

# RACE

John Howard and  
the remaking of Australia

ANDREW MARKUS

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deception, . . . let alone the irreversible long term ramifications implied . . . for their collective future . . .

Graeme Campbell was sufficiently impressed with McCormack to table his 'Grand Plan' in the House of Representatives, 'in the national interest'. He declared that 'Australia needs Denis McCormack in federal parliament'.

In June 1996 Campbell launched his Australia First Party in which McCormack would become a senior officeholder. It would be the means to enable 'the Australian people to take back control of our country, to institute sane and productive policies of national reconstruction and consign the old political parties to history'. The new party's core policies included support for the manufacturing industry, control of foreign ownership, lower immigration, an end to the policy of Aboriginal reconciliation, introduction of the citizens initiated referendum, reduction of the gap between city and country and easing of gun controls. In June 1996 a merger was announced between Australia First and the Australian Reform Party, founded by Ted Drane, a major player in the gun lobby. It was to last but seven days, highlighting the inability of peripheral right groups to coalesce, in part because of political differences but also because of the jostling for position by prospective leaders.

According to newspaper reports, in the following month a secret meeting was convened at a Christian bush retreat near Lithgow, New South Wales, to discuss Australia First strategy, perhaps to further attempt the amalgamation of the major far right groups. Two of the most prominent invitees, Ted Drane and Pauline Hanson, declined to attend. Campbell was left in the company of some twenty stalwarts including Denis McCormack and a number of senior league members including Eric Butler. Drane publicly expressed concern at Campbell's links with the league and with AAFI, complaining that he had checked on people who were to be involved in a forthcoming meeting and found two prominent league activists. Drane subsequently provided journalists with details of his dealings with

Australia First and claimed that 'I kept being invited to meet Butler and I kept saying no'. McCormack responded that neither he nor Campbell were puppets of the league: 'If we were there, so what—we're moulding the league, the league is following us'. Campbell commented that 'I know some people in the League of Rights and I know some people in the Catholic Church. So what?' In Senator Boswell's assessment, Campbell 'has been fawned upon by the Eric Butlers and Denis McCormacks of this world until he believes what they tell him—that he can found a successful new political party in Australia'.

The league had also sought to promote Pauline Hanson, distributing thousands of copies of her maiden speech and writing of her that she had given 'renewed hope to ordinary Australians'; she 'acted as a catalyst in politics to the benefit of traditional Australia'. But full endorsement was reserved for Campbell; he was 'an outstanding leader', 'head and shoulders above all other Federal members', a man around whom 'an effective nationalist movement could emerge to counter the treachery of the internationalists'. Eric Butler applauded the launch of Australia First in 1996 and described Campbell as the 'great white hope of Australian nationalism'. The 17 January 1997 issue of the league's *On Target* declared of Campbell: 'we can see no other national figure of sufficient stature to act as the catalyst for the emergence of a new type of political movement which can divert Australia off the present disaster course'. League members or former members filled key positions in four Australia First state branches but the league had badly miscalculated: Campbell lacked the personality to interest the media, he was not in the race to match the Hanson charisma.

#### CITIZENS ELECTORAL COUNCILS

It seems that Citizens Electoral Councils (CECs) were first established by League of Rights activists with support from kindred organisations, although it is not possible to be certain. The councils

sought to harness the popularity of the Voter's Veto campaign and by 1988 it was claimed that there were branches in 55 electorates. The citizens' initiative movement drew its support from disillusionment with the political system; it seemed to promise a way to recapture control of the political process from politicians working to further the interests of the 'new class' and the 'one world government'. A journalist reported in 1991 that 'the concept of CIRs [citizens' initiated referendum] has a receptive audience in rural areas where people feel remote from the political process and are fearful of the future'.

The Citizens Electoral Councils achieved a major success in 1988 with the victory of their candidate, Trevor Perrett, in the by-election for the Queensland state seat of Barambah vacated by the former Queensland premier, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. In the words of the key CEC activist John Koehler, a Queensland farmer, support was based on:

the realisation that all the political parties slavishly served the international, New World Order Masters and not us—the people of Australia . . . The One World Government Agenda of the Fabians, Rhodes Scholars and others has never been put to the people . . .

