DIY Sovereignty and the Popular Right in Australia

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Abstract

The concern of this paper is with the form that 'right wing' anti-government protest has taken in Australia in recent years. One tactic that is proving popular amongst those who have suffered setbacks in their hold on property, or in their small business ventures, is to declare their secession from Australia, and to establish an alternative jurisdiction and alternative citizenship. The author describes some of these projects, and links the serious political pursuit of this secessionist move to a movement in the USA called Sovereign Citizenship, which is itself linked to recent acts of anti-government sabotage called 'paper terrorism'.

I want to take up the conference theme of 'Mobile Boundaries/Rigid Worlds' in relation to the recent popularity in Australia of creating new countries - on a small scale, of course - in 'do it yourself' (DIY) projects involving a declaration of sovereignty and autonomy. Sometimes it is an experiment in citizenship or just for fun, but it is often done in protest. What I have in mind are those people, for example, who have declared their legal secession from Australia and formed their own principalities, like His Royal Highness Prince Leonard of the Hutt River Province Principality in Western Australia. While the story of Prince Leonard is legendary, others who are more contemporary are not well known.

Commentators call these people micronationalists, which is a term that was coined in the 1990s to describe the activity that was pioneered by Prince Leonard of Hutt. His move to secede was in the early 1970s, but the widespread use of computer technology saw a sudden increase in interest in the idea in the decades after this. Micronations are literally 'small nations', with micronationalism being the activity of participants in the field of developing small nations. Some of these micronations are more like hobbies or works of art than political projects, and some are commercial scams. Sometimes it is hard to distinguish between the serious and the tongue-in-cheek, as people enjoy the fantastic nature of the project and all the titles and regalia that go along with it, such as the designing of stamps and flags and the writing of constitutions. Sometimes it is also hard to distinguish between serious political enterprises and opportunistic schemes. This is not just because the people behind them are so good at disguising their interests and being taken for real. Rather, it is because so many of the projects occupy a space that is ambiguous, or which allows them to mean different things to the different people who get involved in them. There has been very little attention paid to this crossover and complexity of meanings by cultural theorists. The academic study of micronationalism, as far as it goes,[1] is not concerned with the virtual 'cybernations', 'new country projects' or 'seditionist and sovereignty

movements'[2] that feature in this activity. I know of no significant study in the scholarly press on the micronationalism that is the contemporary phenomenon of ordinary people (however quirky), in long-established democracies, getting the idea to create their own countries. The commentary on this activity is not in short supply, but analysis is restricted to the reflections of participants, newspaper reporters or contributors to Internet knowledge banks, such as the 'people's encyclopaedia' *Wikipedia* (itself a popular, Internet-enabled, DIY project). There are dedicated newsgroups, online directories and the host body offerings of 'supranational' organisations, such as the League of Secessionist States and the Commonwealth of Micronations, which give a wealth of material to draw upon.

I can comment on only a couple of the projects here. My point will be that the DIY nature of the phenomenon of micronationalism, and its peculiar concentration on the signs of sovereignty and citizenship (flags, appointments, declarations), allow us to see shifts that we might not otherwise see in our 'fixed worlds', as these are popularly reproduced in everyday life. As de Certeau (1984) pointed out, the people's resistance to a culture that they find oppressive is a practice of 'making do' with the resources made available to them, mixing and matching the ideas and products of that culture in their response to its conditions of existence.

I am interested in what we can see in Australia, particularly in the outbreaks of political inventiveness that have been among its protests and pastimes in recent years. One of the shifts that I see concerns the anti-government feeling that has emerged in Australia, and the direction in which it has moved since it coalesced in the 1990s around popular support for Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party. The decline of One Nation in recent years has come, in part, from the Howard administration's appropriation of its ground in Coalition policy on asylum seekers, Aboriginal reconciliation, welfare reform and so on. Since the 2004 federal election, Family First has taken up some of the field that was formerly occupied by One Nation. It has run with that party's expectations of intervening in a collusive domain of political brokering, in its ability to challenge the economic rationalism of both major parties on a 'family values' concern of Christian fundamentalism. There has been no clear regrouping, however, of those One Nation supporters and friends who mobilised primarily on a platform of declaring the elites (the elites of government, the judiciary, the banks, the media and so on) corrupt and anti-democratic. An appeal to family values in the name of religion does not call to the disaffiliated in the way that a maverick, 'ordinary' individual, roundly scorned by the elites, was able to, in her campaign as a 'battler'. This groundswell of anti-government feeling has not disappeared following the decline of Pauline Hanson. But it has changed its appearance, and even its character, in distinct ways.

