

The Big Picture

Issue 50
25th July 2009

“News to use & amuse”



Editor: Mike Bolan

www.abetteraustralia.com

The real revolution is here

Over the last few years, a new revolution has begun. One with profound consequences for us all, in particular for 'authorities' and the way in which they operate.

A recap – in 1440, Gutenberg [devised the printing press](#) which enabled information to be transmitted from one person to many where previously word of mouth was the main method.

The next revolution in communication occurred with the [development of the telephone](#) in 1876 which allowed near instantaneous communication between two or more parties.

In the early 1900s [radio was developed](#) allowing one person to communicate with large audiences. This was followed by film and television, both of which enabled one party to communicate sound and pictures to a wide audience.

All of these media have been in wide use by various 'authorities' to inform populations of whatever the authorities thought important.

One tendency was for authorities to use the media for [propaganda](#) purposes. Because the authorities controlled the means of communication, their efforts were often effective.

What's happening now is something that has never happened before in human history.

With the development of the internet and the advent and wide use of mobile phones, it is now possible for the community and its members to communicate with each other quickly and easily. People can compare notes and communicate with many other people. They can check the veracity of messages from the authorities and organise to take action, all without the authorities having any real control over what's happening.

In other words, for the first time in human history, disparate people can check what's happening for themselves, reach their own conclusions and act independently.

This happened in Iran during the recent disputed elections, much to the chagrin of their government. Disaffected electors texted, phoned and sent pictures to each other and to media around the world, all instantaneous communication that the government simply couldn't match or do anything about.

Video presentations about this phenomenon can be viewed here as [making social history](#), and [how institutions must change](#).

A story of Tomahawk

By way of illustration, some history of the Tomahawk cruise missile is instructive. The cruise missile flies very low and very fast, and is designed to hit small targets with pin point accuracy. To do this, the missile used an internal computer that matches the terrain that the missile 'sees' with the terrain that should be seen from the track that it is programmed to follow. Differences lead to course corrections to remove them.

The problem for the missile programmers was getting accurate pictures of enemy terrain. Satellite shots and angle shots from high flying spy aircraft had to be used but there was a problem. As the missile got ever closer to its target, so the enlargement of the satellite photos became ever 'grainier' until so much

resolution was lost that the missile couldn't tell a bunker vent from a wheelbarrow, and it gets worse as light levels change.



The missile kept getting 'lost' in the granularity of the image and had no way to resolve problems except to blow up whatever first matched its internal image.

Australian governments have the same perception problems as the Tomahawk missile.

As they lose touch with the public, so they develop a view of the world that is considerably more 'granular' than the citizens' view. It is the view from the 'real world' of Canberra (or wherever).

What is now happening ever more frequently, is that when government spokespeople describe their 'granular' view of the world, we can barely recognise what they are talking about. Worse still, policies that might seem OK to them sound deeply flawed to anyone with a sharper and current view e.g. the public.

The effects of this phenomenon were on show during the Victorian bush fires. We also see them when our governments over allocate water and destroy catchments, or conceive crude schemes to limit carbon emissions, give our money to polluters or approve pulp mills without studying the costs and risks.

As politicians stand in front of us, explaining their 'granular' world, community members can not only recognise the glaring flaws in their descriptions, they can share and compare their impressions very quickly with other people. As they share their views, so [social proof](#) validates their concerns.

So the perception of governments as 'out of touch', even bipolar, builds and expands throughout the population as more and more people compare notes. Citizen web sites such as [Tasmanian Times](#) allow people to compare notes and read stories that often challenge the authorities' descriptions. Mobile phones transmit pictures that provide direct evidence for others to consider.

Younger generations are adapting rapidly to this new world. Texting each other, gatecrashing parties and taking advantage of situations as they come up. Many of them don't bother to listen to government because they cannot see the relevance of what is being said. The government is losing the public's trust and confidence almost every time that they 'explain' things to us.

This revolution is real and it's here now...fasten your seatbelts!