In his maiden speech Perrett outlined the principles of the citizens' initiated referendum:

We are supposed to be a constitutional parliamentary democracy where the people rule, yet no machinery or means exist whereby the people in any district or electorate can communicate their majority views to their elected member in Parliament . . . The real solution is relatively simple, and so beneficial to all—a solution which would bring greatness to this State and to this nation. We have to adopt the principle of direct legislation—citizen-initiated referendum . . . If we

are to lay claim at all to being a genuine parliamentary democracy and a properly constitutional one, we can scarcely deny this right of the people to decide policy . . . When the Government has not perceived the true mood of the people, and when the Parliament has acted or is failing to act on important matters in the way that the people particularly want . . . the people will be stirred to make use of this direct legislative process. Surely in the interests of harmony, true consensus and common sense, we would all welcome that . . . The Government must give the people what they want.

The following year a second candidate, Dennis Stevenson, was elected to the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly on a 'Voters' Veto' platform and was to play a significant, if erratic role, in fringe politics, chairing, for example, the CECs' national conference in Bendigo in 1990.

Why extremist organisations should promote democratisation of politics through the referendum is at first sight puzzling. Part of the answer is its efficacy as a propaganda weapon; what better way to mobilise discontented grass roots support than to show up the corruption of politicians and of the political system by demanding this most democratic of reforms, the path to 'harmony, true consensus and common sense'; and what better way to side-step the complexities of decision making and carry the message that there was a quick-fix, simple solution to the problems facing rural communities. A second component of the answer is the self-identification of leaders such as Eric Butler with the community, the belief that mass support would be forthcoming once the blinkers were removed and truth allowed to prevail. With such an outlook there were no dangers in the extension of democracy. Indeed, the League of Rights denounced party politics and put its trust in the mobilisation of mass support which would produce a people's revolution, a moment of cataclysmic change which would advance humanity to a higher stage.

In the interim, hopefully no one would closely examine the organisations supporting the citizen's referendum. The League of Rights, for example, placed supreme power in the hands of its leader, held no elections, did not publicly circulate a balance sheet of income and expenditure, and included no self-criticism or conflict of views in its publications. After his election Perrett soon found that the CEC Party organisation began ordering him to report almost daily and he was bombarded with right-wing propaganda; he was also told to assist in raising financial contributions in his electorate. 'I became a puppet on a string. They proclaimed to represent the will of the people but the will of the people was only okay provided that they agreed with it. They were trying to use me to push their own agenda—an extremely right-wing agenda'. His response was to defect to the National Party before completion of his first term. He retained the seat as an endorsed National candidate at the next election and subsequently became a minister in the Borbidge government.

In 1988 the CECs sponsored a highly successful speaking tour through parts of New South Wales and Queensland by a former social security department clerk, Peter Sawyer. His speech in a Brisbane suburb packed a high school auditorium with an audience of more than 800. People entering the hall passed tables set with League of Rights publications and were handed copies of the quarterly newspaper, *Wake Up Australia*, published for the Brisbane-based Council for a Free Australia. This organisation, under the national chairmanship of Jackie Butler, proclaimed itself to be Pro-Christian, Pro-Family, Pro-Free Enterprise, Pro-Freedom, Pro-Life, Pro-Common Law and campaigned on moral issues, opposing legalisation of abortion, homosexuality, marijuana and pornography.

Sawyer was described by Laurie Oakes as 'the nation's champion conspiracy theorist'. His message, in Oakes' summary, was that:

Australia is sliding into a planned totalitarian state; that it is all part of a conspiracy to bring about a world government; that Australia's billion dollar Parliament House is to be the

new world government headquarters; and that the hub of the conspiracy is Canberra's Deakin Centre where, he says, the government has already secretly interlinked departmental computers in a gigantic Big Brother national surveillance.