What we see now is less investment in a party, a leader and an ideology of oneness, and more of a building of networks that are decentralised, highly individualistic and eminently practical. A sizeable collection of bush lawyers are springing up, motivated by personal grievances (trouble with the courts, the banks or local councils), and launching actions that are as ingenious as they are localised. More likely to be dismissed as nuisances than feared as a popular uprising, their insurgency consists of small (yet elaborate) coups played out on paper, at the computer, in court and, occasionally, in a daily newspaper. Above all, it is played out over the Internet. It is here that the social and political networking, the information channelling and the sense of community is maintained, and sometimes mobilised in support of particular campaigns.

The practice of inventing micronations is one tactic among others in this turn against the elites and their bureaucracy. What the phenomenon allows us to see in particular is the key place of sovereignty as an idea in the regathering and reworking of that anti-government feeling. It is not occurring in isolation in Australia. It is emerging, I believe, on the back of an anti-

government movement in the USA known as the Sovereign Citizenship movement. I will describe this movement towards the end of my paper.

One thing that commentators seem to agree upon, in the micronationalist world, is that Australia has been over-represented in this endeavour in the last few decades. This is both before the advent of the Internet and after it, when the experimental art world became interested in 'cybernations', for example. Paris based Australian artist Liz Stirling created Lizbekistan in 1996, an exemplary imaginary nation that had four dual language newspapers, passports and its own currency, the nipple. Before Stirling extinguished it all with a summary click of the mouse on 9 September 1999 (9/9/99), there were several thousand citizens, many of them taking part in the 'Lizbek diaspora' which formed for some time afterwards.

There is not much speculation as to why Australia has led the way in all of this, why it has given rise to a disproportionate number of self-declared independent sovereign states, and also why it is escalating now.

One historical precedent that captured the imagination of Australians was the dramatic popular vote in the 1930s for Western Australia to secede from the rest of Australia (Fickling, 2002).[3] This was when a large majority of WA citizens voted to separate from the Federation and go it alone in 1933. The plan was for Western Australians to keep their gold-rush wealth to themselves, instead of having to carry the eastern states, which were languishing in the depression of the time. WA would revert to its former status as a British colony, and then claim autonomy and the spoils of its mineral wealth that way. But as it turned out, Britain rejected the move on a Constitutional ruling. World War II nationalism put an end to the call for secession, along with an economic boom that lifted Australia out of depression soon after, but it remained a provocative idea for many Australians. 1933 was also the year of the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, which is accepted internationally as the basis for the legal definition of statehood. It features here to the extent that aspiring micronations or 'micro-states' seek to fulfil the requirements that it sets out in order to qualify for sovereignty, even if they are not recognised by other, established states.

One Australian pioneer in micro-state formation has ventured an opinion about why Australians have been so quick to launch into home-made sovereignty. This is His Imperial Majesty George II of the Empire of Atlantium. Atlantium's base is George's Kings Cross apartment, known as the Imperium Proper and official Capital of the Empire. In 1981, as a fifteen-year old schoolboy in Sydney, George and a couple of friends declared their independence from Australia, as well as the founding of Atlantium, in protest at what they refer to mysteriously, on their website, as "a perceived rise in unwelcome political influences" (Empire of Atlantium). They adopted Latin as an official language alongside English, and invented a new calendar for the Empire. Atlantium is presented as a not for profit exercise in global community, with five-hundred registered citizens in sixty countries, and is now in a period of renewal called the Refundatio, according to the Emperor who was interviewed for the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 2004. It describes itself as

> a legitimate, functioning, primarily non-territorial microstate and proto-world state that possesses immanent, parallel global sovereignty. The purpose of Atlantium is to promote via its existence the fact that sovereignty in the modern world does not need to... have any form of territorial basis, and that every individual has the right to choose his or her citizenship irrespective of where they were born, or where they live. (Empire of Atlantium, FAQ).

The extent of its functioning is open to question, of course; the claims of micronations are a theatre of exaggeration. What is significant, in this project, is the ideal of de-territorialised citizenship. It is one end of a spectrum of micronational responses to globalisation, with the cluster of activity at the other end of the spectrum being the activity (and the specific form of anti-government feeling) with which I am concerned. Atlantium aims to be socially inclusive and to value diversity, and has renounced war ever since an episode of formal hostilities broke out against the Province of Bumbunga in South Australia, which was a principality near Snowtown, founded in 1976 by British eccentric and monarchist Alex Brackstone.

