

\*FIN\* ON THE DRY SIDE 225  
A MANIFESTO John Hyde

Last week I described an attempt by a Labor Party offshoot, the Steering Committee of the New South Wales party, to equate New Right with Nazism. It is well known in politics that once something is labelled you don't have to argue with it. Lenin once said, "I think we must stick the convicts badge on anyone and everyone who tries to undermine Marxism, even if we don't go on to examine his case..."

'New Right' enjoys different meanings in different contexts. In the United States it has moral majority overtones; in the United Kingdom libertarian; here, by dint of a great deal of orchestrated adverse propaganda, it has authoritarian overtones.

Although a badly chosen and much abused term, New Right is not totally without popular meaning. Most people think that someone who is New Right is against big government and taxes, against statutory privileges including those enjoyed by trade unions, and prefers a free market economy over a command economy. The term is generally associated with 'dry' economics or 'economic rationalism' and individual, as opposed to collective, choice and responsibility.

Those few people who think about such things must therefore loosely associate the Australian New Right with the ideas of thinkers such as Adam Smith, who wrote, "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard for their own interests..." and "People engaged in the administration of government are generally disposed to grant themselves and their immediate dependents rather more than enough"; and

Thomas Jefferson, who wrote "...that all men are created equal and independent, and from that equal creation all derive rights inherent and inalienable, among which are the preservation of life, and liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"; and

Thomas Paine who wrote, "Government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state it is an intolerable one".

In the 18th century the ideas of these men, and many others (it was an intellectually fertile time), influenced 'The Enlightenment', a philosophy based in personal liberty and reason. The Australian New Right---certainly most of the 48 souls identified by the Steering Committee---have more in common with the Enlightenment than with National Socialism, or any authoritarian philosophy. Today's drive toward liberty and reason occasionally has been called the New Enlightenment, a name which describes the ideas better than New Right but one which comes too late on the scene and is too long for the media which doesn't know much 18th Century history anyway.

The Enlightenment was the heyday of the political manifesto. I think the new enlightenment would benefit from a new manifesto. Last week I promised to do my best to produce one. Although written with the plural 'we' it binds no-one but me.

#### A MANIFESTO FOR A NEW ENLIGHTENMENT

\* 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 principal 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.

The Steering Committee is welcome to chew on that!

ENDS