

The Infrastructure Road to Recovery

Health Care

Mayhem and Murder—the Kennett “Reforms”

The clearest case of Mont Pelerin's savage attack on the population, was seen in Victoria, beginning with the 1992 election of Liberal Premier Jeff Kennett. Kennett was the protégé of Mont Pelerin heavyweight John Gough, OBE, a longtime chairman of the ANZ Bank, and a power in the Institute for Public Affairs. Kennett's entire program, in particular his brutal dismantling of the health sector, was outlined for him in a series of “studies” by MPS fronts, notably the 1991 *Project Victoria: An Agenda for Change*, co-written by the Tasman Institute and the IPA, and the 1992 *Towards a Healthier State: The restructuring of Victoria's Public Health Services*. IPA ideologue and former Treasury official Des Moore co-authored both reports, and publicly demanded a “major down-sizing in the Victorian health Department,” together with “a move to a competitive market situation.”

Kennett dutifully complied. Immediately upon his election, he started dismantling the state's health care system, as per the Tasman/IPA reports, which called for: the privatisation of 3,130 of the 5,360 state nursing home beds; “making better use” of private hospitals by closing 1,300 public hospital beds; slashing salaries and staffing rates for the remaining

public hospitals; reducing administrative staffing levels to those of 1987-88; busting unions and replacing them with “enterprise bargaining”; cutting non-medical staff drastically; corporatising hospitals; and “contracting out” services.

Kennett closed and downgraded dozens of public hospitals; corporatised and privatised health facilities; cut capital funding by 49% in 1996 alone and slashed more than 40,000 nursing and other health sector jobs; increased surgical waiting lists by at least 22% from pre-1992 levels; degraded ambulance services; and demoralised doctors and other health professionals who repeatedly warned that people were dying as a direct consequence of the “reforms”.

One notable public outcry came from Dr. Graeme Brazenor, the Victorian chairman of the Australian Association of Surgeons who summed up the situation by saying that if the state public hospital system “was a dog, you'd shoot it”. He spoke out after six patients in a main surgical unit at the Austin and Repatriation Medical Centre were infected with golden staph while undergoing surgery in March 1997, because cleaning staff had been cut back so drastically. Dr. Brazenor ultimately quit because there was no “major restoration of



Mont Pelerin Premier Jeff Kennett.
Photo: AAP/Julian Smith

standards”. However, it was not just a matter of increasing infections. As the CEC documented through several case studies reported in its 1998 pamphlet, *Australia's health care “reforms”: A Nuremberg crime against humanity*, Kennett's dismantling of Victoria's hospital system was *systematically killing people*.

But the reforms continued, including the introduction of “casemix funding”, which is another way of slashing hospital



The Preston & Northcote Community Hospital, only built in the 60s, was one of the hospitals in Melbourne's northern suburbs which was axed by Kennett.
Photo: Jeremy Beck

costs and eliminating medical services, just like America's HMOs [Health Management Organizations]. In this process, the government sets strict guidelines for hospitals where each medical condition is allocated a hospitalisation period, a specified number of treatment and nursing hours and an allowable cost. If the patient does

not recover by the time his hours are up, one of two things happens: he is simply kicked out, or the hospital is fined heavily, and forced to pay for the cost of the patient's extended hospitalisation out of its own slashed funding.

There is a clear precedent for denying human beings needed health care—Nazi Germany.

The Nuremberg Precedent—Denial of Medical Care

In the Nuremberg Trials following World War II, the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain and France tried 23 doctors and Nazi officials who had carried out war crimes and crimes against humanity.

U.S. Chief of Counsel Justice Robert H. Jackson stressed that the prosecution targeted the men who were responsible for criminal policies, “men of station”, “the planners and designers”. It was implicit in this prosecution that the guilty could not have known every individual who would die by his order; but it was made crystal clear, that the individual who ordered the policy, held individual responsibility for the murderous result—they “knew or should have known”.

One of the ways in which the Nazis freed up resources to be used for their war, was by denying med-

ical care to those who needed it—what the Nuremberg Trials referred to as “inadequate provision of surgical and medical services”. Ten defendants were condemned for murder and ill-treatment of civilian populations, which was carried out by diverse means, including “shooting, hanging, gassing, starvation, gross overcrowding, systematic under-nutrition, systematic imposition of labor tasks beyond the strength of those ordered to carry them out, [and] inadequate provision of surgical and medical services...” (emphasis added)

The key to these horrible crimes was the policy of dehumanisation, which began with deciding that some lives were not worthy to be lived. Hitler coined this phrase when he ordered the expansion of the euthanasia program in 1939, but the concept was embedded in

the fascist economic system much earlier. His general order for killing off the insane and others began when resources became scarce. He stated that he “considered it to be proper that the ‘life unworthy of life’ of severely mentally ill persons be eliminated by actions that bring about death.” In this way, “a certain saving in hospitals, doctors, and nursing personnel could be brought about.”

