



Council for the National Interest

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN COMMITTEE

Summer Newsletter 2004

New Year Greetings and best wishes to all CNI members, friends and contacts. This newsletter will look back just a little and then look to the future.

YEAR 2003 IN REVIEW

PUBLIC FORUMS

The first public forum for the year was held in May and addressed by The Hon Kim Beazley, Federal Member for Brand on the topic “The Arc of Instability”. Drawing on his vast political experience, Mr Beazley outlined his views on Australia’s need to take a pro-active leadership role in the arc of countries to Australia’s North

from Indonesia to the Solomon’s. He sees it as essential for Australia to assist in promoting and maintaining stability and security through the maintenance of good government and the preservation of law and order in all of these countries. To neglect to do so risks the creation of fertile ground for increased piracy, transnational crime and terrorist activities as well as providing a possible platform, for an alien power to place Australia’s security under threat.

The closing forum for the year was titled “Australia: A Glass Half Empty”. The keynote speaker, Mr Alan Tough, widely experienced in senior corporate management roles in Australia and in countries to Australia’s North and further afield, promoted the theme that Australians working together will succeed in overcoming whatever problems face the nation just as has been the case in the past.

Both forums were very well attended, drew many interesting questions from the audience and these were answered generously by the speakers.

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AROUND THE DISCUSSION

Following on from the address given by Major General Michael Jeffery in December, 2002 some fifty people accepted an invitation, from the WA Committee of CNI, for them to meet with the Committee and put forward their views and ideas about the challenges and opportunities facing Australia as outlined by Major General Jeffery. As a result of this meeting, a number of those present formed themselves into two discussion groups, designated separately as North and South of the Swan River.

Each of these groups selected and prioritised several key issues of national interest and have been meeting regularly to discuss these and to propose action to be taken. The North Group is currently focussing on Australia's relationships with its northern neighbours and decentralisation of cities. Among other items the South Group is looking at investment of superannuation in the national interest.

In regard to superannuation, it is interesting to reflect that years ago the government of the day introduced compulsory superannuation on a gradually increasing scale because the government recognised the difficulty Australia would have in the long term in providing retirement pensions to an ageing population from a shrinking tax base. This scheme compelled employees to forgo a wage and salary rise and compelled employers to contribute this and an ongoing increasing percentage to superannuation, with the objective of at least partially replacing future pension costs. Remarkably, the government of the day and no government since has implemented these arrangements in such a way as firstly, the funds are guaranteed to be there for the employees, when they retire and secondly, the funds are invested in the national interest. Billions of dollars of the funds are invested overseas, which does nothing for Australia's national interest.

A discussion group, drawn from the Central Branch of CNI in WA has also met regularly and

GROUPS

considered a number of topics including, cost shifting to local government, children's development health and wellbeing and also electoral fraud. Detailed submissions were made to the Federal Parliament on the first two topics, whereas discussions are well advanced on the matter of electoral fraud.

NEW PARTICIPANTS

The work of the discussion groups is a very important core activity of CNI in Western Australia. New participants are always welcome. If you are interested or know some- one who would be, please contact:

South Group - Don King Tel 9450 4545, Fax 9450 4525, Mob 0417 450 451

North Group and Central Group - Denis Whitely Tel 9271 3686, Fax 9271 3687

CNI WEBSITE

The above mentioned submissions will be posted on CNI website, www.cniwa.com.au as soon as resources permit. New software is being sought to speed up this process. There are many other policy papers on the website as well as information about the background and objectives on CNI.

THE YEAR AHEAD

In addition to the ongoing work of the discussion groups, the WA Committee is in negotiation with a number of keynote speakers with a view to mounting several public forums on topics of major national interest, Further details in due course.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS INTERNATIONAL

FDI is an independent, apolitical, non-profit organisation committed to the delivery of premium quality 'joined up' strategic knowledge

services to senior decision-makers. Whilst CNI
WA is not connected to FDI, CNI is pleased to
commend to you a free public lecture "Whither

the UN Security Council?" Details are in the
enclosed 'flyer'.