

Australian Adam Smith Club (Melbourne)

President: Michael Warby, Editor: Regina Bron, P.O. Box 950, Hawthorn, 3122

Wherever the art of medicine is loved, there also is love of humanity.
Hippocrates. Aphorisms (c. 400 BC)

Fred Hansen on Good Health - And How to Get it

The Adam Smith Club will host a dinner meeting on Wednesday the 31st of October 2007, at the Malvern Vale Club Hotel, 1321 Malvern Rd, Malvern 3144.

Dr Fred Hansen obtained his medical degree in Hamburg, Germany. He has practised as a GP in Germany, England and recently in Australia. He therefore has first hand experience of a range of health care systems. Dr Hansen founded a think tank in Hamburg as well as subsequently working with another think tank in Germany. As a free lance journalist he has contributed articles on science and medicine to *Die Zeit* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, in professional journals has published a number of papers on a range of topics from biological warfare to tropical medicine and to health care reform. In 2006 he was awarded the Adam Smith Medal by the Adam Smith Institute for his contribution to free market thinking. You can find his regular blogs on the website of the ASI.

Dr Hansen will discuss the developments in state versus free enterprise health care in Australia and overseas.

Attendance is open to both members and non-members. Those desiring to attend should complete the attached slip and return it to the Club no later than Monday the 29th of October 2007. Tickets will not be sent. Those attending should arrive at 6:30pm for dinner at 7:00pm. The cost is \$35.00 per head for members and \$40.00 per head for non-members (see next page for explanation of arrangements and for electronic booking details).

**Enquiries to Ms Regina Bron, tel. 9859 8277 (AH) or mob. 0412 006 786 (BH)
or email asmith@economic-justice.org**



detach and return

The Secretary,
Australian Adam Smith Club (Melbourne),
PO Box 950, Hawthorn, Victoria 3122.

Please reserve place(s) at \$35.00 dollars per member andplace(s) at \$40.00 per non-member for the October 31st meeting of the Australian Adam Smith Club. I enclose the amount of \$..... in payment for the same.

NAME (please print):

ADDRESS:

SIGNATURE: TEL:

LAISSEZ FAIRE ON THE WEB

This newsletter has an address on the web: <http://www.economic-justice.org/asmith.htm>. The Institute for Economic Justice has been created by David Sharp a former president (and current committee member) and Timothy Warner the current Treasurer of the Club. As stated on the web site, 'The Institute has been founded to assist those who have been subject to economic injustice, and to increase both public and professional awareness of remedies available under the Law.'

ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS

By popular demand, the AASC now offers electronic booking and payment to dinner meetings. Bookings can be made by emailing the number of members and non-members attending to asmith@economic-justice.org; a reply email from the club will then be sent with a link to PayPal where the payment can be made by Mastercard, Visa, AMEX, Diners or PayPal Account. Bookings made after Monday 29th of October will not be accepted online. FEES - a \$2 card fee will apply for the transaction.

MEETING REPORT

The August Dinner had Dr Anna Blainey speaking on "What happened to the idea of rights for consenting adults? Debating drug, alcohol and tobacco policy." The history of alcohol prohibition, and the nature of arguments used in the nineteenth and early twentieth century to support restricting and banning the sale of alcohol provided a foundation to discuss the current debates on tobacco

and recreational drugs. The talk was well received and the question time was lively with conservative and liberal positions much in evidence. We are grateful to Dr Blainey for such a stimulating talk.

The feedback on the new venue was very positive and we will be returning to the Malvern Vale for future dinners. The menu is very flexible and the quality of food for the price is excellent. *TW*

PRODOS FOR ALBERT PARK

The decision by the Liberal Party not to contest the Albert Park by-election was seen by many free market supporters as waving the white flag to statist solutions, with the Greens and Labor left to fight the battle of ideas. One individual decided to fly the flag - quite literally - for those wishing a free market candidate in the by-election. Prodos Marinakis, known far and wide simply as "Prodos," stood up for his principles.

