



Abbott free to push his North Shore politics

By Nigel Bowen

Posted Fri 30 May 2014, 7:57am AEST

Unless the inner-city leftists can get the Western Sydney types back on side, Tony Abbott will be left free to push measures that benefit his North Shore constituents to the detriment of others, writes Nigel Bowen.

Post budget, entire episodes of Q&A have passed without a single question from the audience about same-sex unions and the newspapers are full of hard-luck stories rather than think pieces about transphobia.

Could it be the Left is on the verge of re-engaging with bread-and-butter distributional issues?

There are not a lot of parallels between my life and Tony Abbott's but as luck would have it we were both raised in the upper middle class milieu of Sydney's North Shore.

Before proceeding further I should point out that Abbott's current neighbourhood and my former one, while Liberal Party heartland, is neither monolithically conservative nor affluent. The area is neither devoid of low to middle income earners nor people with left-of-centre views - the likes of Tim Freedman, Peter Garrett and Mike Carlton, for example, are all past or current residents.

That noted, I believe it's fair to say Abbott is, to an extent yet to be fully appreciated, a product of his environment and that his first budget faithfully reflects what might be labelled the North Shore worldview.

In brief, such a Weltanschauung can be boiled down to the following fundamentals: the ALP are incompetent socialists who will invariably blow up the economy whenever they gain control of the Treasury benches; public servants are bludgers; unions are a dangerous scourge; the average worker is indolent at best and dishonest at worst and welfare recipients are scroungers who should pull themselves up by the bootstraps.

Of course, such an outlook is hardly confined to Sydney's North Shore. Both throughout Australia and in many other countries, it's the default position of those who are



PHOTO: Tony Abbott pounds the pavement in the Liberal Party heartland of Sydney's North Shore. (Tracey Nearmy: AAP)

well-positioned enough to opt out of the public system themselves and resent having to shell out to provide health and education services, as well as welfare and old-age pensions for the improvident lower orders.

While displaying a Google-like ingenuity at using negatively geared property, family trusts and self-managed super funds to minimise his or her tax, your North Shorian (both actual and honorary) remains all too painfully aware they are getting a bad deal. And he or she is not accustomed to being on the losing side of a transaction.

The point of this piece isn't to debate the merits or otherwise of this Ayn Randesque mindset - North Shorians vote for their economic interests, as would be expected. The interesting issue is that in the last seven federal elections enough non-North Shorians - many of them unionists, public servants, low to middle income employees and welfare recipients - have voted for the Coalition to give it an impressive five wins/one draw/one loss record.

Both Abbott and I grew up in simpler times when it was assumed that Westies (both actual and honorary) would support Labor. Indeed, the notion they'd embrace the Liberal Party seemed to make as much sense as Penrith Panthers fans burning their club jerseys and opting to barrack for the Manly Sea Eagles or embrace rugby union.

To make sense of this political development we need to introduce a third grouping into the equation, many of them the upwardly mobile offspring of Westies or the downwardly mobile ones of North Shorians.

As is frequently observed, Inner City Types, while lacking the demographic heft of the Westies or the economic muscle of the North Shorians, are disproportionately represented among the ranks of progressive activists, ALP and Green politicians, public servants, academics, artists and, ahem, journalists.

As is also frequently observed, for the last three decades Inner City Types have had little interest in the meat and potato distributional issues of politics, preferring to devote their time and energy to causes that either have a direct bearing on people like them (i.e. seeking to ensure that well-educated, middle to upper-middle class women have the same career opportunities as well-educated, middle to upper middle class men) or relate to appealingly exotic oppressed groups (i.e. Indigenous Australians, East Timorese, Tibetans, Palestinians, boatpeople, transsexuals).

That the Westies - increasing numbers of whom were dealing with mortgage stress, job insecurity and four hour commutes to work - failed to show the appropriate concern for those experiencing Third World Problems, or saw them as competitors for scarce resources, was taken by Inner City Types as proof of their irredeemably reactionary boganism.

Of course, while the Left has been otherwise engaged the Right has been busily reversing many of the hard-won progressive victories achieved from the time of the Great Depression until the overturning of the post-war Keynesian settlement at the beginning of the 1980s.

The Coalition has now started in on undermining the social wage, which was meant to be the pay-off to non-North Shorians for the painful neo-liberal restructuring of the economy under Hawke-Keating, and which was largely maintained by the populist Howard.

If the Coalition wins a second term - and post-war history suggests a conservative federal government can expect at least three terms and possibly up to nine - deregulating the industrial relations system will undoubtedly be next on the agenda.

In much the same way Inner City Types are given to gazing wistfully at the Nordic social democracies, North Shorians admire the US, a nation where the wealth creator is venerated.

Unless the Inner City Types can rethink their political priorities and get the Westies on side, Abbott, long dismissed as "some kind of old-fashioned DLP pseudo-socialist" by observers ranging from Peter Costello to Mark Latham, looks set to Americanise Australia in a way that benefits his own North Shore constituents while imposing significant hardship on those less well located.

Nigel Bowen is a freelance journalist who writes about politics and pop culture among other topics. View his full profile here.

Topics: government-and-politics, abbott-tony, community-and-society

Comments (405)

Comments for this story are closed, but you can still have your say.

Laughing:

30 May 2014 8:12:49am

What a laugh, nothing could be further from the truth than this ridiculous premise. Union Labor hurt the lower paid people of Australia and the debt time bomb will continue to provide budgeting problems for decades to come.

Alert moderator

the yank:

30 May 2014 8:34:09am

Did you bother to actually read this article?

Especially read the last paragraph and his comment regarding how Abbott approach will 'Americanise Australia'. And from what I see the US way of doing things doesn't end up with low debt levels or any sort of social safety net.

Sotopanna:

30 May 2014 9:07:24am

When the actions of a person are not consistent with their words, contemplating what they might do is fraught with challenges.

Without a vision, other than American-ising the nation, the Abbott government can be anticipated to manifest a society precipitated on the wishes of Big Business whom appear to be running the government.

What difference could Turnbull make when the LNP is intent upon self destruction?

There are more on the affected side of the Great Divide that the government has caused so any statements from those whose words aren't respected will be like "pings" from the deep?

Alert moderator

Algernon:

30 May 2014 9:47:31am

Turnbull has something that Abbott and his nearest and dearest buffoonery don't; common sense. Even those on the Left could find him an acceptable alternative.

Alert moderator

Stephen:

30 May 2014 10:42:27am

I always thought that Turnbull and Rudd should have swapped places in Parliament.

Alert moderator

Sotapanna:

30 May 2014 11:16:55am

"I always thought that Turnbull and Rudd should have swapped places in Parliament"

With Labor and LNP being ruled by big business this could have been a possibility.

Without apparent representation the "new underclass" aren't being distracted from the campaign to load they are unfairly being burdened with.

With Parkinson being politically involved in discussions between Clive and Malcolm it is problematic to see where previous illusions of public service objectivity are at?

Perhaps we are all in the "sweet corn soup" together?

Alert moderator

Jilleene:

30 May 2014 11:31:50am

Jenny Macklin could change sides. She proposed a medicare co payment in 1991.

\$3.50 a visit. 23 years ago.

Don of Adelaide:

30 May 2014 3:38:29pm

Not according to Jenny Macklin.

Alert moderator

jarasp:

30 May 2014 5:35:34pm

Yes another Abbott misrepresentation of the truth or liar according to Macklin. I know who you can believe and who you can't and so do most Australians.

Alert moderator

Zathras:

30 May 2014 3:59:42pm

It was introduced but then withdrawn so what makes you think it will work now?

How will it improve the budget when not a cent it would raise goes toward reducing expenditure?

Alert moderator

Blzbob:

30 May 2014 5:12:34pm

If they want to collect \$70 PA off of everyone in Australia. all they have to do is adjust the lowest income tax rat by either 3% or move the lowest scale by just 500 dollars.

Much easier to implement.

Or are they actually trying to lower the level of national well-being and healthiness?

Alert moderator

Rhonda:

30 May 2014 5:45:53pm

Jilleene, if you were watching QT in Parliament yesterday, you would have seen that Jenny Macklin, resoundingly refuted that she supported a co-payment, either in 1991 or in 2014. She was quite clear in her DENIAL. Anyone who continues to spread this lie, is themselves a liar.

That's how this miserable excuse for a government got elected in the first place, fooling people like you, who don't bother to check the facts.

The old saying "cheats never prosper" is seriously being challenged at the moment....

Alert moderator

Zathras:

30 May 2014 3:56:30pm

Indeed, Turnbull and Rudd are very similar.

They are both victims of their own egos and their inflated sense of self-importance makes them reluctant to accept the advice of others.

I wouldn't be holding my breath waiting for a Turnbull resurrection.

Alert moderator

clete:

30 May 2014 11:49:15am

"Even those on the Left could find him an acceptable alternative".

That's not what I'd call a ringing endorsement!

Alert moderator

Alfie:

30 May 2014 1:43:24pm

"Turnbull has something that Abbott and his nearest and dearest buffoonery don't"

That would be a boot-print on his arse.

Alert moderator

Blzbob:

30 May 2014 5:04:40pm

The trouble is that Turnbull could never become leader of the party without fulfilling the expectations of those other members who would support him. To do that he would have no choice but to adopt all their liberal party values.

Abbott may seem to be the pinnacle of the problem, but he is actually the manifestation of underlying liberal values.

You could get rid of Abbott, but the only way you could ever separate Turnbull from those same values would be to have him leave the party and either join another or start his own, like Clive has done.

Perhaps it is time that the ones with a speck of decency left, just as Martin Hamilton Smith did.

Alert moderator

DM:

30 May 2014 6:33:52pm

As you say, Turnbull doesn't now have "liberal party values"; he has liberal values, a very different thing. However, Abbott also doesn't have liberal values; he has Liberal Party values, i.e. neo-conservative values. The Liberal Party is so ridden with deceit that even their name is a deceit!

Alert moderator

Sydney Bob:

30 May 2014 12:02:54pm

Regards the Americanizing of Australia, I have spent considerable time in America and I warn against an American style Health system.

In America you can be middle class, Mum and Dad both working with a couple of kids, own your home and wake one morning to find you have been financially ruined by medical costs.

I warn people living on the North Shore, I have seen wealthy people in America ruined by medical costs

Alert moderator

Susan:

30 May 2014 12:48:54pm

And you can also work in a reasonably challenging job and earn \$10 an hour... the 'working poor'.

There are quite a lot of Americans I like and a half dozen I actually love (as dear friends), but there's no way Australia should be importing their health, education (school and tertiary), welfare and industrial relations systems. There are far better models we can aspire to. "Stop the boats/planes" and close our borders to 'those' Americans.

Alert moderator

havasay:

30 May 2014 1:58:56pm

And at the same time "socialist" Norway has put in place a very workable and successful Mining Super Profits tax that has allowed them to amass a Sovereign Wealth Fund equal to one year's GDP. It is believed to be the biggest of it's kind in the world. Last year the Norwegian government used the legislated maximum allowed withdrawal from the fund and built a brand new hospital.

It's a sick irony that Abbott lies about Australia's very small level of public debt being a burden on future generations and yet has done the most to stop Australians from getting a fair return on our mineral resources. He is strident in standing up for the interests of the mining industry which is 85% foreign owned.

This is the legacy that we are actually handing on to future generations of Australians. It's a travesty of justice and we should all be thoroughly ashamed that this has happened on our watch.

Alert moderator

Machiavelli's Cat:

30 May 2014 3:28:24pm

Norway does not have a Mining Super Profits tax it has a Resource Rent Tax (as was originally proposed in the Henry report) and direct State investment in oil production.

Alert moderator

DiogenesNT:

30 May 2014 4:25:45pm

And power generation. They have set up a system we should emulate so that

Alert moderator

Blzbob:

30 May 2014 5:19:24pm

Labor was unable to introduce a Resource Rent Tax, as neither the liberals or the greens would support it, they did however manage to get support for the next best thing, the Mining Super Profits tax.

Alert moderator

Alfie:

30 May 2014 6:36:47pm

Labor was also unable to negotiate the MRRT (with no opposition intervention). They muffed it. When you are incompetent, not much counts.

Alert moderator

Whitey:

30 May 2014 3:38:56pm

Bob, a \$7 copayment is a long way from the American health system. I think the North Shore healthy life is secure for a while yet.

Alert moderator

Blzbob:

30 May 2014 5:21:01pm

It is the first step on the road towards an American styled health system.

Alert moderator

Kenonin:

30 May 2014 1:42:00pm

'There are more on the affected side of the Great Divide that the government has caused so any statements from those whose words aren't respected will be like "pings" from the deep?'

Now we know how low the haters will go.....

Alert moderator

Rhonda:

30 May 2014 5:52:05pm

With the North Shorians love of money, I wonder how comfortably they sit with all the money expended on the botched search for the missing plane - especially as there's nothing in it for them?

Alert moderator

harvey:

30 May 2014 9:15:20am

The argument is that the hipsters need to stop being insular and join forces with the Westies. In a non patronising way.

Otherwise they are being divided and conquered. That is what the old Howard smear

Its the old argument of 'would you like 100% of nothing or 50% of something'.

The Greens lost me when their purity meant that the first Carbon Tax was defeated. Their whiter than white purity means we have Abbott, no mining tax, no carbon tax. What a useful bunch of winkers they were.

Alert moderator

Bugsy:

30 May 2014 10:33:47am

Agree

Alert moderator

magb1:

30 May 2014 10:39:05am

Tend to agree with you there Harvey - the Greens virtually gave us Abbott, the geoses shot themselves in the foot.

Alert moderator

Sir Robert of Lindsay:

30 May 2014 6:35:29pm

WHAT?

The Greens are responsible for Abbott?

So the Murdoch Propaganda machine had no influence?

So the dis-interested and gullible fools that voted this flog in had no influence?

The Greens and their supporters have been warning about neo-conservatives for decades, and as a result have had to wear the bulk of anti-progressive propaganda and the lies about their agenda, and you blame THEM for Abbott?

