

FIN ON THE DRY SIDE 224
A MANIFESTO John Hyde

The left wing of the NSW Labor Party has published a document which identifies forty eight people they call "New Right". I do not like to be called "right" because "right" has authoritarian connotation; this booklet equates it with Nazism. This label seems to command official Labor Party status; it was launched by the NSW housing minister, Mr Walker, and the cover page claims it as "A Steering Committee Information Booklet". The title is "The New Right: A Threat to Democracy", its price: \$3.00.

It is mostly pure vitriol and not at all subtle but I found this hyperbole amusing: "The speaker's list for the first meeting [of the H R Nicholls Society] read like Ghengis Khan's autograph book." Oh dear!

While I would like to think the accusations too extravagant to be credible, I know it will give psychic satisfaction to pathetic people who need something to hate---the New Right, like whites or blacks, capitalists or socialists, and catholics or protestants, can be hated without much mental effort or risk of accidental introspection.

The authors do not identify themselves; I can understand why.

They tell the reader Australia is influenced by a "cunning manipulative force of rich powerful and greedy people at the expense of all other Australians ... Like the corporate power-brokers in Hitler's Germany, the wealthy elite in a New Right Australia would have all the comforts and power they ever dreamed of." They quote Minister Dawkins' accusation that the New Right are "false patriots". There is much more in like vein.

It should be stated plainly that if there really are a group trying to make Australia into a nation like National Socialist Germany, then it should be denounced; the Steering Committee would be right to do so by any truthful means. However, since it has brought pre-war Germany into the debate, we might bear in mind Goebbels' tendency to attribute Nazi practices and selfish, money-grubbing motives to all who opposed Nazism. The committee's denunciation of the New Right sounds too like the Nazi denunciations of the Jews to be taken just at face value.

We are told that the forty eight named people are a danger to democracy; a formula for division, hatred and even violence in the community, and they follow a philosophy of self-interest and greed under which only the most powerful and wealthy survive. If that were indeed a fair description of the people named, then Australians should be warned about them, but I don't think even Senator McCarthy made more virulent or wilder accusations against more harmless citizens.

Could it be that the authors have an axe to grind? Perhaps they enjoy privileges which the forty eight would like done away with?

Could the virulence spring from self-interest. A clue is given us in this passage: "From the union's perspective, the change to the award meant ... a denial of the RIGHT of the union to negotiate on behalf of its members ..." [my emphasis] In view of the tenor of this debate, dare I note similarity with the Nazi gauleiters.

In truth the new right's critics attack views which almost no one holds---certainly not the named forty eight. Most of these people do share some other views and it is perhaps time these were brought together, if only to make wild assertions more difficult to sustain.

Although written in the belief and hope that others see the world in more or less the same terms my manifesto cannot speak for anyone but myself; others may wish to support, amend or deny it. At least it gives my critics a target to aim at and hopefully will make the wildest accusations levelled against the new right harder to sustain.

A Manifesto:

- * We believe politics should be a moral and ethical pursuit of those civilised values that stress liberty and an abiding sense of justice based on the rule of law.
- * We hold that human actions have moral dimensions---truth is better than falsehood, kindness better than cruelty etc.---but that no one is to be trusted to wield government authority restricting individual behaviour except as necessary to protect the rights of others.
- * As man is apt to misuse power, we find all concentrated power abhorrent. We find the concentration of power and the needless exercise of authority equally abhorrent when exercised by government, trade union or corporation.
- * We therefore favour voluntary market transactions over command transactions. We do not believe that markets are perfect and concede the desirability of government intervention to correct market failure but note that the overwhelming problem in Australia is not imperfect markets but imperfect governments.
- * We deplore the tendency for the middle class to become the principle beneficiaries of taxpayer-funded largesse.
- * We believe that a society which does not hold people responsible for their own behaviour is unworkable.
- * We hold that certain institutions, among which the family is pre-eminent, have stood the test of time and state action should not undermine them.
- * We defend democratic processes in Australia and hold a preference for the democracies in foreign policy.
- * We hold that every citizen possesses the classic civil or human rights of person, association, speech and property. It is especially relevant to Australia that we hold every person has a right to his own labour which ought not be taken from him by

industrial awards or trade unions.

* Noting as irrefutable fact that large-scale murder, deprivation of liberty and starvation is without exception the handiwork of government, we defend personal freedom, particularly economic freedom, as a bulwark against the growth of authoritarian government. Free economies have always served society's poorest and least powerful and least articulate people best, offering them the opportunities for advancement which state intervention tends to reserve for those with influence. We believe it always will.

* We are opposed to economic and other privileges except those which clearly benefit the truly needy.

* We believe that liberty and prosperity are impossible unless facts are squarely faced and thinking about them is clear.

Can I suggest the Steering Committee chew on that!