No. 21 December 1999

Investigating Crimes Against Humanity in East Timor

While the Federal Government acted with great speed and determination to raise a peace keeping force to stop the killings in East Timor, it appears reluctant to see the guilty parties punished for their crimes. Spencer Zifcak, Associate Professor of Law at Latrobe University and Victorian President of the International Commission of Jurists, outlines the history and the issues.

While the killing of the East Timorese by the Indonesian military and the militias was still underway, the Australian Section of the International Commission of Jurists, with the support of its international counterpart in Geneva, announced the establishment of a panel of eminent jurists to assume responsibility for the collection of evidence on alleged crimes against humanity and genocide in East Timor.

The purpose of the ICJ evidence gathering project has been to collect evidence of alleged human rights abuses in the expectation that a war crimes tribunal will be set up under the auspices of the United Nations with powers, functions and jurisdiction similar to those tribunals already established for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

The ICJ committee overseeing the process includes some of the most eminent jurists in Australia – Justice John Dowd from the Supreme Court of New South Wales, Nick Cowdery QC Director of Public Prosecutions in NSW, Bernard Bongiorno, formerly the DPP in Victoria and Moira Rayner, writer and consultant.

The ICJ moved to establish the panel of eminent jurists and a team of volunteer legal investigators with considerable speed. Initial meetings for those expressing interest in assisting with evidence collection attracted more than 600 lawyers across Australia.

From these, 150 lawyers, including many eminent QC's and others with very substantial expertise in criminal and human rights investigation, attended training programs designed to provide them with a comprehensive background with respect to recent East Timorese political history, Indonesian military and militia placement, the international law with respect to genocide and crimes against humanity and the sensitivities of taking evidence from people who had been subject to considerable psychological trauma.

Banned from safe havens

The ICJ's initial plan was to take evidence from the many East Timorese refugees in safe havens throughout Australia. This evidence would then be presented to the UN Commission of Inquiry into human rights abuse in East Timor. Further evidence would be collected for submission to any

international criminal tribunal the UN agreed to establish.

Regrettably, however, the Federal Government took two measures that entirely frustrated these original plans. First, the Minister for Immigration, Phillip Ruddock issued a directive banning ICJ lawyers from interviewing the refugees on Commonwealth property. This meant that the refugees would have to be ferried from their safe havens to other venues to be interviewed. Not surprisingly, most were reluctant to comply, not wishing to offend their governmental hosts and, understandably, being intimidated by the prospect of being interviewed by strange people in unfamiliar surroundings.

"Mr Ruddock's purpose was to delay and frustrate."

Secondly, and at almost the same time, the Minister asked all the refugees to leave Australia early. This was despite the fact that it was the onset of the monsoon season, that malaria was rife, that no clean water was yet available and that accommodation was sparse to non-existent. Those refugees departing were provided with no more than a tarpaulin, two blankets, five kilos of rice and the uncertain promise of more from international agencies on their return. Still, many wished to go to help rebuild their countries and to seek news of their relatives and friends.

The Minister's justification for banning the ICJ lawyers was an impoverished one. He argued that the refugees should be protected from lawyers 'touting for evidence' – as if money or other advantage could be obtained from seeking to advance human rights. He also demanded that the ICJ be authorised by the UN. No legal foundation existed for such a request and no clear reason either. The purpose was to delay and frustrate.

"Diplomacy is one thing, justice another."

One may only speculate as to why the Federal Government chose to adopt such an attitude to evidence collection. The most apparent answer is that it wished not to be seen to encourage any actions by Australian non-governmental human rights organisations that might lead to the prosecution of Indonesian military officials. The Government is right to be concerned about its diplomatic relations with Indonesia – but not to the extent of providing de facto protection for the perpetrators of alleged crimes against humanity.

As a result of these developments, the ICJ has now shifted its focus to Dili. Members met with the UN Commission of Inquiry in Darwin to determine how further evidence gathering might best be co-ordinated. Productive discussions were held in relation to the ICJ's contribution to an international criminal tribunal should such a tribunal be established. The organisation has now sent a representative to Dili to determine, in consultation with the leadership of the East Timorese community and local human rights organisations, how best to make its contribution most effective. It is hoped that teams of Australian lawyers will be sent to Dili to assist throughout the first few months of next year.

Meanwhile, it remains to the Australian Government's great discredit that it acted to frustrate a genuine, well organised and legitimate attempt by an international non-governmental human rights organisation to collect evidence with respect to human rights abuses taking place on its doorstep. Diplomacy is one thing, justice another. While pursuing the first we should insist on the second. Regrettably, the Government appears not to understand.