This makes Atlantium a 'left wing' project, in the sense described by one insider analyst. Tom Cutterham (2003) argues that the emerging trend of micronations now to be non-territorial and internationalist means they are attempting to break down borders, which have been built in the era of the nation-state, in order to secure privileges for the class of white, male, heterosexual Europeans. Nevertheless, it articulates a discourse of sovereign citizenship for individuals that has something in common with the projects in which I am primarily interested. These are characteristically 'right wing' in that they are fiercely nationalist (which is curious, at first glance, given their readiness to secede), and in their claim to territory - often their own rural acreages, but sometimes newly acquired land - in which to invest the key notion of a true nation. For projects originating in Australia, this would be a true Australia, capable of maintaining its integrity (its assets, its borders and its core people) against the totalising momentum of globalisation. They tend to be more socially conservative and seek to shore up or salvage the old privileges of white, male, heterosexual Europeans. Their idea of social inclusion comes from feeling that *they are* not included anymore, in the way they used to be - that they have lost their place. The idea, then, is not to try to include everyone on a slate wiped clean of the old nation-state power structures, but to reinstate their old place of privilege in an ideal form of citizenship. A secessionist micronation from Victoria called Ponderosa, for example, has a constitution, presented by Virgilio Rigoli and his son 'Little' Joe in 1994, which situates their new citizenship on a corrective basis of preference with regard to race, class, sexuality and religion. A newspaper report in 2002 described their constitutional complaint in these words:

> Among the gripes addressed in the 34-page text are the granting of land rights to Aborigines, the formation of national parks and the abandonment of the law of the Old Testament. They say their principality is needed as a state where 'Christians, white Anglo-Saxons and capitalists are not discriminated against'. (Fickling, 2002b)

Either way, 'left' or 'right', the presumption in all these new worlds is that it is the individual who has sovereignty in the new world being created, not the state or even the people as a polity socially contracted to the state. In the 'left wing', de-territorialised global community, the individual is sovereign because the state has renounced key features of its former role, including the responsibility of protecting its citizens through the military or the police. Here is where a renunciation of war, as in the Atlantium constitution, is a telling move.[4] Typically, these constitutions have a list of rights, but no army, judiciary or police force (even in fantasy) to ensure that an individual's civil rights will not be infringed upon (as required in the liberal social contract). In the 'right wing' model of an independent sovereign state, sovereignty ultimately being conferred upon the individual, not the state, is articulated with the specific inclusion of a right to bear arms. Here the maintenance of one's civil rights against infringement by others is

proposed as a matter of personal responsibility, not state responsibility.[5] This is in keeping with the rhetoric of the pro-gun groups who have been vocal in their support of the various moves in Australia and elsewhere to secede in protest from the parent state, which they perceive as over-regulating, and unfairly holding a monopoly on, the use of deadly force.[6]

To return to the question of Australian micronationalism, His Imperial Majesty George II of Atlantium is quoted in the interview as saying:

> "You'll find there's a greater concentration of micro states in Australia than anywhere else - there have been dozens - and if you look at it per capita, Australia is wildly in excess of every other part of the world," he said. "It comes from our convict heritage and disrespect for authority. American groups like the Davidian Branch tend to be more violently whacko, whereas Australians are just quaintly eccentric." (Norrie, 2004)

The reference to our convict history can equally be made to argue for a cowed and apathetic Australian character with respect to authority, as I have found in other contexts in my research (Lattas, 2003). Here it functions to evoke a picture of Australians as thumbing our noses up at our bureaucratic masters. Instead of hitting our heads against a brick wall, we cheerfully embrace our existential condition of exile and transportation, and set up camp elsewhere, starting a new adventure on our own terms.

An earlier article from *The Guardian* cites David Siminton, self-proclaimed governor of Sherwood in the Principality of Camside, as saying that Australia in 2002 had spawned twenty-two micronations.[7] Siminton himself and his sidekick David Icke are 'violently whacko' as opposed to 'quaintly eccentric', as one can see from the web pages of Camside (formerly the Principality of Caledonia). Besides the profile of David Icke, outlining his belief in the world being run by shape changing reptiles from outer space (elaborated on the site in the 'Dark Agenda'), these proclaim the right to bear arms as essential (in bold on the FAQ page). They also feature a declaration of war against Australia (there is no renunciation of war in this principality), and a notice to John Howard to surrender his office.

