



# Australian Adam Smith Club (Melbourne)

President: Michael Warby, Editor: Regina Bron, P.O. Box 950, Hawthorn, 3122

*A love of liberty is planted by nature in the breasts of all men.  
Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Antiquities of Rome (c. 20 B.C.)*

## Tim Warner

on

### The ID Card - A People for the Government or a Government for the People

**The Adam Smith Club will host a dinner meeting on Monday the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 2006, at the St Kilda Rd Parkview Hotel, 562 St Kilda Rd Melbourne, 3004.**

Tim Warner will speak on the new Federal Government Access Card presaged in April, arguing it is a greater threat than the Australia Card proposed by the Hawke Labor Government in 1987. The concept of a photographic ID card that presumes you exist at the Executive's whim is bad enough. The computer linking of databases and the storage of highly personal details on the card itself make this a fight we dare not lose. Tim will outline how he hopes to raise the flag for individual liberty and privacy.

Tim Warner has been the Honorary Secretary Treasurer of the Adam Smith Club since 1987. He is a partner in the family boating equipment business 'Anchor Marine', and has worked at the Victorian Liberal Party Secretariat and as a parliamentary staffer. He worked for three months as an intern at the Republican National Committee in Washington DC in 1990. He has also been a Postmaster, a Restaurateur and a rock studio proprietor.

Attendance is open to both members and non-members. Those desiring to attend should complete the attached slip and return it to the Club no later than Thursday the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2006. Tickets will not be sent. Those attending should arrive at 6:30pm for dinner at 7:00pm. The cost is \$40.00 per head for members and \$45.00 per head for non-members. A \$2 charge per person applies on bookings received after the 14<sup>th</sup> June (see next page for explanation of arrangements and for electronic booking details).

**Enquiries to Ms Regina Bron, tel. 9859 8277 (AH) or mob. 0412 006 786 (BH)  
or email [asmith@economic-justice.org](mailto:asmith@economic-justice.org)**



*detach and return*

The Secretary,  
Australian Adam Smith Club (Melbourne),  
PO Box 950, Hawthorn, Victoria 3122.

Please reserve ..... place(s) at \$40.00 dollars per member and .....place(s) at \$45.00 per non-member for the June 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Australian Adam Smith Club. I enclose the amount of \$..... in payment for the same. Bookings placed after the RSVP will incur a \$2 per person charge to cover penalties in altering catering arrangements.

NAME (please print): .....

ADDRESS: .....

SIGNATURE: ..... TEL: .....

## LAISSEZ FAIRE ON THE WEB

This newsletter has an address on the web: <http://www.economic-justice.org/asmith.htm>. The Institute for Economic Justice has been created by David Sharp a former president (and current committee member) and Timothy Warner the current Treasurer of the Club. As stated on the web site, 'The Institute has been founded to assist those who have been subject to economic injustice, and to increase both public and professional awareness of remedies available under the Law.'

### ELECTRONIC PAYMENTS

By popular demand, the AASC now offers electronic booking and payment to dinner meetings. Bookings can be made by emailing the number of members and non-members attending to [asmith@economic-justice.org](mailto:asmith@economic-justice.org); a reply email from the club will then be sent with a link to PayPal where the payment can be made by Mastercard, Visa, AMEX, Diners or PayPal Account. Bookings made after Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> of June will not be accepted online. FEES - a \$2 card fee will apply for the transaction.

## MEETING REPORT MARCH 2006

A fine time was had by all at the March meeting of the Club. Dr Russell Blackford gave a very stimulating address on the role of Nature in social and political discussion. The more formal parts of the speech had some members feeling a few yards off shore, but the question time showed that some real insights and querying of manners of thought had occurred.

After prolonged absences it was good to see Rohan Miller and Ross Macindoe in attendance.

The new venue 'the Budapest Restaurant and Palinka Bar' received high praise. The quality and quantity of food, and the capacity of the restaurant to deal with some last minute crisis were much appreciated.

The Budapest was suggested by club stalwart David Bishop. Many thanks. *TW*

## CRIMINAL PROFIT

If you hear of a disaster in Mississippi and think you might want to help those in need, think twice. As John Stossel has pointed out in a recent *Townhall* ([www.townhall.com](http://www.townhall.com)) article, John Sheperson thought he would help, and was arrested for his troubles. His crime was to buy 19 generators, drive 600 miles and sell the generators off the back of the truck. He was promptly arrested, and the generators seized.

