

Terrified of the World?

*Graeme Campbell & Mark Uhlmann, Australia Betrayed:
How Australian democracy has been undermined and our naïve trust betrayed,
Foundation Press, Perth, 1995*

Reviewed by Mark Schubert

GRAEME CAMPBELL, federal Labor MP for Kalgoorlie, and his assistant Mark Uhlmann appear to display a certain courage with their politically incorrect stance on a number of sensitive issues. *Australia Betrayed* is, however, an almost irredeemably unstructured book, desperately in need of an independent edit. This must be said at the outset because it completely overshadows the book's content and any courtesy a reader would expect of a writer. Readers are advised to refer to Campbell's open letter (pp.196-202) for a reasonably good summary of what they have just read or are about to read.

The book's thesis is that, as governments are increasingly unable or ideologically unwilling to regulate their economies to the extent they once did, regulators have turned to regulating the attitudes of citizens and the social processes in which they take part. As a result, the state and associated institutions work against the interests and wishes of the majority. The regulated majority are "old Australians" (p.viii) or of 'old Australian stock' (p.ix). Those born overseas of non-English background are dismissed as only 10 per cent of the population. The regulators comprise bureaucrats, academics, big business interests, politicians, media, churches, and professional 'ethnics': what the authors continually refer to as 'elites' and, less frequently, as the 'New Class'.

The policies that have betrayed 'old' Australians include those relating to immigration and multiculturalism, native title, the practice of access and equity, funding for the arts, the Commonwealth's overriding of States' rights, the appropriation and manipulation of symbols such as federation, and the use to which institutions like museums are being put. Of these, immigration and multiculturalism are 'central' to the entrenchment of the 'dominant ideology' (p.ix). Old Australia (and also most immigrants) have been betrayed because governments of all persuasions have refused to stop or significantly slow immigration despite a broad consensus against immigration and multiculturalism. As well, immigration has brought increasing crime and exposure to health risks, along with a deterioration in living standards, social cohesion, environmental quality, and opportunities for Australian students as tertiary institutions chase full-fee-paying Asian students. Australians' cultural attitudes and work practices play, it seems, only a marginal role in the country's economic decline, which is caused mainly by immigration-fuelled population increase and the current-account deficit.

The Australia Council is identified as an instrument for the funding and promotion of New Class anti-mainstream agendas. Museums are exposed as being

used to rewrite history and recast the nation's self-identity. At this point in the book an advertisement appears soliciting support for a campaign against such an attempt at a Sydney museum. This is not the only advertisement in the book: which, to this reviewer, suggests some confusion as to the book's purpose.

The individuals who are criticised include not only New Class activists like Irene Moss, a former Race Discrimination Commissioner, but even Western Mining's Hugh Morgan, who, it seems, has recently called for higher immigration levels. Nor does B. A. Santamaria escape censure. Though 'genuinely concerned about Australia's national interest' (p.43), he is apparently wrong when he argues that a large immigration program is one way to have some control over the immigration levels that would probably otherwise be pressed upon Australia by the United Nations. The authors do, however, pay a partial compliment to a parliamentary Joint Standing Committee, which, for new citizens, stressed 'the desirability of learning English and basic outlines of Australian history and institutions' (p.195). But even of this Campbell and Uhlmann remain sceptical.

To review, even a little negatively, a book whose back cover describes 'the bulk of academics, artists and others' as 'intellectually corrupt hirelings' exposes the reviewer to the accusation that he too is 'intellectually corrupt'. In fact, it is not difficult to agree with many of the authors' points. It is true that something like a New Class exists and that governments are legislating to change citizens' attitudes. But one has to read more than half the book before finding a theme that warrants lumping such a wide array of subject matter into one volume, apart from it all being a result of elitist or New Class design and behaviour. The authors claim that Australian elites are being driven by an 'internationalist' agenda that stresses 'the need for high levels of immigration to invigorate the country, both economically and socially' and the need to join 'economic groupings of nations such as the European Community and the North American Free Trade agreement' because 'Australia will be left behind if it does not make a similar agreement' (pp.128-9). Most nationalists, in contrast, 'call for government intervention to assist local industry and deny that there is any such thing as a level playing field'; they stress 'the importance of maintaining good relations with Asian countries' and believe that 'all these things can be done without sacrificing our own traditions' (p.129).

This 'intelligent outward looking nationalism' (p.130), as the authors call it, has a certain superficial appeal. But doubts about the possibility of a nationalism that is neither 'insular' (p.128) nor 'isolationist' (p.130) arise when the authors reflect on problems that could be caused by the events planned for the centenary of federation in 2001. They complain that 'hundreds of thousands of people would be encouraged to descend on Australia, many of whom would take the opportunity to stay on without an invitation' (p.191). The reader could be forgiven for feeling that the book has been written by two people who are absolutely terrified of the outside world or, perhaps, simply want others to be.

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