Camside itself has been listed as a fake nation and major scam on the warning website Quotloos, where it is consistently referred to as sCamside. It is clearly a scam in that it makes money from selling fraudulent 'Business Registration Certificates' and citizenship papers. Nevertheless, I find that it is linked to a network of critical discourses and conspiracy theories on the banking system that have been adopted and circulated by conservative groups in the US and Australia, especially militant pro-gun groups. Specifically, Camside is party to the NESARA conspiracy put forward by the cult of the Dove of Oneness, the pseudonym of a Shelton, Washington woman named Shaini Goodwin, and with a 'debt forgiveness' agenda that resembles the old communist ideal (Robinson, 2004). NESARA stands for National Economic Stabilisation and Recovery Act, a law that was supposedly passed by the US Congress in 2001, but covered up because it called for everyone's bank debts to be nullified, that is, their home mortgages, car loans and credit card owings. The act was passed, apparently, because government reluctantly conceded that banks have been operating on an unjust system of credit creation since the Federal Reserve Act of 1913. The conspiracy theorists go so far as to say that 9/11 happened because Alan Greenspan was due that day, at 10am, to announce the establishment of a new Treasury Bank, the abolition of the IRS and other measures in accordance with the true NESARA law.

NESARA, and Camside with it, are like contemporary cargo cults, one could say; not worthy of a lot of attention except for how they fit in with the growing popular critique of the

international banking system. NESARA has little penetration in Australia, but the focus on the banks in anti-government discourse, especially among the pro-gun groups that target the New World Order and globalisation (along with domestic issues of gun control), figures increasingly on the Australian horizon.

The micronational principalities in Australia that I am interested in are the ones that have emerged in response to disputes between ordinary Australians, as they like to identify themselves, and authorities in local government, taxation, banking and so on. There is a list of many of their names and Internet addresses (if they have websites) in an appendix to this paper. Prince Leonard of Hutt began his principality after a dispute over wheat quotas; others began theirs through a refusal to pay tax, or to stop mortgage foreclosures or orders for demolition or eviction over building code violations. Some of the more recent secessions are associated with a man named Donald Cameron. According to the investigative journalist Chris Griffiths, Cameron is a conman who has spent more than twenty years in prison. He has practised as a doctor under a false name, without qualification, opening a surgery in Cronulla, and even performing cancer surgery in 1979. Whilst in jail, he called himself Pastor Don Cameron and founded the Church of Love and Peace, later calling himself Archbishop. The Church of Love and Peace continues today in a number of the micronations listed in the appendix, figuring on the letterhead of official state documents (Berghofer, 2005).

Today Cameron assumes the title of QC and Chief Justice, and at last report was practising as a lawyer in the Remedial Justice Association Inc that he established in Toowong, Brisbane. Reportedly, he studied law in jail from 1980 to 1983, but never gained any credentials. His unqualified pursuit of the law was supported by One Nation (Queensland) leader, Bill Feldman, who reported Cameron as saying that he used the initials QC to mean Queensland Criminal, not Queen's Counsel (Griffith, 1998). He is best known for having guided rebel farmers George and Stephanie Muirhead through the legal process of seceding from Australia in 1993. Notoriously, he did this whilst serving out the last of a seven-year prison sentence at the St Vincent De Paul Society prison halfway house. Cameron was declared a vexatious litigant in 1996 after lodging thirteen actions against Westpac. In 2000 Cameron declared the Independent Sovereign State of Australia (ISSA). Under that banner he launched more legal challenges, one against the election of the Queensland state government in 2001, on the grounds that there is no such person as the Queen of Australia, and then another against the election of the federal government in the same year (Meade, 2004). He has also given legal advice to Christopher Smith in his court cases and associated secession (creating Sundowner, a province of the ISSA), and is closely associated with the pro-gun activist Trevor Acworth (chairman of the ISSA's 'Citizens Cabinet') of the Principality of Acworth, and Lyall Sempf of the Principality of Range View in south-east Queensland. Cameron keeps a very low profile now in the press and on the Internet, but he still manages the principalities under the Independent Sovereign State of Australia without either his name or the name of the Independent Sovereign State of Australia ever being mentioned.

The first case that I will describe is the Principality of Marlborough, which was the Muirheads' secessionist state. I am interested in how it was taken up and reported in the militant pro-gun magazine *Lock, Stock and Barrel*. The second is the Bora of Dalungbara Aboriginal People of South-East Queensland and Frazer Island. This is a very recent and intriguing case, given its mix of radical nationalist, pro-gun people and its apparent 'left wing' Aboriginal land rights agenda.