Not only did Prodos fly the well known Australian flag around the electorate but he bearded the statist in their den. At a forum for environmental issues he asked if any present would come onto the stage and light the two candles he produced from his bag - one that represented the liberty of the individual and the other the free market. Strangely Prodos' wife Barboo was the only volunteer at this environmental forum who felt they could light two such candles. When asked about which of the two allowable solutions to Melbourne's water needs he supported - recycling or desalination - he replied, "Build a dam." Asked "where," Prodos replied, "Clear a forest, divert a river - build a dam."

Prodos was well received in the streets of Albert Park, and the media - entranced by his individual campaign style, gave a good run to his positions and philosophy. Tip of "the hat" in particular to Channel Seven and Brendan Donahue who ran a number of spots on the evening news.

On the day he received 5% of the vote - outpolling the DLP, Family First and all but one independent. It was noticeable that one independent green candidate actually 'borrowed' Prodos' campaign slogan on his How to Vote card and he was the only independent to outpoll Prodos!

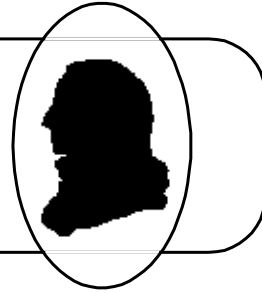
For further details on the campaign - including the two great campaign songs that can be downloaded, see the campaign website www.prodos.com.au. *TW*

VENUE ARRANGEMENTS

At the Malvern Vale Hotel, a private room upstairs (to the right through main restaurant entrance when entering from Malvern Rd) has been reserved. There is NO BYO at this venue. Drinks are at bar prices. Car Parking is available on Malvern Rd from 6.30pm and in the car park at rear. The No. 72 tram stops outside. The Tooronga Station is 400m away. We hope these arrangements do not cause inconvenience and we welcome your feedback.

Laissez Faire

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JOHN HOWARD'S HISTORY

Prime Minister John Howard has pledged to introduce a minimum requirement for the teaching of Australian history in Australian schools. Commencing 2009, the States and Territories will have to implement the federal government's course outline, requiring a minimum of 150 hours of teaching, to be conducted over school years 9 and 10, with the possibility of an earlier commencement in year 8, thereby enabling the course to be spread over 3 rather than 2 years. Failing to do so will result in the potential withdrawal of billions of dollars of federal education funding.

The course has been designed by a panel of experts, including leading historian Professor Geoffrey Blainey and political commentator Gerard Henderson. As pronounced, it presents as a structured and coherent course, providing a broad coverage of the significant aspects of the Australian experience from a variety of viewpoints. It is seemingly non-partisan and without manifest political bias.

A knowledge of our past is essential if we are to understand our present and effectively plan our future. Yet sadly the teaching of history in Australian schools has been downgraded and neglected. On occasion, the lack of historical knowledge of intelligent and supposedly educated Australians can seem truly appalling. In such circumstances, one could be forgiven for thinking that John Howard's proposal was desirable and attractive. Rejecting such a

proposal therefore requires a good reason or reasons.

The main good reason for rejecting the PM's proposal is that, as such, it is none of his business. Education is not a federal responsibility but rather a state one. Admittedly Federalism is effectively dead in Australia, (for which fact our present PM can claim more than a fair share of the credit). But it nonetheless behoves us to take the point, if for no other reason than to keep reminding ourselves of the limitations of constitutions and of judicial review.

Ideally of course education should not be a matter for, or responsibility of, government, but rather for, or of, family. If we are to have government involvement, however, as would seem to be the case, it is far better that such involvement should be state, or even local, rather than national. A monopoly national educational agenda, particularly for the teaching of history, is not a good idea, even if it is one that accords with one's own views. There are always going to be different attitudes and perspectives between historians such as Geoffrey Blainey and Keith Windschuttle and Manning Clark and Stuart MacIntyre.

"Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Fuhrer" was bad because of what it delivered. "Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom, Let a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend" was good because of what it promised. No one outside of the lunatic fringe would accuse John Howard of being or aspiring to be a tyrant.

We should not however make it easier for one to occur in the future by giving the national government control over education, or even a part thereof, and particularly not of history. Control of the past leads to power over the future.

Paradoxically perhaps, there is one academic discipline in which the typical Australian's level of ignorance is probably more appalling than that of history, namely economics. High school economic courses, such as exist, are likely to be poorly taught and focused on Keynesianism, or national accounts, which present as particularly complex and tedious. We are unlikely, however, to see any concerted government, particularly federal government, efforts to change this situation, to present a simpler and more relevant course, much less to make it compulsory, anytime soon. Governments have a vested interest in economic ignorance.