Dr Kemp's Leaked Cabinet Submission

Education Minister David Kemp's leaked blueprint for university reform held no surprises for those familiar with the report of the Howard Government's National Commission of Audit. Formed by Treasurer Costello within days of the Coalition election victory in 1996, the NCA set out a radical plan to transform government in Australia according to the most stringent economic rationalist principles.

Too radical for Peter Costello to endorse publicly at the time, the NCA report nevertheless reveals the Government's long-term policy agenda. It has time and again provided the ideas and the detail for the Government's reforms – the purchaser-provider model of service delivery, abolition of the Department of Administrative Services, changes to Medicare, abolition of the EPA, contract employment in the Australian Public Service, competition policy in the welfare sector, and reform of university funding. It's all there.

Dr Kemp's preferred plan has been cut and pasted from the NCA report. Arguing that the 'providers of education … appear to have gathered influence at the expense of consumers', and regretting that public universities cannot charge full up front fees like their private counterparts, the NCA urged the Coalition to increase 'contestability' between universities by 'attaching funding to the student rather than the institution'. It recommended that the Commonwealth cease all operating grants to universities, and replace it with direct funding of scholarships 'redeemable at any accredited institution', i.e. vouchers. The universities would be free to set fees for the 'products' on offer and 'consumers', with or without vouchers, would pay accordingly.

The Education Minister's leaked cabinet submission identified some of the problems besetting higher education. But Dr Kemp believes that deregulation, not additional funding, is the solution to the crisis. He proposes two blueprints for deregulating funding arrangements and so allowing universities to generate more fee income, stating his preference for the more radical, market-orientated of the two. Central to both options, however, is his proposal to provide financial inducements to universities to take a tougher position in enterprise bargaining and, in the process, attack the position of the union (see the box).

Union bashing through 'Workplace Reform'

A key component of Dr Kemp's submission – and one endorsed by Cabinet – is a proposal for 'workplace reform'. Universities can access funding for a 2% salary increase 'contingent on the achievement of specific workplace reforms reflecting Government policy'. These include provision for Australian Workplace Awards, 'simplifying' redundancy and classification procedures, reducing award standards and reducing the number and size of university committees and governing bodies.

Kemp wants to use enterprise and individual employment agreements to sideline the National Tertiary Education Union, claiming that the union is placing 'restrictions' on universities. His cabinet submission included advice from the Government Solicitor arguing that imposing conditions on proposed grants is not contrary to the prohibition of coercion in the Workplace Relations Act.

This is tantamount to an admission that the Government is in fact seeking to coerce the parties to come to agreements of a particular type through the use of financial incentives. The Government's view that some form of coercion is necessary to pursue its radical reform agenda is no doubt informed by the outcome of recent ballots at the University of New South Wales and University of Queensland. In each case, when management sought to undermine the NTEU bargaining agenda by putting proposed agreements to a vote of all staff, substantial majorities voted against the non-union agreements.

The proposal to use financial incentives to determine the outcome of enterprise bargaining negotiations is an unprecedented attack on the autonomy of universities and a new weapon against unions representing the interests of their members.

Radical Deregulation

Dr Kemp's preferred model for deregulation is essentially the same as the one he developed for John Hewson's *Fightback!* policy package in 1992, and reprised in the West Review of Higher Education last year. Its key elements are:

- allocating public funding via a system of portable tuition subsidies (vouchers), redeemable at public and private providers. Universities could then set their own fees at will, and students would pay the difference;
- replacing HECS with an income-contingent loans scheme available to all, on which real rates of interest would be charged;
- abolishing current controls over the number of places a university can offer, including removing the current 25% cap on domestic undergraduate fee-paying places;
- requiring institutions to reserve a portion of fee-income for equity purposes; and
- requiring all institutions to comply with quality assurance proposals in order to qualify for receipt of tuition subsidies.

The cabinet submission left some aspects cloudy. Detail on the level of public subsidy via the voucher-based funding model was lacking. Neither was it clear what 'abolition of current controls over the number of places a university can offer' meant. Currently, places are restricted only by the 25% cap on fee-paying places, although the existence of an agreed funded load provides a de facto limit.

If Kemp is arguing for lifting all restrictions on the number of places within an 'agreed envelope of Commonwealth funding', then the size of the voucher would fluctuate depending on demand. It's more likely that the Government would keep some kind of a cap on the number of places it subsidises, and all others would be on a full-fee-paying basis with provision for a real interest loan.