The real blame lies with the swing voter who doesn't bother paying attention to what is going on until they walk into a poll booth. Most Greens voters knew what Abbott and his conservative mates were like, it why we don't preference LNP candidates too often.

Alert moderator

The Skeleton Inside:

30 May 2014 10:41:34am

Hear hear!

Alert moderator

Sotapanna:

30 May 2014 10:55:42am

"The Greens lost me when their purity meant that the first Carbon Tax was defeated. Their whiter than white purity means we have Abbott, no mining tax,

This is a reasonable argument.

The challenge for the Greens is to be active in the governance of the nation or sitting up on Mt Principle forever being observer/spectators.

The current scenario illustrates as is countenanced that the Greens may end up with nothing they wished for, and, a lot more than they anticipated like the nebulous "Direct Action", which sees funds being funneled down polluting smokestacks.

Navigating a path which sees compromises as a route to bettering rather perfecting is a challenge for their current leadership?

Alert moderator

ingenuous:

30 May 2014 12:32:33pm

Sotapanna, the problem is that the compromises demanded are too compromising. The original carbon reduction scheme was too weak to work and paid enormous amounts to polluters to keep them happy. It wasn't useful. Remember that the bad guys win if you have an official "Scheme to Fix Problem X" and it doesn't actually fix problem X.

The second carbon reduction scheme (the one that passed) was also weak. *That* was the compromise! It was already so watery as to be almost useless. It was exactly the "first step" you all are now demanding. But still it was politically attackable and ultimate doomed.

The Greens are already compromising and working to deflect the worst of the worst. But they have little power. That is the true problem. If the Greens were in government, we would see how green policies would work, from top to bottom. As it is, we have limited approximations, just the bare minimum that the Greens could get the ALP to support. And soon, we will have none at all, because the LNP deems the environment expendable, and the Greens do not have the power to stop them. (What the ALP thinks of this is unclear. I think they are just thinking about cheap tricks to unseat Tony and not much else.)

Alert moderator

Brownus Average:

30 May 2014 5:51:25pm

What they the Green ALP party say, "existing only in theory" and what you think they wish? actually may not be the prize.

Direct action will better position this nation, Australia to move forward.

Reducing the reliance placed upon off shore, profile shifting.

The ETS may help? but only if everyone else shifts along fast enough, hand balling profiles perhaps to the moon.

Alert moderator

the yank:

30 May 2014 10:57:51am

"imposing significant hardship on those less well located" ... is another important sentence.

Alert moderator

Sotapanna:

30 May 2014 11:18:43am

"imposing significant hardship on those less well located" ... is another important sentence.

Life sentence?

Alert moderator

the yank:

30 May 2014 11:58:15am

yes actually.

Alert moderator

Ms T:

30 May 2014 11:18:49am

Yes, I blame them as well.

If this, what we are now facing, is the product of standing by your principles no matter what then the time has come to accept that being principled, while admirable, can cause as much harm as being unprincipled.

Many small steps in the right direction can achieve more than placing you feet firmly on the ground and refusing to budge until you are body slammed further away from attaining your goals than ever before.

Alert moderator

ingenuous:

30 May 2014 12:23:07pm

While everyone is blaming the Greens (a small minority) for what the LNP and ALP have done (the vast majority), consider that you need a group like the Greens in order to put a stake into the ground.

Without the Greens, you could argue where the boundary might be. It might waver. It may fade in and out. With the Greens, you know where the objective lies, even if their efforts don't move us much in that direction.

Perhaps we need the Hard Greens and the Soft Greens. The Hard ones maintain perfect purity in goals and methods. The Soft ones join the wrestling match in a pile of pig dung that is our political system and hopefully move things a little at a time towards a sustainable future.

30 May 2014 12:38:51pm

harvey:

Patronising rubbish. I don't need the Greens to put a stake in the ground for me. I know what I believe.

I consider they put a stake into the heart of any Carbon Tax or Mining Tax for years to come. The unintended consequences of not being able to negotiate or understand the political landscape for what it was.

This is what hubris looks like.

Alert moderator

30 May 2014 1:53:23pm

Salient Green:

Harvey, you apparently can't see that the real reason we have no carbon price is because the Labor party was too beholden to big polluters to put up an effective carbon price in the first place, and that Labor were too beholden to big mining to put up an effective mining tax, and that Labor were very weak in other policy areas as well which sheet home the blame for an Abbott government directly to the LABOR PARTY.

Alert moderator

30 May 2014 3:34:38pm

darthseditious:

Well, we all saw what happened when the last non-allied minor party with the balance of power in the senate, did a deal with the devil - the GST, they imploded not long after.

Alert moderator

30 May 2014 11:53:28am

don't believe the media:

I really think the traditional working class in the west was won over by Howard's adaptation of Hanson's racist diatribes. as the author put it, seeing them as 'competition for scarce resources.' The fear card has been a winner in many elections.

Alert moderator

30 May 2014 12:51:36pm

Susan:

Too true - it was clever. Immoral, evil and a reflection of some inherent 'gap' in the Australian psyche... perhaps a lack of teaching of critical thinking skills at school??... but clever.

Alert moderator

30 May 2014 1:53:44pm

Kenonin:

'I really think the traditional working class in the west was won over by Howard's adaptation of Hanson's racist diatribes.'

You do realise DBTM, Howard and the Liberal government were in 2007, so how do you blame Howard? Labor was removed due to the ineptitude displayed from 2007 to 2013, just admit it, the Australian people, had had it to the eyeballs with the Labor Government comedy hour.

The same will possibly happen to the Liberal government too, if the party doesn't pull their collective heads out of their asses (much like Labor previously)

Alert moderator

darthseditious:

30 May 2014 3:36:25pm

And an in less time than 6 years by the look of what we have now.

Alert moderator

Albo:

30 May 2014 3:22:27pm

"I really think the traditional working class in the west was won over by Howard's adaptation of Hanson's racist diatribes."

Oh ! Really ?

As a born & bred westie, I can tell you the working class are more concerned about rising debts and costs of living, the closing of factories, increased traffic congestion, safety for their kids, the dropping education standards, the dropping moral values, and if race has anything to do with these issues, you may have point worth considering ! Other than that, you are just uttering ad hominem rubbish you heard in some contrived political narrative !

Alert moderator

Sir Robert of Lindsay:

30 May 2014 6:38:25pm

"We will decide who comes to Australia and how they will arrive"

Worst bit of closet racism I've ever seen, and my fellow Lindsites fell for it hook line and sinker.

A truly embarrassing day for what was once an open and inclusive country.

Alert moderator

Rhonda:

30 May 2014 7:45:17pm

"The fear card has been a winner in many elections"

You've got that right. Howard used it and now Abbott's trumped him. It's ironic that Abbott and Newman (Qld) stood side by side, promoting fear about the Carbon 'Tax' and the impost on families (for which they were compensated) and small businesses.

Newman's been in for just over two years. Under his leadership, electricity prices went up a further 20 plus% last year and are going up a further 13 plus% this year. That's under government ownership, now they are talking about privatization, which will make it worse!

Alert moderator

GraemeF:

30 May 2014 12:55:07pm

The first 'carbon tax' was not defeated by the Greens. The original CPRS had their approval.

The second CPRS that was negotiated only with the Coalition because Labor tried to distance themselves from the Greens was worse than doing nothing. Despite that fact, the Coalition went back on their word when Turnbull was defeated by a denialist Abbott by one vote.

The second CPRS was closer to the useless Direct Action plan because most of the funds went to the polluters. The Greens were correct to oppose a 'worse than nothing' plan.

Alert moderator

Rhonda:

30 May 2014 6:45:01pm

I agree Harvey. I wonder if the Greens think of the consequences of those actions - especially today when we now see that money funded in the federal Budget for the Refugee Council (for the aid of refugee resettlement), has now been scrapped?

The funding promise lasted just two weeks!! Haven't heard anything from the Greens yet on this. Not much purity now. What else is going to go?

Abbott was right when he said he'd run a 'no surprises' government - it's been nothing but 'shocks' so far.

Alert moderator

tc21:

30 May 2014 8:36:11am

How exactly? In all the years spent in my job, it is the Liberals who fight to strip away entitlements year after year whilst Union Labor as you call them have fought tooth and nail for us to keep them. Your comment is total rubbish.

Alert moderator

Paul01:

30 May 2014 9:45:07am

Agree tc21 and Laughing needs to look at when our real debt problem started.

The real debt problem is the money that we owe, every Australian on their homes

Our current federal debt is manageable and the current budget does not pay one cent off of the debt so why all the pain?

The debt has increased since the LNP got into power so how is it a "crisis" or an "emergency".

Alert moderator

burke:

30 May 2014 10:34:31am

Why is that a problem? I worry about my debts, you worry about yours and the government worries about theirs. Something wrong with that?

Alert moderator

Paul01:

30 May 2014 11:36:07am

As I said Burke, the current budget does not pay one cent off the debt so why all the pain?

In fact, the deficit has risen sharply since the LNP took power.

I reckon LNP ideology is the answer.

Alert moderator

darthseditious:

30 May 2014 3:41:59pm

ideology has more to do with this current budget than economics. Abbott, who was the real architect of the budget, is a neocon ideologue - probably more to the far right than John Howard ever was. He certainly has a political tin ear, something that JWH never really demonstrated until he got control of the senate and the power went to his head. Abbott will find that his decision to inflict pain on the very people who voted for him - the western sydney "bogans" will come back to bight him on the bum. The polls are already giving out warning signals of what may come to pass.

Alert moderator

don't believe the media:

30 May 2014 11:57:20am

Yes and Howard worried about Keating's 94bn foreign debt all the way to the election before he converted it to 380 bn and called that irrelevant.

Alert moderator

Susan:

Individuals can generally only raise 'revenue' (to meet their needs and service their debts) by working or investing existing surpluses (savings). When things interfere with these strategies, 'you worry about your debt, I'll worry about my debt' doesn't achieve a great deal. And what can interfere? Age, illness, disability, low hourly wages, need to care for children or the aged or the disabled, lack of jobs, poorly paid jobs, poor education, high costs of accommodation, increasing taxes on goods and services, few options to 'break the cycle' due to high costs of education etc. It's a highway to hell when we just think about Number 1.

Alert moderator

tongal42:

30 May 2014 3:31:37pm

Nothing wrong with that, except that this government seems intent on increasing our debts so that they don't have to worry about theirs.

Alert moderator

MT_Syd:

30 May 2014 10:42:34am

Absolutely Paul - and one thing is sure, the average person will struggle to reduce their debt so long as the coalition and their mates are in power

Alert moderator

Jilleene:

30 May 2014 11:34:15am

Paul Keating had our personal debt at interest rates of 17%.

So its not just the coalition.

Alert moderator

DWM:

30 May 2014 12:09:58pm

In John Howards days as treasurer he gave us an interest rate of 22%.

Alert moderator

Alfie:

30 May 2014 5:12:48pm

Keating also plunged Australia into recession.

Thankfully, we have just dodged that bullet again by dumping Labor.

Alert moderator

lazarus:

30 May 2014 6:09:19pm

Like Treasurer Howard plunged us into recession. Latest business confidence

Alert moderator

Reinhard:

30 May 2014 6:18:07pm

Keating did not plunge us into recession, it was the world-wide recession started by the black monday stock market crash..

Alert moderator

Sir Robert of Lindsay:

30 May 2014 6:44:07pm

Interest rates under keating topped out at 18%. I know this from first hand experience.

HOWEVER, that was at a time when the debt to household income ratio never got over 30%.

It topped out at 36% under Howard after he and Costello went on their crusade to increase house prices in order to convince the great unwashed a \$300K mortgage made them wealthy.

Alert moderator

clete:

30 May 2014 1:05:14pm

Yes, the debt has increased, because, amongst other things, this government is committed to the funded programs, negligently put into law, by the previous Labor government.

Alert moderator

Chris L:

30 May 2014 2:11:58pm

You mean like the baby bonus and first home owners grant?

It's fair enough to criticise the ongoing costs that turn out to be mistakes, but unless you have both eyes open you are only barracking for a football team.

Alert moderator

Algernon:

30 May 2014 2:42:27pm

How much did Howard squander in revenue between 2005-7. near enough to \$400b I understand.

Alert moderator

harry snr:

30 May 2014 7:42:10pm

So Australia has a huge debt, but aren't there investors behind every debt ?
Paying back the debt must inevitably disappoint a few investors. And how does all this rhyme with the neo-cons statements that " we are open for business

and we have to attract investors " ? The real ideology, if you care to look closely, is : " Tax Payers' Money = OUR MONEY, and every bit of spending beyond the level of revenue, is money wasted on bludgers, no-hopers, the great unwashed, atheists, sons and daughters of Satan, miscreants and what-ever insult you want to apply to the low life. The Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York knows what to do with low life. There they use cockroaches, tarantulas, earthworms, eyeballs and testicles in well attended fund raising dinners.

Alert moderator

JohnC:

30 May 2014 9:46:39am

@tc21:

The Unions are the whipping boys for the media and the LNP in particular. With so many good stories to be told such as workplace safety, unfair dismissal, minimum wage rates and even the 40 hour week one would think the Unions would be venerated no ostracised. Unfortunately they fail in the PR stakes but their record over the years should be applauded not vilified. The North Shore mob are well aware of the danger of this and courtesy of Abbott and co they continue to sink the boot into the ACTU using purely politically driven vehicles like Royal Commissions into corruption to disguise there real worth and achievements.

Alert moderator

darthseditious:

30 May 2014 3:49:01pm

That's because the media don't report the good news stories, but are quick to report on union rorts, union thugery, and so on and so on. But you are right, when it comes to PR, the unions have, so far, been their own worse enemies. Their propensity to throw up uncompromising dinosaurs as spokespersons when they really need media savy pragmatists has meant that, what message they are trying to get across, is drowned out in the usual argy bargy. No doubt there will be those who say that shouldn't matter, but with a reactionary, anti-worker government in power at the moment, the importance for unions to be a more positive force has never been more important than now.