In January 1988 Sawyer prophesised that Aborigines, who had supposedly smuggled thousands of AK 47 Russian assault rifles into the country, would launch an armed uprising on Australia Day and warned his supporters to stay indoors. In 1991 he was urging people to prepare for 'imminent' invasion from Indonesia in consequence of Australia's disarmament and advocated that his listeners purchase and hide firearms. Indicating the extent of support for far right conspiratorial ideas in Queensland, Sawyer stood as an advocate of citizens' initiated referenda in a July 1990 by-election on the Sunshine Coast and secured 16 per cent of the vote.

To the chagrin of the league, control of the CEC movement was captured by followers of the American Lyndon LaRouche and the movement's national headquarters was moved to Melbourne. The LaRouche organisation was distinguished by its professionalism in research, publication and fundraising. According to one 1992 source it raised close to \$20 000 per week, published *The New Citizen*, a newspaper with a distribution of 50 000 copies, and ran a training program for activists.

The LaRouche movement has been likened to a cult, providing its followers with a strange mix of conspiratorial theories, complicated economic analysis and populist policies geared to appeal to farmers, pastoralists and blue collar workers. It views its leader as a major historical figure, a 'statesman' and the 'world's greatest living economist'. According to one of the leading Australian authorities, David Grearson, the movement:

takes the conventional conspiracy theories much favoured by the far-right and goes ten steps further. . . . [They] claim, for example, that the Queen heads an international drug-trafficking

ring, that Dr Henry Kissinger is a KGB agent, and that AIDS is a Soviet plot . . .

In the early 1990s the LaRouche publication 'Sovereign Australia: an Economic Program to Save Our Nation', based on material prepared in the United States, presented the view that the 'twin tyrannies of communism and the International Monetary Fund' had brought Australia to the brink of ruin. It urged admission only of English speaking migrants, the rebuilding of the nation's military capacity, the setting up of a citizens' militia and an end to the 'totalitarian practice' of gun control. The 'average Aussie' was urged to take up the battle for citizens' referenda, otherwise 'the Australia our forefathers left us will soon be finished'.

In the late 1990s the LaRouche policy provided for abolition of land rights, the ending of free trade and economic rationalism, the reintroduction of tariff protection, exchange and currency controls, promotion of large scale infrastructure development projects and implementation of an immediate moratorium on debt for family farms.

#### CONFEDERATE ACTION PARTY

The Confederate Action Party (CAP) was established in Queensland in July 1990, possibly to provide a rival to the LaRouche-influenced Citizens Electoral Councils and a substitute for the Logos Foundation, expected to decline following revelations of the misconduct of its director. The Confederate Action Party's name recalled the revolt of the Confederate states in defence of their way of life and of slavery in the period of the American Civil War; it was also a call for a 'Confederation of organisations and citizens who value liberty, the flag and our constitution' and for 'positive ACTION'. Its slogan was 'ONE FLAG ONE NATION'.

While it was short lived, the CAP revealed the potential of far right politics in Queensland. In 1992 it ran twelve candidates at

the state election and won strong support, an average vote of 9.6 per cent, with over 15 per cent in five seats, compared with the average for the Liberal Party in the same seats of 8 per cent. Several prominent supporters of Pauline Hanson, including Tony Pitt and Bruce Whiteside, had been Confederate Action candidates. At the March 1993 federal election its Queensland Senate team received 39 000 votes, about 2 per cent of the total. By the second half of 1993 it was reduced to a group publicly squabbling over control of the organisation and charging each other with financial irregularity; a handful of branches were established in other states, one in rural Western Australia winning national headlines in January 1995 when its most active member was murdered.

The party's policies provide further evidence of the issues engaging far right politicians in Queensland. Its 'main aim' was to 'introduce "Citizens Initiated Referendum" into Australian politics'. This reform would ensure 'that the people of Australia can say no to laws that the majority do not want'. A CAP pamphlet argued that:

- C.I.R. gives back to the people the real power to determine the laws under which they are governed.
- C.I.R. requires our elected representatives to take notice of the will of the people.
- C.I.R. stops intimidation by extremist groups and also stops decisions being made by political parties and pressure groups.
- C.I.R. gives immunity from politicians' attempts to dictate against the wishes of the Australian people.
- C.I.R. is a proven, successful system being used in many countries whereby voters have a direct say in determining their own laws by which they are governed.