Waco was very much in the minds of the far 'right' in Australia at the time that the Muirheads decided to dig in at their farm and resist its falling into receivership. The Waco cataclysm on 19 April 1993 had become (and still is) the defining moment of the Sovereign Citizenship movement in the USA.[8] The Muirhead saga was happening at the same time, in 1993, having begun with a Notice of Demand lodged by the bank on their farm on 30 March that year. It continued through April, May and June with court appearances, their secession and forcible eviction from the Rockhampton property, culminating in the jailing of George Muirhead.[9]

The Muirheads were concerned not to repeat the Waco tragedy and were careful to have no guns involved. One Colt .45 semi-automatic pistol was found on the property, but it was reported to have been planted there by a journalist who fled the scene soon after its discovery.[10] Under the pseudonym 'Pat Riot' (patriot), Ron Owen described the scene in terms of the Eureka Stockade, and of civil disobedience being a form - in his words - of affirmative action. To quote:

> [A] group of farmers, sick and tired of the arrogance of the banks... had enough courage to take affirmative action. I told my friends it could be a rerun of the Eureka Stockade and I was going to be part of it. When I rang the Muirheads they told me my support was welcome, but the rule was absolutely no firearms. (Owen, 1993a, p. 20)

Owen stayed at the farm throughout the whole stand-off with the police.

'Pat Riot' reports that they were alarmed by a Blackhawk helicopter checking them out, and discussed what they would do if they came under fire from it.

> We had all seen the recent newspaper article, where the army admitted that it had issued guidelines for shooting down Australian citizens, so you can imagine the wave of fear that came over us... There was much talk of armed rebellion, but this was soon squashed. It was decided that if the state used the Army against Australian citizens, a lot of things would start to jump up into the air on a regular basis. Things like judges, banks, politicians, power stations and port facilities, to name a few. (Owen, 1993a, p. 20)

The popular suspicion of Australia's governing elites is in evidence here, with the conviction that the government would commission the military to fire on its own people, that media operatives would plant a firearm, and that the logical targets of a popular resistance might include 'judges, banks, politicians'. More than ten years after the showdown at the Principality of Marlborough, such secessions are springing up all over the place, with a similar expectation of a looming battle against an enemy government, in which deadly force might be used by both sides.

Here is what 'Pat Riot' says about the flags that were flown at the site (seen in the photo 'Welcome to Marlborough Country', included here):

> A Flag For All Reasons
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> People have asked me of the significance of the flags flown at the entrance to the property; in particular the United Nations and the Aboriginal flags. The UN flag was subtle. Apparently there is a section of a UN covenant (which has been signed by Australia) that paves the way for parts of the country to secede, presumably for an Aboriginal state. The Muirheads applied to the UN for recognition on this basis

immediately after the secession, but not surprisingly were turned down. The Aboriginal flag was even more subtle, partly to tie in with the UN flag, but mostly for the irony of it all. Thousands of Australians are working their bums off trying unsuccessfully to keep their land while being hounded by the banks. Other Australians, under this flag, are not persecuted by the banks, do not work and have land given to them. (Owen, 1993a, 20)

I will move on to the other site, briefly, where the Aboriginal flag is flown apparently without this pointed irony: the Bora of Dalungbara Aboriginal People. This group, led by 'Elder Jim Jones', has not seceded from Australia, but rather reclaims its original sovereignty from the fact of Aboriginal ownership of the land (Reaffirmation of Nationhood of the Dalungbara Aboriginal People). It is an example of the emerging group of 'tribal sovereignty' projects that are listed as micronations in the ultra-conservative, online directory 'Microfreedom' (which showcases their bids for separate homelands as part of an apartheid-inspired racial purity agenda). The Bora of Dalungbara manages a system of 'indige passes' for tourists administered by Lyall Sempf, who has seceded from Australia in his own right, in the Principality of Range View (Anon, 2004). Lyall Sempf, part of an anti-government network dedicated to freeing the lives of individuals (and, in his case, wild horses) from destructive state management,[11] is an officially inducted 'white member' of the tribe, verified in a document posted on the website. A second white, anti-government activist formally accepted as an aboriginal - "being of a 4th generation born in Australia" - is the group's legal representative, Leonard William Clampett, in another scanned document on the website (Bora of Dalungbara Aboriginal People Legal Advocacy). Clampett has written several tracts questioning the legitimacy of the banking system (Clampett, 1989/ 2003; 1990; 1993). He has also launched a court challenge to the GST, set up an anti-GST political party (Reclaim Australia Party) and advises people on how to decline to pay speeding fines or their income tax (Johnson,1999). The association of this group with radical nationalists in Australia and internationally is confirmed, finally, by the Bora of Dalungbara's listing in the extremist *New Nation News*, in company with the neo-eugenic group Prometheism and a host of white power movement sites.