Piecemeal Deregulation

The second option proposed by Dr Kemp – which is essentially a 'way-station' to further deregulation – is to preserve existing HECS arrangements, but lift the 25% cap on undergraduate fee-paying places. At the same time, the Government would make income-contingent real-interest loans available to fee-paying students.

'Most elements of the Kemp agenda could be implemented by stealth.'

This is calculated to increase income to universities, but while HECS remains the domestic fee-paying market is unlikely to deliver sufficient income to solve the financial problems confronting higher education institutions. In the longer term, however, such a policy would increase pressure on the application of market interest rates on HECS fees (on 'equity' grounds) and top-up fees for HECS-liable students.

The Government has now backed away from these proposals – but given their previous denials on this subject, any repudiation of Kemp's agenda has to be treated with suspicion.

Will it Happen?

Following the furore over the leaked cabinet submission, the Prime Minister ruled out fee deregulation but said Cabinet would consider real interest rates on HECS debts. This was an odd statement, given that real interest rates on HECS would outrage the electorate but deliver no additional funds to universities.

It would, however, over time help the Government's budget bottom line, as income received via HECS repayments is used to offset Government funding to universities. Subsequently, Howard ruled out major changes to HECS, but offered no alternative policy scenario.

It is unlikely that the Government would be able to gain the support of the Senate to lift the cap on fee-paying undergraduate places or to amend HECS. However, no legislative change is required to amend funding levels, or to implement a voucher-based model of allocation. Currently, institutions eligible for public funding are included in the Schedules attached to the Higher Education Funding Act, but it is not clear whether inclusion on the Schedules is actually a prerequisite for receiving public money. Therefore it is quite possible that most elements of the Kemp agenda could be implemented by stealth, constrained only by the Government's willingness to manage the inevitable electoral fallout.

Julie Wells, National Tertiary Education Union

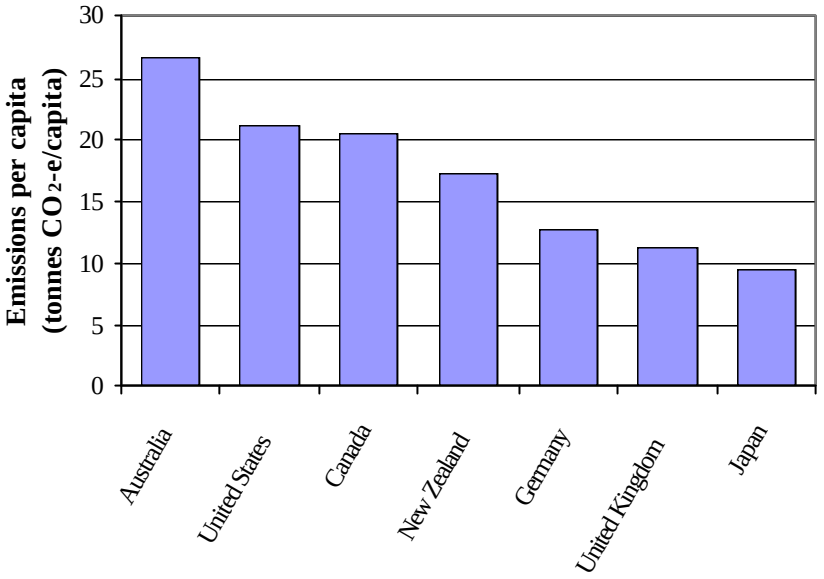
Clive Hamilton, The Australia Institute

Australia tops the developed world in greenhouse gas emissions per capita

The Australia Institute's recent study into greenhouse gas emissions per capita of the 35 Annex B parties to the Kyoto Protocol, found that Australia has the highest per capita emissions in the industrialised world.

This new research is based on UN figures which demonstrate that when all sources of greenhouse gas emissions are factored in, Australians emit 26.7 tonnes of greenhouse gas per capita per year, double that of other wealthy countries and 25 per cent more than emissions per person in the United States.

Australia's position is exacerbated by exceptionally high emissions from land-use change; Australia is one of only two countries where land use is a net source of greenhouse gas emissions, as opposed to a net greenhouse sink.



Net greenhouse gas emissions per capita for selected countries, 1995

The Institute's study has attracted immense interest internationally with over 500 requests from all parts of the world for the paper to be sent electronically.

Cartoon with thanks to Cathy Wilcox and the Sydney Morning Herald

Native Title and Anglo-Australian land law compared

The Native Title Amendment Act 1998 amounts to an extraordinary expropriation of property rights and interests for one section of the community with no compensation on just terms. It was an act akin to the notion of* terra nullius*, says the Australia Institute's latest Discussion Paper* Comparing Native Title and Anglo-Australian Land Law *by Ed Wensing.