In this issue

The real revolution is here.....	1
That was the week that was.....	2
Economic conservative?.....	2
Huh?.....	2
Facade hides foreign-owned resources.....	3
Unconscious corruption 1.....	3

That was the week that was

Financial mess

Floating along with blithe carelessness [TheAge](#)

Wall St gravy train rolls back in [SMH](#)

Governance & spin

Stimulus fattens bureaucracies [TheAustralian](#)

Taxpayers face \$98 m clean up for Darling Harbour [SMH](#)

Federation problems need to be fixed: Abbott [TheAustralian](#)

Orthodox spin [TheAge](#)

WA doubles public transport fines [TheWest](#)

ATO ruining small business: Financial advisors [NewsLtd](#)

Forestry/Food/Agriculture

PR to help destroy NZ rainforests [CMD](#)

Burke praises MIS [WeeklyTimesNow](#)

Climate/water/energy/environment

Power stations want \$20 bn ETS aid [TheAustralian](#)

Are we open for Green business? [NewMatilda](#)

For the climate's sake, keep it in your pants [NewMatilda](#)

Rudd water buyback totals \$660 m so far [Stock&Land](#)

Health/education revolution/communication/defence

Education revolution doesn't count without teachers [SMH](#)

Telstra charges for paying bills in person [HeraldSun](#)

Swine flu propaganda and problems 1976 [BrasscheckTV](#)

Rudd health takeover plan [TheAge](#)

Melbourne Uni model looking anorexic [TheAge](#)

Let doctors manage wait lists: surgeon [TheAge](#)

Vic cranks up costs of education [TheAge](#)

Economy/social/shelter/transport/free speech

Biggest economic upheaval in a lifetime ahead [TheAustralian](#)

Tax Office accepts credit cards [CourierMail](#)

Conflicts of interest reign in financial advice [SMH](#)

A generation's debt trap [TheAge](#)

Vic State care kids being 're-traumatised' [TheAge](#)

Rudd to toughen terror laws [TheAge](#)

Long wait to discover Super fate [HeraldSun](#)

Booklovers overcharged for too long: Fels [TheAge](#)

Self sustainable property we may all need [TheAge](#)

Kicking the personal debt lemon [HeraldSun](#)

First home owners 'grant' deterring buyers [SMH](#)

Self funded retirees hit hard by financial crisis [SMH](#)

Economic conservative?

Kevin Rudd tells us that he's an 'economic conservative'. If true, shouldn't that mean that he'd want to understand the costs of a government decision before it was carried out, particularly when the costs could run into tens of billions of dollars?

ELECTRICITY generators are pleading for between \$5 billion and \$20bn in extra assistance from the Rudd government to avoid an "industry crisis" under the emissions trading scheme, with some suggesting the compensation could be tied to new investments in renewable power.

The government is yet to be convinced of the generators' claims, but after lobbying last month it commissioned investment bank Morgan Stanley to examine the impact of the ETS on privately owned brown coal generators in the La Trobe Valley and power stations in Queensland and South Australia. [TheAustralian](#)

In this case, the government has fixated on an ETS, despite there being no evidence that it will actually reduce emissions, and is now commissioning research to find out what the cost impacts of that decision might be.

At the risk of sounding radical, isn't that the whole purpose of open decision making that includes the public and industry? The very method that is being abandoned by ALP governments around Australia.

It also seems that the government's best shot is to 'mitigate' any downstream consequences by throwing more of our money away to cover the costs that they have created with their Rambo approach.

And the big giveaways?

Could they be to avoid the pain of weaning industry off the public teat?

ALP governments are looking more and more like bad decision makers and bad parents who are going to create a mass of industries that are dependent on the public purse, coupled with a whole load of unconsidered and costly downstream consequences that will further burden taxpayers to an unknown extent.

The ALP government method of 'planning', that leaves out the public and industry for reasons of expediency, clearly results in a proliferation of unknown and unconsidered downstream costs that ultimately the public has to pay.

Remembering the 'granularity' of government's view, outlined in our main article, we can see how 'granular' the Labor government's view must be if it cannot pick up a \$20 bn cost.

Rudd's claim to economic conservatism is just that...a claim.

Huh?

AUSTRALIANS should brace for high unemployment, rising interest rates, severe budget cuts and more expensive food and petrol as the nation and the world recover from the global economic crisis, the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, warns. [SMH](#)

He's said this kind of thing before but exactly how do we 'brace'?