What these micronational projects have in common is their inspiration and legitimation in a growing body of paralegal knowledge and political rhetoric that has emerged in opposition to the authority of the state. Many of the key documents being read by 'seditionist and sovereignty' projects are, in particular ways, commonly consulted around the world, such as the Magna Carta and the 1688 Bill of Rights, or the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966. There are plenty of local treatises on the illegitimacy of Australian governmental and financial institutions, however, that circulate amongst these groups and are routinely posted on their websites.[12] I cannot detail all of these websites or documents, but will end with a brief framing of this material in an account of the Sovereign Citizenship movement. The DIY political, legal and financial expertise of sovereign citizenship informs the recent 'right wing' micronationalism in Australia, whilst it spreads rapidly in the USA and around the world. A characteristic of this movement is that it counteracts the authority of the state by 'responding in kind' to the elaborate schemes upon which its authority is based, in its everyday bureaucratic operation.

The Sovereign Citizenship movement began in the US with the Posse Comitatus group in the 1970s. This was an armed group of radical Christian Identity believers who developed an anti-government ideology and practice of refusal or civil disobedience that is the mark of the Sovereign Citizenship movement. It also draws on the precedents and schemes of the Detax movement, the Patriot movement, and the common-law court movement (Sullivan, 1999;

Lethbridge, 2000). The Sovereign Citizenship movement includes militia groups, African-American Moorish groups (with Islamic or New Age philosophies), secessionists and anarchist entrepreneurs such as the Libertarian Capitalists (e.g. Anti-State.com, Cuthhyra and LewRockwell.com). The Anti-Defamation League (2005), for example, gives the broad title of the 'Sovereign Citizenship Movement' to any group with a 'right-wing anarchist ideology' that is anti-government to the point of refusing all of its administrative routines. Whilst many of these are fringe groups, the discourse of the sovereign individual and sovereign citizen has a lot of penetration in the US mainstream. In a nation with a popular hatred of taxation, the ideas have found fertile ground.

A line can be drawn from the early militia groups of thirty-odd years ago, for example, to present day forms of civil disobedience that arise from a refusal to pay taxes or otherwise comply with the administrative routines of government. These forms of civil disobedience include the extreme form of protest now referred to as 'paper terrorism' (ADL, 2003). In 2002, the US State of Wisconsin convicted a man of 'paper terrorism' for the first time under the attorney general's new Domestic Security Unit, which was formed as part of that state's anti-terrorist efforts in the wake of 11 September (Cole, 2002). Steven Magritz's act of terror was to harass government officials by bombarding them with falsely legal or paralegal documents. Magritz had refused to pay taxes on his sixty-two acre property, and the local county had moved to foreclose on it. In response he had filed hundreds of counter-claims and bogus liens (property bonds) on local officials that turned the tables on them and clogged up the system. Magritz was not acting on his own inspiration here, of course. The strategy of a document blitz rests on complicated legal and political arguments that are taught in expert seminars and online books through a host of websites, and is gaining in popularity and adherents (Sullivan, 1999; Maller and Lynch-German, 2002). The points of constitutional law are complex and obscure, but the language of individual sovereignty is familiar libertarian discourse in the USA, and widely disseminated.

There is evidence that such sharing of expert knowledge and favoured tactics is active in Australia, as well as in the US. The legal advisers of micronations originating in Australia are often self-taught bush lawyers, drawing on a pool of knowledge that has been accumulated via the Internet postings of contributors to the 'sovereignty community' (which includes the micronationalists). Whilst the 'paper terrorist' approach is only incipient in Australia (presaged in Cameron's 'vexatious litigation', or in the extravagant warrants published by Camside), the characteristic parrying of authority that is practised by anti-government groups is clearly emerging as the new form of articulation here. The DIY, 'mix and match' approach to new nation creation - illustrated in the discontinuous flag-waving, and in the mix of 'left' and 'right' agendas of my last two examples - sees the signs of this sovereignty made mobile and strategic, rather than fixed and essentialising.

The Australian pursuit of micronationalism - at least in its pro-gun and radical nationalist components - can be understood as an attempt to claim that sovereignty, for the individual, in a peculiarly original grasp of the mobility of state boundaries.