Australia's land law changed forever on 3 June 1992, the date of the High Court's historic landmark judgment in *Mabo v. the State of Queensland*. It now encompasses two sets of rights and interests: one deriving from colonisation, the other deriving from the prior traditional ownership of Australia by its Indigenous peoples. The protracted debate over the High Court's *Wik* judgment clearly demonstrates that it is taking some time for the broader Australian community to adjust to the notion that Indigenous Australians may have continuing property rights protected by Australian law.

From a land management perspective, there is an urgent need to develop new approaches to land administration and management that takes account of the two sets of rights and interests. The new Discussion Paper explores new approaches to understanding the interface between the two distinct sets of rights and interests in land, or as Noel Pearson describes it, "the recognition space".

It discusses the two sets of rights and interests in land and water and develops a framework that them at three different levels: in relation to laws and customs generally; in relation to land management techniques; and, in relation to the content of land rights and interests. The various factors that influence or govern how these rights and interests interact with each other are examined.

The similarities between indigenous and Anglo-European concepts of land management are much greater than the differences. Both cultures have an enduring approach to land management reflecting their respective cultural values.

The Anglo-Australian approach is firmly rooted in statute law, as well as in the Crown's power to grant interests in land and to regulate and change those rights and interests. In contrast, indigenous Australian approaches reflect their special relationship to land and water and their sense of stewardship in the use, preservation and renewal of natural resources for present and future generations. In both cultures, the ways in which land and water are utilised are very similar and are closely regulated.

Despite these similarities, the native title rights and interests of indigenous Australians have been declared subservient to the real estate interests of non-indigenous Australians because the Native Title Amendment Act of 1998 gives other proprietary interests a higher priority than native title, and exempts such action from the Racial Discrimination Act.

Earlier this year the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) concluded that the Native Title Amendment Act discriminates against native title holders, and called for the Act to be suspended.

It is not in Australia's best interests to continue denying the CERD Committee's findings. Denial never works as a long-term solution. Sooner or later we will need to deal with this report or we may face the kind of sanctions once imposed on South Africa or become the first western nation to be reported to the UN General Assembly for breaching the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

History will one day judge the *Native Title Amendment Act 1998* for what it really is. In the eyes of the international community, Australia's reputation as a fair and just society has already been severely tarnished.

"There are two laws. Our covenant and white man's covenant, and we want these two to be recognised… We are saying we do not want one on top and one underneath. We are saying that we want them to be equal."

David Mowaljarlai, Elder, Ngarinyin people, Western Australia, 1997

Aluminium Smelting and Climate Change

The Institute's recent paper exposing the level of public subsidies to the aluminium smelting industry received a ferocious response from the beneficiaries of the hand-out. But the suggestion to conduct the research actually came from within the fossil fuel industry, indicating that other industry players are fed up with the aluminium industry's intransigence and special pleading. Here, one of the report's authors, Hal Turton, outlines the case and some of the reaction.

Back in November 1997 the Prime Minister announced the mandatory 2% renewable energy target for the electricity industry as part of a package of climate change policies. This policy requires an increase of two percentage points in the proportion of electricity generated from renewable sources (wind, solar, biomass and some hydro). Of all the Federal Government's climate change policies the 2% renewables target has the most potential.

When in October Environment Minister Robert Hill took to Cabinet a proposal to implement the policy, the aluminium industry attempted to torpedo it. It claimed that the policy would cost them millions of dollars, and repeated its threat to move operations offshore if greenhouse policies result in higher electricity prices. The aluminium industry has opposed nearly every policy designed to restrict greenhouse gas emissions except those that are voluntary and largely ineffective.

The Institute's discussion paper examines in detail the claims of the aluminium smelting industry, and asks whether Australia would be any worse off if the aluminium smelting industry carried through with its threat to move elsewhere.

Cheap electricity

In Australia, aluminium smelting accounts for 16% of greenhouse gas emissions from electricity generation and 6.5% of total emissions (excluding land-use change). Since the Kyoto Protocol was agreed in December 1997, the industry has argued that the burden for cutting emissions should be placed on other sectors of the economy and households rather than being borne by the polluters themselves.

The Institute's analysis has uncovered one of the main reasons why the industry is opposed to greenhouse gas reduction policies, particularly those that affect the price of electricity. Over the years the industry has managed to extract large subsidies from the various State governments, particularly in the form of cheap electricity. Consequently, any increase in electricity prices will have a larger impact on the smelters.