Alert moderator

magb1:

30 May 2014 10:40:18am

Spot on tc21, Paul01 & JohnC

Alert moderator

Polly Wolly Doodle:

30 May 2014 8:56:54am

Hello Laughing,

The debt bomb began ticking in 2003, took on some speed in 2005 (both Howard terms). The GFC stimulus spending was not considered to be profligate by the IMF. First act of this government? Double the deficit, and blame the previous.

And if an economy is to be kept healthy, a government needs to raise the standard of living for working class (the spenders), and keep wages growing. Austerity measures aimed at the biggest group of consumers, harms the economy. If the UK is anything to go by, the economy-slump bomb is with us, courtesy of another conservative government.

Alert moderator

Realist:

30 May 2014 9:38:38am

How exactly has this government doubled the deficit while being accused of 'cuts, cuts, cuts'?

This is the absolute stupidity of much of the criticism being levelled. It defies common sense.

The deficit was determined before Abbott took over. He is faced with the burden and now that our interest bill has exceeded \$1 billion dollars per month the job of reducing it is harder than ever before.

Meanwhile we have gross distortion and manipulation of facts to try and make a case. Such as the claim on The Conversation that it would take 43 years for a student to pay off their HECS debt.

That set the hounds running on whether the government would collect from 'dead students'. Then today we have an admission that the 'modelling' was actually grossly erroneous and the actual time frame is 11 years!!

Now how many students expect to be dead within 11 years of graduating?

Of course, if 'the modelling' was conducted by anyone without a partisan axe to grind then I fully expect someone with common sense looking at the figures would have said "That can't be right. You better check your calcs!"

But no, just like your comment, logic is ignored when the claim suits the argument.

Alert moderator

Algernon:

30 May 2014 9:49:56am

Realist, the budget papers themselves expose Hockey, where it shows he added \$20b to the deficit since taking office.

Alert moderator

Barge:

30 May 2014 10:28:09am

Please tell us what he spent it on rather than just parroting the ALP mantras.

Alert moderator

Sir Robert of Lindsay:

30 May 2014 6:46:37pm

Neither asked for or warranted. Look for them to take this back in about 18mths time as a special "dividend" to make the bottom line look better.

Alert moderator

clete:

30 May 2014 11:04:21 am

I think you'll find, Algernon, that the projected revenue figures in PEFO were overly optimistic (which Labor accepted everytime from Treasury) and were realistically played down by this government in the MYEFO.

Also, Hockey was forced to repay the Reserve Bank \$9b that Swan ripped from it.

If that's what you call "exposed", then I guess you're right.

Alert moderator

Reinhard:

30 May 2014 5:05:53pm

Labor took \$7.9 billion in dividends from the RBA or \$1.3 billion per year. In real terms the Howard govt took twice as much, an average of \$3 billion a year.

Alert moderator

A happy little debunker:

30 May 2014 11:08:36am

Algernon,

You mean that the underlying assumptions are conservative and not (as labor had them) wildly optimistic!

After all, we should be using the same optimistic assumptions that saw 6 years of misbalanced Labor budgets - That'll fix all our economic problems!

Alert moderator

Eric:

30 May 2014 10:33:27am

The modelling was probably done by the same mob who predict the world's temps are going to rise by 4+ degrees by the end of this century.

Alert moderator

MT_Syd:

30 May 2014 10:44:48am

The ABC Fact check has an article about the claim that Hockey has doubled the deficit in the last 10 months.

Turns out to be true.

They did it by doing things like giving the RBA \$9 billion, for no pressing reason.

Alert moderator

Waterloo Sunset 2014:

The RBA is US (the citizens of Australia). We still have the money, Duh!

Alert moderator

Brian V:

30 May 2014 10:56:00am

Any interest payments are being paid on Howard and Costellos tax cuts ... they were and are the most profligate government in Australias history (IMF - you know that lefty organisation ...lol) - even worse than Whitlam.

Governing on lies lies and more lies as they seek to slam the sick, unemployed, pensioners and students - talk about class - what a disgusting mob of winkers. Or grubs with a capital C.

Alert moderator

kenj:

30 May 2014 11:01:57am

It's a PR nightmare. "The Dead are Rising and Voting Labor." The Libs should have known that students have always been big on zombies.

Alert moderator

kenj:

30 May 2014 11:06:08am

Cost increases have not been fully appreciated. They're looking at market rates on student loans and are citing 6%. On a \$100,000 course which accumulates over 20 years that's a payback of \$320,000.

Then look at how those 'best figure' numbers can change....

* The course you have chosen might cost \$150,000, taking your final payment over 20 years to half a million.

* Economists in Europe and the US are all signalling that interest rates are going to rise with the wind back of Federal Reserve 'quantitative easing'. That would see any student loans taken out now having their annual rate increased to, say, 10%. Over 20 years that \$100,00 loan is paid back at \$670,000.

* Of course, if the US dollar collapses or GFC2 occurs (more likely than not) then rates could go even higher.

* 20 years is a reasonable time frame for repayment but personal factors may intervene: family illness (students are still going to get married and have kids, right?), job loss etc. So it might run out to 30 years or more.

Don't overlook that market rate 6%. It's economically deadly for the student -- and the country.

The overall result will be (more likely than not) the same as the US experience: an underclass of permanently indebted citizens unable to make good life choices because of their student debt and a country losing out as a consequence.

Graham H:

30 May 2014 11:42:53am

100,000 at 6% over 20 years only accumulates to 320,000 if you repay Zero.

Is that the intention ?

No need to make your figures that hysterical.

Pay 8,000 per year for 20 years - and whole initial 100,000 debt repaid via 160,000.

Alert moderator

kenj:

30 May 2014 1:02:01pm

That's right. Provided interest rates stay at 6% (they won't) and life factors don't intervene (they will). Moreover, on my understanding student debt repayments are not tax deductible. On a salary of \$50,000 pa, and after paying taxes, your \$8000 repayment is going to be 17.5% - 20% of your after tax income for every one of the next 20 years! That's to achieve a best case outcome. But don't come down with an illness that sees you out of work for two years because the interest keeps accumulating and that's the rub. The debt -- however much of it you still have to pay off -- sits there and grows forever and even moderate rates of interest compound rapidly. Unless you pay it off early you have a millstone for virtually all of your working life.

If rates go to 10% early on then you are hit very hard indeed. It's far from plain sailing and it would only be justifiable as a government policy if two aspects prevailed:

(1) the government did not have cheaper alternative methods for financing higher public education in a more targeted fashion that would restrain student and government cost blowouts for this sector (they do); and,

(2) the colleges could be relied upon to impose restraints on discretionary price increases and cost expansions from their ends (they won't).

The government has given the higher education sector a bank card and said "Go spend! The students will be paying for it." That's not fiscally responsible in my view.

Alert moderator

Gregory:

30 May 2014 2:50:43pm

After 20 years and your pay is at net 150,000 the last 8,000 repayment will be 5.3 % of your net.

Alert moderator

WA Ideas:

"On a salary of \$50,000 pa, and after paying taxes, your \$8000 repayment is going to be 17.5% - 20% of your after tax income for every one of the next 20 years!"

Only if you are assuming that the salary will remain stagnant at \$50,000 for the next 20 years and if that was the case, then clearly you've done the wrong degree!

On average, tertiary graduates' incomes rise at a greater pace than non-graduates so as they develop more experience in the workforce their skills improve and their salary increases commensurately. Whereas, a non-tertiary educated worker, such as an admin person, would generally be paid effectively a constant wage in real terms over time (i.e. CPI adjusted).

The reality is, as a graduate myself, the HECS or Fee-HELP payments are deducted from my salary by my employer and as I've never budgeted on spending that money, I've never missed it and I'm used to my 'after tax' income comprising 'after tax and after HECS' income instead. The fact is, as I earn more, I pay back a greater proportion of my HECS debt, so upon graduating I got a job that put me above the minimum salary to start repaying the debt and over 4 years my salary has increased by 140% as I changed jobs and my skills developed. So really, my HECS debt will be paid off in well under 20 years by simply paying the statutory minimum. Oh, and it doesn't impact on my ability to borrow money either because if I lost my job and earned \$0, then I don't have to pay any HECS payments until I start earning above the income threshold again...

Alert moderator

JRM:

30 May 2014 3:13:16pm

Might be an idea to just pay your fees as you go then.

Alert moderator

JRM:

30 May 2014 3:22:42pm

Graham

Paying back zero sounds an ALP plan.

Alert moderator

don't believe the media:

30 May 2014 12:03:28pm

Yeah, they've sure risen since Joe Hockey led the protest in the 80s against student uni fees going up to \$250. Our future is at risk, was his message.

Alert moderator

Kanooka:

30 May 2014 12:17:12pm

Kenj: Those least likely to gain employment in the USA at the moment and for the last several years have been those with College degrees, they are seen as over qualified for the few jobs available and there are far too many well qualified for the professional positions around.

Your point is well made and supports again just how wrong we are as a nation to blindly follow the US in almost every regard (no not all are wrong just most). It is accepted by the Americans that a college education is the norm for the middle and upper classes and unusual for those at the lower levels of the socio economic scale.

Again further example of what the above piece argues, Abbott and his "North Shore" elites have no desire to lift those below up to their standard of living, why would they when that would erode their own sense of self importance!!

As for the poor old Greens they are so inward looking they can't see beyond each others agendas why look outside the party for a fight when you can be like the ALP or the far right of the LNP and keep all your fights in house.

Alert moderator

Judy Bee:

30 May 2014 12:37:26pm

Hello Realist,

I guess one man's reality is another man's delusion. The IMF in 2013 found Howard in 2003 and 2005 started profligate spending...Hockey did double the deficit, that is on the record. What defies logic is that he keeps insisting on blaming the deficit amount on the previous, as you do. What Howard and Rudd and Gillard continued to be blind to, was that the resources boom was going to end. Rudd and Gillard should have implemented structural change with a mind to closing tax minimisation schemes.

And the cuts, cuts, cuts are not above criticism when the actual structural problems are not addressed at the same time. Revenue has to be significantly addressed through tax review of those who do not pay enough, those who minimise tax.

The Conversation today has published an apology for the flawed modelling on University Fees, and has adjusted their figures. Wouldn't it be lovely if Abbott and Hockey would do the same thing?

Alert moderator

Chris L:

30 May 2014 7:04:23pm

A good point Judy. The Conversation has always seemed dedicated to facts and reality. The correction and apology they published actually reinforces their reputation for accuracy.

Alert moderator

30 May 2014 2:10:48pm

DaveP:

Total agree, well said.

Alert moderator

Apologist:

30 May 2014 9:04:39am

You need to realise that we need to put the inner city types back in charge of the country. Inner city types never cheat on their taxes or use negative gearing. They are smarter than everyone else. They care for the environment, asylum seekers and our children's future. In short, they are just morally and intellectually superior to you. Just get with the program and put the inner city types back in charge where they rightfully belong.

Alert moderator

WA Ideas:

30 May 2014 3:12:44pm

Are you saying that there are no farmers or country people that have investment properties or use family trusts to run their businesses?

I can assure you there are many!

Alert moderator

Albo:

30 May 2014 4:04:05pm

Yep !

We have seen what the "inner city types" have done just being in charge of the inner city !

Have you ever tried to visit inner city Sydney from the suburbs where most of us live ?

The "inner city types" have ensured you wont be having a good time, whether you are trying to get to work or just trying to have a night out ! They have turned our workplace and entertainment centre into their own personal "castle keep" !

And they have all the answers for us, just as long as we keep well away from them ! How can we afford to let them be in charge of anything else ?

Alert moderator

Sir Robert of Lindsay:

30 May 2014 6:56:18pm

Instead of putting thoughtfull, intelligent and caring people into office, our swinging dis-interested voters put in PUP members who don't even have enough intelligence to know how our parliment works let alone understand the legislation.

And now they want us to pay for them to have "advisers" because they are too stupid to understand what is going on.

Watch Abbott bend over backwards to them now they have the balance of power. This will be like the bad old days of Harradine holding the country to ransom, except on steriods.

Alert moderator

phi:

'If the Coalition wins a second term - and post-war history suggests a conservative federal government can expect at least three terms and possibly up to nine - deregulating the industrial relations system will undoubtedly be next on the agenda.'

when someone is serious in saying Abbot will win at least the next 3 elections, and can win up the next 9, I would doubt their accuracy.

the way the polls are going, he wont win the next one, let alone the next 9

Alert moderator

barsnax:

30 May 2014 10:03:01am

The conservatives may win the next election but it's debateable as to who will be leading them.

As for IR reform the way Abbott has already lied to get elected, it wouldn't surprise me if this were to be put on the agenda next week let alone next term.

Alert moderator

PW:

30 May 2014 10:03:17am

"the way the polls are going, he wont win the next one, let alone the next 9"

Betting markets are much better indicators than polls. Betting markets have the Coalition at \$1.60 and Labor at \$2.40. They know how voters forget.

Alert moderator

Algernon:

30 May 2014 10:29:54am

Yep this far out from an election those odds tell me that Labor is looking good PW. At his point the Tories hould be at \$1.10 or even shorter. If the next opinion poll show a further erosion of the tory vote then I would expect the LNP price to lengthen. If a Double Dissolution was called then I'd expect the LNP price to collapse.

Alert moderator

The Skeleton Inside:

30 May 2014 10:40:23am

Ha! I think this post demonstrated the point of the article perfectly!

Alert moderator

v:

30 May 2014 11:31:33am

Laughing,

"the debt time bomb will continue to provide budgeting problems for decades to come."

Labor had a plan for dealing with the collapse of the international economy, and had considerable success in insulating Australia from its worst effects. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Australians are still working in jobs that would have disappeared had the government simply sat on its hands or adopted a pro-cyclical "austerity" approach. These hundreds of thousands of workers continued to pay tax, continued to spend their discretionary income, and did not require unemployment benefits. As a result our budget stayed healthy, unlike Greece's, which adopted Hockey's pro-cyclical "austerity" approach.

