Ignorance of economic theory in no way distinguished him from many, most other political leaders of the day, state and federal. Time? 1930s.

Lang would not be alone. In March 1970, in Melbourne - which likes to put itself about as 'The Athens of the South' - Sir Henry Bolte, the 'Liberal' longest-serving Premier of Victoria, speaking at a Victorian Parliamentary House dinner, prided himself as follows: "The only place I've never been in here is the library, not in twenty-odd years." He had already said of striking teachers seeking to meet him: "I don't have a doorstep low enough for them to sit on."

In 1987 Sir Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, the Country Party (Agrarian Socialists) longest-serving Premier of Queensland, delivered himself as follows: "The greatest thing that could happen to the state and the nation is when we can get rid of all the media. Then we could live in peace and tranquillity, and no one would know anything."

It would be a very short answer to the question: when did Bob Hawke, John Howard, Kevin Rudd, and so far Julia Gillard, ever cross the threshold of a theatre, a concert hall, or the sublime Sydney Opera House, for cultural purpose; when was any of them ever noted for attending a lecture, or a book launch which was not strictly to the advancement of their political career? Has any of them ever read a work of fiction, seen a play, or a subtitled film, or sung in a choir, or debated moral questions since high school?

In May this year Opera Australia will stage a performance of Puccini's *La bohème*, one of the most romantic, one of the most frequently performed operas internationally. From the publicity one could think that Mimì has just left some night-club where modern youth go to jump-up-and-down, and binge away their life - scantily dressed, half dishevelled, ready for anything on the backseat of a car, or wherever the occasion demands. Rodolfo looks no better: some kind of labourer going to the locker-room for a well-deserved shower. Topless prostitutes figure in a promotional image and are introduced in the 'modernisation', presumably to portray the atmosphere of the *Quartier Latin* and of

the *Café Momus*, to give a palpable sense of looseness (we are in Paris, after all !). If this is done to ‘up-date’ the *scenario* so that young people may be attracted, it is a waste of time and money. It completely amounts to traducing Puccini, and Illica, and Giacosa, and the original Murger. Most ‘old Italians’ may not understand the original words anyway, and may have a problem with the subtitles. Both groups could hardly afford the extortionate prices. Such is, however, the ‘production’ of ‘culture’ in ‘multicultural Australia’.

Early this year Bob Ellis, a well-known social commentator, one who has a life-long association with the Labor Party, published a book, a sort of election diary. In it, and at several points, he wrote about Prime Minister Gillard that she is “not well informed”, while Tony Abbott, the Leader of the Opposition, has ‘good manners’, is ‘formidable’ and possessed of a ‘first-class mind.’

There is no love lost between Ellis and Abbott. But it is for Gillard, who is “sudden, firm and wrong” in everything she does, that Ellis reserves some of his most acidic barbs. He opens with some rhetorical questions, “Is Julia Gillard a brilliant parliamentary performer ...? Or is she a political drongo [in Australia: a slow-witted or stupid person] who should be sacked from the Ministry and deselected ?” He answers his own questions in favour of the ‘political drongo’ option, and then launches into an entertaining, but devastating, *resumé* of Gillard’s actions throughout her time in parliament. Three pages are devoted to such examination, and they carry the voice of truth.

Then comes a veritable broadside: “She's not well-informed.” he writes. “She hasn't, I think, read a novel or seen a film with subtitles and I doubt if she has read *Encounter* or the *New Statesman* or *Vanity Fair* or *Harper's* or the *London Review of Books* or *The New York Review of Books* and therefore she doesn't have hinterland. She has not much except a kindergarten sandpit response to things: ‘Nyah, nyah you're just jealous because I'm prime minister and you're not.’ ... It's perfectly all right for some reason if you are deputy prime minister to do that but when you are prime minister, you have to speak for the nation and I don't think she has discovered what that is. ... One thing is sure - there will be no Gillard era. This is not a 20-year stretch. Civilised people's hands are already over their faces every time she speaks. That cannot last. She has no power, no influence, no friends, no learning. There's not much there.”

So is there no way back for her? Ellis pauses for a while and then pronounces: “She needs a Falklands war. She modelled herself a great deal on Thatcher but lacking, alas, the husband or twin children that would have made that kind of act respectable.”

Gillard is part of a Melbourne-based gang Ellis dubs the “Mouse Pack”, which includes [two other ministers]. “They twitch their whiskers and come out in favour of the Afghan war without studying the problem or noting that an army intelligence officer [Independent MP Andrew Wilkie] holds the balance of power.” Ellis says. “This is not so much dumb stuff as stuff that comes from people who have been in the same small room for too long, stroking each other's fur.”

And then there is the ‘can-do’ mentality. In August last year, visiting her old school in Adelaide she said that she would ‘fast track’ new teachers. Accountants, engineers, lab-technicians, journalists would do an eight-week course, then learn on the job in classrooms to be full-fledged qualified teachers in two years. As Bjelke-Petersen of Queensland memory used to say: “You do not learn experience from a book.”

“What grieves me most - writes Ellis in a by no means final tirade - is Gillard’s utter lack of any apparent moral continuity. Smashed marriages, betrayed leaders, ungratefully punished unionists, shamed and amazed schoolteachers and billions wasted on architectural white elephants trail in her wake and she sees no wrong in this record of wilful, senseless vandalism. She thinks it is a good idea to bust things up and requests our congratulations for her serial spontaneous atrocities, laughing at them off merrily as she would spill popcorn.”

Whitlam, a profoundly erudite person and patron of all arts, was universally condemned by the Australian corporate media and the populace-at-large for being caught ‘viewing ruins’ in Athens in December 1974 at the time a cyclone inflicted huge damage on Darwin, the capital of the Northern Territory. Keating, a self-taught person, was derided for having ‘academic’ ambitions in cultivating Mahler and a passion for old clocks.

Australians have a word for this kind of ‘passive or emasculated’ (males only, please !) highly cultivated person, who is by definition not ‘virile’ as the Fascists wanted to be portrayed. The word is *poofter* and it goes well beyond a reference to one’s sexual proclivity.

12

The State lives on fear. Today, it is the fear of ‘terrorists,’ which is a manufactured threat, meant to scare people into handing over their rights and dignity to the tricksters in power. “Our twentieth century is the century of fear,” wrote Camus in his article ‘The century of fear’ for *Combat*, the newspaper which had supported the French Resistance to Nazi occupation during the second world war. Camus said that fear could be regarded as a developed science, and that “its perfected technology threatens the entire world with destruction.” The time ? November 1946. The truth of that statement came to fruition in the last century, but it has taken on new meaning since the 11 September 2001 attacks, especially when one considers the mindless reaction which was engineered and orchestrated by individuals at the highest levels of the United States Government who are interested in making the 21st century just as fearful and war-like as the last. 9/11 was obviously no ordinary event. It created a state of suggestibility in the American people, which is one of the means of indoctrinating ordinary people both religiously and politically. America was not always so ugly as today.

In his State of the Union address, on 6 January 1941 President [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#) proposed four fundamental freedoms that people “everywhere in the world” ought to enjoy: 1. [Freedom of speech](#) and expression, 2. [Freedom of worship](#), 3. [Freedom from want](#), and 4. Freedom from fear.

Present day Australia has secured - more or less - the first three. As for the fourth, Alan Renouf, one of Australia’s most experienced diplomats, felt bound to give the title *The frightened country* to his memoirs of Australian foreign policy. He published the work in 1979 upon his return from Washington where he had been a well respected ambassador. His thesis was that an “unreasoning fearfulness” sits at the heart of Australia's relations with the world. The country lives in fear of its neighbourhood. That fear has several deep consequences for the way Australia conducts itself.

The 'White Australia' policy, built on anger at the Chinese who had come to Australia during the gold rushes of the second half of the 19th century, came to a political head in 1888. Of the 40,721 Chinese who had come to Australia, accounting for a peak of just 3.3 per cent of the national population, 36,049 eventually left. This was Australia's experience of the so-called Asian hordes. It was a defining moment for the country's social and political evolution. The Chinese lingered in the collective national consciousness as the alien masses for which Australia has spent the rest of its history anxiously scanning the horizon.

Upon federation Australia incorporated the same 'values' of racial superiority and exclusion. The 'White Australia' policy was one of the founding principles of the Commonwealth, encouraged by the newly formed Labor Party and expressed in legislation as the first act of the new Federal Parliament in 1901.

In the previous century, after Tasmanian Aborigines started to resist the wholesale invasion of their fertile lands, the largely benign descriptions of the native gave way to derogatory descriptions which likened them to wild animals. Indigenous Australians were to continue to be treated as less than human, murdered, mistreated - and their children taken from the families. The 'race' was a 'problem' which required a 'solution'. Does that sound familiar ?

'Invasion anxiety' has been one of the most powerful, subliminal forces in Australian life. It has always had racial overtones and is often expressed most forcefully by the same people - and governments - who deny that Indigenous Australians are entitled to recognition as the original owners of this country and recompense for what has been taken from them. It has been revived recently when it has informed the imposition of a brutal detention regime on those people seeking asylum in Australia from the ravages that Australians have brought to their countries: Afghanistan and Iraq, in particular.

Domestic peace was very early a victim of the 'Queen's peace', which led, amongst other causes, to the enactment of harsh penalties for non-conformists and to the conviction of Henry Seekamp for seditious libel over the [Eureka Rebellion](#) in 1854; the conviction of 13 trade union leaders of the 1891 Australian shearers' strike for sedition and conspiracy; and the action against radical Harry Holland,

gaoled for two years in 1909 over his advocacy of violent revolution during the [Broken Hill](#) miners' strike.

During the first world war sedition laws were used against those who opposed conscription and war, in particular the Industrial Workers of the World - I.W.W. In 1916 members of the I.W.W. in Perth were charged with sedition including 83 year old Montague Miller, known as the grand old man of the labour movement. Miller was released after serving a few weeks of his sentence but was re-arrested in 1917 in Sydney at the age of 84 and sentenced to six months gaol with hard labour at Long Bay Gaol on the charge of belonging to an unlawful association. The Sydney Twelve were all charged and convicted with various offences including sedition.

On 10 December 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed and adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Nowadays, December 10 is celebrated as International Human Rights Day - but the heart is not there. Australians, insular and educationally limited, see themselves as inhabiting 'the best country in the world' - why, the best in the synonymous 'Southern hemisphere'.

In theory, Australians are unequivocally opposed to human rights abuses. Those who know and care will condemn the governments of other countries where human rights abuses occur while simultaneously living indifferently with human rights abuses occurring in their own backyard. In fact many individuals would be incensed at the suggestion and reject the notion that human rights abuses are routinely occurring in Australia.

For Australians, the expression 'human rights abuses' conjures up a range of images including torture in Abu Ghraib, or at Guantánamo, or human trafficking in Asia, or honour killings in Muslim communities, and the detention of political prisoners living under repressive regimes. Australians associate abuses of human rights with corrupt governments, lawless lands and absolute poverty. The people they imagine as victims are rarely white: these people come from other lands, particularly African, Middle Eastern and Asian countries.