Australian micronations
(Note: not an exhaustive list)

- The Hutt River Province Principality started on a WA farm in 1970, by Prince Leonard (born Leonard George Casley) after a dispute over wheat quotas. URL: http://home.vicnet.net.au/~huttrivr/ [Not available 29 March 2005].
- Province of Bumbunga 1976 started a rural property near Snowtown, SA, by Alex Brackstone, an eccentric monarchist British migrant. See Bartlett (1985).
- Independent State of Rainbow Creek started in Cowwarr, north-eastern Gippsland area of Victoria on 23 July 1979 , by Governor Tom Barnes, after a dispute over flood damage to farm properties. A declaration of war on the state of Victoria was served on 16 January 1979. Available from: http://www.imperial-collection.net/rainbowcreek01.html. [Accessed 29 March 2005] See Hinchliffe, Peter, n.d.
- The Empire of Atlantium, started in Sydney, NSW, in 1981, by His Imperial Majesty George II (George Cruikshank, fifteen-years old) and friends Geoffrey and Claire Duggan, after "a perceived rise in unwelcome political influences." Available from: http://www.atlantium.org [Accessed 29 March 2005].
- Lizbekistan, cybernation started in Paris in 1996 by Australian artist Liz Stirling, URL: http://www.lizbekistan.com/index2.htm; www.lizbekdiaspora.com; www.lizvegas.com [Not available 29 March 2005].
- Principality of Marlborough started on a farm in Rockhampton, Queensland, in 1993, by George and Stephanie Muirhead after a mortgage foreclosure dispute with the Commonwealth Bank. Legal advice from Don Cameron.
- The Principality of Runnymede, n.d., started by Prince Anthony Thomas Rigg.
- The Principality of The Highlanders, n.d., started by Prince Wilfred Vernon Taylor.
- The Principality of The Hebrides, n.d., started by Prince Denis Wilfred Collins.
- The Principality of Brougham, n.d., started by Prince Ralph Brian Smithers.
- The Principality of Ausfreeborough, n.d., started by His Eminence the Prince Joseph Richard Bryant.
- The Principality of Caledonia proclaimed on 26 May 1993 by Prince Palatine Edward James Renton. It was shut down in August 2001 and replaced in December 2001 by the Principality of Camside by H.R.H. Prince Peter Rettke, who appointed Dr David Siminton Governor of Sherwood, in association with David Icke.
- The Principality of Ponderosa - a twenty-four hectare (fifty-nine acre) property surrounded by a moat in northern Victoria, started by Virgilio and his son 'Little' Joe Rigoli in 1994, in trouble on tax evasion and benefits fraud charges (Fickling, 2002b).
- Independent Sovereign State of Australia (ISSA) started in south-east Queensland by Chief Justice and Archbishop Don Cameron in 2000. ISSA claimed 1,500 members Australia-wide in 2004 (Meade, 2004, p. 5).
- Sovereign Principality of Acworth, started on their Country Retreat and B & B property in Ipwich, Queensland, in November 2001, by Trevor and Diane Acworth. Part of or linked to the Independent Sovereign State of Australia (ISSA), started by Don Cameron. Available from: http://www.principalityofacworth.com/company.html [Accessed 29 March 2005].
- Province of Sundowner started in Millmerran near Toowoomba, Queensland, in 2003 by Christopher Lawrence Smith after a dispute with the local council over a building code violation. Part of the Independent Sovereign State of Australia (ISSA), started by Don Cameron (Berghofer, 2003).
- Principality of United Oceania. Started on a sixty-six hectare farm at Medowie, near Salamander Bay in northern New South Wales, on 1 May 2003 by Serene Highness Prince

Peter The First (Peter Gillies), after a dispute with Port Stephens Council over property development (Anon, 2003). It ended in March 2005 (Anon, 2005).

❖ The Principality of Snake Hill, started near Mudgee, north-west of Sydney, on 2 September 2003 by Head of State Prince Paul. "It was necessary to secede from Australia because two of our (investment) properties and income were stolen through a wrongful suit and the Australian and New South Wales governments did nothing to help us... We were almost one year ahead with an interest-only mortgage, when we were sued for being behind. We filed copies of receipts and loan statements with our Defence, but we still lost the Court case." Available from: http://members.lycos.co.uk/snakehill/ [Accessed 29 March 2005].

❖ The Principality of Range View, started near Gatton, Queensland. Secession declared on 19 July 2004 by Lyall Sempf ('white' member of the Tribe officially inducted into the Dalungbara Aboriginal Tribe on 1 July 2004). Available from: http://www.brumbywatchaustralia.com/Principality01.htm [Accessed 29 March 2005].