In September 2013, treasury and the PBO released their projections (PEFO) of the future performance of the economy, based on the fiscal settings then in place. They showed that debt at the time was slightly below \$200 billion and would peak at just over \$300 billion. According to treasury's analysis, GDP growth would average at around 3.5%, providing healthy revenue streams to the government that would easily fund its commitments and ensure a return to surplus many years before most of our competitors and peers.

Earlier this year, treasury and the PBO issued updated projections (MYEFO) of economic and budget performance, this time based on the pro-cyclical fiscal settings imposed by Mr Hockey on the economy. Although exactly the same "model engine" was used, the figures that popped out were quite different to those in the PEFO, and showed a marked deterioration in the outlook, with peak debt almost doubling to over \$600 billion, growth slowing to 2.5% (30% reduction) and the return to surplus delayed by many years.

This is not surprising. If you put beef into a mincer, you get minced beef. If you put pork into a mincer, you get minced pork. The mincer hasn't changed, just what you put into it. When treasury put Labor's counter-cyclical fiscal settings into the mincer, a positive economic outlook was produced. When they put Hockey's pro-cyclical settings into the mincer, a bleak economic outlook was produced.

Hockey can defuse the "timebomb" that he has created with his pro-cyclical settings, simply by reverting to Labor's counter-cyclical settings. But then he would have to admit error and, even more embarrassing, admit that his opponents had it right all along. While this would be a no-brainer for a normal adult, it is an insurmountable hurdle for an intellectually and morally bankrupt Tory narcissist like Hockey. Australia will pay dearly for Hockey's immaturity.

Alert moderator

Alpo:

30 May 2014 12:19:08pm

Brilliant analysis "v", a must-read post for everyone supporting the current Government's policies. I would only like to add that the Budget from Hell derived from the consequences of Hockey's pro-cyclical modelling, is going to impose REAL not "modelled" PAIN on REAL not "modelled" PEOPLE. That's exactly what a majority of Australians are realising right now, and those who voted for the Coalition at the last Federal election are deserting them - and also the Coalition Premiers in the States - in droves.

Alert moderator

Serendipitous:

One of the most thoughtful posts ever.

Thanks v for putting into words what I've thought to be the case but couldn't express half as well.

I agree with Alpo. Your analysis needs to be published and read widely.

Alert moderator

a happy little debunker:

30 May 2014 1:54:30pm

V,

As you have suggested - Nothing of substance had changed between The PEFO and The MYEFO.

However a wildly different outcome is reported.

Could it be that the underlying assumptions in the MYEFO are conservative? Even more so than the PBO (that became so used to over egging the Labor omlette)?

The PBO that Labor kept telling us - was totally wrong in their forecasting of revenue & growth, after the fact.

Following 6 years of wildly overly optimistic Labor assumptions that lead to a worsening budgetry outcome each and every year (increasingly - totally disconnected to any temporary effects of a GFC). A prudent government would choose to be more conservative in it's assumptions.

Your 'time-bomb' suggestion would lead us back to a Wayne Swan promised solution - NEVER, EVER delivered.

That's the real problem with conservatives - they tend to be conservative!

Alert moderator

v:

30 May 2014 4:42:04pm

hld,

"As you have suggested - Nothing of substance had changed between The PEFO and The MYEFO."

Nice try, but no cigar, I am afraid.

In fact, I said nothing of the sort. What I said was that the "model engine" used by treasury and the PBO was exactly the same for the PEFO and MYEFO. And this means that they used exactly the same "underlying assumptions" (actually, we call them "rules" in the systems game, but that is beside the point).

But this does not mean that nothing of substance changed - quite the opposite in fact. The previous government successfully managed the collapse of the global economy through the use of counter-cyclical fiscal policy. This means that the government intervened in the market by injecting liquidity into the community to maintain demand for goods and services in the domestic economy. It worked because by injecting liquidity in the community and maintaining economic activity at healthy levels, the government ensured that it continued to receive relatively strong flows of revenue. It was this ability to maintain strong revenue flows that led the international ratings agencies to upgrade our credit rating to AAA at a time when they were frantically downgrading countries that had taken the "austerity" approach dictated by neo-liberal ideology.

When the government changed, Mr Hockey changed our fiscal settings from counter-cyclical to pro-cyclical. As a result of this FUNDAMENTAL REVERSAL of fiscal policy, the fiscal outlook changed.

As I said in my previous post, if you feed a mincer with beef, it will give you minced beef. If you feed it pork, it will give you minced pork. If you put counter-cyclical settings into a fiscal "model engine", you get projections of stability and prosperity. If you put pro-cyclical settings into the same engine, you get projections of decline and stagnation.

The underlying assumptions were the same - it was the inputs that changed, and it was Mr Hockey who changed them.

"That's the real problem with conservatives - they tend to be conservative!"

I couldn't agree more. Conservatives are conservatives because they don't understand how chaotic systems, like economies and societies work. While they are the ideal candidates for menial tasks not requiring deep thought, analysis or honesty, they should be kept well away from positions of responsibility. Hockey and Abbott are all the proof that anyone needs.

Alert moderator

Waterloo Sunset 2014:

30 May 2014 7:37:24pm

In your 4yth paragraph, you just described the stimuli that all countries enacted.

True to form, once bitten by the bug for getting rid of our savings, The ALP dished out another splash, including 12.7 billion cash, for Ozzies earning less than \$80,000. \$3.9 billion for insulation too, amongst other things.

Turns out it was a waste of money. We need it now.

Alert moderator

Rae:

30 May 2014 5:13:58pm

Well said v.

Keynes had a term for this. He called it 'muddled thinking'.

He believed that if we could eliminate 'muddled' thinking in economic matters then we could allow the management of material welfare to run and concentrate on the truly important 'problems' of life and human relations, and questions about the universe and everything.

He declared that economists are the "trustees, not of civilization, but of the possibility of civilization."

A total lack of any real understanding of how the economy operates is evident in this first LNP budget.

Alert moderator

Sir Robert of Lindsay:

30 May 2014 6:59:49pm

"Hockey can defuse the "timebomb" that he has created with his pro-cyclical settings, simply by reverting to Labor's counter-cyclical settings."

Oh, this you can lay money on, V

It'll happen just before the next election

Alert moderator

Harquebus:

30 May 2014 11:40:43am

Actually, it is peaking crude oil production that is creating problems globally. Business, unions, Labor and Liberal all failed to factor this observation which, will cause even greater problems as time progresses.

Alert moderator

V:

30 May 2014 12:13:58pm

Harquebus,

"Actually, it is peaking crude oil production that is creating problems globally."

Well, you are correct in suggesting that oil features rather prominently in our current economic difficulties, but you are barking up the wrong tree when you say that it is all about "peak oil".

Our current problems can be traced back to 1974, when the oil-producing nations of the Middle East stood up as a unified force and demanded a better deal from the multinational oil corporations. Up until this point, the western economy had been coasting on cheap oil and effectively wasting the huge opportunity created by the post-war reconstruction boom to strengthen our civil society and economy against exactly the sort of threat posed by the OPEC embargo. Social-democratic social policy and Keynesian fiscal principles had kept western societies and their economies stable and productive since the Great Depression, but a failure to nationalise significant national industries meant that control of the world economy remained in the hands of multinational corporations, rather than devolving further to the people of

12/06/14 1:43 PM

In 1974, the world economy was struggling with an oversupply crisis that had been growing for quite some time, but dirt-cheap oil from the Middle East was keeping it afloat. In 1974, the oil producing nations pulled the plug on cheap oil and demanded a fair price, causing the international economy to collapse and allowing the totally discredited "neo-classical" economists to re-badge themselves as "economic rationalists" or "neo-liberals" and reduce discussion of the economy to mere accountancy.

We have had 40 years of neo-liberal domination, and we have had at least 35 years of steep decline in civil rights, living standards and economic efficiency. The two are linked, and it is the domination of the neo-liberals that has allowed corporations to endanger the viability of life on this planet by heavily polluting OUR atmosphere with CO2, overfishing and polluting our oceans and turning vast tracts of previously fertile land into deserts.

"Peak oil" is simply another negative side-effect of letting neo-liberal ideology replace sound economic reasoning in the corridors of power.

Alert moderator

Harquebus:

30 May 2014 2:34:17pm

Not so v. Crude oil production and the economy are joined at the hip. Also, the price of crude and the price of food travel in lock step.

BTW: Peak oil in the U.S. was 1971, the beginning of credit fuelled consumerism from that of savings fuelled consumerism.

Alert moderator

v:

30 May 2014 4:58:44pm

Harquebus,

"BTW: Peak oil in the U.S. was 1971" and the US economy continued to prosper until 1974, when it fell in a heap as a result of the oil-producing nations finding a common voice and demanding a fair price for their oil.

I agree that oil and economy have been inextricably linked since Churchill's fateful decision to fuel Britains new "Dreadnought" class battleships with oil instead of coal (because he hated and feared British coal miners - his own compatriots). But it was always going to end in tears, and the decline of capitalism, which began in the 1890s, was only delayed, not arrested, by the arrival of dirt-cheap, seemingly limitless supplies of energy.

World War One, the Great Depression and World War Two were all the direct results of the failure of capitalism. The 20th Century was by far the most bloody and disastrous centuries in human history, and this cannot be viewed in isolation. It wasn't bad luck, it was our dogged insistence in persisting with an economic system that was already past its use-by date.

"Peak oil" presents us with a real challenge, but it is one that we would have had to face at some time regardless of how conservatively we used our limited oil reserves. It certainly has been hastened by our ridiculous habit of burning oil for energy (the least productive use of oil known to man), but we would have got there eventually no matter what we did. Our real failure is in not recognising it as a problem early enough and failing to develop replacement technologies with sufficient urgency. And, again, capitalism is the culprit. Oil is a source of immense political and economic power because of the scale of industrial undertakings required to turn oil into useful fuel and to distribute this across the world. The corporations who use this immense power to ensure that the market serves their needs rather than ours, are unwilling to surrender this power.

Yes, peak oil is an important consideration, but, in many ways the problems associated with it are symptoms of the failure of capitalism. Oil kept capitalism going for a century longer than it should have survived. "Peak oil" simply means that there is nowhere left for capitalism to go, except into history.

Alert moderator

don't believe the media:

30 May 2014 11:55:06am

Laughing, i'm trying to work out how unions hurt the lower paid. Howard's agenda to crush the unions hurt and his use of racism as a vote winner converted them anyway.

Alert moderator

Ursus Augustus:

30 May 2014 12:04:14pm

The author of this piece is simply a peddler of propaganda, that is what he does for a living, except he uses a bunch of euphemisms to put some lippy on his pig. The article reflects that using a Sydney class envy euphemism as its central motif ("North Shore"). That said, Laughing, you are spot on. It is just a risible bit of 'sexed up' drivel, contrived to get a spot at the Drum methinks.

Alert moderator

Rhonda:

30 May 2014 5:33:52pm

Still trying to push the LNP spin Laughing? YOU might be laughing, but very few others are as a result of this dishonest government we now have. They got voted in on lies and now they are lying that they lied!!

Years ago Tony Abbott was impressed/influenced by Bob Santamaria's right-wing preachings. Devout Catholic, BA Santamaria has been described as religious zealot, reactionary, the master of anti-communist propaganda, a very dangerous man.

Following Santamaria's death, Tony Abbott stood in Parliament and paid tribute, describing him as "a philosophical star by which you could always steer" and "the greatest living Australian".

It doesn't leave much to the imagination which path Tony is taking us on. I'm not laughing and unless you are one of the very wealthy ones who will no doubt go on to bigger and better things, I doubt if you will be either, under the governance of Abbott and his

Alert moderator

awake:

30 May 2014 8:18:27am

This article is one of the most frightening pieces of journalism I have read in some time.

It is frightening because it is true - I too come from the North Shore of Sydney born, raised and lived there for thirty years.

The North Shore is not as Abbott believes - this person does not understand the common man at all. He has been born, raised and lived in a semi religious and pseudo upper class bubble.

I don't want Australia to have another George W, we need a strong, honest man or woman who can rise above the BS and spin and get on with a fair cop for all of us. Whether we are Westies or North Shore.

Can we please just vote him out.

Alert moderator

Algernon:

30 May 2014 9:32:49am

I too grew up on the North Shore and couldn't escape the place quick enough. More balance where I now live in Bennelong. I follow the Sea Eagles not because I live there but because my father worked with many of the team and I was allowed into the sheds at the end of the home games.

On the Western suburbs being the heartland well thats almost a silly notion. People in Western Sydney by and large are better educated than those in the eastern half. They may not be welded onto Labor like they once were but they can smell a shonk and will take the appropriate action next time.

People on the North shore vote Liberal because that's what they do. Give them the viable alternative instead of a the fatalist approach they take and things might be different. State wise, Labor has held North Shore seats and almost knocked others off but generally only for a term. They prefer a solid independent if they do change.

This Abbott is a different creature all together. Doesn't understand the common person, Isn't really North Shore other than his snoot school education and is a product of the hard right conservative born to rule. The reality is that he's a one term PM. I cannot recall a government as bad and as incompetent as this. Even the Billy McMahon government was better than this lot.

The Western suburbs is gone for the Liberals next election as is the Central Coast. Its all of their own making.

Alert moderator

Ben the lawyer:

30 May 2014 10:24:49am

'The Western suburbs is gone for the Liberals next election as is the Central Coast.'

12/06/14 1:43 PM

Definitely. The western suburbs will totally vote for a party arguing for weaker borders and a carbon tax. Take that to the bank with you.

Alert moderator

MT_Syd:

30 May 2014 10:49:39am

Western Sydney voters are more worried about how much it will cost their children to go to university, and about paying more for fuel, and i cant see them taking too kindly to being lied to.