Do we grab the nearest solid object and hang on 'til it's over?

Duck & cover?

Can anyone out there enlighten me? I need to know.

Facade hides foreign-owned resources

Brenda Rosser, Sunday 19th July 2009.

Today, in a newspaper distributed in Australia and known as the 'Daily Telegraph' Mr Greg Sheridan has an article entitled 'Stern response vital to future' [1]. In it Sheridan refers to an interesting saga now playing out between an angry Chinese Government and Rio Tinto, which is a giant, mainly British-owned multinational natural-resource company that operates on 6 continents. It is the 4th largest publicly-listed mining company in the world.

Two weeks ago Mr Stern Hu, an executive of Rio Tinto who is also an Australian citizen, was detained by the Chinese Government and accused of "bribing officials from companies he was doing business with and engaging in illegal espionage."

The context for Mr Hu's detainment was that Rio Tinto had recently rejected a \$25 billion bid for a 20% stake in Rio by the Chinese Government-owned Chinalco. The Chinese Government made it clear that it was "**furious**" about this rejection. China also missed out on its bid for a 40% cut in iron ore prices when customers from Japan and South Korea undermined China's position by accepting prices would fall by a lesser 33%.

What concerns me about the nature of the reporting on this issue in Australia's mainstream media is that the Australian reader is being misled about the true nature of these, and related, disputes. The conflict, it is pretended, is between China and Australia. But it's not. Australian ownership levels in Rio Tinto are minimal at around 16%. By contrast 42% of Rio Tinto shareholders are in the UK and 18% of its equity is owned by Americans.

Although it's true that Mr Stern is an Australian citizen, his detainment alone does not justify the enormous amount of media coverage that his arrest is getting. Nor does it seem appropriate that our Prime Minister over-emphasise the economic stake that China has with its relationship with the Australian government; as he appears to do.

Alarming, Australia's mining resources (in general) are likely to be predominantly foreign-owned [2], [3]. If this nation now fits the contemporary description for Canada: a "*twenty-first century version of a tenant farmer*", it's about time Australian citizens were told the truth by the major GLOBAL media companies.

[1] 'Stern response vital to future' by Greg Sheridan. The Sunday Telegraph. Page 100. 19th July 2009

[2] [Foreign-owned major resource projects](#) Stephen Mayne. May 19, 2009

[3] [Foreign government investments in Australia](#) Stephen Mayne. May 18, 2009

Unconscious corruption 1

by **Buck Thor Emberg**

When living in China, I became painfully aware that their laws regarding the management of us university lecturers, all of whom were from other countries, were two things: control and conquer. The cadre, as the Party Members were called, listened, but did not act. Then they acted but did not listen.

The usual comment by us Foreign Devils went something like, "*Well, this is the way they do it in China. We have no rights.*" We learned to live with that fact and knew if they were going to take us on a bus trip for the weekend to Chengdu it would probably be to some communal tea farm and factory where we would be isolated from the people and possibly get stuck in the quagmire network of Chinese back roads. The government never told us the truth. It was obviously their policy. We learned to live with that fact. When needing copies of material for our students, we quickly learned the reason for our submitting our copy was for censorship purposes. We learned to live with that fact too. After all, everything Chinese officials did was lawful...by Chinese law.

When living in Turkey, a few years after their most recent revolution, we knew having an Audi automobile might give us trouble. It did. The minor customs officer at the border of Greece/Turkey told us, "*Get out of the car. I am confiscating it.*" The reason being, we had been across the border too many times that year... and he wanted a new car. The customs official could take our car. After all, it was acceptable... by Turkish law.

When living on the south Pacific island of Kwajalien, Marshall Islands, we lecturers quickly learned the Marshallese had no rights on our island. Never mind that the Island on which we lived was part of their nation. The Marshallese came by ferry boat early in the morning to work and left on the five o'clock ferry to go home to their slum island down the atoll. This was upsetting; but, it was lawful. Marshallese law...forced by American law.

Were these laws corrupt? Yes, by our standards. But they were the laws of their land. If it is said to be the law of the land...by this it is given dignity and people should agree and follow the law...or so we are told.