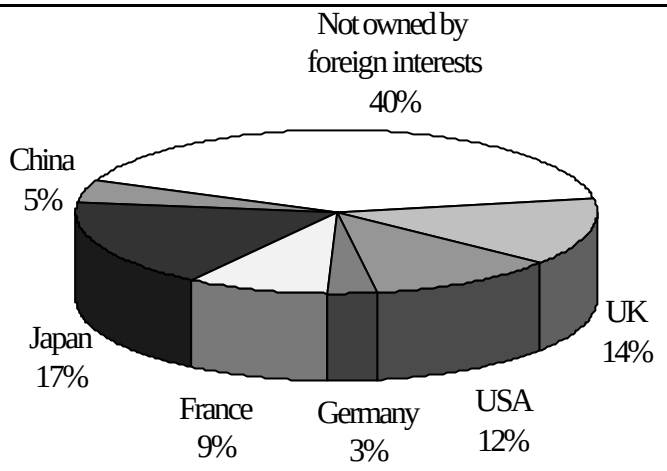
The prices paid for electricity by aluminium smelters are set in long-term contracts and are a closely kept secret. However, enough information is available to make a good estimate of the extent of subsidies. The general belief in the electricity industry is that smelters pay between 1.5 and 2.5 cents/kilowatt hour (kWh) for delivered electricity compared to around 5-6 c/kWh paid by other large industrial users (and more than 10 c/kWh peak price for households).

The former Victorian Treasurer, Alan Stockdale, revealed that other high-voltage customers were paying up to three times the price paid by the two Victorian aluminium smelters. The Victorian Auditor-General reported that in 1997-98 the Victorian Treasury paid $180 million to the State Electricity Commission to subsidise the cost of electricity to Victoria's two smelters, indicating a subsidy of around 2 c/kWh. On the basis of the available evidence, the total subsidy to aluminium smelters in Australia amounts to $410 million per annum.

On top of these subsidies the aluminium smelting industry is trying to avoid paying for any environmental damage caused by its activities. The failure to pay for the costs of the pollution

Subsidies to the Australian aluminium smelting industry (A$)

Subsidy	Amount	Per employee
Financial subsidy from under-priced electricity	$410 m	$76,600
Uncompensated costs of greenhouse gas emissions	$430 m	$80,400
Total subsidies	$840 m	$157,000



Ownership of Australian primary aluminium production

for which it is responsible amounts to an additional subsidy to aluminium smelting. It is anticipated that within the next few years a fully-fledged market for greenhouse pollution will develop and it is estimated that greenhouse gas emissions will cost around $15/tonne of carbon dioxide. This implies the smelting industry is attempting to obtain an additional subsidy of $430 million per annum.

'The subsidy to aluminium smelting in Australia is $157,000 per employee.'

The extent of the subsidies to aluminium smelting – in absolute terms and per employee – is summarised in the table. It shows that the subsidy to aluminium smelting in Australia is $840 million per annum or $157,000 per employee.

The industry argues that it is of great economic importance to Australia, especially for the foreign exchange its exports earn. Indeed, aluminium smelting exports were worth around $2.8 billion in 1998, compared with A $3.7 billion from bauxite and alumina. The smelting industry also emphasises the number of jobs it creates – around 5350 employees in 1995-96 with an average wage of $41,200 per annum.

However, there is more to the story than the industry would like us to believe. For a start, around 59% of the output of the aluminium smelting industry in Australia is foreign owned, with Japanese (17%), British (14%) and US (12%) interests dominant (see figure). The level of control is substantially higher.

As for employment, the table above illustrates that it is extremely costly to taxpayers to create jobs in the smelting industry. If the aluminium smelters carried through with their threat to shift out of Australia in response to the introduction of greenhouse gas abatement policies, the analysis above suggests that their departure would result in a net economic benefit to Australia. Through industry development programs and wage subsidies, the $410 million in direct financial subsidies freed up could be used to provide many more jobs than the industry currently provides.

The reaction by the aluminium industry to the Australia Institute's report was predictable. The head of the Australian Aluminium Council claimed that the Institute had not taken account of the effects of long-term, base load, high voltage electricity supply contracts. Of course, the Victorian government buys power under such contracts and on-sells it to the local smelters. The government probably pays an appropriate market price, but still has to fork out around $200 million per year to prop up the aluminium industry.