Every trip to the doctor will be a little reminder of Abbott's lies

If the coalition wants a chance at another term it will need to have a leadership change

Alert moderator

Brian V:

30 May 2014 11:00:22am

"Weaker borders and a carbon tax."

I think the records stuck records stuck hahaha... but I guess you are right - they will vote for a party that lies lies and lies and brings in great big new taxes..... hahahaha

Alert moderator

Dave:

30 May 2014 11:08:40am

"The western suburbs will totally vote for a party arguing for weaker borders and a carbon tax."

I think you'll find the Family Tax Benefit changes will be a decidedly more unifying issue than any beat up talk-back radio can manage.

But go right ahead believing that the next election will be 2013 all over again and see how far you get.

Alert moderator

KevinS:

30 May 2014 11:02:14am

Awake and Algernon. Thanks and I agree whole heartedly. Hopefully you see my comments. Sydney's West and North, East and South are not what is portrayed. The fact is you will see what you want to see in a community when you allow stereotyping to be the judge.

Sadly, this postcode and school tie agenda is being played out in Tasmania as well.

Alert moderator

Albo:

30 May 2014 4:42:11pm

Come the time of the next election, the people of Western Sydney & The Central Coast will still fondly remember the incompetents that created all the budgetary mess, and who still have no clue how to fix it, that's why they deny there is even a problem. They saw how well these incompetents managed the boats ! They remember how dysfunctional they were tearing each other apart in the Parliamentary soap opera that they have now brought to their Opposition performances, and it will be very easy for these Westie electorates to give the incumbent government another nod just for trying to do something to fix the mess that the other mob created, and who would surely just make it worse if put back in the House !

A comfortable Coalition win is on the cards !

That "unelectable Abbott", now the "one term Abbott", should move easily to the "surely not another term Abbott, what's wrong with voters" mode , here at the Drum !

Alert moderator

30 May 2014 5:21:46pm

Algernon:

Please Albo be sensible for once and treat the West of Sydney and the Central Coast as intelligent people they are. They don't like being lied to on multiple fronts. They don't like the fact they will cop the brunt of Hockeys horror budget, they might remember that it was Labor that managed the economy and kept them in jobs during the GFC. The only people that think that there was a budgetary mess are the Liberals and their cronies. No credible economist backs that assertion.

Gee Albo they only have to look at the state Liberals and ICAC with the conga line of Liberals fronting the commission. Look at the Central Coast every member fronting it. Look at the member for Dobell, look where here money came from. Almost makes Thompson look like a saint.

Look at the last parliament will we and all the legislation that was passed. Lets look at this current lot who with a favourable senate and a leader with all the negotiating skills of brick can't get anything through. If we want soap operas look at the current lot 12 points behind and getting worse by the day.

The LNP is a one term government unless they do something about their leader. Lets remember Labor lost the last election themselves, the electorate didn't like Abbott then and they like him a whole lot less now. I think they can see the mistake that's been made and will correct that next election.

Alert moderator

30 May 2014 7:04:43pm

Sir Robert of Lindsay:

"On the Western suburbs being the heartland well thats almost a silly notion. People in Western Sydney by and large are better educated than those in the eastern half. "

Sorry. I couldn't get past this sentence without laughing.

You obviously haven't ventured further west than ANZ stadium for a Swans game, have you?

Mt Druitt, Blacktown, Cranebrook, Airds, Raby? Ever heard of these areas?

Alert moderator

Tom1:

30 May 2014 10:17:49am

awake: You comparison of Abbott with Bush is fairly accurate. Bush was a born again Christian. (I suppose that means realising the true facts of life, and then finding God just to be on the safe side.) Whereas Abbott is still deluded. Other similarities are incoherent mumblings and not being across his policies, with a little bit of chauvinism thrown in. (Women doing the ironing)

I personally think this Government is doomed. One of the biggest determinants of this reflection is Michael Kroeger also believing it, as he virtually announced of Sky News last night. Kroeger is one of the Libs most manic supporters, and it seems that even he has given up hope.

Just as a point of interest Julie Bishop thinks Africa is a Nation. She said so today, to a gathering at the Crown Plaza when musing whether this is really China's century. She said 'What about other nations like India and Africa. The listeners must have been enthralled. The point being, can we afford to be ruled by Abbott and what he has a front bench of this calibre. Of course he uses the word "Calibre" to describe the women who then thought deserved \$75k for having a baby.

Alert moderator

Harquebus:

30 May 2014 11:38:03am

There are more poor people than there are rich. The Coalition losing the next election is a good bet.

Alert moderator

v:

30 May 2014 1:14:48pm

Harquebus,

"There are more poor people than there are rich."

This is only a significant factor if people vote according to their own best interests, and this rarely happens, because of a thing called "populism".

People who are poor usually wish that they weren't. Some people who are poor interpret their poverty as an injustice imposed upon them by someone else, who is therefore to blame for all of their problems.

And this is where populism comes in. The goal of the populist is to divert attention well away from the real causes of poverty and disadvantage, and to substitute these with "scapegoats". If you can convince poor people that union bosses are responsible

12/06/14 1:43 PM

for their poverty and unhappiness, you can divide and isolate workers, rob them of their strength and personal dignity, and they will thank you for it provided you do something horrible and public to the scapegoats. Punishing the "offender" becomes more important than dealing with the problem, and the populist's mission is a success.

Sometimes populism results in a loss of some social amenity, an increase in social inequality, degradation of human rights and so forth, which can be repaired later by a reforming government. But every now and then, things get out of control and produce historical disasters like The Holocaust, the Balkans War and the Rwandan Calamity.

The Tories have always relied on populism, but it use by Howard and Abbott has taken it to new extremes that threaten the long-term viability of our democracy. Rejecting this corrupt and destructive tactic would make us a stronger and more prosperous nation.

Alert moderator

Harquebus:

30 May 2014 2:37:42pm

Political popularism doesn't alter the fact that, political and economic ideologies have run head first into physical realities. No politician is going to be popular making promises that are physically impossible to keep. That is the new reality.

Alert moderator

v:

30 May 2014 5:21:59pm

"political and economic ideologies have run head first into physical realities"

No Harquebus - capitalism and neo-liberal ideology have run into physical realities. But my point is that they had already done this by the 1890's. Since then, capitalism has been nothing more than an animated corpse. But chaos and systems theory gives us a far better understanding of how the real economy and our society work.

There is no need to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Liberal democracy and capitalism have failed. We should move on. And this is where our understanding of economies and societies (built on the work of Adam Smith and Karl Marx) becomes vitally important. We have no choice but to change the way we run our economy and society, but we do have a choice of what sort of society and economy we build. And that is what we should be concentrating on.

Alert moderator

DCO:

30 May 2014 3:23:29pm

V,

I agree with your position on populism, but I think another mechanism is also in play. Neoliberalism relies on a simplistic vision of 'winners' and 'losers'. The idea is to make it easy for the winners to strip assets and wealth away from the losers, by removing protections usually provided by strong government. Hence

the endless calls for small government, the removal of regulatory bodies and the attacks on defences such as unions.

Usually neoliberalism uses shock and awe (a formal element of Friedman economics) to create the conditions that allow the changes to occur. For instance, in Chile, one of the first candidates, there was a right-wing coup. The various Bush's had war, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction etc. Thatcher had the Falklands and mining unions. Howard had Iraq, and then we got those terrifying 'boats'.

People in a neoliberal context automatically divide themselves into winners and losers. The winners are generally prepared to support the process, while the losers oppose it. The trick then is to persuade people who are actually losers, that they are winners. If you can convince enough so that you maintain a majority, then you can keep the process going, while maintaining a source of people to rip off.

Howard's aspirational battlers were the losers who he convinced were either already winners or could become winners by working a bit harder and supporting the right wing.

There comes a point though where neoliberalism collapses, because it does not generate wealth, it simply redistributes it. In fact it destroys wealth because no investment in the future, such as infrastructure, is undertaken, as opposed to asset-stripping.

Also a risk is that those who thought they were winners now realize that they're bearing a disproportionate burden, ie they're doing someone else's heavy lifting.

I think that's just about where people have got to now, in the western suburbs.

Alert moderator

30 May 2014 4:51:46pm

Albo:

"If you can convince poor people that union bosses are responsible for their poverty and unhappiness, you can divide and isolate workers, rob them of their strength and personal dignity, and they will thank you for it provided you do something horrible and public to the scapegoats."

And if you can convince poor people that business and employers are responsible for their poverty and unhappiness because they might have more than you, so you have obviously been exploited and abused, then you can divide & isolate workers & keep them totally dependent on your promise to provide for them because you care, at least until the money runs out !
Then of course they will be on their own !

Alert moderator

30 May 2014 5:11:01pm

v:

"And if you can convince poor people that business and employers are responsible for their poverty and unhappiness "

This is easy as it seems and the mere fact that business and employers ARE responsible for their poverty is no help.

You see, there is a little thing called "hegemony" to contend with and, in capitalist system, those who control the popular media hold hegemony. At the moment, hegemony in Australian culture is held and exercised by foreign interests whose aims and objectives are contrary to the best interests of working Australians. But they have a loyal deputy in Tony Abbott, who was carefully chosen for his total lack of independent thought and willingness to do or say anything in his pursuit of power.

When George Bush's father and maternal grandfather wanted a loyal deputy in Germany during the 1930's, they chose a similar little megalomaniac as their deputy. When the US wanted to destabilise Iran by having Iraq attack it, they chose another little man called Saddam Hussein to do their dirty work.

They were able to get away with it (in the short term) through the use of hegemony, and in all cases, populism was the vehicle.

Alert moderator

the yank:

30 May 2014 8:19:40am

"looks set to Americanise Australia" ... THAT statement nails it for me and why I have a lot of trouble with Abbott.

I've seen and lived through doing things the 'American way' and I've come to the clear belief that Australians do it better, much better.

I don't want to see 25% of those that work living below the poverty line while the top 1% laugh it up.

I can't see Abbott winning a second term mainly because he is unable to engage with not only his fellow LNP members, but the opposition and the people at large.

He may or may not be a nice guy in private but is perceived as a person that doesn't listen and is inflexible. He can no longer be kept under wraps like he was during the election. And unless he is struck by the lightening blot of empathy he will remain aloof and out of touch.

Alert moderator

Kerrie:

30 May 2014 9:15:51am

Abbott's also untrustworthy and doesn't have the interests of ordinary Australians at heart according to opinion polls.

Alert moderator

Realist:

30 May 2014 9:42:35am

Of course that statement "nails it" for you because it suits your distorted world view. It doesn't matter whether the statement has any truth in it or not.

Just as we saw on another thread. Whether you have enough or not is irrelevant. Your criticism is fuelled by whether someone else has more than you. Just old fashioned envy and greed.

That is why you fail to critique the figures being bandied about and are frequently sucked in, the distortions feed your perspective.

If you read a little wider than the Drum you would find that much of what you feed on is just manipulative pap. But some people like being manipulated don't they?

Alert moderator

Mark James:

30 May 2014 10:10:07am

Realist, a couple of points:

A view is not necessarily "distorted" just because it does not accord totally with yours.

People are quite able to support the idea of equality of opportunity without being necessarily envious. Even institutions such as the IMF, for example, are now (belatedly) admitting that rising inequality poses a threat to sustainable economic growth.

It's curious, though, that you would throw the charge of "greed" at those whose preference is for a more equitable world while ignoring the drivers of inequality (the Gordon Gekkos, the tax evaders, the corporate libertarians, the Tories and the global wealthy elite) whose motto is "greed is good."

Alert moderator

the yank:

30 May 2014 10:55:48am

Unable to argue against what I said you make a personal attack.

I often quote from a variety of source material, lately from the AFR (Australian Financial Review) but over time from US, UK and other sources. What media outlets do you use to help you define your views?

I've also lived in, besides the US, Canada, Britain, and Denmark.

Yes, not having Australia develop into another USA does nail it for me. Do you want us to follow the path of the USA? If so why?

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Alert moderator

thinkandthinkagain:

30 May 2014 11:12:30am

And your sweeping generalisation that anyone who does not like the direction this country is being steered in is somehow struck with 'old fashioned envy and greed' speaks volumes about what you value.

I think you will find that many people do not care about keeping up with the Jones's and simply just want to have an affordable life for themselves and their family in which they don't have to be plagued by constant debt and struggle despite every effort to work very hard.

The fact that a considerable portion of people voted for PUP last time around suggests your argument that people resent the rich on the basis of them being rich is nonsense.

If the average person who is doing everything they can to manage their own lives has roadblocks thrown in front of them and has the existing social structure eroded which has the effect of sabotaging their efforts for independence, you should not be surprised that people will strongly dislike the government who seeks to erode that structure.

I find it completely bizarre that people will argue that it's the countries 'freeloaders' that are upset by this budget. Conservative ideologues have tried to illustrate protesting students as dangerous socialists who violently insist on handouts from the government in the form of education. Nevermind that these people are trying to fight for their right to become qualified independent taxpayers whose skills benefit the country but are instead being construed as crazed bludgers for political ends.

Perhaps your argument of greed and envy should apply at least equally to the palpable hatred of people on welfare in this country. The government and the media have no problem claiming such people are freeloaders and bludgers whether they are disabled, students or unemployed and like to tar everyone with the same bludger brush. It's a bit rich (pardon the pun) for the wealthy to be claiming victimhood and class envy when this budget is clearly about targeting the poor.

Alert moderator

Realist:

30 May 2014 4:14:29pm

"speaks volumes about what you value."

Ahhhh! Actually I spend my time doing what I value - charitable work for those far less fortunate than you and in fact, any other Australian. People who know real poverty rather than just whinge about it and have none of the safety nets you take for granted.

Anytime you want to do likewise and make a real contribution, come and have a go.

Any Australian who sees themselves as poor is just demonstrating envy and greed. The average Australian is among the richest ten percent in the world. Check the figures and consider helping those less fortunate than you before you whinge about how much you have.