In March 1949 Lance Sharkey, then General-Secretary of the Communist Party of Australia, was charged that, in March 1949 he uttered the following seditious words: "If Soviet Forces in pursuit of aggressors entered Australia, Australian workers would welcome them. Australian workers would welcome Soviet Forces."

Australians who could articulate some 'key facts' would say, not without some boasting that in their country all people - Australians and non-Australians alike - are treated equally before the law; that the Australian legal system is based on the concept of the rule of law, and that in all cases defendants are considered to be innocent until proven guilty beyond all reasonable doubt. Let it be said immediately: this is not so - and it hardly ever was so. There was always present an urge for "the comfortable to disavow the needy" - as Galbraith would put it - making it easier to imagine that defects of character or culture rather than economic history cause disadvantage.

Now more than ever there is an implicit assumption that a person charged is inevitably guilty. Intellectually corrupt media fuel that prejudice. Due process, legal aid, 'not guilty' verdicts and sentences which take account of mitigating circumstances are seen as 'mollycoddling' the criminals. In other words, never mind the evidence, just focus on the possibility - the kleptocracy excluded, of course.

The State police may not be much loved, but it is thought of as responsible for keeping peace - which is the Queen's peace - in the community and bringing before the court people they believe have broken the law. There is also a national police force - the Australian Federal Police - which investigates offences against federal laws, including drug trafficking, illegal immigration, crimes against national security and crimes against the environment.

To foster understanding about, and protection of, human rights and to address human rights concerns, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission was established in 1986 as an independent statutory organisation reporting to the federal parliament through the Attorney-General. An Australian Crime Commission was established in January 2003 as an independent statutory body to work nationally with federal, state and territory agencies, principally to counter serious and organised crime. Combating transnational crime and terrorism is also a high priority for Australia, and

extradition and mutual assistance are key tools in that fight. International cooperation ensures that criminals cannot evade justice simply by crossing borders. Australia has formal extradition arrangements with more than 120 countries. Such arrangements are part of an extensive range of treaties, which are the formal instruments of international law.

All this conjures up the picture of a law abiding country. Not so.

Increasingly, during the past thirty years at least, the U.N. Human Rights Committee has found on several occasions that Australia has breached the fundamental human rights of people living in Australia, and the Committee has heard some fifty complaints against Australia. In seventeen of those cases, the Committee found that Australia violated the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#).

While some Australians find it embarrassing or outrageous that a foreign tribunal can sit in judgment of Australia, Australia alone among the so called 'western democracies' does not have a Bill of Rights so courts cannot hear complaints about human rights violations.

Some laws have been enacted to protect human rights and the rudimentary Constitution of Australia has been found by the High Court - quite laboriously - to contain certain implied rights. Australia has been criticised - quite bitterly, but in vain - for its past and present treatment of the Indigenous People.

It is not a sufficient explanation that the majority of Australians enjoy some economic prosperity and they and the governments may be blind to the failure of the laws to protect human rights. Every day there are too many examples of people being denied their lawful human rights and, as a result, living disadvantaged lives in unnecessary hardship.

No government in Australia is exempt from the charge of exploiting the community's fears about crime and almost all levels of government have attempted to exploit such fear of crime for political advantage.

There is plenty of evidence that the large network of Australian civilian and military 'intelligence' and security agencies, both domestic and overseas, do not exist to safeguard ordinary people. Their function is to terrorise and intimidate the public, especially political opponents of the ruling establishment. From the gaoling of militants during the first world war to the Petrov affair of the early 1950s and the Hilton Hotel bombing in 1978, those agencies have a long history of dirty tricks and frame-ups directed against left-wing activists, trade unionists and people branded as 'Marxists'.

From time immemorial confessions have been extracted from prisoners under interrogation. The High Court felt compelled in two cases, *Williams v The Queen* (1986) 160 CLR 171 and *McKinney v The Queen* (1991) 171 CLR 468, to limit police questioning and require judges to warn juries of the dangers of convicting on the basis of a confession alone. State and federal laws were then passed specifically to authorise police interrogations, subject to video-taping. But studies have since shown that video-taping is no guarantee against the planting of evidence and concoction of false confessions.

Through other means the Australian Federal Police and other federal agencies have been known to abuse human rights: phone-tapping, bugging, computer hacking, tracking and optical devices to monitor and gather information. In October 1997 the Melbourne *Age* newspaper revealed that the Victorian Police Special Branch of the Liberal Government of Jeff Kennett had illegally monitored and maintained files on political activists and organisations, and infiltrated political and community groups. The previous Cain Labor Government claimed to have disbanded the Special Branch in 1983, but simply replaced it with the Operation Intelligence Unit. Since renamed the Security Intelligence Group, it continued to carry out political surveillance, including of Islamic associations, radical parties, refugee action groups and animal liberation organisations.

Over the past twenty years at least, a veritable fever of penal 'reform' gripped the State governments, usually in the heat of election 'auctions' designed to demonstrate that the purveyors of the policies were definitely not 'soft' on crime. 'Labor' governments were particularly sensitive to being tagged

with that label and moved dramatically away from more progressive policies which had previously characterised their approach to criminal justice.

Under attack from the Opposition or radio shock-jocks, ministers may feel there is no option but 'to talk tough', reassuring themselves that unless they make compromises to 'penal populism', they will lose power and, with it, the chance to make beneficial changes to the system.

The beginning of this era of 'penal populism' in Australia appears to have been the 1988 New South Wales election which was marked by a 'bidding war' on the introduction of tough new penalties. The result was the so-called 'truth in sentencing' legislation which dramatically inflated the prison population. From this point, and with the media pouring high octane fuel on politically malleable fears, a cycle of increasingly punitive policing and punishment took hold. By the 1990s, the promise of tougher sanctions to protect people from crime had become an obligatory element in every suite of policies presented to the voters at state elections. 'Law-and-order' has risen inexorably from being judged a relatively low-order problem to one of the top three or four needing political attention.

In the lead up to the 1998 election, Prime Minister Howard raised the 'law-and-order' issue - which is usually the province of the states - calling for harsher punishments and even accusing judges of being 'soft' on crime. New South Wales' then Premier Bob Carr adopted a punitive rhetoric previously associated with conservative figures, saying, amongst other things, that "hoodlum patrols would reclaim the streets for our citizens and make them safe again." Drug traffickers, he later promised, would "die in gaol."

Western Australia was the first State to introduce a form of the now notorious mandatory sentencing initially popularised in the United States. And soon the others followed, in a mechanistic growing disdain for rehabilitation and intolerance.

Sloganeering as a substitute for thought, and logic, and human solidarity, and 'a programme', became the norm. Entire classes of Australians were abused and humiliated - called "dole bludgers" -

those forced to rely on unemployment compensation, “welfare cheaters”. The governments - all of them, including the present Gillard Government - seem intent on pushing a punitive agenda rather than one with the goal of providing improved opportunities for those in receipt of financial assistance. The accent is on punishing rather than encouraging; frightening rather than encouraging. The slogan ‘work for the dole’ is still supposed to turn passive recipients of unemployment benefits into active job seekers - or else. The recipients of benefits are amongst the most disadvantaged in every sense - including in access to the media. Indeed, they are more likely to be humiliated than assisted. When everything else fails they could be referred to as ‘job snobs’, who do not want to work. At mid-April 2011 the ‘Labor’ Prime Minister told the jobless to “pull their weight.” Sounds familiar ?

This, of course, appeals to the ‘contented classes’ who would never doubt that their highly paid, occasionally, extravagantly paid, emoluments are by definition well deserved, as against the low paid jobs of the working poor, who are a fraud of the first order on the community.

There are, it seems, no active union organisers - only “union thugs”. In 1998, during a protracted waterfront dispute, the Australian stevedoring workers were accused of costing the economy billions of dollars a year and to be denying others jobs. They were held responsible for “damaging Australia’s reputation as a reliable supplier of goods.” The Minister for Industrial Relations constantly asserted that the Union was “holding the country to ransom, used bully boy tactics, had undue influence on work practices, and had a ‘stop-at-nothing approach’.” The Howard Government, proceeding on that assumption - no doubt carefully tested in publicly funded opinion polling, knew very well that, simply to mention the word ‘wharfies’ to some Australians would cause them to run in fear. The Minister thought nothing of importing balaclava clad scabs fully trained in Dubai and assisted by assault dogs to be unleashed against the waterfront workers.

There are “illegals” - assigned to a class of non-persons. If somebody disagrees and organise that disagreement s/he is assigned the label which is meant to silence her/him or discredit her/his views. Media hired pens or mouths profitably join in to propagate insults, denigrating dissenters as “bleeding hearts” or members of the “chattering classes”, or of the “Aboriginal industry”.

After the aggression on Afghanistan and Iraq, when asylum seekers began to arrive by whatever means, they were officially branded as “illegals”. This is presently the language of the average Australian - thanks to irresponsible shock-jocks and rabid ‘journalists’.

A climate of political fear, inaugurated by Menzies and perfected by Howard was not abandoned - only reworded as ‘border protection’ - by the Rudd/Gillard Governments. Thus victims came to be blamed for their own conditions. From that to religious bigotry the step became almost ‘natural’. Not only that - the perpetrators of that infamy turned themselves into defenders of Muslim women in Afghanistan !

In the meantime, in Australia, Muslim migrants from India or intending-migrant- university-full-fee-paying students in particular, have experienced frequent antagonism, regular racial slurs, and violence, all of which has resulted in great distress to them and a financial crisis for the ‘education industry’.

With recurring frequency, members of the Muslim community are being told ‘to shape up’ or ‘clear out’ and to ensure the teaching of ‘Australian values’ in their schools or risk losing their funding.

Nor were Australian subjects immune from such attitude. Such uncouthness is not only directed to ‘different’, ‘illegal’ - generally unwanted - persons. There are countless stories, too, of the intimidation of public servants in the Commonwealth Government.

The politicisation of the once public service has become so pervasive that ‘public servants’ zealously anticipate government directives and protect ministers from reasonable scrutiny - and all for fear of what is ‘different’.

Ministerial responsibility is regarded as a quaint, ancient relic of more naive times.

Ms. Cornelia Rau is a case in point: she is a German citizen and Australian permanent resident who was unlawfully detained for a period of ten months in 2004 and 2005 as part of the Australian Government's mandatory detention programme. Suffering from schizophrenia, she disappeared from a Manly Hospital in March 2004, and, in February 2005, it was revealed that she had been unlawfully detained at Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre, a prison, and later at Baxter Detention Centre, after being classified as a suspected illegal immigrant or non-citizen by the Immigration Department when, under a crisis, she refused to reveal her true identity. Her detention became the subject of a government inquiry which was later expanded to investigate over 200 other cases of suspected unlawful detention by the Australian Government's Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs. Ms. Rau is currently living in Adelaide.

Ms. Vivian Alvarez Solon, an Australian, suffering mental and physical health problems, was unlawfully removed to the Philippines, where she was born, by the same Department in July 2001. In May 2005 it became public knowledge that she had been deported, although the Department knew of the initial mistake in 2003, but failed to act. After the ordeal, Ms. Solon was able to return to Australia in November 2005.

In each case an overwhelmingly damning report was delivered to Parliament.