Reports from other segments of the energy industries suggest that the Institute's report made quite an impact behind closed doors. Meanwhile, Comalco is trying to extract more subsidies (over $250 million) for its proposed alumina plant in Queensland. The Queensland government finds itself competing with Malaysia over who can throw the most public money at Comalco. In NSW, Capral is trying to get out of the smelting business after its electricity contract expired. The NSW Government's refusal to give Capral power at the price it wanted probably has something to do with this decision to get out of smelting.

The Institute's paper suggests that the claims by the smelting industry of its economic contribution are grossly exaggerated. Effective greenhouse gas abatement policies will ensure that every industry and consumer takes responsibility for their own contribution to climate change. The aluminium industry is not taking responsibility for its own activities, relying on large subsidies to be competitive. By its efforts to undermine the development of emission reduction policies the industry has illustrated it is also unwilling to take responsibility for its greenhouse gas emissions.

Hal Turton is a Research Fellow at The Australia Institute

BOOK REVIEW

Corporate propaganda: Getting down and dirty

Alex Carey wrote that 'The twentieth century has been characterised by three developments of great political importance: the growth of democracy, the growth of corporate power, and the growth of corporate propaganda as a means of protecting corporate power against democracy'. In his book, *Taking the Risk Out of Democracy*, he showed that it is through public relations that propaganda is best waged.

Secrets and Lies: the anatomy of an anti-environmental PR campaign by New Zealander, Nicky Hager, and Australian, Bob Burton, is about this hidden force, the modern PR industry.

What makes *Secrets and Lies* so unique and invaluable are the scores of documents upon which it is based – secret internal missives, strategies and tactics that served as the battle plan of the hidden propaganda war waged by a New Zealand state-owned logging company, Timberlands West Coast Limited, and its mercenary PR consultants.

What *Secrets and Lies* describes is happening every day, in similar ways, on every issue of economic and political importance where public controversies rage or could erupt. The activities and events described here are not exceptions, they are the rule. What is exceptional is that they are revealed.

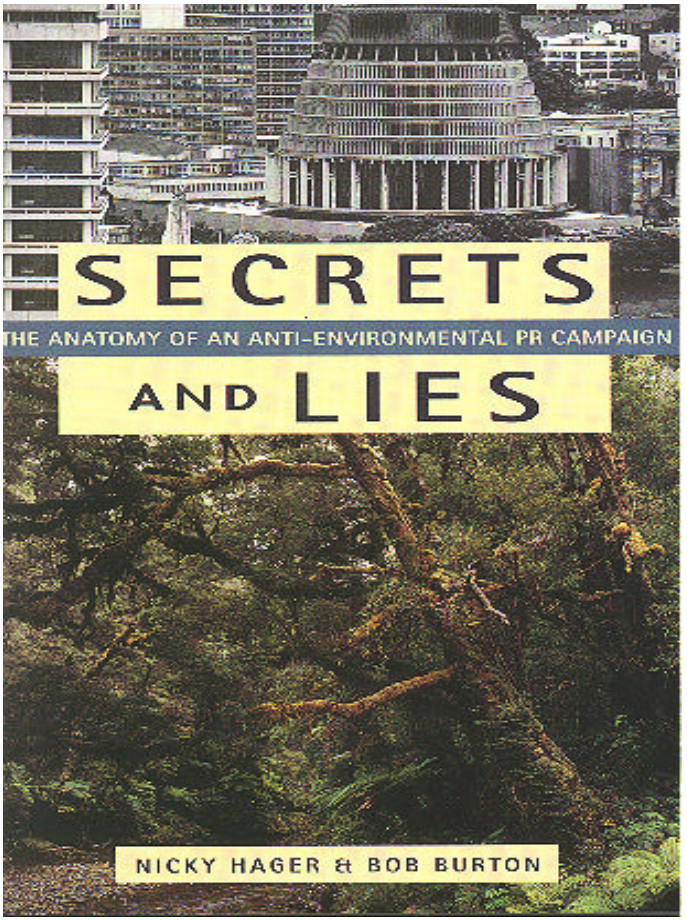
Shandwick, the New Zealand subsidiary of which is exposed in this book, boasts that its 'approach is to assist clients in packaging and positioning a product, image or point of view to gain maximum advantage within the policy marketplace'. It describes its services as 'Government Relations, Media Relations, Grassroots/Grasstops Advocacy, Advocacy Advertising, Intelligence Gathering and Monitoring, Crisis Communications and Event Management'.

To the average citizen, these terms say little. But what they mean in the real world is revealed in this book: hidden manipulation, dirty tricks, influence peddling and the thwarting of democracy.

In *Secrets and Lies*, Shandwick is unmasked lobbying a Civil Aviation Authority inquiry into the dangerous use of a logging helicopter, proposing the establishment of a pro-logging community group, churning out letters to the editor to be issued through a front group, infiltrating an environmental organisation, and much, much more.