His crime? He was charging twice the price for which he bought them. The benefit for the residents was that the generators stayed in impound for the length of the crisis.

The Mississippi State Code states that after an emergency is declared no goods or services can be

sold except at the price prevailing when the emergency is declared. There is a slight nod at reality - you can charge any 'normal' transport fee in addition to the certified price. The result is that you cannot expect anyone to help you unless they are from the Government or are not for profit motivated. The result in Katrina was that the people waited and waited and waited for those in the government to give them certified handouts.

You can almost hear the boos and hisses from the gallery at the mention of the profit motive, as a method of getting people to service the needs of those struck by the crisis. Only certified not for profit saints need apply. *TW*

### VENUE ARRANGEMENTS

For the St Kilda Rd Parkview Hotel, drink is not included in the price. You may purchase drinks from the venue (reasonably priced wines by glass and bottle) which is fully licensed. A room has been reserved for the dinner meeting. We hope these arrangements do not cause inconvenience and we welcome your feedback.

# Laissez Faire

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## PRIVATIZE THE ABC

A great new site has been set up by Prodos to encourage the privatization of the ABC. Check out [privatizetheabc.com](http://privatizetheabc.com), Prodos has written a catchy song to the tune of 'Alexanders Ragtime Band' - privatizing really

is 'the honest democratic thing to do!' There are also links to buy clothing and items with the campaign logo - my t-shirt has just arrived and I have proudly worn it around town. *TW*

## LAND RATIONING AND REGRESSIVE POLITICS

In Nineteenth Century Australia, liberal and democratic politicians sought to widen access to land, while the squattocracy sought to retain its dominant position in land control (the squatters occupied, later leased, the land, but they did not have freehold title). The end result was the spread of freehold title with a relatively broad land ownership based largely on family farms.

In early Twenty First Century Australia, it is a mainstay of "progressive" politics to restrict access to land, in the name of stopping "urban sprawl" and ensuring "environmental sustainability". The restriction of access to such a basic resource as land has predictable results—it drives up the price of (urban) land. Australia, with one of the lowest population densities in the developed world, with its metropolises

occupying well under 1% of its total land area and a very efficient house-building industry, has some of the most unaffordable housing across the settler societies of North America and the Antipodes. If Australia had the same confidence in property rights as Texas (a richer society, with higher population and population growth and even more of its population concentrated in its five large metropolises), our houses would be about half (in the case of Sydney, a third) as expensive as they currently are.

As is normal, raising the barriers to market entry—in this case by restricting the use of land for housing—affects the poorest sections of society most. Whether you rent or seek to own your first home, you are paying far more than you need to be because of government land rationing.

Existing property owners, however, are advantaged by prices being artificially inflated. But the price of doing so is to create a more unequal, unfair and conflict-ridden society. If cities are restricted in building out, yet population is increasing and average size of households is going down, then they must build in and up—hence constant battles over inner city amenity. Resident action groups are in fact fighting themselves. What they see as the great benefit—the high (and rising) value of their properties—and what they see as the great threat—increased urban crowding—are both caused by government land rationing. The restriction of people's freedom to use their property does not recreate a fairer and more harmonious society: quite the opposite. *MJW*

## A CROWDED AUSTRALIA

Melbourne's *MX*, the evening give-away newspaper does not aspire to the status of a newspaper of record. It is not about to mount a challenge to the likes of the *London Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*. Yet it seems clearly to have successfully filled a niche, particularly amongst commuters, with a maximum mix of show business and other personalities and a skimming of news; superficial but satisfactory.

Given the nature of the newspaper, the front page story of Tuesday May 30 seemed particularly out of place. Under a headline of "BYO desert boots" and the sub-heading "Babies put Australia on path to poverty" there followed a collection of assertions from a variety of sources, the only apparent connecting factors being an

extreme green and redistributionist agenda. Its level of fatuousness was freaky. Although there was a variety of contenders, the prize in this regard probably had to go to the allegation, attributed to a population sociologist, that "Australia was running out of space."