Of course, we do not do that in Australia! No?

In Tasmania of 2009 we also are living by the laws of the land. Our laws are legally brought about by democratically elected government and by the will of the people. There is no way we can be called an undemocratic Island. We are blessed to live on a boring little island where not much happens. Our "World's Best Practices", in just about everything from walnut picking to fish farming makes us the envy of the world...or so the glossy pamphlets would have us believe but this is merely predictable pap pleasantly produced by parliamentary press proclamations... such as the volumes of Treasurer's releases.

We may be governed by the laws of Tasmanian, but are we a democracy? Perhaps not. It is my contention that Tasmania was, is and probably shall be more of an oligarchy than a democracy until there is a turn around caused by the people. Tasmania is not a true oligarchy, but more of a Dynastic Despoilation as we view the continued corruption of our political, social and physical landscapes.

Dynasty? Since 1856 the names of those who ruled our island from Hobart have had forty-one family name "Repeats" in Parliament...both Upper and Lower Houses. One family has had nine politicians elected, (maybe some of them were only cousins). Another family has seven "Repeats". Ten more

dynasties have had at least four "Repeats". (Not included are ten Smith "Repeats"). These Families, these Dynamic Dynastic Acts of God, have become set in pre-cast concrete. These Dynasties are not going to move unless goaded and exploded.

When a further study is made of Tasmanian politicians: 1. in Parliament in Canberra, 2. Mayors on various councils, and 3. plain old platitudinous pollies, the depth of good law-making becomes shallow because these denizens of the trough frequently seem to serve their Family Dynasty more than they serve the people. Not so? Read the Role of Dynastic names of Tasmania's elected leaders. These pedigreed names are endemic on the engraved plaques in all Tasmanian city halls.

It could be said that these Rulers of the Tasmanian Dynasties are good people, nice people and work hard. Most are not criminals. A few get parking tickets. They raise their children well. They seek to serve the people as best they can. So the mythology reads. They are the leathered elbow Stuff of Tasmania. We are all taught that. "Thank God for graziers who will run for office and develop good irrigation systems for agriculturists," is part of the fable. Goodness begets goodness. Or so we are lead to believe

Here is the rub. When we realise that, for almost 200 years, these Members of the Tasmanian Dynasties have turned in on themselves and think that by serving themselves and their Fellow Dynastics, they are serving the Greater Tasmanian Good. They may be. They may not be.

Eventually, even the courts begin to reflect the Dynasties... because the Dynasties have passed the laws and the court is only there to uphold the law. They are only doing their job and the Law Lords usually belong to the System and amazingly, are frequently inter-related to their political partners.

Some years ago I was involved in the discussions concerning new forestry laws. They met at our house a few times. We, the people, gathered in harmony and hope, were to make recommendations. The government was represented, labor was represented, big business was represented and us 'hoi poloi' (small citizens) were represented. We harmoniously suggested changes in the laws. Lists were made. Coffee drunk and hand shakes exchanged. It was a great moment.

The rub quickly became deeply abrasive, opening deep wounds, as the changes had already been made before our cottage meetings even took place. The laws would be passed, buried in small paragraphs in the middle of the bill. However, the new laws were going to serve the same people. The laws were made, essentially, by the same old Dynasties for the well being of the same old Dynasties and those who recently had been accepted into the narrow band at the top. Of course, the courts upheld the laws. It was the law!

We were duded! Over the past few generations not much has changed in Tasmania. Like the parrot in the former bar, now converted to a church, "...the same old faces..."

People of Tasmania, we have been duded...over and over again by the "...same old faces..." If you want to live where the top few percentile make the laws for the top few percentiles then be satisfied and do not rock the boat. That is one Tasmanian way.

However, Tasmania is on the cusp of another age. It will be either the Same Old Ice Age with the same old faces of the same old Dynasties...or, hopefully, a new age of government which seeks to serve us all and not merely the privileged.

We have a state to win back! The old Tasmanian Rulers have to go! Now!

B.T. Emberg is a PhD History Candidate at the University of Tasmania

Look out for:

PART II CHANGING GUARD AND GOVERNMENT IN TASMANIA