Some of the activities detailed in the book make for alarming reading. Here are some of them.

'Neutralise likely opposition' The main priority of the Timberlands public relations campaign was to *"neutralise"* the effect of the environmental groups that threatened its logging plans. A secret Timber-



lands PR strategy states that a "primary objective… must be to limit the [environment] movement's ability to influence the public and policies".

The tactics employed to undermine environmental opponents included infiltration of environmental groups, targeting their sources of finance (including concerted actions against the Body Shop); and making numerous legal threats and/or complaints against environmental groups, academics and journalists.

Silencing critics The effort to stop criticism of the company even extended to paying contractors to remove graffiti and posters from walls and lamp posts in Wellington and covertly sponsoring a mural to remove a blank space on a wall commonly used by pro-forest graffitists.

Cultivating the media Central to Shandwick and Timberlands campaign was cultivating favourable coverage from journalists through the provision of free tours of the forest, including helicopter trips. Journalists who wrote critical stories were on the end of legal threats or complaints to their editors.

Creating a community group for a government agency The secret PR documents, reveal that Timberlands PR staff dreamed up and arranged the formation of a purportedly independent local pro-logging group and then used the group to assist with its PR strategies as required.

Letter writing campaign for third parties Shandwick established a program for churning out letters to the editor, including employing a person to work on this for Timberlands specifically. This included writing letters that would be issued through supposedly independent parties.

Covertly lobbying the Labour Party Shandwick and Timberlands worked frantically to reverse the Labour Party's anti-logging conservation policy owing to management fears that a change of government in November would lead to its native forest logging being stopped. Timberlands' scientific allies, who had been carefully cultivated by Timberlands, wrote letters to the Labour leader and her colleagues attacking conservationists and her party's anti-native logging policies. Timberlands also used its West Coast front group, some Labour MPs and other industry and environmental allies.

Divide and conquer tactics against environmentalists Timberlands mobilised other allies too. It set out to mobilise its chief so-called "environmental" ally, Guy Salmon of the Ecologic Foundation (formerly the Maruia Society), and woo the World Wide Fund for Nature into supporting Timberlands logging plans.

After Jenny Shipley became Prime Minister and was no longer a shareholding minister, she and her staff remained intimately involved in Timberland's campaign. However, she told Parliament that she had had no involvement in Timberland's PR campaign.

Secrets and Lies is an excellent, unique and welcome addition to the handful of books that have examined the modern propaganda industry.

John Stauber, Editor of the US investigative journal, PR Watch

Secrets and Lies: the anatomy of an anti-environmental PR campaign is published by Craig Potton Publishing, Nelson New Zealand 1999, ($29.95) and is being distributed in Australia by John Reed Book Distribution in Sydney (Ph 02 9939 3041). Ask your local bookshop to order it in.

BOOK REVIEW

Is there a "great divide" in Australia?

In 1988 Katharine Betts coined the terms 'cosmopolitans' and 'parochials' to describe a great divide in Australian attitudes towards immigration. Her original thesis in *Ideology and Immigration: Australia 1976 to 1987* (Melbourne University Press, 1988) propounded a new class in Australia, a new generation of intelligentsia, knowledge-brokers and power elite contrasted with the majority of the voting population.

Her new edition of this thesis was published earlier this year as *The Great Divide: Immigration Politics in Australia* (Duffy & Snellgrove, Sydney, 1999) and attracted wide publicity. It reinforces the earlier ideas, extending description of the 'new class' to include professionals, the media and the cosmopolitan-cum-internationalist culture, along with the updating of opinion polls data. Two new chapters, 'John Howard and the Press' and 'The Revolt of the Parochials' take the story into 1999 and, although not covering the actual referendum, they explain a good deal about the eventual voting pattern on the republic proposal.

The author addresses a major puzzle. Why in recent times have Australian politicians and the 'new class' shied away from the Population Problem, disparaged the views of 'the parochials' on 'the key policy affecting the future of their nation' and, indeed, contrived to keep the general community in a state of ignorance about population and immigration issues?

Part of the explanation is drawn from client politics whereby the 'growth lobby', multicultural groups and trade unions press for their respective components of the immigration program. Trading off these allegiances serves to explain the 'collusive' bipartisanship of the major political parties. The benefits of immigration are secured by these interest groups, whereas the costs of immigration are assumed to be too widely diffused for opposition to immigration to be organised or manifested.

