

I wrote the following entry when the budgets came out, but decided not to post it, as I felt upon reflection that I was a bit harsh on Rudd. Subsequent events have shown that I was not at all alone in my bitter disappointment over the difference between the Rudd potential and the Rudd actuality. Now that Rudd has been removed, the post takes on a different significance, so I'm going ahead and posting after all as a kind of Rudd commemorative issue. It now remains to be seen whether we are out of the pan and into the fire.

## **Democracy is not just a matter of numbers.**

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Since my calling Kevin Rudd a "totalitarian" has raised at least one of one person's eyebrows, I'll take that as a cue for further elaboration — in light of the recent public statements of the government's *true* values: namely, the annual Budgets, both state and federal, in which the money required to establish geothermal energy in Australia (and thereby catapult ourselves into a position of true global leadership) is wasted on sport and the military, thereby demoting us to the status of part of the problem, not part of the solution, distracted by the jolly games and the fast aeroplanes.

Firstly, the difference between totalitarianism and fascism needs to be clarified. As the two usually go hand-in-hand, it's easy to confuse them. But this obscures their significant distinction.

A totalitarian is distinguished by their claim to speak on behalf of absolutely everyone in a given country. This claim is based by the totalitarian upon a conviction that they understand everyone in their country, see into everyone's lives, know everyone's experience. Whenever Mr Rudd begins a sentence with "All Australians...", he is invariably about to present me with a choice between two options. EITHER I get behind the barrow he is pushing (e.g. World Christian Youth Day; the Olympic Games; the relative significance of some sixteen year-old girl sailing a yacht around the world; etc etc); OR I am not an Australian. The logic is inescapable. The totalitarian presumes to *dictate* to the populace who they are and what they want, although they experience this dictation as merely *describing* who the populace are, and what they like.

How could such an intelligent man as Kevin Rudd fall into such a pitfall? Precisely because his metaphysics are based upon a superstitious belief in a centralized consciousness permanently peering into each and every mind. Because Rudd believes that this ludicrous assertion could be (and in fact is) an actual fact, the thought seems to make sense to him that statements beginning "All Australians..." could ever be valid. Not so.

Mr Rudd makes this mistake because he simply ignores the difference between "all" and "whole," a confusion which is a key indicator of totalitarian thinking. Certainly, *on the whole*, it seems to be the case that Australians tend to like a sport of some sort, and are positive towards the concept of spectatorship, even if they are not actually involved and active in any clubs. But even granting the debatable claim that a majority of Australians like sport (although to be honest, I'm not so sure that me and Henry Lawson are the sole representatives of this non-plussed minority, which may well in fact be a numerical majority<sup>1</sup>), appreciating the difference between the claim that Australians *on the whole* like sport, and the deceptively similar but in fact profoundly different claim that "*All* Australians like sport,"

1 "It would be better if young fellows of this country didn't think so much about racin' and fightin'." *Two Boys At Grinder Brothers* from *Over the Sliprails* (1892). Arvie Aspinall is an autobiographical mask for the young Lawson, as Lawson himself points out in his later autobiographical fragments - see e.g. Colin Roderick ed. *Henry Lawson: Autobiographical and Other Writings 1887-1922* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1972), pp. 204-5.

is seeing the crucial difference that distinguishes a tolerant multicultural society from a rigid monocultural hegemony.

Democracy is not just a matter of numbers. That is mere mob rule. The idea of democracy also includes the idea of the freedom to differ, within limits. Democracy thus includes the tolerance of sub-cultures who are free *not* to conform to the norm, provided they remain within that freedom's limits - i.e. so long as they do not infringe upon the freedom of others. The Serbian and the Croatian sub-cultures, for example, are free to celebrate their own cultures in a democratic and multicultural Australia, but neither are free to attack the other, except symbolically in a sublimated form on the soccer field. And I do recognize that sport plays this important function in society. But I also assert my own freedom to not like sport in a free country, without thereby sacrificing my nationality.

Mr Rudd prides himself on his knowledge of Chinese, and rightly so: this is of world-historical significance in its own small way, as is the event of an African-American in the White House in a somewhat larger one. But I presume that Rudd speaks neither Croatian nor Serbian. Nor Albanian, nor Greek, nor Turkish, nor Romanian, nor Hungarian, nor Bulgarian. I mention only these languages because they are those surrounding the place the Greeks called *Sestus* when they were fighting the Persians there in 478 B.C., and the Turkish now call *Gelibolu* - or as we barbarians have mis-spelled the word, "Gallipoli." Ever since Jason sailed through the Bosphorus, this region has been a locus of military tension. Control of the Hellespont has always meant considerable power. But most of the unthinking Aussie flag-saluters don't even know where the Sea of Marmara is, let alone the first thing about its complex history. They don't even know the very recent history of the first world war, as that ludicrous and unnecessary catastrophe *actually* unfolded. And because of this spectacular ignorance, we Australians celebrate being *used* by the English as cannon fodder and as a decoy as our defining moment of national pride!

This celebration is orchestrated by those who want to make sure that the clearest candidate for an alternative defining event - the Eureka Stockade - does *not* take its rightful place in that role, and that the union jack remain in place in the corner of our flag - where it was put by Ivor Evans, the 14 year old schoolboy from Box Hill Grammar who won the "design the flag" competition in 1901. It is tragically spectacular that on the whole, Australians would rather celebrate an act of historical disrespect by the English in 1915 by saluting a colonial school-boy's design (reflecting his childish and dependent mentality), than by commemorating a proto-democratic uprising of oppressed and exploited workers within our fledgling colony in 1854. Appropriately enough, this was an uprising of miners against exorbitant taxation, an issue no doubt weighing heavily on Mr Rudd's mind at the moment. But any comparison between the struggling diggers of the Ballarat gold-fields of the 1850s, and today's multinational mining corporations headed by billionaire barons, is obviously entirely specious. And equally obvious is the degree to which the agenda of the proto-democratic diggers of the Eureka Stockade was fatally flawed by racism: this is the reason that their blue and white Southern Cross flag cannot be used today either, for it is indelibly stained with innocent Chinese blood, and like the Confederate Flag in the USA, cannot be disassociated from the history of racism marring its symbolism.