In both cases the 'responsible' ministers refused to accept any responsibility at all on the grounds that they did not know anything about the incidents investigated in the reports. Prime Minister Howard had deliberately 'abused' the wording and effect of the doctrine of ministerial responsibility which was that "for every act or neglect of his Department a minister must answer." Middle level public servants would suffer for what was obviously the consequence of a relentless government campaign to demonise and expel 'unlawful non-citizens'.

After the outrages on 11 September 2001 in the United States, the Howard Government was quick in proposing legislation to justify further police-state powers. And from then on - and after the October 2002 Bali bombing, the March 2004 Madrid train bombing, the July 2005 London subway bombing and countless others - there has been an escalation of measures restricting civil liberties. The Australian Government has been ratcheting up the so-called 'war on terror', hoping to foment

fresh fears and insecurities to divert from its mounting political problems. The ‘national security’ minister, Attorney-General Philip Ruddock, submitted to Parliament bill after bill for acts which further violated human rights.

At mid-2003, and with the support of the Labor Party, the Howard Government succeeded in pressing the Australian Parliament to approve an unprecedented piece of legislation giving the government’s political police the sort of arbitrary power normally associated with fascist regimes or military *juntas*.

In Opposition, and in eleven years in Government, Howard was a deft handler of the Australian populace. He knew their fears and phobias and he was masterful in playing on them, deploying them, managing them, manoeuvring them. He did two things. He prodded their fears, and then he offered them reassurance. He inflamed and then soothed, supplied the anxiety and also the temporary solution. He lasted that long because he was the ‘real’ Australian.

There was hardly anything new in this technique. During the long sixteen years of previous ‘anti-Labor’ regime, Menzies’ years 1949 to 1966, the language of fear had been adopted and perfected. Menzies had found ‘spiritual value’ in the Nazi regime and exalted it on his return from Germany in November 1938. The language is familiar. There were those who belong and ‘the different’: the Communist, the Jews, the Gypsies, the homosexuals, the mentally deficient - ‘the others’, in other words. After a fairly long period of Haw/Keating corporatist ‘Accord’ - to pacify the workers, Howard could resume the attack on ‘different’ Australians, and find skilled collaborators.

A leading Stock Exchange gambler, one of the major supporters of the New Right agenda and the mining industry’s campaign against land rights for Black Australians, found a way of grounding on divine authority - Christian, of course - that industry’s demands that it be allowed to mine on land claimed by Indigenous People as sacred. Even more bizarrely, he warned that if land rights were granted that would constitute a sanction of “infanticide, cannibalism and cruel initiation rights.” It would be a “step to the world of paganism, superstition, fear and darkness.” He had no restraint in plumbing the depths of such dark, racist fears. Howard said not a word - just sat on the side, comfortable and relaxed.

In the nineties, during the native title debates, Australians complacently heard that the original inhabitants of the continent should be treated as outsiders who threatened to appropriate “our” lands, invade “our” suburbs and “take what does not belong to them.” Some State premiers campaigned - successfully ! - on such outrageous rubbish. On that ‘platform’, at the end of that decade a comprehensively illiterate candidate obtained more than one million votes and was able to enter the Senate.

The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation now has had for almost ten years the power to detain and question people without charge or trial. A.S.I.O. and Federal Police officers can raid anyone’s home or office, at any hour of the day or night, and forcibly take one away, strip-search her/him, interrogate and hold her/him *incommunicado*, for all practical purposes indefinitely.

The initial empowering Act and the many which followed represent a fundamental assault on basic human rights. They give the security and intelligence agencies unfettered arbitrary and repressive power, marking a dramatic step towards the implementation of authoritarian rule. A person has no right to know why s/he is being picked up for interrogation. If s/he resists, force, including lethal force, may be used. If s/he refuses to answer any question or hand over any material that A.S.I.O. alleges s/he possesses, s/he faces five year’s gaol. A detainees, including teenagers as young as 16, is unable to contact her/his families, friends, political associates or the media. In effect, one can be kidnapped by the secret police without anyone’s knowledge. If one knows the name of a lawyer, s/he may contact her/him for legal advice, but only if A.S.I.O. does not object to the lawyer. Initial detention can last for up to seven days, including three eight-hour blocks of questioning over three days, but the Attorney-General can easily approve further seven-day periods. To justify serial extensions, A.S.I.O. and the government simply need to claim that ‘additional or materially different’ information has come to light.

Almost simultaneously, all States, which were then all governed by ‘Labor’, responded by enacting complementary legislation, handing over the State’s anti-terrorism powers to the Howard Government, and with the enthusiastic support of the ‘Liberal’ Party, of course. Mirroring acts enabled the police to obtain warrants to enter any premises, by force or impersonation if necessary, to search and seize anything without the knowledge of any occupier or owner. The New South Wales Government had led the way, so to say. In Victoria, the second most populous State, the government

had legislation enacted which gives the State police the power - for the first time - secretly to enter, search and 'bug' homes, as well as forcibly to enter and search premises. In Queensland, the 'Labor' Premier was moved to giving 'serious consideration' to 50 Crime and Misconduct Commission recommendations, which included allowing police to conduct covert searches without warrants.

More illiberal provisions followed at the end of 2003, when the Federal Government was able - with the concurrence of Labor - to have legislation passed which effectively forbade all public protest against, or even reporting of, the use of the new detention and interrogation powers of A.S.I.O. It is now a crime, punishable by up to five year's gaol, publicly to mention any operation involving A.S.I.O.'s unprecedented powers to detain and interrogate people without charge, simply on the allegation that one may have information relating to terrorism.

The very fact that someone has been detained cannot be discussed publicly for up to 28 days, until after the detention warrant expires. No other information about the detention can be disclosed for two years. Moreover, even if A.S.I.O. itself breaks the law, for example by detaining someone for more than seven days without obtaining a new warrant, any journalist who reports the case could be imprisoned.

In effect, these measures outlaw political campaigns against arbitrary or illegal detentions.

A lawyer's activity is also curtailed: the law prohibits a detainee or her/his lawyer from alerting the family, the media or anyone else that s/he has been detained.

As a result of more than two decades of unrelenting 'law-and-order' campaigns, Australians are far too ready to gaol people rather than seeking other forms of sentencing. Too many politicians have been seduced into a kind of 'penal arms race', and into implementing costly and ineffective policies. They have embraced penal populism, enacting policies which are based primarily on their anticipated popularity rather than their effectiveness.

Some eminent lawyers, and even the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, condemned the Howard Government's Anti-Terrorism legislation as a violation of international human rights law, but Prime Minister Howard and the Australian State 'Labor' premiers stood together in favour of the repressive measures.

Centuries of political and social struggles have attempted to stop barbaric methods being employed by the State. Demands for strict limits on the powers of the formerly monarchical and absolutist state were at the centre of the great 'bourgeois' revolutions even in England in the seventeenth century, and in France and the United States in the eighteenth century. The struggle against such methods formed the basis of the liberal doctrines, based on the rights of the individual, associated with the rise of the *bourgeoisie*. But Australia has had no revolution - bourgeois or otherwise - and still has no Bill of Rights.

According to a recent Amnesty International survey, the techniques currently employed by various governments include "beating, whipping, burning, rape, suspension upside down, submersion into water almost to the point of suffocation, and electric torture with shocks of high voltage on various parts of the body, very often on the genitals." But those things happen elsewhere, 'over there'. Abu Ghraib, Bagram, Guantánamo are 'deplorable necessities', and anyway beyond Australia's control. Notions of complicity with a Great-And-Powerful-Friend are too esoteric for ignorant Philistines.

If the police transports a Black Australian for many hundreds of kilometres, on a hot day, in a van in which the temperature was estimated at 50 degrees Celsius, without windows, air and air conditioner, without ever stopping for the prisoner to relieve himself, without food or water, there is a mixture of disbelief, disapproval - suddenly set aside with a 'dirty nigger' comment ... and a promise by the State to investigate. It happened less than three years ago - no one heard about it since.

There is more: to the above list of violent torture practices prepared by Amnesty International, the organisation was forced to add "psychological devices, including threats, deceit, humiliation, insults, sleep deprivation, blindfolding, isolation, mock executions, witnessing torture of others (including

one's own family), being forced to torture or kill others, and the withholding of medication or personal items.” It should be emphasised: *even* sleep deprivation, because the Attorney-General of the Howard Government expressed the view that that is not a form of torture ! And damned the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, both of which were ratified by Australia ! Was the Attorney-General influenced by a well-known Harvard law professor's call - after 9/11 - for United States judges to issue ‘torture warrants’ ?

Whatever the reason, the Attorney-General's view might have encouraged two Australian academic lawyers openly to advocate torture in a paper published in 2005.

When governments become accustomed to abuse of power through the use of fear and amidst the populace's indifference, there is no limit to what they may do. In June 2008 the ‘Labor’ Premier of New South Wales had no difficulty in introducing sweeping police powers further to suppress civil liberties during the month-long Catholic World Youth Day events in Sydney, culminating with a massive address by Pope Benedict XVI. By executive order and regulation, which established more than 600 ‘controlled areas’ throughout Sydney, Police were empowered in control areas to search members of the public, their vehicles and personal belonging and to arrest and fine those whose actions may be deemed offensive to Catholic pilgrims. The ‘controlled areas’ included some 500 Catholic and State schools, tertiary institutions - including the University of Sydney and University of New South Wales, public transport hubs, parks - including the Botanic Gardens and a major park, and cultural venues - including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the State Theatre and the Sydney Opera House, a racecourse and sporting venues.

Preventive detention and ‘control orders’ are the tools of fear-inducing State power.

One such ‘control order’ was imposed for the first time in 2006 on an unfortunate Melbournian. A recent convert to Islam, he was on a visit to Afghanistan in March 2001, six months before the 11 September attacks. A person of modest means in more ways than one, including financial, after the United States invasion he decided to accept cash from an al-Qaeda-linked individual to return to Australia. Caught by Pakistani Police and held prisoner for five months from January 2003, Pakistani,

American and Australia intelligence and police officials tortured him in Pakistan, using all available physical and mental abuses.

Finally released without charge, he was delivered to the Australian Federal Police.

From mid-2003 he lived in Melbourne with his wife and children, under close surveillance by police and A.S.I.O. which suddenly arrested him in late 2004 - the charge: terrorist activity; and subjected to a 'control order', after 18 months, just as the Howard Government was preparing a further round of 'anti-terrorist' legislation, including provisions for closed trials, secret witnesses and media restrictions. His ordeal would end when, after six years of persecution, in October 2008, a Victorian Supreme Court jury acquitted him of all charges.

Presumption of guilt pervades certain aspects of criminal law in Australia and is unashamedly used by governments.

The case of former Solomon Islands' Attorney-General Julian Moti is the most recent illustration of such bias.

Australia carries out a neo-colonial Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands - the official name: R.A.M.S.I. Julian Moti was suspected with harbouring doubt about the 'civilising function' of R.A.M.S.I.