The featured explanation is more sociological: the cultural elitism of the new class, based on 'status markers', anti-racism, internationalism, multiculturalism and humanitarianism. Political correctness and snobbery of the new class is portrayed rather superficially, but her account shows why it has become so difficult in the political field to debate population issues.

The Great Divide is an important book in that it encompasses the classic Malthusian issues of people, society, natural resources, economic development and moral choices. Moreover, through detailed recounting and analysis of the past twenty-five years of immigration politics in Australia, Katharine Betts sheds light particularly on democratic processes, political leaders, the media and opinion polls. The 100 pages of appendices, notes and bibliography furnish summary data and indicate a wealth of published analysis and discourse on the issues.

Given the controversial nature of the subject, her concluding words are worth quoting: 'The way to approach [the parochials – people who think like Pauline Hanson] is the way we should approach any fellow citizen in a democracy. We should listen, debate, persuade and together arrive at sound and unprejudiced policies.' Nevertheless, whilst she writes clearly and often objectively, Betts displays a number of prejudices which lead her to denigrate the 'new class' and favour the attitudes of the parochials.

It is unfair of her to suggest that the intelligentsia have sought to restrict discourse on the Population Problem. In fact there is a continuous and impressive tradition in Australia of public inquiries, conferences, research programs and publications keeping Malthusian issues on the public agenda.

Similarly, rather than attributing status symbols, the 'race' card and contempt for parochials to the 'new class', Australia's commitments to policies regarding refugees and multiculturalism are based on highly defensible values and obligations. A glance at the future cannot fail to see rising refugee movements, international obligations and concern for humanitarian contexts. Regarding multiculturalism, Australia's national or cultural identity should not be presumed to be static or its development circumscribed.

There is bias also in her assumptions that economic, social and environmental costs of immigration (medium or high levels) outweigh the benefits for the nation. 'The central justifications for immigration no longer apply', she writes The problems here are not so much ignorance or suppressing debate, as the author asserts, but

the need for continuing research and a fresh approach towards a broader population policy. The work and demise of the Bureau of Immigration and Population Research are given scant notice.

It could well be that an integrated conceptual and institutional framework for developing a population policy might overcome the barriers of ignorance, positional sensibilities and political distortions portrayed so graphically in the book. Such a framework could facilitate a return to a more genuine and proactive political debate than the defensive collusion presented in the book.

Less prejudicial descriptions of both the 'new class' and 'the Parochials' could demonstrate their potential, if not actual, constituency and participation in the formation of a broader population policy. On the other hand, awareness of other burgeoning 'great divides' in Australian society, such as wealth gaps, neglect of intergenerational equity, distrust of institutions and persistent economic rationalism, are potential barriers.

Brett Odgers

Best wishes to all our members for the Christmas season. We wish you a safe and happy New Year.

INSTITUTE NOTES

Launch of the Australia Institute's new website

www.tai.org.au

Our new website is finally up and running. We hope that the new presentation ensures that information is more accessible to members and the general public. The What's New section is especially useful for members as it features summaries of latest Discussion Papers, media releases and public addresses. To order any of these simply send an email to mail@tai.org.au. We would also appreciate any comments on the new site.

Electronic mailing list

We are in the process of building a members' email list in order to send electronic notices of the Institute's activities. If you think we may not already have your email address and would like to be included please email it to mail@tai.org.au.

Farewell to Hal Turton

A sad farewell to Hal Turton who is leaving the Institute to take up a position with the Sustainable Energy Development Authority in NSW. His contribution to the Institute's work over the last 18 months has been invaluable and we wish him all the best.

New Publications

- Discussion Paper 25 *Comparing Native Title and Anglo-Australian Land Law* by Ed Wensing.
- Discussion Paper 26 *Population Growth and greenhouse gas emissions: Sources, trends and projections in Australia* by Hal Turton and Clive Hamilton. Due out in late December.
- Submissions to the Senate Environment References Committee Inquiry into Australia's Response to Global Warming:

  The Aluminium Industry and Climate Change

  Greenhouse gas emissions per capita of Annex B Parties to the Kyoto Protocol

  Myths and Misconceptions in the Climate Change Debate

  Land-use Change and Australia's Kyoto Target (forthcoming)

(NB These submissions can be read on the Institute's website)

- *Accounting for Kyoto and Emissions Trading* an address to the Taxation Institute of Australia's Corporate Tax Intensive 28th October 1999

Forthcoming Publications

The GST and Charities by Julie Smith. Due to the recent policy developments on this issue, publication of this paper is being postponed in order to incorporate an assessment of the implications of the recent agreement between the Government and the Democrats.