Despite this central flaw, Eureka Stockade still marks a far more important moment in Australian history than does John Monash's 1915 folly. There is still something in Eureka worth celebrating, once disentangled from its racism: and that is a concerted and determined rebellion against totalitarianism and in favor of democracy. Celebrating "Gallipoli" is celebrating our own ignorance, our own exploitation, and the disrespect we continually receive from England, embarrassed as she is by we illegitimate progeny, reminding her of a genocidal past she would rather sweep under history's rugs.

"Gallipoli" and all it symbolizes is a neurotic reaction to an episode of abuse, and needs to be overcome. This however is an accurate description of Australia's militarism as a whole, and so opens out upon a much wider question. It also opens for me upon a much narrower question, because if my grandfather hadn't been gassed in the trenches, he wouldn't have dropped dead two years after he got back to the farm at Tanjil South, so his widow wouldn't have moved to Melbourne with my infant mother and her two brothers in 1930, so she would never have been killed in the car crash on the corner of Collins and Bourke Street in 1936, so my mother wouldn't have been an orphan, so with a bit of luck, I might have both inherited a farm, and known my grandparents. But Sir John Monash ruined all that, with his pith-helmeted gung-ho and his all-cannons-blasting approach to diplomacy.

In distinguishing the totalitarian from the fascist, I emphasize that I am not calling Rudd a fascist. Fascism begins when a totalitarian uses military force against his (or her) own people. Thus the response of the English colonists to the Eureka uprising was truly fascist. An old fascistic technique was employed by the colonial government - a brutalized and enslaved cohort of one kind or another are conscripted as the soldiers used to attack the insurgents. In the case of the Eureka Stockade, the militia was recruited from those convicts who had risen to become goal-wardens in the notoriously brutal Tasmanian penal system (read *For The Term of His Natural Life*). The colonial government harnessed the brutal energy of criminals who had been beaten into submission, and were willing to turn against their fellows, in order to attack an essentially political challenge to the legitimacy of their total authority. Classic fascist tactic.

Obviously it would be ridiculous to call Rudd a fascist. He does not rule by force. His tactics are learned rather from a Chinese source: the cast of Eunuchs who ruled China for centuries. Originally castrated by the Emperor so as to be able to tend his harem without temptation, the phenomenon of the Eunuch had evolved into something far more significant than a guild of harem attendants by at least the Ming Dynasty. By the time Matteo Ricci arrived in Beijing in 1500, the Eunuchs effectively ruled China, although in constant struggle with the Mandarins (the literate educated elite). The Eunuchs' power ultimately devolved upon the fact that only they had access to the Emperor, for his wives and his Eunuchs were the only mortals permitted into the Emperor's presence, the Emperor himself being believed to be divine. Thus the elaborate bureaucracy built by the Eunuchs over centuries was the one force which could claim divine authority.

Rudd too claims divine authority, although attenuated through the Christian metaphysics of grace and love. This metaphysical basis merges seamlessly with the politics of bureaucracy centralized hierarchically. The literal castration which ensured life-long commitment through an irreversible surgical procedure is now replaced with an only slightly less irreversible career-choice to become a public servant, a politician, or some other species of bureaucrat. The totalitarian move is to then mistake one's kind for the whole, and to assume that the interests, values and experiences of one's part of the whole, is in fact the whole itself. In other words, that we are all the same.

This ludicrous assumption can be enforced only in trivial ways, which are nevertheless sufficient to engineer some sense of reality in Canberra. Thrown into a spin by the failure of the home insulation scheme? Slap more tax on smokers. Tell yourself its for their own good in order to mask from yourself the actual motive: that it gives a re-assured sense of power. Then slap an even bigger tax on miners, and show yourself just how powerful you are. And do it on behalf of "All Australians," although make sure the money actually goes to the military, to the sporting clubs, and to centralization of health and education systems. In other words, to bureaucrats and top brass.

Nietzsche's critique of fascism hinges upon not a moralistic reaction (leading inevitably to

military opposition), but upon admitting that a will to power lies at the root of what we are, and utilizing this insight to sublimate that will up into a higher, more creative form. To point out to the fascist that his (or her) form of will to power is not "wrong" or "evil," but *weak*, is to appeal to the energy stuck in a low, base and destructive form to transform itself, because multicultural democracy is more powerful than monocultural militarism in the same way that a diverse eco-system is more powerful than a weed-infested terrain: more creative, more interesting, more highly evolved.

Of course part of what makes fascists fascists is that they won't listen to reason, so this "pointing out" is entirely hypothetical, but the hope is of course to educate potential fascists before they turn into actual fascists. Which means, to cultivate a culture in which fascism cannot take root — a diverse and healthy culture, as opposed to a totalitarian culture of cultural weeds. All cultures are sub-cultures in a multicultural Australia, and all sub-cultures regulate whatever monomaniacal tendencies any other sub-culture develops. No part mistakes itself for the whole, so no-one makes the mistake of claiming to be able to say anything about "All Australians" which is not trivial. On the whole, it is the mixture that matters, which depends on the difference, which depends on the tolerance. It takes real strength to be that tolerant.