Between 1997 and 1999 allegations that Moti had sexually abused a 13-year-old girl were first levelled against him in Vanuatu. The charges, however, were thrown out of court, with the magistrate describing the attempted prosecution as "unjust and oppressive" due to the absence of evidence and glaring inconsistencies and contradictions in the alleged victim's statements. Local prosecutors did not appeal the decision and the issue was closed - until late 2004. Then the Australian High Commissioner to the Solomon Islands, dredged up the allegations as a means of preventing Moti from

being appointed to the position of Solomons' Attorney-General. The subsequent Australian Federal Police investigation served as the means for removing Moti from the Solomon Islands and the destruction of his legal career throughout the South Pacific. The Howard Government's unrelenting pursuit of Moti formed part of its provocative 'regime change' campaign in 2006-07 against the Solomons' government of Manasseh Sogavare, waged to sustain R.A.M.S.I.

Moti was unlawfully removed from the Solomons on 27 December 2007, by being removed from his home, bundled onto an airplane, flown to Brisbane where he was immediately arrested at the airport by waiting A.F.P. officers. The so called 'deportation' proceedings went ahead in violation of a local magistrate's court ruling specifically prohibiting Moti's 'deportation'. Moreover, that amounted to a violation of the Solomon's Deportation Act, which provides for a seven-day appeal period. All this occurred following the revocation of his position as Attorney-General by a pro-Australian Government, which was installed after Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare became victim of a protracted 'regime change' campaign. Such removal of Moti was nothing more than a 'disguised extradition' and not a deportation as the prosecution claimed before the Queensland Supreme Court, where Moti was standing trial - again - this time under the Australian child sex tourism laws. That such charge had been discharged in Vanuatu a decade before counted for naught. As it turned out the A.F.P. and the Director of Public Prosecutions violated Moti's basic legal rights by withholding vital documents. His right to liberty was breached, his civil rights were breached, the rule of law was breached, he was illegally seized and taken to Australia, before he could lodge an appeal against the 'deportation', and the Australia Government was a knowing party to all of that.

Moti lost the case. He appealed and lost again.

At mid-April 2011 the High Court of Australia was called upon to consider whether the government turned a blind eye to the illegal rendition of Moti in 2007. The Court had granted special leave to hear the case and would also examine whether the payment of near AU\$ 150,000 to the alleged victim and her family brought the administration of justice into disrepute. In fact, in February 2008 - under the new Rudd/Gillard 'Labor' Government - the Australian police began paying monthly sums of AU\$ 1,290 to the alleged victim's brother, AU\$ 480 to her father, and AU\$ 2,475 to her mother. These payments were made while the family continued to live as usually in Vanuatu, where the minimum monthly wage was just AU\$ 240. According to a November 2010 article in the

Melbourne *Age*, “payments to the complainant and her family have reached at least AU\$ 300,000 - double what was revealed in court in 2009.”

From the defence, the Court heard that “Australian authorities assisted [Moti’s] unlawful rendition to Australia”, by handing his new passport to Solomon Islands police, arranging his arrest in Brisbane and paying accommodation for the Solomon Islanders who escorted him.” The defence also said that “[the A.F.P. agent] knew the deportation was unlawful.” The Court was also told that the “Australian ‘witness assistance’ payments to the alleged victim may have been an abuse of process.” Further, the defence submitted that “The right-thinking person would correctly perceive a link between the political genesis of the prosecution, the means by which [Moti] was brought to the jurisdiction, and the extraordinary payments being made to keep the prosecution on foot.”

The Australian Government’s plan suffered a *contretemps* towards the end of March 2011 when the father of the victim confessed on his death-bed that his daughter had ulterior motives when she first accused Moti in 1997-98. And the motive ? The 13- year-old girl, according to the father, had levelled the rape allegations against Moti to try to prevent the family, who are all Tahitian nationals, from being deported from Vanuatu for violating visa conditions. The father accused the A.F.P. of threatening his family - “if we did not cooperate it would go against us.” As a result, “fear was in the house.” Nevertheless the A.F.P. offered inducements. He apologised to Julian Moti and his family, with whom he had been friends, declaring that neither he nor his wife would continue to cooperate with the attempted prosecution of Moti.

At the end of such revealing confession, the girl’s father said: “We have all been battered by all this. ... The people who have pressed the button to start all this [were to blame].” And he pointed the finger towards the Australian Government at the time. Moti’s tribulations had begun under the Howard Government; they would continue under the Rudd/Gillard Government. Names might have changed, Australia’s ruthless neo-colonial interventions through the Southwest Pacific continue.

Yet, there is much *fracas* about ‘multiculturalism’ - a wonderful goal gone sour because people of scarce appreciation for culture can hardly be serious about multi-culture. In the hand of skilful manipulators multiculturalism risk becoming a form of populist cretinism manoeuvred by

Government Philistinism for electoral purposes. Most every thinking person realises it. In reality, one should pay attention to some ‘necessary associations’ between ‘Middle Eastern thugs’, organised crime’, and drug trafficking.’

Members of what Galbraith called ‘the contented class’, John Howard’s ‘comfortable and relaxed’ kleptocracy, would not ‘inside trade’, of course, nor ‘consume’ other than for purpose of entertainment ! *Ça va sans dire !*

13

Cronyism and corruption have lived so long amongst humans that it is fair to say they preceded The Bible, where many precedents are recorded.

This is not to say that in Australia cronyism and corruption are all around. Transparency International provides every year a ‘corruption perception index’ of 180 countries and it is sad to see that, in the latest for 2009, Australia figures eighth in a decreasing scale, after New Zealand, Denmark, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, Finland, and The Netherlands.

Opportunity for cronyism and corruption in Australia is greater when the Coalition parties are in power - if for no other reason than at least at the federal level they have been in government for some 65 years since Federation.

Sometimes excessive publicity is given to episodes of squalor by the media, which are by and large in the hands of Grand Corruptors. Thus much evidence was given to the case of a couple of ‘lifters’ involved in an episode of bullying at a coastal night club - he a powerful state minister and she a federal representative. So, would ‘Labor’ people content themselves with something less than cronyism - nepotism, perhaps ? Then there is the case of a state minister who made the *beau jester* of resigning her position to tend to her son, soon thereafter to return to parliament as deputy premier -

no less, and always with her shoulders well guarded by the husband, a powerful federal minister. But these are modest, if glaring examples of cronyism.

Of course, a populace so conditioned by intellectually corrupt media would be expected to wonder what qualifications ‘union hacks’ hold. No question is ever asked about corporate *honchoes*, perhaps because having money, or a flexible conscience - and preferably both, is regarded as a sufficient title. Nothing news about that: the Medici proceeded on the motto: “Money to get power, power to protect money”. Only notice the final result !

The ‘Liberals’, in particular, have always had more opportunities, not only for the length of their holding power but also because they come from a social *milieu* which flourishes in ‘private enterprise’ and can afford to enlist the best-paid ‘turf-accountants’ to minimise their taxes, or retain the ablest - or if not the best connected - lawyers, who in turn speak the language most welcome by a classist judicial system. And all that takes place under the patronage of the monarchy which, naturally, personifies cronyism and is the source of corruption - not exclusively of the financial kind. ‘Labor’ - whatever that has come to mean nowadays - must content itself of the crumbs. Anyway, nobody could - without blushing - accuse ‘Labor’ of running a meritocracy.

Then there are cases rendered less obvious to the naked eye by the application of the Axminster System - which is the classical, subtropical corruption of the Westminster type, and good for a carpet - under which whereby matters ‘too delicate’ can be swept. Example: early in 2009 the Victorian Transport Minister ‘locked away’ all the documents of the disputed construction of Melbourne's \$700 million Southern Cross Station. Transparency and accountability were postponed - until 2058. The decision was hardly unusual. It has become standard practice for Australian governments - at all levels - to ‘spare’ the public the ‘boring’, detailed information which would allow any assessment to be made of large infrastructure contracts.

Nowhere is the trend more pronounced than with respect to so-called public-private partnerships, projects in which private parties take responsibility for financing, constructing and operating public-use infrastructure, in exchange for the right to receive user fees and charges. And here another value, so dear to the Westminster System, comes into play: ‘tradition’. It should be remembered that one of

the very first public buildings in the colony of New South Wales, the Sydney Hospital, was erected by an extremely corrupt PPP.

While concession arrangements for toll roads and other infrastructure assets have existed since time immemorial, they were 'rediscovered' and renamed PPPs in the late 1980s and have since become a primary means of financing mega-projects, with applications ranging from tunnels and desalination plants to hospitals and prisons. The change in branding from concessions to PPPs is hardly innocent. A concession by a government to a private party of the right to undertake and charge for a monopoly asset has a clear negative connotation: taxpayers are giving up something which would otherwise rightly be theirs. Who, on the other hand, could object to a partnership, with all the sense of shared obligation that word implies? As with nation building, here words are being used not to assist understanding but to mislead. For whether the contracts are indeed a partnership, and one which delivers net benefits to the community, is a question of fact, not of form. The crucial issues are whether the projects are worth doing and whether the concession contract provides the project outcomes at least cost to the community.

Regardless of the final result, and its real utility, everyone's a winner. The firms undertaking the projects cash the rents. Governments gain more ribbon-cutting opportunities, vocal support from PPP firms, lucrative jobs for their 'mates' and welcome donations to campaign coffers. Only taxpayers and users suffer, but then again, ignorance is bliss. Little wonder that PPPs have proved increasingly popular with incompetent state governments and are now being vigorously promoted by the Gillard Government. Full disclosure of all PPP contracts, and of the cost-benefit analyses underpinning PPP projects, is indispensable if these costs are to be averted. And no suggestion is proffered here of illegitimate personal gain by public persons. It is just the 'new way' of doing things.

On the other hand, political corruption is the use of legislated powers by government officials for illegitimate private gain. Forms of corruption vary, but include [bribery](#), [extortion](#), [cronyism](#) - to some extent, [nepotism](#), [patronage](#), graft, and [embezzlement](#). While corruption may facilitate [criminal enterprise](#) such as [drug trafficking](#), [money laundering](#), and [human trafficking](#), it is not restricted to these activities.

In some cases, government officials have broad or poorly defined powers, which make it difficult to distinguish between legal and illegal actions. Worldwide, bribery alone is estimated to involve over US\$ 1 trillion annually.

When a government confers a benefit onto some companies and not others it is playing favourites. Sometimes it is called ‘picking winners’. Sometimes it is called ‘targeted assistance’. The result is the same. But the opportunities for influence, peddling and calling in favours, take off when a government starts being selective. There is no problem with individuals or companies trying to influence government. This is what representative government is all about. Every voter who casts a ballot is trying to influence government - and sometimes a voter benefits, albeit indirectly, from particular policies. It is quite different when a broad policy applies equally to people of like circumstances - a tax cut for those on certain income or childcare assistance for those with children in like circumstances. But it becomes a problem when the practice is narrowed down to particular companies in particular industries - where special benefits go to people who seek special access to obtain them. Special influence looking for special benefits is a recipe for cronyism.

Outside public funding, there are no guaranteed sources of financial support for political parties apart from the union movement's donations to Labor. Business support is contested. Some businesses support both sides of politics. Some support neither. Many skew their support to the party which happens to be in government - after all, the decisions which affect their business are made by the government not opposition.