❖ Principalities of Argyll, Cochrane and Woodlands, started near Gatton, Queensland, on 1 September 2004 by Cecil Herbert Sempf and Sidney Esme Adel Sempf. Declared in a public notice in the *Star* newspaper, 1/9/2004. Information available from: http://www.brumbywatchaustralia.com/Principality01.htm [Accessed 29 March 2005].

❖ Sovereign Principality of Lockyer and Capricornia, started at Lockyer Waters near Ipwich, Queensland, in (or by) February 2004 by Gary and Kathryn Friend (Friend, 2004).

❖ Bora of Dalungbara Aboriginal People, started in south-east Queensland and the Frazer Island/Wide Bay area by Lyall Sempf of Gatton ('white' member of the Tribe officially inducted into the Dalungbara Aboriginal Tribe on 1 July 2004) and John Dalungdalee Jones of Spring Hill (Elder John Jones: "In July 1997, Justice Shepherdson J. made a Representative Order that I represent the Dalungbara, Batchala and Ngulungbara Aboriginal Peoples of Fraser Island and Wide Bay area. I represent about 2,000 indigenous people.") Their Nationhood was reaffirmed (it was never surrendered so no need to secede), "similar to the Torres Strait Islanders who have also recently declared independence from the purported Commonwealth of Australia" on 29 August 2004. Available from: http://www.brumbywatchaustralia.com/WelcomeFraser01.htm [Accessed 29 March 2005].

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[1] In the university, the word has been picked up in reference to the study of nations or
nationalism using a 'micro' as opposed to a 'macro' focus. Studies have generally considered the
economic and political realities of actual small nations that must operate with limited resources
and a high degree of dependency on regional conglomerates or traditional ties. Sometimes the
term is used to refer to the nationalist aspirations of ethnic or provincial groups that have broken
away from a larger power. Here the concern is either with the destabilising effect of identity
movements on regions with a high degree of ethnic tension and history of internal conflict, or
with the de-territorialising effects of globalising capital.

[2] These are some of the names of micronation subgroups. The latter two are the preferred terms
for the serious political projects of THE MICROFREEDOM INDEX, the US-based index that
serves to showcase the more libertarian and, in some cases, extreme nationalist micronationalist
projects.

[3] "Micro-nations have been claimed all over the world, but Australia seems particularly afflicted.
There is a tradition to such claims: in the 1930s Western Australia considered seceding from the
rest of the country." (Fickling, 2002a, p. 22)

[4] Article XIX of the Atlantium constitution reads: "Aspiring to an international peace based on
justice, order, mutual respect and positive engagement, the Empire of Atlantium renounces its

Sovereign Right to the use of all forms of external aggression, threat or force, including the maintenance of permanent State military institutions." (Empire of Atlantium Constitution).

[5] The Independent Sovereign State of Australia (ISSA), however, appoints local sheriffs to oversee law and order at the same time as it advocates the private ownership of guns for self-defence (information received from Chris Smith - himself an appointed sheriff in the Sundowner Province of ISSA - during an interview conducted by me on 27 January 2004, at the public library in Toowoomba, Queensland).

[6] I note that the editor of *New Nation News*, the host website for a fringe of new nation projects concerned with racial purity, cites the right to bear arms as the first of his ideological principles.

[7] I have no way of knowing whether his list corresponds with mine.

[8] The tragedy in Waco, Texas, led up to the deaths of seventy-nine men, women and children at Mount Carmel on 19 April 1993.

[9] This is the sequence of events. The receiver arrived 5 April, there were court appearances on 8 and 23 April, upon which Muirhead was convicted, jailed and released from jail on 17 June 1993.

[10] See reports of the Freedom Rally, *Lock, Stock and Barrel*, 12, p. 19; *Lock, Stock and Barrel*, 11, showing the 'Trojan horse', the flags flying at the Muirhead ranch and details of the protestors' perception of media 'misrepresentation' at the rally.

[11] Sempf's primary public campaign is to safeguard the existence of brumbies in Australia.

[12] Examples include the British High Court judgment of 25 June 2004, purporting to find that there is no 'Queen of Australia', and the AUSTEO secret document from the Department of Territories acknowledging that Prince Leonard of Hutt was indeed exempt from tax. See the scanned document on the Bora of Dalungbara Aboriginal People website, http://www.brumbywatchaustralia.com/Principality01.htm