Alert moderator

thinkandthinkagain:

30 May 2014 6:55:17pm

Yes, it makes perfect sense for you to make assumptions about the personal wealth and social endeavors of others on the basis of views expressed here.

You seem to forget in your last comment you were defending Australia's richest on the basis that people who called out stark inequality were merely being envious of them.

So if i am following correctly, the richest are the good guys whose actions should not be questioned, but people you perceive as middle class ought to be ashamed of themselves for having too much compared to the impoverished in foreign countries? What are you tripping on?

Perhaps you don't realise how many of the richest corporations in the world like to outsource labour and exploit the impoverished in the third world for their own profits.

Nevermind the bleeding obvious though, the creation of a new underclass in Australia will be another impoverished group that perhaps you can go and pride yourself on saving with your charitable efforts. Or is living on the street in Australia gravy compared to living on the street in a foreign country and thus not worthy of your concern? The homeless in Australia simply don't know how good they have it I assume.

Good luck saving the world and attempting to abolish sovereignty while you're at it, because clearly it is futile to discuss and construct domestic policy without factoring in every other global social issue afflicting humankind.

Alert moderator

Mark:

30 May 2014 11:43:55am

You're not a very good realist. I agree with the yank, I don't want Australia to renege on the social compact we have to smooth out social inequities in areas like health and educations. It's not envy or greed that drives me, as I'm very fortunate in life and already have plenty. I'm not seeking to have more for myself, I want a more equitable distribution and I'm prepared to pay more of my income/wealth to achieve that. Your slur of envy is not based in my reality but is more likely to be your own reality of an unwillingness to be part of a "Commonwealth" of Australia.

Alert moderator

Harquebus:

30 May 2014 11:35:12am

12/06/14 1:43 PM

On this occasion TY, I agree with you 100%.

Alert moderator

the yank:

30 May 2014 11:59:37am

oh happy days.

Alert moderator

Harquebus:

30 May 2014 4:20:35pm

You've gotta get lucky sometimes.

Alert moderator

Merlin 23:

30 May 2014 11:53:23am

Regardless of anybody personal view of Abbott, the budget that was delivered is required to correct the structural issues we are experiencing with our economy. Yes I concede there is no budget emergency, but the government can't keep on delivering deficits or we will turn out like the US.

Could the budget be better? - sure it could. The paid parental scheme be abolished or at least based of the average wage. Maternity Leave for Public Servants should abolished so they can access the same system.

Finally - the former government must accept a fair whack of responsibility for the way they things are.

Alert moderator

GraemeF:

30 May 2014 1:06:53pm

But all the nasty cuts to the poor etc, do not retire the debt. They balance off the billions that are going back to the big polluters, miners and wealthy mothers.

The Coalition is planning to retire the budget just as fast as Labor planned but the Coalition just expect the poorest to do all the heavy lifting.

Alert moderator

Daniel:

30 May 2014 2:04:09pm

Assuming that massive savings (or increased revenue) were essential why is it the poor, unemployed, disabled paying the highest price.

Nothing done about tax dodged, or negative gearing, or various forms of economic rent. Cuts to a wide array of services, massive redundancies in the public service and a healthy dose of bashing the poor.

All while funding school chaplains and fighter jets.

Government could have done what they said they would and shared the heavy lifting

but they didn't.

Plenty of ways to save or raise money that would have been much fairer.

Alert moderator

Jungle Boy:

30 May 2014 2:44:23pm

Since you admit that there are "structural issues", then you need to blame not only the former government, but the one before that, the one before that, and the one before that. And so on.

The ageing of Australia's population has been known for decades.

It's not something that suddenly occurred during the Rudd-Gillard governments.

Alert moderator

GraemeF:

30 May 2014 1:03:15pm

The US is seeing levels of poverty not experienced since the 1960s.

That is right wing economics. People working two full time jobs and still not having enough money to house, feed and clothe their families.

In the US 95% of economic gains since the GFC have been sucked into the parasitic maw of the top 5% of the wealthy.

That is what our right wing brethren in Australia wish for us. They are a bunch of wealth groupies. Groupies are never respected in the morning.

Alert moderator

TC:

30 May 2014 4:29:40pm

What rubbish Yank. We are not following the American way, we are doing it the Australia way, a nice in between ground between socialist Europe mired in debt and stagnation and the USA which has only just introduced the first step in universal health care. Australia has always been a nation of lifters, hard workers with an opportunistic mindset to work hard and make their own luck but we are turning into a bunch of whingers who want endless handouts and spending of public money. This is not the way to prosperity or happiness.

Alert moderator

GraemeF:

30 May 2014 6:10:20pm

Have you compared the US debt to ours recently?

Alert moderator

Albo:

30 May 2014 4:57:13pm

Yank,

You mean we are about to become obsessed with Hollywood, Disneyland, grid iron, basketball & baseball ?

Alert moderator

Oaktree:

30 May 2014 8:21:29am

If this Coalition lasts more than one term, I would be most surprised. Do hope you are wrong, Nigel! North Shorians and City Types will not enjoy what will come if the safety net develops large holes.

Alert moderator

Desert Woman:

30 May 2014 9:03:33am

Oaktree, if this lot get their way, there won't be a safety net. The poor and the sick? It's all their fault isn't it? Bashed up by your man? You must have been asking for it. And so it goes. I just hope that this early warning of where we are headed is enough to dissuade even the most rabid of these types from the belief that they will somehow escape Tony's knife. They won't.

Alert moderator

The Other John:

30 May 2014 9:28:46am

What a load of dross, DS.

Newsflash for you and for the author: there are a lot of people right across Australia, who are in full support of the policies that Abbott and Co have brought forward so far. Many of these people are too busy working hard or running their own businesses or farms to spend time winging about "whether someone or other has more than them".

Perhaps the author could have a lesson about our history which shows that many Australians are not born into wealth, instead they work damned hard to become financially independent. And those who do have every right to be dismissive of those in society who are capable of doing more, but choose not to be bothered.

Alert moderator

Desert Woman:

30 May 2014 10:13:52am

Got it. The world is really divided into those who have worked hard and the bludgers. The rich worked really hard to be that way, the poor didn't. Therefore, it's all their fault and they shouldn't whinge. Isn't that what I said?

Alert moderator

Graham H:

30 May 2014 11:49:13am

No DW

For some - You can work really hard and be poor.
You can bludge and be rich.

You can work hard and be rich. But that is not acceptable for most on the Drum.

And you can bludge and be poor. These are the ones some of us don't care too much about.

Alert moderator

Desert Woman:

30 May 2014 2:28:46pm

Graham, I read many different views and opinions on the Drum, some seem more stereotypical than others but I have never seen any concerted or strongly advanced views that becoming rich through hard work is unacceptable. Also, there maybe a few poor bludgers out there but never in my long life have I managed to meet one yet.

Alert moderator

The Other John:

30 May 2014 10:30:46am

If you are asking "Do I think that as a society we can do more to instill in our youth the drive and initiative to help them to be their best?" Then the answer is YES.

If you are asking if I think enabling 15 year olds, who hates school, to leave and access welfare immediately, is helping to set up another generation of welfare dependency, then the answer is also YES.

If you are asking "do I believe that many able bodied unemployed in Australia could do more to find meaningful work" then again, the answer is YES.

Why are you opposed to helping our young people make better life choices at important stages of their lives?

Alert moderator

Desert Woman:

30 May 2014 11:11:59am

No TOJ, I am not asking you any of those questions. We have many young people out of work through absolutely no fault of their own, for the simple reason that there are more job seekers than there are jobs. Kids who are learning, and constantly applying for anything at all, and they don't even get the courtesy of a reply. You think taking these kids off the dole is magically going to make jobs appear in front of them?

Alert moderator

Scotty A:

30 May 2014 1:43:37pm

John no one is against that. What is being argued is the policy to achieve it. Have we come so far down partisan lines that no one can remember what a policy debate looks like? Its exasperating!!

Alert moderator

Tom1:

TOJ. I see that Abbott, Hockey and Co have you convinced that the nation abounds with losers and bludgers, and they deserve no pity.

Newsflash for you. There are millions who 40 or so years ago were in full employment and remained so, mainly in the same job until they retired. In doing so they helped to build up the wealth of the country. After all the entrepreneurs cannot exist without the labor and wherewith all to be successful. Some now receive a pension, or part pension.

Because successive governments has stuffed up our finances, starting with Howard with his profligacy, and then with Rudd in trying to combat the GFC, and now Abbott after years of running down our economy the catch cry is "Our children and grandchildren should not have to pay"

So now Abbott thinks it is ok to hit these same people, pensioners, and lower and middle income workers to a disproportionate degree compared to those on his income.

And you get off on insinuating that the budget cuts are aimed at Those that are capable of doing more but cannot be bothered."

This Government continually sends confusing messages. We are to believe that Pyne is coming up with a higher education system that will mean University access for all. He then says that these same students can earn over a million extra in a lifetime because of their degrees. If this is the case there seems no excuse for expecting the lower and middle income classes to fix the so called "Mess" now.

The "Mixed message" syndrome afflicting this Government seems to be why it is in such disarray that even the faithful are turning against it.

Alert moderator

Rae:

30 May 2014 5:58:31pm

They will very well need an extra million to cover the interest bill as it rises.

The question is then "who ultimately pays for all these extra millions?'. There has been no discussion on limiting the costs of privatised Universities.

Alert moderator

MT_Syd:

30 May 2014 10:53:58am

Tell me John, does the unemployment rate go up and down because people become more or less lazy from time to time?

Or is it because of the number of jobs available?

For example, in the early 90's was there a big epidemic of laziness sweeping the nation?

And the high unemployment in Europe and the US since the GFC was about a sudden massive increase in lazy workers?

Alert moderator

The Other John:

30 May 2014 11:10:21am

Another newsflash for you, MT. We are not in the 1990's and we are not in the US or Europe. You keep saying the economy is humming along really well, and the reality is there is almost full employment in some areas of the country, but no one to do the work.

There are plenty of young Australians who could do more for themselves to find work, and that is my point, we are letting them down for life by not encouraging them to make better decisions at key points in their lives. You want to make welfare a career choice, fair enough, but I think our society has far more to offer, and the real rewards come from hard work, volunteering back to your community and taking responsibility for your own future and teaching these same lessons to your children. You on the other hand want someone else's earnings to pay their way for life. I just don't understand how that is not robbing our kids of their potential.

Alert moderator

MT_Syd:

30 May 2014 11:49:16am

Admit it John, unemployment is a function of how many jobs are available

The surfing dole bludger is a bit of a myth. Living on the dole is excruciatingly hard. Very few people want to be on welfare for any length of time.

Yes, some areas have very low unemployment. But for a school leaver the unemployment level is generally quite high. The reason is that there aren't many jobs for inexperienced workers - employers feel no responsibility to train people any more.

If you really want to ensure the next generation are hard working and entrepreneurial then what you should be aiming for is more jobs, better education and less debt. Pretty much the opposite of this budget.

Alert moderator

Tiresias:

30 May 2014 11:40:03am

@The Other John

News flash. Across Oz the LNP vote is down. Abbott's personal rating is as low as Gillard's was at her worst (this even after Gillard was harried and pilloried by some MSM and Abbott has been supported and spruiked by the same MSM).

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As for reading widely, one does not need to go far. The Drum has made some telling points against the Coalition. Look also at the many independent media outlets and their connections with social media.

Meanwhile, across Oz is not necessarily the same as West Sydney plus North Shore plus Inner City.

Alert moderator

The Other John:

30 May 2014 12:23:22pm

And what of the individual's responsibility to FIND a job, MT?

I run a business, with prominent street frontage and for all these unemployed school leavers who cannot FIND a job, I have not had one person walk through the door with the initiative to ask whether there is any work going, or if they could get some experience via some part time hours to prove themselves. No, we just need higher educated people to supposedly walk into a senior management position when they are ready, but only when they are ready.

I want all young Australians to know the reward of hard work and contribution to society through volunteering and a sense that we all owe a lot more to society than the other way around, and more and more degrees will not alter the fact that most jobs are never advertised, so why sit around waiting for one to come along? Is that what they teach at uni? Society OWES you a job, you just have to wait for the right one to come along?

You dont create incentive or a work ethic by enabling welfare dependency for early school leavers, MT, no matter what your conscience is telling you.

Alert moderator

MT_Syd:

30 May 2014 12:55:43pm

Well John,

young people today are sensible enough to know that they are far more likely to get a job by looking at who is advertising than by walking into random businesses.

But either way, the fact remains that the unemployment rate is determined by the number of jobs available.

Cutting dole payments to zero forces people to make bad choices, and places a higher burden on their families. So for kids with parents who have plenty of money this policy will have little effect, but for those without they are much less likely to be able to present themselves well, or afford the transport to get to an interview, or even afford to buy food or pay rent.

Alert moderator

Daniel:

John, if an enthusiastic young person had walked into your business enquiring about work would you have given them a job?

If you did would that meant that a would later advertise for less staff having already found them?

It's musical chairs. Telling the poor its their fault for not running fast enough doesn't help. If we have 9 jobs and 10 people the slowest person is always going to miss out. If everyone speeds up there is still one missing out.

Reality is working hard isn't always enough and the same amount of work might give one person their own business and another person minimum wage. Life isn't fair.

Many people working harder than I do earn less than me.

These policies don't change the employment rate it just shuffles the winners and losers around a bit while making it much tougher for the losers. Expect to see more poverty, family violence, divorce, and homelessness.

Alert moderator

30 May 2014 3:57:00pm

Tom1:

TOJ. I guess That Hockey, Cormann and the rest of the brains trust on the lib front bench use the same methods of assessing the numbers of people seeking work as you do. IE. How many young people go into business premises who are not seeking workers and ask for a job!

With the education they received under labor they actually know and in fact are required to go to employment agencies. Your system may be appropriate for young people in the future once Pyne has his wicked way with the education system, and he has dumbed down the population.