The manifest inanity of an assertion that Australia was running out of space is such as to make one wonder how any newspaper, even one as dedicatedly superficial as *MX* could print it without at least a query or critical comment. Perhaps it was meant as a joke. The quote, attributed to H L Mencken, that no one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the public comes to mind. The quote might be more appropriate if it was directed at the intelligence of newspaper editors. *DBS*

## WHY FREEDOM

“Man is born free but is everywhere in chains” is a catchy little slogan often attributed to Karl Marx. Old Karl however lifted it from the noted French scribbler Jean-Jaques Rousseau. It is, and was of course, basically nonsense, widely used to justify a conclusion that the way to overcome a perceived lack of freedom was for us all to give up whatever level of it that we had. But what a slogan. A person who could come up with a slogan like that could certainly sell cornflakes to the masses, or anything else for that matter.

It is freedom that enables us to be what we are and not what someone else wants us to be. If death is the fate of us all and death is our own, then how we seek salvation and the freedom to do so is also our own. Given our perception of reality it is our right that this should be so. It is the most fundamental of rights, the right from which all other rights are derived. And since we do not, a la Robinson Crusoe before Friday, live in a world of one, such right is the

right of everyone and is thus constrained by the requirement of equal applicability, which is only possible, if at all, if freedom is confined by definition to what is sometimes derisively referred to as negative freedom, i.e. the absence of physical constraint imposed by another.

The fact that freedom, as sound economics teaches, is conducive of the most productive and efficient society is beside the point. As such it is a fortunate corollary. But to use utility as the basis of freedom is wrong and dangerous, leading as it has today to suggestions that it is desirable or appropriate to trade off freedom for purported other benefits such as security or equality. Freedom is like truth; it bends easily. But then it is no longer freedom (or truth).

Freedom today is under fierce attack. Perhaps it was ever so. But certainly the Anglo Saxon countries, at least since Magna Charta, have shown a magnificent tendency to resist attempts to deprive them of the level of freedom to which they have

attained. But those who resent or fear freedom, of which there is seldom any shortage, have learned to use well the carrot and the stick of welfare and warfare to achieve their results. The slogans of war are great for cutting freedom down.

Under cover of a slew of wars the opponents of freedom are having a field day; preventive detention, control orders, removal of lawyer client privilege or the right to legal representation, weapon control, widened definition of sedition and so forth. We now have the spectre of ID cards. The suggestion that the present Federal government proposal is not an ID card or will not lead to one is a lie and should be treated as such. If history teaches us anything at all it is that governments lie. An ID card deprives us of our freedom; it suggests our identity is the gift of the government that has bestowed it and can be reclaimed by such government at its will. We can disappear as quickly as our freedom. *DBS*

## GOD KNOWS

If there is one thing the controversy over Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* has proved, is that faith, religion and logic are no barrier to a good story.

But we in the Judeo Christian world do not have monopoly rights on weaving stories around religious belief for personal or financial gain. In pressing for the introduction of legislation based on Sharia law, Kaplale, a member of the ruling Democratic Party, has said the new laws are essential because disasters such as landslides, earthquakes and the 2004 tsunami are warnings from god about the liberalism accompanying Indonesia's era of reform.

This statement begs the question: on whose authority is he making such a claim?

Without god's statutory declaration, signed, witnessed and sealed, ascribing God's reasons for visiting any event on mortal man are naturally open to interpretation based on personal bias.

The tsunami of 2004 and the recent earthquake in Java could also be reasoned as retribution for Indonesia's:

- move towards a more restrictive, fundamentalist regime;

lack of action in finding and prosecuting the Bali bombers and allowing a second attack to occur;

• involvement in East Timor;

• treatment of Papuans;

• prosecution of drug mules rather than the serious players;

• illegal fishing in other sovereign waters;

• involvement in people smuggling;

• poor performance in world soccer;

• poor educational standards;

• high consumption of galang galang;

• over zealous military;

• lack of support for the war against terrorism and the Iraqi action;

• those terrible floral shirts given to all delegates at ASEAN meetings;

• not promoting Aussie rules football in all schools;

If god was really serious about punishing national impiety, all countries would be hit simultaneously by calamitous disasters and following Kaplale's logic, particularly the non-Muslim ones.

God may work in mysterious ways, but rarely so blatantly political ones. *RB*