While Hitler killed to save money for his war effort, other modern-day ideologues not only advocate killing to save what they deem to be “scarce resources”—money for their banking and corporate sponsors—but because they intend to savagely reduce the world's population, as documented in the “Populate or Perish—Australia Needs 50 Million People” section of this special report.



Nazis in the dock at Nuremberg. Some were found guilty and hung for crimes against humanity, including “the inadequate provision of surgical and medical services.”

Now, Let's Rebuild!

The Mont Pelerin-directed slash of our health care system would be bad enough in “ordinary” times. However, it is taking place at a moment when HIV-AIDS is exploding throughout our Asian region, and when old and new diseases are spreading around the world. Hepatitis C, for instance, has reached epidemic proportions, being contracted by 10 times more people than the HIV-AIDS virus and in only half the time. Infectious diseases specialist, Prof. Graham Cooksley told the *Herald Sun* September 2, 2001 that Hepatitis C “has become a plague.” Add to that the fact that the virtually-untreatable

VRE (Vancomycin resistant enterococci), one of the newly dubbed “superbugs”, has been isolated in 20 hospitals around Australia, and that more than 20 per cent of pneumonia cases are now resistant to penicillin and other antibiotics. Now comes the threat of large-scale terrorism on the model of the World Trade Centre or something potentially even more deadly, such as bioterrorism, and there is no way in the world that our ravaged, crisis-ridden healthcare system could even dream of dealing with the thousands or tens of thousands of casualties which such attacks might cause.

In the wake of September 11,

co-workers, in appreciation of the MPS' efforts.

While the rest of the world's media was still cheering New Zealand as the global “poster boy” for economic rationalism, the *New Citizen* published a 20-page special expose on the New Zealand “reforms” in its Jan.-Mar. 1997 issue. Entitled, “Nazi ‘reforms’ rip New Zealand—Australia next”, the report documented, sector by sector, how the reforms had looted and crushed New Zealand's physical economy, including the nation's once-proud health system. That reality is now generally admitted by all but the most lunatic economic rationalists, including those Mont Pelerin hacks who run the New Zealand Business Roundtable.

Howard and company claim to be fighting terrorism. Obviously, a crucial component of such a fight must be a drastically-upgraded health care system, capable of dealing with September 11/anthrax-style incidents, as well as with daily life. *This means pouring billions of dollars into the system, immediately.* A real marker for whether this government, or any other, actually intends to fight terror, or just use “terrorism” as an excuse to introduce a fascist police state, will be seen in its commitment to health care. So far, were he alive to see Australia's health care system today, Adolf Hitler would be smiling.

3. On how the MPS and its local fronts took over both of Australia's major parties during the post-Whitlam 1970s, see the CEC's *Stop the British Crown plot to crush Australia's Unions*.

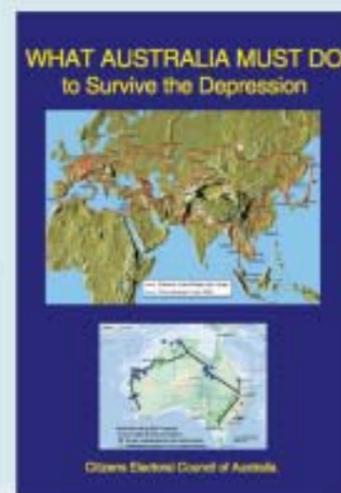
4. Wrote Carolyn Jones, “My mother's experience has not only left me alarmed about the state of our public and private hospital systems but has also led me to question the purpose of taking out private health insurance. I would have thought that health insurance, like any other form of insurance—whether it's for the car or the house—is effectively a guarantee that you get access when needed. But my mother, a pensioner, is paying nearly \$100 a month for the privilege of entering a lottery...”

Footnotes

1. Contrary to the fairy stories believed by little children and some others, Gough Whitlam was dumped by the British Crown itself, not merely its lap-dog, Sir John Curr. That fact is amply documented in the CEC's 1998 96-page pamphlet, *Stop the British Crown plot to crush Australia's Unions*.

2. A key role was played in the early financing of the Mont Pelerin's flagship London think tank, the Institute for Economic Affairs, and related networks in the 1950s by the Queen's private money manager, London financier Harley Drayton. And, as longtime MPS director Lord Harris of High Cross bragged in a 1996 interview, the Queen had showered knightly and even higher honours upon both himself and most of his MPS

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