The countries of the former Soviet Union and of Eastern Europe, to their benefit, have thrown off the discredited economic theories of Marx and Lenin. China is in the process of doing the same. The time is long overdue for the Western equivalent thereof, the equally discredited and damaging theories of J M Keynes, to be consigned to the dustbin of history. For this to occur however will require a population with a far better knowledge and understanding of simple economics than presently exists. *DBS*

TOLERANCE: A SPRINGBOARD FOR FREE MARKETS

The effect of ideas, both religious and secular, on our lives, our societies, our economies and interaction between nation states is often overlooked in an age when attention spans are short and news becomes increasingly pre-digested. Take the idea of tolerance for example, and its effect on the Middle East imbroglio.

The development of tolerance for differing and competing views of man and society was an outgrowth of the Reformation in religion in 16th century Europe. As a matter of convenience, the start of the Reformation is dated from the time the German theologian Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, as a declaration of protest against abuses in the universal Catholic Church.

The Reformation did not immediately lead to tolerance of religious and social diversity. Both the Catholics and Protestants offered universal explanatory systems. Within the Protestant trend, the two main leaders were Luther and Jean Calvin. The churches they established also fought bitterly. The Calvinists in England could not accept the reforms to the Church in England under Henry VIII and Elizabeth I as being sufficiently thorough to merit their support. They thus became Puritan dissenters. Many Puritans emigrated to avoid persecution, amongst them the Pilgrim Fathers. But they were no more tolerant than other Christians. Active tolerance had to await the acceptance of a Humanist "Third Force."

The relationship of capitalism and religion, especially Calvinism, has been variously described by R H Tawney in "Religion and the Rise of Capitalism," Christopher Hill in various books discussing the period of the English Civil War and perhaps most famously Max Weber in "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism."

In all respects, modern societies and economies could not flower where religion offered a total, universal and all-encompassing explanatory system that did not value enterprise. Social and economic tolerance separate the

modern world from the Middle Ages. Liberalism grew in England and Scotland out of the necessity of accepting varying religious viewpoints as a means of ensuring social harmony. Even in liberal England, this process took centuries. In other countries, it took much longer. The last execution for heresy by the Spanish Inquisition was in 1826, the victim a teacher who sang the wrong words to a song. As a result of the suppression of liberty, Spain remained stuck in the twilight of the Middle Ages until the 20th century. European, especially Latin, liberalism has as a result been frequently tainted with anticlericalism.

Why is this important? It is easy to put down the current troubles of the United States and its allies to Islam, but this is only partially correct. Indonesia is a tolerant country and most of its people practice a moderate version of Islam. It also has significant Christian and Buddhist minorities. Fundamentalist Islam is gaining influence, but Indonesia shows a well-governed, tolerant Muslim-majority state is possible. Saudi Arabia is still stuck in the Middle Ages. They mutilate and execute people for crimes against religion. The Saudi alliance with the West is a relationship of economics and convenience. The Saudis propagate state-sponsored religious intolerance at home and abroad. The West needs to peacefully export the free market and a liberal society to the Middle East, and support moderate Islam.

The Middle East has some tolerant societies, but in Iraq, imposing tolerant and liberal values by force has yet to prove successful. In fact, the Iraq war has proved to be disastrous for religious minorities such as Jews and Christians. The Jewish community, which has been in Iraq since the Babylonian captivity thousands of years ago, has virtually ceased to exist. The ancient Christian community has shrunk from over 400,000 to around 120,000. It's a sad commentary on the Iraq war that even the ugly Saddam regime was a more effective guarantor of religious tolerance than the United States and its allies. *JRB*

VALE JENNY BOSTOCK

The Club is saddened that one of our most enthusiastic members and supporters, Jenny Bostock, died on September 24th of complications from a fall. Not only will Jenny's good company and perceptive comments be missed at our dinners, the annual Committee planning session at Tom & Jenny's bay side retreat was always the better for her contributions. Jenny's commitment to the principles and ideals that the Club upholds was self-evident to any who had the pleasure of her company. Our thoughts go to Tom Bostock and the family.