The late Chalmers Johnson, reviewing a book by Emeritus Professor Sheldon Wolin, who well over two generations taught the history of political philosophy from Plato to the present to Berkeley and Princeton graduate students, made some observations of a general character which - *mutatis mutandis* - apply to Australia, too. “Our political system of checks and balances - wrote Wolin - has been virtually destroyed by rampant cronyism and corruption in Washington, D.C., and by a two-term president who goes around crowing “I am the decider,” a concept fundamentally hostile to our constitutional system. We have allowed our elections, the one nonnegotiable institution in a democracy, to be debased and hijacked ... “

Wolin's new book *Democracy incorporated: managed democracy and the specter of inverted totalitarianism* is a devastating critique of the contemporary government of the United States - including what has happened to it in recent years and what must be done if it is not to disappear into history along with its classic totalitarian predecessors: Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, National-Catholic Spain and Soviet Russia. The hour is very late and the possibility that the American people might pay attention to what is wrong and take the difficult steps to avoid a national *Götterdämmerung* are remote, but Wolin's is the best analysis of why even the presidential election of 2008 probably would have done nothing to mitigate America's fate.

Wolin's work is fully accessible and includes particular attention to the advanced levels of social democracy attained during the New Deal and the contemporary mythology that the United States, beginning during the second world war, wields unprecedented world power.

Wolin introduces three new concepts to help analyse what Americans have lost as a nation. His master idea is "inverted totalitarianism," which is reinforced by two subordinate notions which accompany and promote it - "managed democracy" and "Superpower," the latter always capitalised and used without a direct article. Until the reader becomes familiar with this particular literary tic, the term *Superpower* can be confusing. The author uses it as if it were an independent agent, comparable to *Superman* or *Spiderman*, and one which is inherently incompatible with constitutional government and democracy.

Wolin writes, "Our thesis ... is this: it is possible for a form of totalitarianism, different from the classical one, to evolve from a putatively 'strong democracy' instead of a 'failed' one." His understanding of democracy is classical but also populist, anti-elitist and only slightly represented in the Constitution of the United States. "Democracy," he writes, "is about the conditions that make it possible for ordinary people to better their lives by becoming political beings and by making power responsive to their hopes and needs." It depends on the existence of a *demos* - "a politically engaged and empowered citizenry, one that voted, deliberated, and occupied all branches of public office."

Wolin argues that “The American political system was not born a democracy, but born with a bias against democracy. It was constructed by those who were either skeptical about democracy or hostile to it. Democratic advance proved to be slow, uphill, forever incomplete. The republic existed for three-quarters of a century before formal slavery was ended; another hundred years before black Americans were assured of their voting rights. Only in the twentieth century were women guaranteed the vote and trade unions the right to bargain collectively. In none of these instances has victory been complete: women still lack full equality, racism persists, and the destruction of the remnants of trade unions remains a goal of corporate strategies. Far from being innate, democracy in America has gone against the grain, against the very forms by which the political and economic power of the country has been and continues to be ordered.” Wolin can easily control his enthusiasm for James Madison, the primary author of the Constitution, and he sees the New Deal as perhaps the only period of American history in which rule by a true *demos* prevailed.

To reduce a complex argument to its bare bones, since the Depression, the twin forces of managed democracy and Superpower have opened the way for something new under the sun: “inverted totalitarianism,” a form every bit as totalistic as the classical version but one based on internalised co-optation, the appearance of freedom, political disengagement rather than mass mobilisation, and relying more on ‘private media’ than on public agencies to disseminate propaganda which reinforces the official version of events. It is inverted because it does not require the use of coercion, police power and a messianic ideology as in the Nazi, Fascist and Stalinist versions. According to Wolin, inverted totalitarianism has “emerged imperceptibly, unpremeditatedly, and in seeming unbroken continuity with the nation’s political traditions.”

The genius of American inverted totalitarian system “lies in wielding total power without appearing to, without establishing concentration camps, or enforcing ideological uniformity, or forcibly suppressing dissident elements so long as they remain ineffectual. ... A demotion in the status and stature of the ‘sovereign people’ to patient subjects is symptomatic of systemic change, from democracy as a method of ‘popularizing’ power to democracy as a brand name for a product marketable at home and marketable abroad. ... The new system, inverted totalitarianism, is one that professes the opposite of what, in fact, it is. ... The United States has become the showcase of how democracy can be managed without appearing to be suppressed.”

Among the factors which have promoted inverted totalitarianism are the practice and psychology of advertising and the rule of 'market forces' in many other contexts than markets, continuous technological advances which encourage elaborate fantasies - computer games, virtual avatars, space travel - the penetration of mass media communication and propaganda into every household in the country, and the total co-optation of the universities. Among the commonplace fables of the Australian, as well as of the American, society are hero worship and tales of individual prowess, eternal youthfulness, beauty through surgery, action measured in nanoseconds, and a dream-laden culture of ever-expanding control and possibility, the adepts of which are prone to fantasies because the vast majority have imagination but little scientific knowledge. Masters of this world are masters of images and their manipulation. Wolin reminds the reader that the image of Hitler flying to Nuremberg in 1934 which opens Leni Riefenstahl's classic film *Triumph of the will* was repeated on 1 May 2003, with President George Bush's apparent landing of a Navy warplane on the flight deck of the U.S.S. *Abraham Lincoln* to proclaim "Mission accomplished" in Iraq.

On inverted totalitarianism's "self-pacifying" university campuses compared with the usual intellectual turmoil surrounding independent centers of learning, Wolin writes, "Through a combination of governmental contracts, corporate and foundation funds, joint projects involving university and corporate researchers, and wealthy individual donors, universities (especially so-called research universities), intellectuals, scholars, and researchers have been seamlessly integrated into the system. No books burned, no refugee Einsteins. For the first time in the history of American higher education top professors are made wealthy by the system, commanding salaries and perks that a budding CEO might envy."

The main social sectors promoting and reinforcing this modern Shangri-La are corporate power, which is in charge of managed democracy, and the military-industrial complex, which is in charge of Superpower. The main objectives of managed democracy are to increase the profits of large corporations, dismantle the institutions of social democracy - Social Security, unions, welfare, public health services, public housing and so forth, and roll back the social and political ideals of the New Deal. Its primary tool is privatisation. Managed democracy aims at the "selective abdication of governmental responsibility for the well-being of the citizenry" under cover of improving "efficiency" and cost-cutting.

Wolin argues, "The privatization of public services and functions manifests the steady evolution of corporate power into a political form, into an integral, even dominant partner with the state. It marks

the transformation of American politics and its political culture from a system in which democratic practices and values were, if not defining, at least major contributing elements, to one where the remaining democratic elements of the state and its populist programs are being systematically dismantled.” This campaign has largely succeeded. “Democracy represented a challenge to the status quo, today it has become adjusted to the status quo.”

One other subordinate task of managed democracy is to keep the citizenry preoccupied with peripheral and/or private conditions of human life so that they fail to focus on the widespread corruption and betrayal of the public trust. In Wolin’s words, “The point about disputes on such topics as the value of sexual abstinence, the role of religious charities in state-funded activities, the question of gay marriage, and the like, is that they are not framed to be resolved. Their political function is to divide the citizenry while obscuring class differences and diverting the voters’ attention from the social and economic concerns of the general populace.”

Another *élite* tactic of managed democracy is to bore the electorate to such an extent that it gradually fails to pay any attention to politics. Wolin perceives, “One method of assuring control is to make electioneering continuous, year-round, saturated with party propaganda, punctuated with the wisdom of kept pundits, bringing a result boring rather than energizing, the kind of civic lassitude on which managed democracy thrives.”

Wolin adds: “Every apathetic citizen is a silent enlistee in the cause of inverted totalitarianism.” And he wondered whether an Obama candidacy could reawaken these apathetic voters, although he suspected that a barrage of corporate media character assassination would end this possibility.

Managed democracy is a powerful solvent for any vestiges of democracy left in the American political system, but its powers are weak in comparison with those of Superpower. Superpower is the sponsor, defender and manager of American imperialism and militarism, aspects of American government which have always been dominated by *élites*, enveloped in executive-branch secrecy, and allegedly beyond the ken of ordinary citizens to understand or oversee. Superpower is preoccupied with weapons of mass destruction, clandestine manipulation of foreign policy (sometimes domestic

policy, too), military operations, and the fantastic sums of money demanded from the public by the military-industrial complex.

Foreign military operations literally force democracy to change its nature: “In order to cope with the imperial contingencies of foreign war and occupation,” according to Wolin, “democracy will alter its character, not only by assuming new behaviors abroad (e.g., ruthlessness, indifference to suffering, disregard of local norms, the inequalities in ruling a subject population) but also by operating on revised, power-expansive assumptions at home. It will, more often than not, try to manipulate the public rather than engage its members in deliberation. It will demand greater powers and broader discretion in their use (‘state secrets’), a tighter control over society’s resources, more summary methods of justice, and less patience for legalities, opposition, and clamor for socioeconomic reforms.”

Over the years, American political analysis has carefully tried to separate the military from imperialism, even though militarism is imperialism’s inescapable accompaniment. The military creates the empire in the first place and is indispensable to its defense, policing and expansion. Wolin observes, “That the patriotic citizen unswervingly supports the military and its huge budgets means that conservatives have succeeded in persuading the public that the military is distinct from the government. Thus the most substantial element of state power is removed from public debate.”

It has taken a long time, but under George W. Bush’s administration the United States finally achieved an official ideology of imperial expansion comparable to those of Nazi and Soviet totalitarianisms. In accordance with the National Security Strategy of the United States - allegedly drafted by Condoleezza Rice and proclaimed on 9 September 2002, the United States is now committed to what it calls “preemptive war.” Wolin explains: “Preemptive war entails the projection of power abroad, usually against a far weaker country, comparable say, to the Nazi invasion of Belgium and Holland in 1940. It declares that the United States is justified in striking at another country because of a perceived threat that U.S. power will be weakened, severely damaged, unless it reacts to eliminate the danger before it materializes. Preemptive war is *Lebensraum* [Hitler’s claim that his imperialism was justified by Germany’s need for “living room”] for the age of terrorism.” This was, of course, the official excuse for the American aggression against Iraq which began in 2003.

Many analysts would conclude that Wolin has made a close to airtight case that the American Republic's days are numbered, but Wolin himself does not agree. Towards the end of his study he produces a wish list of things which should be done to ward off the disaster of inverted totalitarianism: "rolling back the empire, rolling back the practices of managed democracy; returning to the idea and practices of international cooperation rather than the dogmas of globalization and preemptive strikes; restoring and strengthening environmental protections; reinvigorating populist politics; undoing the damage to our system of individual rights; restoring the institutions of an independent judiciary, separation of powers, and checks and balances; reinstating the integrity of the independent regulatory agencies and of scientific advisory processes; reviving representative systems responsive to popular needs for health care, education, guaranteed pensions, and an honorable minimum wage; restoring governmental regulatory authority over the economy; and rolling back the distortions of a tax code that toadies to the wealthy and corporate power."

Unfortunately, this is more a guide to what has gone wrong than a statement of how to remedy it, particularly since Wolin believes that the American political system is "shot through with corruption and awash in contributions primarily from wealthy and corporate donors."

