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# A Democracy if We Can Keep It

ALAN MORAN JUN 18 2020



*Australians of another age knew what was worth defending*

In an *AFR* column, former Liberal leader Alexander Downer has reprised a conversation with the late Lord Carrington in which Britain's one-time Home Secretary suggested democracy would struggle to survive. It was a view Downer rejected at the time but of which he is not now so sure. I have visited this theme in the past - for example [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#) - and in these times of madness, when popular movements demand the sacking of entire police forces and an incident in Minneapolis sees statues of Captain Cook vandalised in Australia, I return to the theme with a marked degree of pessimism.

The reverence for democracy arose only over the last a century or so. Prior to then, rule by consent - especially with regard to taxation - had been common, as affirmed in 1215 by Magna Carta. But that did not mean rule by the people. The great Greek philosophers were acutely aware of the deficiencies of mob rule in Athens, and American revolutionaries of the **eighteenth century** were similarly concerned that the gentle tyranny of King George could be replaced with something much, much worse. Their belief was in **life, liberty and property**. John Adams wrote

*Property is surely a right of mankind as really as liberty ... The moment the idea is admitted into society that property is not as sacred as the laws of God, and that there is not a force of law and public justice to protect it, anarchy and tyranny commence.*

Members of Parliament claim to be the most acutely aware of our political alternatives, insisting they represent the acme of the "innate common sense of the people". Yet in Australia they balloted in favour of Rudd and Turnbull, two megalomaniacs with core beliefs dominated by the delusional conviction that humans, and humans alone, are responsible for CO2-induced climate change. We saw huge numbers, albeit still a minority, willingly vote until the Fall of the Berlin Wall for communists in Italy and France. Need we also be reminded that Germans accepted the suppression of their liberties in the 1930s?

That's one side of the coin. The obverse, and from not so long ago, is that "ordinary" bourgeois people proudly voiced their support for the system, perhaps more certain than today that the police would protect their right to do so. The 1968 events in France saw half a million anti-government protesters take over the streets, but Danny the Red's horde was followed by a counter-

protest that brought out 800,000 supporters of the government. This presaged an overwhelming electoral victory for the Gaullists. Only tiny numbers favouring the status quo these days are willing (or dare) to take to the streets in Western Europe, North America or Australia.

I have a piece in the current *Spectator* looking at the latest US polls pointing to the likelihood of a Democratic president – Joe Biden, presumably – pursuing a radical agenda that leverages the Black Lives Matters' notions of overturning traditional liberties, starting with equality before the law and extending to crimps on freedom of expression, property rights and, indeed, policing itself. Add to this a re-continuation of the Obama era's measures weakening the military and we in Australia might have to live with an America that not only rejects the tenets of "life, liberty and property" but is also incapable of projecting military superiority.

This last point is vital. Australian politicians have been righteously assailing an illiberal Chinese regime. But that regime represents a nation on which our economy depends, and criticism voiced from Canberra emerges from behind the security of the ANZUS pact and the shield provided by the US military. Remove that and, especially as we willingly sacrifice our own defence interests on the altar of political correctness and **non-sensical procurement decisions**, we may not feel so confident in speaking up.

Australia is, moreover, caught up in the same mania for self-flagellation seen in the US and Western Europe. The capture of the institutions by the Left – name one, just one, that hasn't been colonised – makes it impossible for any protest movement against excessive government spending and taxation to gain traction, even if the will is there. It takes incredible courage, for example, for a politician to raise the issue that we waste \$30 billion a year in special favours to Aborigines, in addition to granting land rights and according many other privileges. Fifty years of this and, except for their leaders, the poverty remains, the abuse goes on and indigenous life continues to represent a study in gold-plated despair, especially where Aborigines remain outside of mainstream populations. Yet anyone voicing concerns about such matters is dismissed and derided as 'far right' and likely to become an immediate target for online venom up to and including the social media mob's demands that the offender be fired.

And so the drift towards the undermining of liberty and property rights continues, taking us further and further from the democracy, idealised as it always was, that Alexander Downer and Lord Carrington discussed. As the silencing and shouting down continues, there are no palatable options for its replacement.

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