

VIGILANCE

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For rank & file control of the MUA - Nationalise the maritime industry under workers' control

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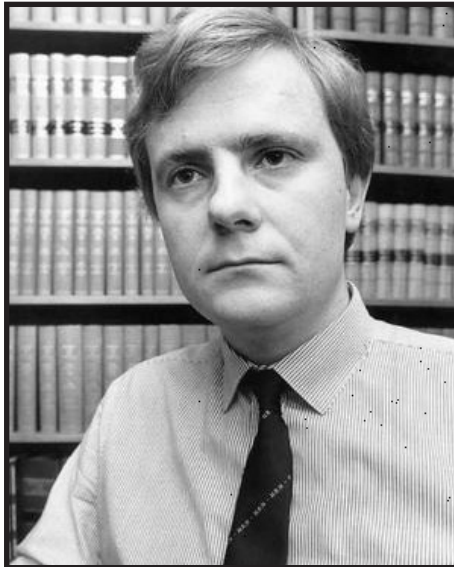
Never mind Howard - here comes Peter Costello

Don't let his pixie ears fool you. Peter Costello is a man whose deeply conservative politics and pathological hatred of trade unions are as bad - if not worse than - John Howard's. And one way or another, Costello will eventually lead the Liberal Party.

Costello's conservative, anti-union politics first came to light in a struggle against left-wing students at Melbourne's Monash University in the 1970s.

The Monash student union was controlled by Maoist (pro-Chinese Communist) students. The student union was being demonised for raising money to send to the National Liberation Front (NLF or "VietCong") during the Vietnam War.

Costello was part of a group of Liberals, right-wing Labor students, members of the Democratic Labor Party (the 1950s Catholic right wing split from the ALP), conservative Jewish students and other anti-communists that fought for control of the student union. Costello eventually won the student union presidency.



It was in the mid-1980s that Costello made a real name for himself as a junior lawyer in the union-busting Dollar Sweets case.

Costello represented the makers of "Hundreds and Thousands" in the landmark legal case that won common law damages against a union. He urged Dollar Sweets to take legal action and seek an injunction to stop a long running picket by members of the Federated Confectioners' union.

In December 1985 the Victorian Supreme Court ruled in favour of the company. After 143 days the picket was forced to end. Years later the union was forced to hand over \$175,000 to the company in an out of court settlement to pay for the losses caused by the picket.

This was the first time in Australia that a union had to pay common law damages to an employer for losses suffered through picketing.

In the midst of the Dollar Sweets case, it was revealed that Costello was a leading light of the "New Right".

In 1986 Costello was one of the co-founders of the notorious HR Nicholls Society. Its members included various anti-union mining bosses, National Farmers Federation leaders, senior civil servants and radical right-wing academics and journalists.

The Society's goal was the weakening and eventual elimination of trade unions. They coordinated the spread of their ideas through political parties, pressure groups and the media. Part of their long-term plan was to influence the Liberals and win party leader John Howard to their vision.

The activities of the HR Nicholls Society were soon exposed. In December 1986 the *Business Review Weekly* reported that "Unbeknown to most Liberal MPs, members of the HR Nicholls Society are quietly

drafting the [industrial relations] policy which includes radical measures to redirect the Arbitration Commission, undermine trade unions, and reshape the way in which Australians are hired and fired".

Even Costello's entry to federal parliament in 1990 was controversial. Alongside Michael Kroger (his best mate from Monash), he launched a right-wing putsch that soon forced out moderate Liberal MPs.

Costello might make the odd appearance at the Hillsong Church - but he is certainly no angel. He is a dangerous right-wing politician who would be happy to see the end of the unions and return to the days of "masters" and "slaves". Sooner or later he will also be the leader of the Liberal Party.

"The rich getting richer, the poor get the picture"

Need proof that John Howard rules for the rich? The Liberal's own data in its first report to the Fair Pay Commission* ought to clinch it.

The report states that, since 1996, the higher paid "have experienced noticeably faster growth rates" in income than the rest of us.

From 1996 to 2004, average earnings growth was 10.9 percent. However, only the richest 25 percent of the population managed to achieve this "average".

The other 75 percent of the population saw their earnings grow at a slower rate - the bottom 10 percent managed 7 percent growth, the bottom 25 percent saw 8.5 percent growth and the bottom half 9.7 percent growth.

The richest 10 percent of the population saw their earnings grow by 14.6 percent - over twice the rate for the bottom 10 percent.

Proof that John Howard is a Robin Hood in reverse - stealing from the poor to give to the rich.

An older study of income distribution** backs this up. From 1996 to 2001 the national income share of the richest 20 percent rose by 0.8 percent, while for the other 80 percent it fell.

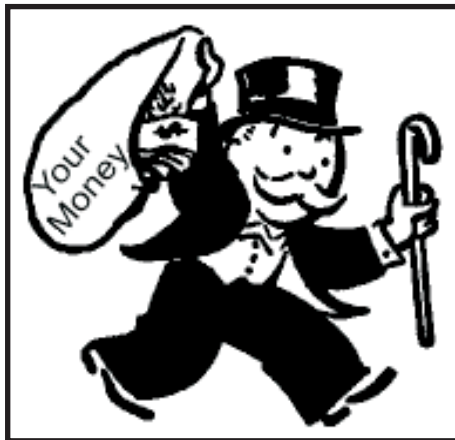
This report concludes that not only has income inequality increased in the 1990s, it has also grown *faster* under John Howard than it did in the 1980s.

Despite what Howard and the Liberals might tell you, they do not rule for the benefit of all Australians.

When they talk about governing in the "national interest", what they mean is ruling in the interests of the rich.

* Australian Government Submission to the Fair Pay Commission, July 2006.

** *Examining recent changes in income distribution in Australia*, Social Policy Research Centre (UNSW) October 2003.



Union donations to the Labor Party: value for money?

Tucked away in the latest *Maritime Workers Journal* (page 24-5, Winter 2007) is an article about the huge donation MUA leaders are giving to the Labor Party.

At a joint meeting with CFMEU Mining and Energy Division leaders, the MUA national council voted in May to donate the equivalent of \$60 per member for the ALP's election campaign.

With a little over 10,000 members, the MUA's donation will hit over \$600,000.

Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard will not repeal all of "WorkChoices" - they only plan to water it down. Morris lemma in NSW wants the ferries and electricity sector privatised and a third stevedoring operator in Botany.

Our union's automatic support for the Labor Party has to end.

All MUA members must have the right to discuss and vote for or against donating money to the ALP, another working class party or no party at all.



But will we get any value for money? Current plans by federal and state Labor Parties would suggest not.

The process of union funding to political parties needs to be democratised and controlled by the rank & file.

Want to distribute *Vigilance* at your workplace? Get in touch (see details below)

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