Corruption as a way of operating has become so common - if not accepted - in Australia that it is possible to access a service on the subject from the Internet. And from it the following juicy items were taken in one single day, at random, while researching this topic:

"Australia Corruption News. Service for global professionals. Constantly updated news and information about Australia.

Latest Australia Corruption News

- [Migrants 'bribe way to residency'](#) 21 Mar 2011 06:04 GMT
... University staff have been accused of taking bribes to falsify the English test results of ... gain a visa are currently applying for Australian citizenship, a Department of Immigration official has ... Department of Immigration official has told a corruption hearing. Western Australia's corruption watchdog is examining ...
- [Migrants bribe way to residency: hearing](#) 21 Mar 2011 06:11 GMT
... Several migrants who allegedly bribed public servants to gain a visa are ... gain a visa are

currently applying for Australian citizenship, a Department of Immigration official has ... Department of Immigration official has told a corruption hearing. Western Australia's corruption watchdog is examining ...

- Unskilled workers bribe their way to visas 21 Mar 2011 08:26 GMT
... basis of false English-language credentials, a West Australian corruption hearing has heard. The state's Corruption and ... employee at Curtin University of Technology was bribed to falsify records to allow some visa ...
- E-robbers the new security risk for Australian banks: SAS Institute 21 Mar 2011 02:50 GMT
... According to the SAS Institute's US based fraud strategist, Stu Bradley, who works with some Australian banks on fraud detection policies, local and ... see that as the next area the fraudsters will hit due to the sophistication of ...
- Curtin Uni staff 'took visa bribes' 21 Mar 2011 05:26 GMT
... University staff have been accused of taking bribes to falsify the English test results of ... English test results of visa applicants, WA's corruption watchdog has heard. The Corruption and Crime ... are currently 34 IELTS test centres across Australia, with four in WA. Mr Quinlan said ...
- Test scores 'faked after uni bribes' 21 Mar 2011 19:16 GMT
... students paid as much as \$11,000 in bribes to have their English language test results ... to help them gain visa applications, a Corruption and Crime Commission hearing has been told. ... visas to work, study or live in Australia. A senior official for the Department of ...
- Bribes allegedly paid to falsify visa tests 21 Mar 2011 04:42 GMT
... Bribes allegedly paid to falsify visa tests The ... English test score to be improved A Corruption and Crime Commission hearing in Western Australia has been told that a university staff ...
- Ex-banker faces conspiracy, fraud charges 21 Mar 2011 05:36 GMT
... was involved in a multi-million dollar mortgage fraud, which police allege involved inflated property values ... Mohamad Diab, Mohamad Mehajer and a National Australia Bank staffer Mohamad Sowaid to “cheat and ... was approved by soliciting Mr Mehajer to bribe Mr Sowaid. It’s alleged Mr Sowaid was paid ...
- Formula One cleared of \$50m corruption payment 21 Mar 2011 19:51 GMT
... this year's F1 season which begins in Australia this weekend. The investigation surrounded a payment ... was arrested in January on suspicion of bribery, breach of trust and tax evasion. Last ...
- Corruption Suspected In Lagging Tonga Economy 21 Mar 2011 09:41 GMT
... MELBOURNE, Australia (Radio Australia, March 17, 2011) - The ... weak economy. Another government minister claims widespread corruption and mismanagement is causing most state enterprises ...

- [Ex-banker on conspiracy, fraud charges](#) 21 Mar 2011 12:02 GMT
... was involved in a multi-million dollar mortgage fraud, which police allege involved inflated property values ... Mohamad Diab, Mohamad Mehajer and a National Australia Bank staffer Mohamad Sowaid to “cheat and ...
- [Work visas issued on fake claims: hearing](#) 21 Mar 2011 11:20 GMT
... basis of false English-language credentials, a West Australian corruption hearing has heard. The state's Corruption and ... employee at Curtin University of Technology was bribed to falsify records to allow some visa ...
- [WA uni staff faked test results, CCC hears](#) 21 Mar 2011 04:01 GMT
... CURTIN University staff allegedly took bribes to falsify the English test results of ... English test results of visa applicants, West Australia's corruption watchdog has heard. The Corruption and Crime ...
- [English exams for migrants falsified](#) 21 Mar 2011 15:46 GMT
... falsify English tests for potential migrants, a corruption watchdog has been told. Some of the ... whether visas should be revoked. Yesterday, West Australia's Corruption and Crime Commission began public hearings ... Centre were sufficient to detect the alleged fraud. ...
- [When 'Civil-Societyism' Fronts for Barbarism \[opinion\]](#) 21 Mar 2011 14:01 GMT
... a fraud, rather than accomplice to moral corruption.' Many institutions are guilty of selling favours ... country's subsequent political rot, including a \$3-million bribe to the Shaik family from German firm ... post via email and gapping it to Australia. The LSE's ethical collapse is special, not ...”

Not a single word has been omitted, or added - for transparency as well as effect !

It was thought at mid-2009 that the reason why Australia had slipped down the international anti-corruption rankings was because of the A.W.B. Oil-for-Food scandal.

In addition, Transparency International lamented that many governments simply were not putting enough effort into curbing bribes. The organisation had just recently released an annual report which evaluated the efforts member countries were making to uphold the O.E.C.D.'s Anti-Bribery Convention. Australia did come out in the bottom category, criticised for carrying out little or no practical enforcement against bribery offenses by national businesses operating overseas. That was a category shared by 21 O.E.C.D. countries, as diverse as Turkey, Brazil and Canada. Only four countries are in the top tier, cited for active enforcement, with eleven in the middle with moderate

enforcement. In such a climate there was a risk that, unless enforcement both improved and became more uniform across countries, the Anti-Bribery Convention could become irrelevant. Conventions like this cannot afford to fail, otherwise it becomes one of those international conventions which are more valuable on paper than in practice.

Especially over the decades prior to the Convention, multinational corporations have helped bribery and corruption become a much worse problem especially in developing countries. As the multinational corporations, especially American and European, went abroad to countries which were vulnerable, the scale of the bribes increased - greedy officials would demand more from foreign investors.

This was particularly a problem in the resources sector, and distorted several national economies.

The Transparency International reports look at how many foreign investment corruption cases have gone to court, year by year - and how many had resulted in convictions. While not specifically including bribes, Australia's biggest overseas corruption case for 2009 was the Iraq Oil-for-Food scandal and the Australian Wheat Board. Six cases were at the time in the civil courts, but none had yet resulted in convictions - and the recommendations from the Royal Commission into the affair had not been followed up. The lack of results had placed Australia in the bottom group. Countries like the United States and Germany, which have both prosecuted several cases, served as a clear contrast in the top category.

Clearly the A.W.B. scandal would not go away, no matter what the Howard Government would do. It was the prevailing opinion that, apart from that scandal, the government itself was incompetent, dishonest and corrupt. It has been proven so in relation to its accountability and other processes following the discovery of restricted and secret intelligence reports and communications between various Australian embassies, trade officials, the United Nations, Australian public servants and the Australian Prime Minister, the then Minister for Trade, who was also Deputy Prime Minister, and the Foreign Minister and their Departments in relation to the A.W.B. scandal.

New evidence and supporting material had come to light during an independent investigation into claims that Member of Parliament were holding 'dirt files'. The 'dirt files' claims were proven but in the process of the investigation, and a substantial amount of material related to the A.W.B. scandal as well as documents related to other issues were discovered. The A.W.B. material was held by various Australian agencies and had not been brought to the attention of the Royal Commission looking into the bribes provided to the former Iraqi regime through a straw company in Jordan.

The material showed that, in fact, senior Government Ministers were told on a number of occasions that the A.W.B. was providing bribes to Saddam Hussein and his regime, contrary to the provisions of the United Nations Oil-for-Food programme. Copies of confidential and secret diplomatic cables, memoranda, e-mails and other material were found showing that both the then Minister for Trade as well as the Foreign Minister, had received numerous detailed intelligence and other briefings very early on into the scandal. They did nothing. The Foreign Minister noted in one secret memorandum to the Australian Embassy in Jordan that: "No-one will ever find out anyway". The then Minister for Trade was also advised on a number of occasions as to what was going on. Prime Minister Howard was also briefed on the matter by the various agencies including the Office of National Assessment - O.N.A., as well as the Australia's international spy agency - A.S.I.S.

The same Howard Government which had kept silent over what it knew of the Oil-for-wheat scandal set out to 'detect, investigate and prevent corrupt conduct' through the newly formed Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity - A.C.L.E.I., with an Office of the Integrity Commissioner.

The Commission was established by an Act of Parliament in 2006, and placed under the responsibility of the Home Affairs and Justice Minister. The agencies subject to the Integrity Commissioner's jurisdiction are the Australian Crime Commission, the Australian Federal Police, and the former National Crime Authority. From January 2011 the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service became also subject to the Integrity Commissioner's independent scrutiny. Other agencies with a law enforcement function may also be added by regulation. A.C.L.E.I.'s primary role is to investigate law enforcement-related corruption issues, giving priority to serious and systemic corruption. The Integrity Commissioner must consider the nature and scope of corruption revealed by investigations,

and report annually on any patterns and trends in corruption in Australian Government law enforcement and other Government agencies which have law enforcement functions. Accordingly, A.C.L.E.I collects intelligence about corruption in support of the Integrity Commissioner's functions. A.C.L.E.I. also aims to understand corruption and prevent it. When, as a consequence of performing her/his functions, the Integrity Commissioner identifies laws of the Commonwealth or administrative practices of government agencies which might contribute to corrupt practices or prevent their early detection, s/he may make recommendations for these laws or practices to be changed. Any person, including members of the public and law enforcement officers, can give information to the Integrity Commissioner. Information can be given in confidence or provided anonymously.

Well Juvenal could ask: *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* - "Who will guard the guards themselves?"

After all, who would know about a little bit of corruption work, promoted by 'benevolent' organisations such as the one rendered public by the Victoria Ombudsman in March 2011. And the innocent name? - The Brotherhood. The 'brothers' meet for lunch, to hear a guest speaker and then to engage in a bit of 'networking'.

What the Ombudsman discovered about The Brotherhood confirmed the widely held conviction that its activities undermine the community's confidence in public institutions.

Invitees from a list of up to 350 influential people have been attending the lunches every six weeks since the first one was held in 2003. The guests are all men, and the Chatham House Rule applies, *i.e.* "What is said in the room stays in the room."

The host has been from the beginning the founder, a former policeman between 1988 and 1999, who had come to the attention of the Police Internal Investigations Department for, among other transgressions, assaulting a member of the public, and fined AU\$ 200. He now heads two private companies. The founder starts the lunches with the statement "We are all members of The Brotherhood and we must assist each other."

A whistleblower told the Ombudsman that “[the founder’s] motivation for the formation and maintenance of this group is to, amongst other things, provide an environment to facilitate unlawful information trading including confidential police information and other confidential information from government departments. This is in addition to gaining commercial benefits and inside information regarding contracts for tender.”

On the invitation list are two ‘Liberal’ State MPs, many current and former police officers including one with alleged links to an organised crime figure. A former Australian Wheat Board executive involved in the Oil-for-wheat scandal is on it, too. So is the manager of a licensed table top dancing venue frequented by Victoria Police officers.