You should really be sending a message to Pyne that when the extra 67,8 and 9 year Olds are forced to stay in the workforce longer it will be more difficult than ever for the bright young educated to get jobs. Oh I forgot, there will be no longer any bright young educated because it will have become too expensive. Our Universities will be educating the young of the wealthy overseas who can afford it.

Alert moderator

30 May 2014 7:34:47pm

the egg:

Well TOJ I did just that when I arrived in Australia 30 years ago and at the only interview and response I got the advice given was to get on a plane and go back to the Uk as the place was bugged !!! I have repeated the exercise several times since as after having been made redundant twice (no payouts in the private sector) and the result has always been the same. Not today thank you !! I didn't go back though as I felt the place I left was even more bugged and we had three kids who deserved a future and I still had (blind) faith in Australia. I no

I now believe that this wretched ideologically - driven government is going to preside over a tsunami of unemployment and poverty that is beyond the belief of most people.

Welcome to the new Argentina !!

Alert moderator

The Other John:

30 May 2014 3:21:39pm

"Young people are smart enough to know..."

But the facts say something different, MT. The fact is that a high number of jobs are never advertised. And small business owners have a long history of providing opportunities to younger workers who are willing to have a go. So how smart are those who do not go out looking for a job, really?

And, yes, if an energetic, enthusiastic school leaver came into our business seeking an opportunity, I would most certainly try to make room for them in the team and give them a chance to prove themselves. I have given freely of my time to the kids of relatives and friends on how to approach job interviews, editing resumes and conducting themselves in a manner which shows they are willing to work. These kids were not ones to sit back and wait in line, and a couple of them already had volunteer work on their resumes to show that they were not just sitting around since leaving school.

I cannot understand this argument from bleeding heart leftists who think that 16 year old kids in the middle of puberty are making the right decisions by leaving school to go straight onto youth allowance? It beggars belief that such counsel is being offered to your young people at one of the most crucial times in their lives.

Alert moderator

Ben the lawyer:

30 May 2014 10:15:07am

'Bashed up by your man? You must have been asking for it.'

That's a pretty silly comment.

Alert moderator

Johnny2:

30 May 2014 10:43:15am

+1

Alert moderator

Desert Woman:

30 May 2014 2:39:16pm

Ben and Johnny2, I'm sure some men think it is a silly comment. It is a sad fact of life that some men still don't recognize sexism. While I am sure we are making progress in this, we still have a long way to go and that is exactly what your

Alert moderator

Ben the lawyer:

30 May 2014 3:16:22pm

'While I am sure we are making progress in this, we still have a long way to go and that is exactly what your comments prove'

How so?

Alert moderator

The Skeleton Inside:

30 May 2014 3:22:46pm

BtL

I think that's the point. It is a silly comment, but it is made to highlight the 'blame the victim'/'blame the poor' mentality that is at the heart of this budget.

Alert moderator

Desert Woman:

30 May 2014 4:34:02pm

Skeleton, my comment certainly illustrates the blame the victim mentality of the budget but as for it being silly, it seems silly only to those who do not recognize that this common defence for assaults on women is also sexist. You can deny that such a defence is used but that would certainly be to deny reality.

Alert moderator

Eric:

30 May 2014 10:42:14am

I cannot believe the amount of partisan pap that is put on this site.

When a single mother (with 2 chld) can get up to 55k p.a. tax free through the welfare system then something is terribly wrong. It takes 3 people on average earnings to 'pay' the benefits this single mother gets and the irony is for her it is net of tax which means the 3 workers take home less than she does. So wrong. The Australian today shows this case study to be a real case scenario.

Alert moderator

MT_Syd:

30 May 2014 11:41:43am

OK - looking at the article in the Australian the biggest items are the childcare payment and the single parent payment, rent assistance and family tax benefit part A & B.

And it appears there is no support for the family from the father of the children.

It is assumed she is undertaking work or work related education for at least 27

It seems to me that if you started reducing the amount then this woman would have little option but to quit whatever training she was doing because she wouldnt be able to afford to have children looked after.

The reality is that if you live in a city and have small children then you really will be homeless unless you have substantial support

Alert moderator

Realist:

30 May 2014 9:51:48am

It will last more than one term. Already the faux outrage is being revealed for what it is - serial distortion of the facts, setups by activists, manipulation by the ABC journalists with an axe to grind.

The Conversation has now confessed the 'modelling' used to show a student would need 43 years to pay back HECS was a gross distortion. Labor has been forced to admit its brochure claiming cuts to the pension is just lies, John Faine has been revealed as a cynical manipulator and the so called pensioners that claimed they would be so hard pressed have been revealed to be life long Labor activists.

Situation normal really. No focus on the good of the country, just lies, distortion and spin to promote Labor's self interest.

Meanwhile, the economy will recover, people will realise their pension hasn't decreased, families will note that 40 cents per week tax on fuel is insignificant.....the government will recover in the polls.

It is Labor that is risking a whiplash when people realised just how cynically they have been used.

Alert moderator

emess:

30 May 2014 11:02:26am

Realist, I find young tongue in cheek style amusing.

Fancy, people being angry when they realise that they have been used. Who would have thought it?

Fancy, an opposition being negative. Who would have thought it?

Fancy, supporters of one political party being outraged by the other party using the same tricks. Who would have thought it?

Keep it up, I need a good laugh now and then.

Palmer for me next election the way things are going.

Alert moderator

KevinS:

30 May 2014 11:27:25am

Realist. You are not fully correct. A young graduate, particularly those who to attend university must live away from home has more than a HECs debt that accompanies their degree/s. High costs of rent and other expenses cannot always be met with casual/part time work. Many young graduates starting out also have large credit card liabilities as well. Their fault alone for their financial circumstances? No it is not. Tell me if you've ever received a speeding or overdue payment fine? Have you just accepted fault or protested that it wasn't your fault, there were extenuating circumstances?

I know debt and circumstance and fault are not clear cut because apart from my business, I volunteer as a debt counsellor and have also seen social impacts of family breakups or other dysfunction even in higher income families. Start seeing the reality that is 2014 Australia away from your selected information streams. Speak to a few charities/food banks. You may be surprised where they supply food hampers to.

You are correct. The Coalition will win a second term. Not because it will deserve to based on performance and lies so far, but because it will know when to soften the purse strings. Your claim about self responsibility, individual contribution and fault will be true in that case. Voter stupidity results in contempt from our politicians and that includes the ALP, Greens, Palmer, Family First, liberal Democrats as well and is on the cards to continue.

Alert moderator

IanM:

30 May 2014 8:24:24am

"Unless the Inner City Types can rethink their political priorities and get the Westies on side..." Not going to happen. Inner city types have their own priorities and most of those are directly opposed to those of "Westies". And isn't just issues like immigration, which has been a working class ALP priority since it created the White Australia policy to protect jobs a hundred years ago. We also see it in policy areas like energy where middle class Greens benefit from subsidies effectively funded by working class Westies paying higher electricity bills.

There is no indication yet that Bill Shorten's ALP has learned the lesson of recent federal election history. The only time the ALP has won a clear majority in a federal election in the last twenty years is 2007, when the major issue was industrial relations, something of fundamental concern to "Westies". Without that kind of support, the ALP will remain in opposition.

Alert moderator

jusme:

30 May 2014 9:06:04am

If you're talking about solar there, it has been taken up more in the west than inner city. Probably because of more roof space, bigger concerns over money etc.

Lefties are against further urban sprawl. 'Westies' should embrace that because it means

12/06/14 1:43 PM

I'm all for incentives to make another city way up north and entice people out of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. I'm against doing it so Gina can pay no tax, or less than she does. North would be the perfect place to start a permanent and large refugee processing/training etc centre. Among other industries. That's jobs for the now ex-westies.

You're entitled to your opinion, but I think the left and the 'west' have more in common than not. The problems arise when a certain 'news' source misleads the westies constantly. Such false propaganda is undemocratic. Maybe now that like 'workchoices' the coalitions ideology is unspinnably against ALL working class, whether inner city, westie and if left to run its course, anti-small business too.

Alert moderator

Stuffed Olive:

30 May 2014 9:17:19am

The Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 came about under Edmund Barton, Protectionist Party. Not the Labor Party. As I understand it though I think all parties supported it.

Alert moderator

Algernon:

30 May 2014 9:51:53am

That is correct SO, these Tory types are so good a rewriting history to suit their own needs.

Alert moderator

Machiavelli's Cat:

30 May 2014 9:58:56am

That would be the Barton (Protectionist Party) minority government which was able to form government with the support of the Australian Labour Party. It was opposed by the Free Trade Party. The White Australia Policy (enacted by the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901) was a core Labour policy until Whitlam. It was Whitlam who enacted the final dismantling of this policy in 1973 (the Menzies and Holt governments had been slowly dismantling it since 1949).

Alert moderator

A happy little debunker:

30 May 2014 11:15:39am

Machiavelli's Cat,

'Menzies and Holt governments had been slowly dismantling it since 1949', but only after it had been further strengthened and reinforced by Labor's Curtin and Chifley governments.

Alert moderator

Stuffed Olive:

30 May 2014 12:05:24pm

Yes, and it had a lot to do with World War II. Then a bit later, with the gradual easing of the policy we got this: "The revised Act avoided references to

questions of race. Indeed, it was in this context that the Minister for Immigration, Sir Alexander Downer, stated that 'distinguished and highly qualified Asians' might immigrate." That came after a few hundred Japanese war brides were allowed to stay in Australia. It is indeed an interesting history which neither party would want to revisit. All in and then all out. So give it up Happy.

Alert moderator

IanM:

30 May 2014 10:09:58am

Quite right Stuffed Olive, but the policy developed from ALP principles and was enacted by a coalition including the ALP.

The Barton Government, which won the first elections following Federation in 1901, was formed with the support of the ALP. That support was contingent upon restricting non-white immigration, reflecting the attitudes of the Australian Workers Union and other labour organisations at the time. The Attorney General Alfred Deakin removed some of the more overt racism in the bill, in part over the objections of the ALP who wanted more direct methods of exclusion than the dictation test.

The Holt Liberal Government effectively dismantled the White Australia Policy via the Migration Act, 1966.

Alert moderator

CJB22:

30 May 2014 8:24:27am

Hypocrisy will be the undoing of Abbott.

Alert moderator

Alfie:

30 May 2014 8:43:21am

Maybe. It won't be Shorten.

Alert moderator

Lucy (original):

30 May 2014 9:36:00am

Oppositions don't win elections.
Governments lose them.

The 2013 election was won, essentially, on the slogan "Kick this mob out". It was not won on Abbott's never existent popularity.

The next election will be lost by the LNP on the sentiment "Kick this LNP mob out". It will not be won on Shorten's popularity. All Shorten has to do is to be recognised as a brand name.

Alert moderator

Alpo:

30 May 2014 9:43:07am

Alfie, if Abbott became PM, even Jack the Stripper can.... let alone Bill Shorten. Don't hold your hopes on a Labor or voter rejection of Shorten, it just won't happen,

especially now that Bill has truly energised himself. Try to find some other excuse to cheer yourself up. For instance, look at the opinion polls.... oops!

Alert moderator

The Other John:

30 May 2014 9:29:33am

It most certainly wont be Shorten. He has enough problems of his own making outside of Canberra. Stay tuned.

Alert moderator

Where's Tony:

30 May 2014 10:05:29am

I'll be watching with interest, TOJ but could you please give us a clue on what to watch for. Maybe Alfie could help you with this.
In the meantime I am watching with interest the current investigation into Tony and The Whitehouse Institute, looks pretty dodgy to a great many folks out there. The NSW ICAC is another pretty interesting subject right now, as is the RC into Union corruption which will drag a few in politics and Big Business into its net. My point being, be careful what you wish for, filth abounds out there in Planet Privilege.
As Malcolm T said yesterday, Peppa Pig is one snout we don't mind having in the trough, wonder who he was referring to!
Corruption, rorting, favours for friends and family and so on are never in the interest of the Nation and should be dealt with by the full extent of the law wherever it is found. Anyone who supports those who are seen to be committing such acts is either complicit in those acts or just plain blind.

Alert moderator

Serendipitous:

30 May 2014 8:28:49am

"...deregulating the industrial relations system will undoubtedly be next on the agenda." Yes.

If you want to know what a second term Abbott government will do, just listen carefully when he says what "this government" will not do, such as chase HECS debt when someone dies.

Note: He doesn't say "No government I lead will chase down HECS debt". It's "This government won't ...".

The sneakiness in this (or the alarm bell if you're on the receiving end) is that by saying THIS government won't chase HECS debt past death, Abbott leaves open the possibility (probability?) that the next Abbott led government will.

And so on and so on.

Listen very carefully peeps.

Alert moderator

TGU:

30 May 2014 8:42:13am

S, Why do you have a problem with the government taking part of a deceased persons estate to pay back a HECS debt? It's standard procedure in the commercial world that this sort of thing happens and that is how it should be.

Alert moderator

din:

30 May 2014 9:13:14am

and how many people die with outstanding hecs debt that can be paid out by their estate ?

Alert moderator

The nose:

30 May 2014 11:07:20am

Din, does it matter how many people die with a hex debt? I don't see your point. But I do know if a person has a \$100,000 debt and dies, the house which he or she may have bought with their partner, will be sold to recover the debt!

Alert moderator

BJT:

30 May 2014 9:14:43am

Well, I'm assuming that if they weren't able to get a job high paying enough to start paying back the HELP, then the Uni didn't meet it's expectation that 'you get a higher paying job if you've been to Uni'. The commercial world also has 'Satisfaction or your money back'.

Oh, also the obvious 'It helps the country to have doctors, nurses, scientists...etc', and you get the benefits of these professions, so help subsidize them.

We all pay tax and the resulting money goes to make the country a better place. Help the young, or they will remember when you're old and vulnerable, and won't help.

Alert moderator

Jungle Boy:

30 May 2014 3:01:03pm

"Well, I'm assuming"

You could also assume that the student bailed out without bothering to finish the course.

Or you could also assume that the student had some good North Shore connections, and was thus able to conceal his true income or otherwise evade paying the loan back during his lifetime.

