

From the Editor

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TIME TO DEFEND THE INSTITUTIONS OF CIVILIZATION

The world will be a different place following the events in New York and Washington DC on 11 September.

The sense of safety afforded by our rich isolation is gone. We now know that we can no longer hide from the world—it now comes to us, atrocities and all.

Similarly, Australia will be called upon to play a larger role both in the fight against terrorism and in defence of freedom, liberal democracy and capitalism.

One of the lessons for the US from the events of 11 September is that it can no longer be the world's sole policeman. The US lacks the knowledge, ties and resources for the job and, even if it tries to do so, it becomes the focus of hate for every aggrieved party. In the Cold War, an overriding superpower may have made sense; it no longer does. And if we—the rest of the Western world—do not share the load, we risk encouraging the US to move back down its historic isolationist path. This is something the world can ill afford, on the trade front as well as the strategic.

What this means for Australia is that we will have to play a much larger role in our own backyard—the Asia-Pacific region. And the task is potentially huge. Every neighbouring country is politically and economically unstable, including New Zealand. Indeed, New Zealand appears to be happily descending from the ranks of the wealthy nations (see Alan Moran, 'Will the Greens Close Down New Zealand?' on page 16). Moreover, there are few allies in sight aside from the US. Japan is a mess. Europe is distant and fractious. China is more menacing than helpful. And the UN is part of the problem.

Australia's ability to take on an expanded military role is, however, limited. Despite seven years of phenomenal economic growth which pushed the tax take to record levels, govern-



ments have no surplus cash. They have more than spent the lot. As a share of GDP, spending has been pushed to record levels in almost all areas except defence. The task of the next government will not be tax reform or higher taxes, but *spending* reform. (See Jim Hoggett, 'The Election Choice: Who Can Stem the Spending Tide?' on page 3).

Australia must also step up its defence of the capitalist system and liberal democracy. Liberal-democratic capitalism has been the foundation of our success, and offers the best and greatest hope for those in the world who wish to share in our success. Yet it is under attack across many fronts.

Gar Smith, Editor of *Earth Island Journal* (a student journal from Stanford University), expresses the view of many in the NGO movement (if somewhat more forthrightly than they) about the recent attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon:

We need to correct the rightist spin of the Bush administration and media. This was not an 'act of war'. This was an act of anger, desperation and indignation.

This was not an 'attack on Freedom'. It was a politically targeted attack on the core structures of the US military and the US-dominated global financial structure.

This was not an 'attack on all American people'. This was not the

sort of flat-out terrorism that targets random innocents at a disco or a beach. The majority of the victims were, unfortunately, working for the Pentagon and various elements of multinational financial empires.

In short, for many people the problem is capitalism, not a bunch of madmen. Indeed, capitalism is being blamed for all the imagined afflictions of the world—from starvation to obesity, from lack of drugs for AIDS to overuse of drugs by the aged, from the poverty of nations to excessive wealth of nations, from environmental destruction to the closure of steel plants. And the promoters of this nonsense are, under the guise of 'people power', being given undeserved legitimacy by governments, industry and the media.

Our concern lies not with the right of people to hold and express mistaken beliefs. Indeed, their right to do so must be defended to the end. Rather, the concern is that the organized few are being allowed to tyrannize the unorganized many and, in the process, undermine our institutions from within.

One essential step, outlined by Gary Johns (see 'Protocols with NGOs: The Need to Know' on page 7) is to enforce full disclosure of all relationships between NGOs and granting bodies. If an organization demands 'standing', it should be forced to make good its claims and the details must be fully open to taxpayers and shareholders—something that is currently not the case.

Just as important, Eric Dezenhall ('Surrender Is Not A Winning Strategy' on page 12) argues that firms and governments should not surrender to the wrong ideas and petty threats that will destroy our economy and our liberal society from within. To give in does not promote democracy; it undermines it. Surrender does not aid peace in our times; it perpetuates conflict.

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