Some of the public servants attending maintain databases of sensitive information. It seems that a regular attendee, a senior Victorian Police officer, disclosed the identity of a prosecution witness in a high profile murder trial, contrary to a Supreme Court suppression order. One member used his position at the Traffic Camera Office to annul over AU\$ 2,000 worth of speeding fines accumulated by the founder and persons of his companies. The ‘operator’ has denied any wrongdoing but the case has been recommended to police for investigation.

The example of The Brotherhood is not unique. The Ombudsman’s report cited the New South Wales Independent Commission Against Corruption’s investigations into the ‘Information Exchange Club’ in 1992. This could be added to the mountain of damning reports and inquiries including Royal Commissions into various state Police forces over the decades. Nothing ever seems to happen. ‘Revolving door’ appointments involving positions on boards for retiring, previously highly placed politicians have become routine.

The links between public institutions and big business interests - both mainstream and underworld - are becoming well known to the public, but one would be an optimist for thinking that anger at the seemingly endless stream of scandals is growing. It is pressure from the community which leads to the inquiries. It is in response to this same outrage that instrumentalities like the state-based Independent Commissions Against Corruption were established.

The demand on big business to abide by their State 'rule of law' is certainly justified; and the fight to bring business 'operators' to heel must continue. But so long as governments rule on behalf of corporations and the real power in society belongs to an oligarchy the battle will never be successful.

14

Strictly speaking, and barring some rare, isolated cases, there is no electoral fraud in Australia if by that one means 'illegal interference with an election process'. None of the defining instances of 'electoral fraud' is present in Australia - not intimidation, vote buying, misinformation, misleading or confusing ballot papers, ballot stuffing, mis-recording of votes, misuse of proxy votes or destruction or wrongful invalidation of ballots. It is 'the electoral process' itself which is fraudulent.

Nevertheless, to the extent that the term is sometimes used to describe acts which although legal are considered to be morally unacceptable, outside the spirit of electoral laws or in violation of the principles of democracy, there is fraud.

Show elections, in which only one candidate can win, could sometimes be considered to be electoral fraud although they may comply with the law.

In national elections, successful electoral fraud can have the effect of a *coup d'état* or corruption of democracy. In a narrow election a small amount of fraud may be enough to change the result. If the result is not affected, fraud can still have a damaging effect if not punished, as it can reduce voters' confidence in democracy or, through the voters' general indifference to politics and the process, can traduce the very substance of democracy.

Electoral fraud is not limited to political polls and can occur in any election where the potential gain is worth the risk for the cheater/s - in elections for corporate directorships or labor union officials,

student councils, sports judging, and the awarding of merit to books, films, music or television programmes. Harsh penalties aimed at deterring electoral fraud make it likely that individuals who perpetrate fraud do so with the expectation that it either will not be discovered or will be excused.

There has been for long time - in the State Queensland in particular, but not exclusively - serious 'Gerrymandering'. This is the practice of political corruption which attempts to establish an electoral advantage for a particular party - in the case the Country Party (Agrarian Socialists), by manipulating geographical boundaries to set up partisan, incumbent-protected, and neutral districts. It takes its name from Elbridge Gerry, a Massachusetts governor who tried it for the first time 200 years ago.

During the 2010 Australian federal election there was an attempt at disenfranchising a large number of electors who had not enrolled in the lists before the election was called. After the ousting of Prime Minister Rudd, to justify the manoeuvre, the newly chosen Prime Minister Gillard saw fit to call a snap election, under pressure of media and corporate interests. Australian federal parliaments have three-year terms. The exact timing of national elections is in the hands of the prime minister, and an announcement on 17 July 2010 for election for a snap poll on 21 August meant that the campaign would last only five weeks and, more importantly, that given that an estimated 1.4 million unregistered voters - a third of them aged 18-24 - had just one day to apply for enrolment, under amendments to the *Electoral Act* of 2006 put forward by the Howard Government, a large number of persons would be unable to vote. The minimum legally permissible time for enrolment and campaigning marked a further sharp erosion of a truly democratic process. On 6 August 2010 *GetUp !*, a political advocacy group, won its High Court challenge to the constitutional validity of the changes to the *Electoral Act* of 2006. This led to up to 100,000 more Australians being added to the roll for the election.

After much experimentation and change over the past 150 years, Australia has settled for electoral arrangements which are portrayed by federal government of either hue as "accepted by Australia's people, political parties, and parliamentarians." This is far from the truth. Nevertheless, the system is used in the federal and many state parliaments of Australia and in municipal, major political party, trade union, church, company boards, voluntary bodies and sports clubs elections !

Practically the Australian electorate has been voting under three types of voting systems: first past the post, preferential voting and proportional representation - with single transferable vote. Voting is compulsory and secret.

First past the post - a plurality system whereby the winner is the candidate with the most number of votes, though not necessarily an absolute majority of votes - was used for the first parliamentary elections held in 1843 for the New South Wales Legislative Council and for most colonial elections during the second half of the nineteenth century. Since then there have been alterations to the various electoral systems in use around the country.

Presently, two variants of preferential voting and two variants of proportional representation are used for all Australian parliamentary elections. Preferential voting is a majority system which attempts to ensure that a candidate secures an absolute majority of votes. Proportional representation systems are designed to allocate parliamentary seats to parties in proportion to their overall vote.

Under 'full' preferential voting each candidate must be given a preference by the voter. First, all the number '1' votes are counted for each candidate. If a candidate receives more than 50 per cent - an absolute majority, 50 per cent plus one - of the formal first preference votes, the candidate is immediately elected. If no candidate has an absolute majority, the candidate with the fewest votes is excluded. These votes are then transferred to the other candidates according to the second preferences shown by voters on the ballot papers. If still no candidate has an absolute majority, again the remaining candidate with the fewest votes is excluded and these votes are transferred. This process will continue until one candidate has more than half the total votes cast and is declared elected. Full preferential voting has been used in federal elections since 1918. Under this system, voters rank candidates in order of preference on ballot papers. With 'optional' preferential voting the voter may allocate preferences to as few as one candidate. This system can produce similar outcomes to 'full' preferential voting but can also produce results where the winning candidate wins with less than half of the votes. It also clearly lessens the importance of preferences in many seats.

Australia has a federal system of government with a national parliament and legislative assemblies and councils - parliaments - in each state and territory, although there is no Legislative Council in Queensland, the Northern Territory, and the Australian Capital Territory. This leads to a variety of systems, with a variety of frequency of election calls, and an unequal assignment of seats regardless of the population. How that could be satisfactory, and above all democratic, is beyond belief. But sel-willed ignorant people could be made to believe anything, if sufficiently and frequently lied to.

A variety of electoral systems is used for these parliaments.

The federal House of Representatives is composed of 150 members, elected in designated electoral divisions for 3 years with the preferential voting system and full allocation of preferences. The Senate is elected for 6 years, with staggered re-election every three, with the proportional representation system, suitably amended.

The Legislative Assembly of New South Wales is composed of 93 members, elected for 4 years with the preferential voting system and optional allocation of preferences. The Legislative Assembly of South Australia is composed of 47 members, Victoria (88), Western Australia (47) and the Northern Territory (25), all elected for 4 years with the preferential voting system and fully allocation of preferences. The Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory is composed of 17 members, elected for 4 years and the House of Assembly of Tasmania is composed of 25 members, elected for 4 years with the proportional representation system of the Hare-Clark model. The Legislative Council of New South Wales is composed of 42 members, elected for 8 years with the proportional representation system. The Legislative Council of South Australia is composed of 22 members, Victoria (40), Western Australia (34) elected for 4 years with the proportional representation system used for the federal Senate. The Legislative Council of Tasmania is composed of 15 members, elected for 6 years with the preferential voting system and the optional (partial) allocation of preferences.

Only a person paid for her/his biased opinion could state that systems such as these do not leave Australians unequal by result, weight of their representation, at the same time in different administration of the state and territories of the country.

The results of the 21 August 2010 federal election for the House of Representatives led to a staggering comparison: the Australia Labor Party, with 4,711,363 votes and 37.99 per cent, obtained 72 seats. The 'Coalition' (Liberal Party of Australia, 3,777,383 votes, Liberal National Party of Queensland, 1,130,525 votes, National Party of Australia, 419,286 votes, Country Liberal Party of the Northern Territory, 38,335 votes and National Party for Western Australia, 43,101 votes) - and thus for a grand total of 5,406,630 votes and 43.66 per cent, obtained 72 seats. The Australian Greens, with 1,458,998 votes and 11.76 per cent, obtained 1 seat. There were 312,496 votes for Independents and 510,876 votes for other groups. Four Independents were elected.

After distribution of the forced 'preferences' the results for the two parties of the system were: the Australian Labor Party, with 6,216,445 of the votes and 50.12 per cent, obtained 72 seats. The 'Coalition', with 6,185,918 votes and 49.88 per cent, obtained 72 seats. *It deserves repeating:* the Greens, with 1,458,998 votes and 11.76 per cent, obtained one seat.

The consequence of this monstrous system is the axiomatic proposition that the 'Labor' Party cannot win anything close to a majority without the Greens 'preferences' and the Greens cannot win any seats without the 'Liberals' 'preferring' them *in odium* of 'Labor' ! It makes for an unsavoury alliance: the Greens and 'Labor' are deadly enemies compelled to work together.

A minority government was possible because of the support of the one Green and three of the Independents.

Proportional representation is meant to yield 'proportional' election results, whereby parties should win parliamentary seats roughly in proportion to the size of their vote. Ideally, 50 per cent of the vote should win about 50 per cent of the seats. Proportional representation is the clearest way of realising the basic tenet that the proportion of representatives who hold a particular view should be roughly the same as the proportion of the people who hold that view. While some systems which pursue this goal (such as closed [party list](#)) can address other proportionality issues (gender, religion, ethnicity), and these advantages are often used to promote such variants, it is not a feature of proportional

representation as such to ensure an even split of men vs. women, ethnic or religious representation which resembles the population, or any other goal.

As it is used in practice in politics, the only proportionality being respected is a close match between the percentage of votes that groups of candidates obtain in elections in representative democracy, and the percentage of seats they receive - e.g., in [legislative assemblies](#). Thus a more exact term is party-proportional representation, sometimes used by those who wish to highlight systems which emphasise party choice less, candidate or gender choice more, or who wish not to promote systems (such as closed party-list mixed-member proportional) which overly empower the parties, at the expense of voter choice of exactly which individuals go to the legislature as representatives. In contrast those who subordinate gender, ethnic, religious, regional or candidate choice to party choice - usually party members themselves - often use the term full representation.

Proportional systems almost always use political parties as the measure of representation - thus in practice these systems are party-proportional. For example, a party which receives 15 per cent of the votes under such a system receives 15 per cent the seats for its candidates. Different methods of achieving proportional representation achieve either greater proportionality or a more determinate outcome.

Party-list proportional representation is one approach, in which groupings correspond directly with candidate lists from political parties. The open list form allows the voter to influence the election of individual candidates within a party list. The closed list approach does not. Another variation is the single transferable vote, which does not depend on political parties - and where the "measure of grouping" is entirely left up to the voters. Elections for the Australian Senate use what is referred to as [above-the-line voting](#) where candidates for each party are grouped on the ballot, allowing the voter to vote for the group or for a candidate.