AUSTRALIA NEEDS CONSENSUS DEMOCRACY!

Its electoral appeal called for Queenslanders to 'Stand up for Australia—One Flag—One Nation'. If elected to office the party

lacked the capacity to develop detailed policies of its own so in key areas it accepted policies offered by special interest groups, such as the anti-immigration and divorced men's lobbies.

There was much evidence of infiltration from the far right. Thus in December 1996 sacked Hanson staffer Jeff Babb commented that Hanson's close supporters 'have let in extreme LaRouchite and League of Rights-style conspiracy theorists, who have established footholds in her support organisation'. In January 1998 it was reported that the Mackay branch of One Nation was disbanded following the joining of a number of AUSI Freedom Scout members. Rod Owen of *Lock, Stock and Barrel* fame observed in August 1997 that 'near enough every one of our members' had joined One Nation. In August 1998 Ted Briggs, One Nation's Queensland treasurer, resigned after discovering that fellow state executive members had been leaders of the Confederate Action Party. Brendan Bogle, president of the Petrie branch, made a similar charge of infiltration. Several endorsed One Nation candidates were forced to resign following the revelation of extremist links.

Those familiar with fringe politics immediately recognised the origin of One Nation's policies. Extremists in Queensland had long advocated taxation reform along the lines of the policy adopted. Elements of the financial policies were similar to those of the *League of Rights* and Eric Butler conceded that 'they have borrowed . . . on our ideas'. The totality of policies differed little from the Confederate Action Party platform, itself influenced by a range of Queensland fringe groups (see Appendix 2). Once such policies were released and subject to scrutiny doubt over the party's competency and the extent of extremist influence heightened.

This, however, was only the beginning of the party's problems. Hanson's own inadequacies were highlighted when she attempted to explain policies. She proved herself unable to deal with detail and could not overcome a basic ignorance of the political system, nor could she deflect questioning and send the media on their way

with pleasantries in the style of Joh Bjelke-Petersen. The release of policy was disastrous for another reason. Vagueness and strong rhetoric enabled the party to maximise its appeal; specific policies, whatever their content, alienated some section of the support base—for example, taxation policy imperilled the support of retirees, hard-headed farmers and the small business community.

On 1 July One Nation released an immigration policy similar to the policies of Australians Against Further Immigration (AAFI). Indeed, One Nation absorbed AAFI and appointed AAFI's Robyn Spencer as its immigration spokesperson. Under the policy, explained to a hostile media conference by Spencer, the party would aim for population stability through zero net immigration, refugees would only gain temporary entry and be expected to return to their country of citizenship as soon as circumstances allowed, and the family reunion program would be restricted and only available to those with basic English competency (with the exception of 'young children').

In a classic contradictory statement, it was proposed that the immigration intake would be non-discriminatory, but only to the extent that 'the numbers do not significantly alter the ethnic and cultural make up of the country', on the pattern of racially discriminatory American immigration quotas enacted in the early 1920s. A One Nation government would abolish multiculturalism and encourage 'widespread use of English within all communities and institutions of the land'. Granting of citizenship would be dependent on ability to 'pass a spoken and written English test' and 'basic understanding of Australian institutions, history and environment'. While campaigning against limitation of freedom of speech which had supposedly characterised the era of 'political correctness', One Nation undertook that 'organisations or individuals who deflect loyalty from Australia should be sidelined in debates on national issues'. Further, all citizens would be 'expected to have an overriding commitment to Australia and to accept the basic structures and principles of Australia'. It was not explained how these forms of

The election result was to prove a great disappointment. Her prognosis having been proved correct prior to the Queensland poll, Hanson predicted on the federal polling day that One Nation would win twelve to fifteen seats in the lower house and six in the Senate. The result was just one Senate seat. Both Hanson and Oldfield were defeated. In the Queensland parliament, as a result of resignations from the party, within six months of the June 1998 state election its representation was cut from eleven to ten, then to five in February 1999 and nil in December.