The parties each list their candidates according to that party's determination of priorities. In closed list systems, voters vote for a list, not a candidate. Each party is allocated seats in proportion to the number of votes it receives, using the party-determined ranking order. In an open list, voters may

vote, depending on the model, for one person, or for two, or indicate their order of preference within the list. This system is used in many countries, including Finland - with an open list, Sweden - with an open list, Israel - where the whole country is one closed list constituency, Brazil - with an open list, the Netherlands - with an open list, South Africa - with a closed list, and for elections to the European Parliament in most European Union countries - mostly with an open list.

A mixed election system - such as is presently used in New Zealand - combines a proportional system and a single seat district system, attempting to achieve some of the positive features of each. Mixed systems are often helpful in countries with large populations, since they balance local and national concerns. They are used in nations with diverse geographic, social, cultural and economic issues. Such systems, or variations of them, are also used in Bolivia, Germany, Mexico, and for the Scottish Parliament and the [Welsh Assembly](#).

It may be instructive to compare the electoral results in two different countries which are regarded as democratically governed: Finland, which has proportional representation on a party list, and New Zealand, which has a mixed member proportional representation system.

After the Finnish parliamentary election of 17 April 2011 the 200 seats were divided among the nine successful parties as follows:

National Coalition Party, with 599,138 votes and 22.0 per cent, obtained 44 seats.

Social Democratic Party of Finland with 561,558 votes and 21 per cent, obtained 42 seats.

True Finns, with 560,075 votes and 19.5 per cent, obtained 39 seats.

Centre Party, with 463,266 votes and 17.5 per cent, obtained 35 seats.

Left Alliance, with 239,039 votes and 7 per cent, obtained 14 seats.

Green League, with 213,172 votes and 5 per cent, obtained 10 seats.

Swedish People's Party, with 125,785 votes and 4.5 per cent, obtained 9 seats.

Christian Democrats, with 118,453 votes and 3 per cent, obtained 6 seats.

The Åland representative, with 8,546 votes and 0.5 per cent was elected to a reserved

seat.

That is proportionality, and *that* is democracy.

Finns are no different as human beings from any others. Perhaps their better way of governance may reside on their more modern view and the good fortune of not being chained to stultifying 'tradition' such as that of the Westminster System. Independent since 1917, with an original Constitution Act enacted in 1919 and recently modified with an Act which came into force on 1 March 2000, the Finns have declared their country a sovereign republic, in which power is vested in the people, who are represented by the Parliament. Thus begins the very first Chapter of that Constitution. And it goes on: "The constitution shall guarantee the inviolability of human dignity and the freedom and rights of the individual and promote justice in society. Finland participates in international co-operation for the protection of peace and human rights and the development of society." Chapter 2 is devoted to the protection of "Basic rights and liberties", listed one by one. . In its words one could hear Sibelius, confidently declaring in a letter to his friend Axel Carpelan: " ... I can already make out the mountain that I shall ascend (...) God is opening his doors for a moment, and his orchestra is playing the Fifth Symphony."

After the New Zealand parliamentary election of 8 November 2008 the 122 seats were divided among the seven successful parties as follows:

National, with 1,053,398 votes and 44.93 per cent, obtained 58 seats.

Labour, with 796,880 votes and 33.99 per cent, obtained 43 seats.

Green, with 157,613 votes and 6.72 per cent, obtained 9 seats.

Association

of Consumers and Taxpayers, with 85,496 votes and 3.65 per cent, obtained 5 seats.

Māori, with 55,980 votes and 2.39 per cent, obtained 5 seats.

Progressive, with 21,241 votes and 0.91 per cent, obtained 1 seat.

United Future, with 20,497 votes and 0.87 per cent, obtained 1 seat.

That may be democracy, representation it is not.

* * * * *

Conclusions ?

This much is certain: no all purpose definition of Fascism is possible. Mussolini's was born republican and anti-clerical, hired by land-owners and industrialists, for the repression of workers; soon turned monarchist, and corporatist, it found a good bed to lay down with the Fascist Popes: Pius XI and Pius XII - the latter a Nazi-sympathiser, all comfortable in ritual buffoonery, during 1922-43; it died 'republican' and 'social' under the wing of the German occupiers, 1943-45. Hitler's was paid by big business, essentially pagan and anti-Christian, lasted twelve years of planned, unrelenting crime and genocide, 1933-45. Franco's was National-Catholic, corporatist, luckier than the previous two to the point of becoming acceptable to the 'western democracies', thirty nine years of blessed brutality, 1936-75. There are other examples, of course: Peron's Argentina, Pinochet's Chile, and others, too, of more different hue. They all share some common elements: anti-Communism, anti-Bolshevism, anti-Semitism - albeit in various degrees.

Sub-tropical - somewhat Friendly Fascism, if that should be the answer to the original question, presents many features common to other Fascisms - and some. Here they are, perhaps not in any specific order, but listed as constitutive essential elements:

- 1788, British invasion of Gondwana-New Holland-Australia, untouched by the 'spirit of 1789', as well as that of 1776; 140 years to 1928 of planned genocide of the original Black population, during decades of institutional racism; unbridled nationalism - only now and only implicitly still proclaiming the cultural superiority of the British system, from classist law to a putrescent monarchy, yet, still capable of censoring the production of a Royals' spoof by the publicly-supported Australian Broadcasting Corporation;
- A stolid insularity which proclaims Australia = the Southern Hemisphere, with 'the world' out there
- people oblivious to the political and economic upheaval which is going on beyond its borders;
- A continuous rhetoric of freedom, liberty, democracy, and - much later - human rights, clashing with a reality of preferring authority to liberty, hierarchy to equality, and deference to fraternity;

- A close alliance of the State and the corporate world and its fraudsters;
- The domination by huge foreign business - themselves with a tradition off supporting dictators all over the world;
- The support which must be needed to participate in a transnational business-military complex, as a supplier of senseless growth;
- Irrationality - largely due to 'imported values' - in an atmosphere of know-nothing-ism in which conformism and formal adherence to the 'values' of the Judeo-Christian tradition is 'safer', although it may bring home varying degrees of anti-Semitism, but serves to sustain inequality and authoritarianism, and a sense of resignation which goes with that 'faith', superstition, predestination, delusion, and life-gambling;
- A parliamentary system in which television performance by highly paid, studiously 'beautiful' actors respects the game of a decaying, morally and intellectually corrupt Westminster System;
- A central cabal to preside over a new coalition of concentrated oligarchic power and, in effect, unconcerned that pillaging over pillaging may cause shortages, pollution, unemployment, inflation and war;
- The growth of militarism as a 'spirit of life', early inculcated into future generations through school and family;
- Duty, honour and patriotism redefined to defend observation of such business-military-corporate-transnational-bellicose 'values';
- A close alliance of the State, the Church and the corporate world and its fraudsters;
- All of the preceding wrapped into a flag with mixes the reference to early tax evaders with the perennial British servitude expressed in the Union Jack's treble crucifixion - surely, surely the surviving symbols of colonialism;
- An automatic aggressive, subservient, militaristic, 'foreign policy', which quietly transferred a state of vassalage from 'the mother country' to a Great-And-Powerful-Friend', always subsuming a position of superior 'biological determinism' - better racial superiority *vis-à-vis* the neighbours;

- A readiness to intervene whenever the ‘leader of the free world’ calls - if need be with a lie as in Vietnam, or to ‘export democracy’ as in Iraq - but realistically to guarantee the availability of petroleum for the ‘free world’;
- A fragmented ‘society’ in which, it may be difficult to tell and persuade an indifferent populace that homelessness, unemployment, a high cost of surviving, and urban congestion, transport, decay, and filth are good for them, although it is not too difficult to have that populace tighten the belt on an austerity programme from which the bottomless wealthy are obviously excluded by the size of their ill-gotten possessions and through recourse to tax minimisation and perks;
- An organisation of the economy to serve international and domestic cartels under the illusion of a ‘market economy’, which amounts to nothing more than a corporatist economy;
- The proclivity of a populace to ‘quick solutions’ which always end up in reduction of government spending for social services, health, fire protection, employment prospects and - for the few who still care - libraries;
- All this of course in strict observance of the values of the Judeo-Christian tradition in a multicultural and secular society without any concern that such mindless ‘communion’ may make no-sense, especially to those many given to an inordinate consumption of alcohol, and an increasing use of drugs and always with a structural passion for gambling;
- A militant anti-Communism - now revised as an anti-Muslim attitude - coupled with the fear of an extreme and imminent threat to ‘national security’, which justifies an even more secret police apparatus, practically unlimited by constitutional restrictions or legal requirements - there being no Bill of Rights and a colonial reliance on the common law;
- A duopoly in printed media and an oligopoly in other media totally controlled and curtsied in fear of retribution by a band of Right-wing talking heads, or pens and noisy minions in the parliaments;
- An ‘education’ system which indoctrinates to incuriosity, imparted by well-dressed propagandists of ‘market values’, wondrous technology, and the virtues of hard time - under the cloak of acceptable ‘respectability’, while words such as ‘academic’ and ‘intellectual’ become an expression of contempt if not of an attribution of lunacy in a new world where language is debased, SMESsed, and increasingly closer to grunts;
- A ‘society’ in which what matters is a sum of trivia + conformity + search-for-quick-enrichment + success and ‘popularity’;

- The reliance on a pill-for-everything and technology for every need in peace as in war;
- An unquestioning confidence that violence can win in the end - preferably with bombs to kill people but to respect 'real property', or action from a distance on an automated battlefield;
- An innate disregard for any form of economic and or political planning because that is presented, inculcated, absorbed and regurgitated as 'Socialism' at best when not 'Communism';
- A national obsession for any sport and pomp and circumstance with the corollary passion for marching as substitute for thought: occasionally 'slow march', as the English do, and bag-pipes as the Scots do - but nothing original;
- The totally incredible but widely believed notion that in Australia there are some very rich, some poor - largely because refractory to work, and a large, overwhelming majority of people who are both 'middle class' and blessed by a unique form of class-collaboration;
- The rota-like repetition and mindless assertion, out of laziness and indifference, by an uncultured populace of the blessing of a multicultural society - a notion totally devoid of meaning and sense if by that one should accept populist cretinism and Government Philistinism as defining a multi-folkloristic circus.

* May Day 2011. In memory of my friends, Professor Bertram Gross and Justice Lionel Murphy.

Dr. Venturino Giorgio Venturini, formerly an *avvocato* at the Court of Appeal of Bologna, taught, administered, and advised on, law in four continents, 'retiring' in 1993 from Monash University. Author of eight books and about 100 articles and essays for learned periodicals and conferences, his latest work is *THE LAST GREAT CAUSE – Volunteers from Australia and Emilia-Romagna in defence of the Spanish Republic, 1936-1939* (Search Foundation, Sydney 2010). Since his 'retirement' Dr. Venturini has been Senior Associate in the School of Political and Social Inquiry at Monash; he is also an Adjunct Professor at the Institute for Social Research at Swinburne University, Melbourne. george.venturini@arts.monash.edu.au.