One Nation's declining electoral appeal in the period June 1998–March 1999 is presented in Table 6.5. In February 2000 the party did not field candidates in the by-elections for two Queensland state seats in which it had polled strongly a little more than eighteen months earlier. The breakaway City-Country

**Table 6.5 One Nation vote, June 1998–March 1999**

Queensland election (June 1998) (one house parliament) 22.7%	Queensland federal vote (October 1998) House of Representatives 14.35%	Queensland federal vote (October 1998) Senate 14.83 %
Queensland state seat of Mulgrave: state election, June 1998 31%	Queensland state seat of Mulgrave: by-election, December 1998 15.5%	
New South Wales federal vote October 1998 House of Representatives 8.96%	New South Wales state vote: March 1999 Legislative Assembly 7.35%	
New South Wales federal vote October 1998 Senate 9.61%	New South Wales state vote March 1999 Legislative Council 6.34%	

Source: Australian Electoral Commission; Electoral Commission of Queensland; New South Wales State Electoral Office

Alliance, formed by the last five One Nation parliamentarians, scored 13.8 per cent of the vote in Bundamba and 1.9 per cent in Woodridge. One Nation had polled 34.3 per cent and 28.4 per cent respectively in these seats at the state election.

**'DEMOCRACY REALLY MEANS MOB RULE'**

A fundamental contradiction lay at the heart of Pauline Hanson's One Nation. This was a party that trumpeted its democracy, that promised to return power to the people. Like the League of Rights and the Citizens Electoral Councils, its policies were grounded on the promised involvement of 'the people' in the political process. As part of its policy for the Queensland election One Nation promised the introduction of the citizen initiated referendum; its law and order policy provided for 'community based policing initiatives', a referendum on capital punishment, and the election of twelve 'Ordinary Citizens' to oversee the performance of the judiciary and recommend removal of judges not performing their duties; the family law policy announced for the federal election provided for the abolition of the Family Law Court and its replacement with a family tribunal, comprising 'respected members from the local community'.

Yet, in line with the tradition of fascism, One Nation was based on the 'fuehrer' principle, on the role of the leader with capacity to divine 'the people's' will. Like other leaders who have seen themselves as the embodiment of the national will the 'mother of the nation' could see no difference between her own views and those of her 'children'. In this mode of politics rule by the people equates with rule by the leader. She was 'The Truth'.

Any doubt as to the nature of the party was dispelled by its name, the first political party of significance in Australian history bearing the name of an individual: this was not the party of 'One Nation' but 'Pauline Hanson's One Nation'. Despite its claim to be the voice of the Australian people, the leadership of One Nation



**Table A3.5 Analysis of One Nation vote—Queensland (1998) and New South Wales (1999) state elections**

Vote (%)	Queensland, no. of seats	New South Wales, no. of seats
40-45	3	0
35-40	7	0
30-35	9	0
25-30	19	0
20-25	20	1
15-20	12	4
10-15	7	18
5-10	2	40
0-5	0	25

Source: Electoral Commission of Queensland, State Electoral Office, New South Wales

central Brisbane seats did One Nation poll under 10 per cent (see Map 1). The strength of this vote is further highlighted by comparison with the One Nation vote in the New South Wales election of March 1999, to be considered later in this Appendix.

Compared with other minor parties One Nation was thus spectacularly successful in Queensland. However, while it polled well across the state it lacked the localised support possessed by the Labor and Liberal Parties to enable it to win a majority in its own right in a constituency. So strongly did One Nation eat into the National vote that the Nationals only obtained an outright majority in one seat, that of the premier. Of the eleven seats won by One Nation all were won on preferences following the decision of the conservative parties to allocate preferences to One Nation ahead of Labor. Five of the seats won were formerly held by the National Party (four classified 'safe'), six by Labor (one 'safe').

One Nation narrowly missed victory in six additional seats, winning between 47 per cent and 49.9 per cent of the vote after allocation of preferences. Of the 89 Queensland electorates it was

**Map 1—1998 Queensland election, Brisbane electorates. One Nation vote.**