I'm not saying I agree with the idea of these loans, I'm just saying your assumptions are pretty narrow.

Alert moderator

Rae:

30 May 2014 6:25:02pm

Yes I wonder if with tax minimisation you might avoid ever having to pay back

the HECS.

You know the income tax return with so many deductions the income is minimal.

Alert moderator

Stuffed Olive:

30 May 2014 9:36:22am

More to the point is why DON'T you have a problem with the notion of taking it and changing the deal. Next step you will be in favour of government taking everyone's estate to pay for primary and secondary education, road building, trains and god knows what else. It's just disgusting.

Alert moderator

TGU:

30 May 2014 12:13:25pm

SO, once again an hysterical reaction to someone who disagrees with your socialist beliefs. If you agree to pay back moneys owing for a item or a service, in this case a university education which should earn the recipient a good living, then the expectation is that the money will be repaid, if there is sufficient funds in your estate after you have died then the person or persons owed the money is entitled to seek payment. If education was free then it wouldn't be a problem but it isn't. As far as the rest of your rant goes the government is already taking money off us all for those things you mentioned, it's called income tax.

Alert moderator

donkeyvoter:

30 May 2014 9:37:30am

While we are at it, why not add pre, primary and secondary education to the HECS-HELP scheme with any remaining debt taken from superannuation and death duties. User-pays is standard procedure in the commercial world. It's how it should be.

Alert moderator

rabbie:

30 May 2014 9:48:42am

TGU, there shouldn't be a HECS debt in the first place. University education for Australian citizens should be free. It is a social investment in our people.

Alert moderator

Alpo:

30 May 2014 9:52:41am

TGU, education should not be seen as a commodity in the way a piece of jewellery is. You buy an expensive jewel, the jewel is your property, you enjoy it. If the jewel is so expensive that you borrowed money to buy it, and you pass away before finishing repaying your debt, the jeweller has the right to recover the outstanding money. With education you already return the investment back, even before reaching the threshold of personal income to officially start repaying the debt, by paying your taxes. Hence the fundamental difference between the two.... Oh, of course there is also the issue that education should be seen as a right not as a commodity at all, but I won't waste

Alert moderator

DaveS:

30 May 2014 9:59:43am

Well gee lets see shall we...

1. Its NOT the same as a loan for a house. Its a loan for someone to improve themselves -ie pay more taxes- whilst have the double whammy of improving society -eg doctors , nurses etc
2. If you die younger as a result of your work , your family is deprived of an income source AND now has to pay back the \$\$ for their untimely death.
3. If you live till the average age you should have it paid off , if not , why not?? Accident , illness or injury? Who cares , you say? A lot of us who believe in the fair go do.
4. Insuring a loan for education is extremely difficult and expensive.
5. You can salary package your HECS or HELP , like other loans so paying off is easier and quicker , eg no need for death tax.
6. In Australia we don't believe in punishing the dead. We have the fair go , where if you haven't paid it off we wont lump your kids with the bill.*

* This of course doesn't apply to the economy. ;)

Alert moderator

Where's Tony:

30 May 2014 10:12:29am

I don't argue for or against this TGU, both sides have a point worth considering but why Oh why does the minister for Education and the Treasurer keep making such announcements without first talking to the PM.

Gonski, Public Funding of Budget Advertising and now this have all seen the PM coming out and contradicting his senior ministers. Surely adults would have communicated their views to each other before opening their mouths in public.

Alert moderator

Tom1:

30 May 2014 4:36:48pm

WT. That is part of the ploy don't you see. These hair brained comments are posted by Tony's ministers, and then Tomy comes along, and plants his imprimatur according to the public response.

Alert moderator

Serendipitous:

30 May 2014 10:22:27am

Sorry T. and the others of like mind below. My post wasn't about the HECS debt per se. It was about something much more important, viz listening very closely to Tony Abbott says and especially the subtext. The HECS debt reference was just one example. Thank you to the posters who "got" what I was saying.

Alert moderator

The Skeleton Inside:

30 May 2014 10:50:21am

Because this is not the commercial world.

Because education is an investment, not a cost.

Because that investment benefits the whole economy, not just the individual

Because it will raise very little money while causing extreme anguish

Because we are not America

Because because because!

Alert moderator

Alfie:

30 May 2014 1:22:58pm

"Because education is an investment, not a cost."

Wrong. HECS is a LOAN scheme. It is a debt that you are obliged to repay.

Alert moderator

The Skeleton Inside:

30 May 2014 3:29:13pm

I did not say that HECs is an investment, not a cost.

I said that EDUCATION is an investment not a cost.

By this I mean that it is in EVERYBODY'S interest that people get educated. Yes it is expensive. But it pays off in the end.

The reason that governments pay for education wholly or partly is because the whole nation benefits.

Therefore it is counter productive to have a policy which is a disincentive to education.

Geddit?

Alert moderator

thinkandthinkagain:

30 May 2014 11:31:12am

I wonder how many students are expected to die with an outstanding HECS debt. I would bet with these budget changes, many of the poorer students will. With fee and interest hikes and no guarantee of well paid employment at the end of the degree, higher education renders itself no more than a high risk gambol with ones future economic freedom for those who do not come from a wealthy background.

As a result, only the rich will become educated as they can pay their fees quicker or entirely up front and thus pay vastly less than poorer students will have to pay for the same degree.

End result; those with less money remain unskilled because it is completely unaffordable to become educated, those from wealthier backgrounds become qualified irrespective of who is the smartest/most intelligent individuals. Less students graduate altogether in the long run, thus driving up wages for the wealthier students who were able to graduate as their skills become a rarer commodity.

Pretty clear social engineering in my opinion.

Alert moderator

Tom1:

30 May 2014 4:28:19pm

TGU: It would depend on the circumstances, but reality suggests that not too many deceased ex students die, leaving sufficient to pay off their HEC debt.

This is a pretty mealy mouthed suggestion by Pyne and Hockey. Aiming at incidental low hanging fruit. Likely to make no difference to the bottom line.

Of course the higher hanging fruit that would make a difference is too difficult for them, and in the main would be aiming at their own constituency. The superannuation port is one and big business paying their taxes is another.

This conversation is part of the reason Michael Kroeger has thrown in the towel. Did you ever expect to see that?

Alert moderator

Kerrie:

30 May 2014 9:12:39am

Serendipitous, I think you are right. The proposed (and scrapped) HECS debt collection from dead people is significant. Based on current form, I expect Abbott or some other neo-liberal to bring it in at some point. However, I'm hoping that opponents to Abbott will make some use of the bad faith implied by this proposed change.

Signing a contract is a serious business. North shorians, and equivalents, probably understand that you can't make second business contracts if one of the signatories has shown bad faith (ie broken the implied or explicit terms of the contract). Chasing HECS debts from dead people is a fundamental breach of contract. Who knows what Abbott and his neo-liberals will suggest and do next?

I agree with the author, the challenge for politicians is to craft their message for their audience. The notion of bad faith agreements may work better for some audiences than the idea of dying before getting a chance to pay it back and leaving the family liable for your debt. It is too easy to make the second look like a scrounger.

On a related note. Have businesses realised the knock-on effects of increased HECS debts? (Ie increased training costs, possibly higher salaries for high demand graduates and workers compensation settlement amounts if the dead or permantly incapacitated worker has a large HECS debt)

Alert moderator

Diogenes:

30 May 2014 9:15:38am

At age 50 I completed my first degree, and a GradDip at age 51. It is possible I will cark it before the HECS debt (currently @18k) is totally repaid, which at current rate I will make the final payment out of my final pay when I retire at age 67.5. I see no problem the government taking any residue owing out of my estate.

When I was doing my degrees there were many , mostly females, my age, or older, doing degrees. Many(most) will not be working after they finish for many reasons (degree chosen, age, going on to study higher degrees as they are bored empty nesters etc etc) - why should they have the debt wiped out ?

Alert moderator

clete:

30 May 2014 10:03:13am

It's refreshing to read a view on this site that isn't wailing over a lost/reduced /amended tax payer funded entitlement.

Alert moderator

jusme:

30 May 2014 9:17:33am

Exactly right Serendipitous.

He's changed the "lower taxes" mantra to "lower AND simpler taxes". That's code for removing exemptions on basics like fresh food from the GST, ie: broadening it. Another certainty next term, possibly this term if the states get desperate enough.

But he won't openly take it to the election, in the leadup he'll dodge direct questions and talk about how he *had* no plans to raise the GST, and didn't. etc etc etc but how he will FIX the budget emergency (lie) as highest priority. Then after the election, if he wins, he'll broaden and raise the GST and say he never said he wouldn't.

So yeah, analyse all coalition statements and you'll find what they say CAN (and usually does) actually mean the opposite of the impression they're giving. Makes them an illegitimate government imo.

"No changes to the way HECS is recovered" (re dead students). If I read the ABC explainer right, HECS CAN be recovered from a deceased estate under current law, so under this government it will happen.

The doublespeak is strong in these ones.

Alert moderator

The Other John:

30 May 2014 9:32:00am

So perfectly Ok for other families to pay taxes on their inherited estates via capital gains tax, but inner city sandal wearing hippies who graduate at the age of 43 are not happy for their own estates to have to pay back to society what is owed? Hmm.

Alert moderator

Stuffed Olive:

30 May 2014 10:14:15am

There is no capital gains tax on inherited estates TOJ. Continue to support rubbish bubble policies from the Liberals and soon you'll be in big doo doo because it is a very smelly hole. Educating one's society is an excellent investment and it pays back

Alert moderator

The Other John:

30 May 2014 10:36:17am

Wrong, as usual, Olive. the CGT clock starts ticking on almost every asset passed to an estate or beneficiaries of a will, so tax will eventually be paid unless the asset is never sold, which is extremely unlikely in almost all circumstances.

Educating one's society is great, I agree. But why should those who do not receive a tertiary education, subsidise those who do? And lets face it, we have all seen plenty of middle aged "student activists" in the past fortnight who have never done anything EXCEPT study. When does society reap the reward of their "education"?

Alert moderator

Stuffed Olive:

30 May 2014 11:51:48am

TOJ - I have a personal experience which tells me I am right. As to the rest of your codswallop - take it to further extremes, why should I pay for all the public transport when I have none where I live? All public education ought to be free as clearly you see no benefits to society and you wouldn't give a damn is there were no teachers or nurses etc - we can all go back to bartering and hand tilling the ground. You have no idea about whether any "student activist" has worked or not. Every student I've known for the last 20 years has had a casual or part time job and studied at the same time. We reap the rewards of education every day, every week, every year. Prove yourself better than this nonsense you write and stop sending idiotic comments.

Alert moderator

Stuffed Olive:

30 May 2014 5:00:05pm

Sell it as soon as possible. Most estates would have more than one beneficiary and just want to divvy up the proceeds. No GCT is necessary unless you want to keep it for more than two years and then it becomes your investment and your decision.

Alert moderator

George Spiggot:

30 May 2014 10:23:33am

Is it just me or have you noticed that conservatives feel threatened by these "Latte sipping, sandal wearing" inner city hipsters?

Much easier exploiting the less educated.

Alert moderator

EvilPundit:

I used to be a lefty, and I voted for left-leaning minor parties and Labor for my first twenty years of voting age.

But the increasing preoccupation of the Left with divisive identity politics and political correctness drove me away. Since 1966 I have voted for small parties of the Right with preferences going to the Coalition.

Even though I would be financially better off under a Labor government, I cannot abide the hateful anti-male, anti-white, anti-Australian agenda of the modern Left. It's become about hating people like me, and while that goes on, I'm on any other side.

Alert moderator

Julie:

30 May 2014 9:06:08am

So what do you do? Everything you post you rail against women & political correctness. As for 'anti white' wow. You talk about hatred; you are a good example of it. Also whenever someone as extreme right wing as you claims they 'used' to be left I personally find it impossible to believe.

Alert moderator

EvilPundit:

30 May 2014 9:27:09am

@Julie - I don't "rail against women" - I critique feminism, which is an ideology, not a person.

As I said, these ideologies of feminism and political correctness promote hatred of men and white Australians. Accordingly, I oppose them.

Alert moderator

Julie:

30 May 2014 10:15:17am

I saw your post in the Tara Moss thread where you railed against privileged Western women. That is not hatred of feminism; that is hatred of women. You said:

Western white women, especially those gifted with good looks, are the single most privileged social group in the world - bar none.

They are at the top of society, and everything is designed to exalt them and make life easier.

I am tired of the constant feminist whining about imaginary oppression that emanates from the elites of our society

You need to look very closely at yourself. Your bitterness & your hatred of women is in every single thing you post. I am not touching the 'white Australians' stuff.

30 May 2014 11:04:01am

ex-servicewoman:

Well said Julie! He's been called on it! You are not the only person who has noticed EP's not-so-subtle comments regarding women on many other threads. He would probably despise a woman like myself, who dared to enter a previously male only domain in my ADF role & then, shock horror, had the audacity to report abuse dished out by my male counterparts. White women are not privileged, we are routinely discriminated against, harassed in our workplaces & then labelled for speaking out.

Alert moderator

30 May 2014 1:48:52pm

Dave:

Whenever anyone complains of misogyny there are a littany of responses crying "that's not misogyny".

I've taken to asking okay, then, give us an example of a misogynist and what misogyny looks like and I'm yet to receive a single tangible example. I have had responses of "well labels like that aren't helpful" though!

Alert moderator

30 May 2014 2:37:47pm

a happy little debunker:

Julie,

Do you know what the Halo effect is and how it works?

Can it be argued that someone that gains social, economic and employment advantage from that effect, is one of the oppressed, rather than the privileged?

Very few people ascribe any Halo Effect to Gina Rinehart (excepting maybe a reverse effect), and EP has at times defended her with supportive comments and has never (to my observation) made a disparaging remark.

It is simply demonstrated that without the benefits of the Halo effect - Gina is far more 'oppressed' than Tara!

Alert moderator

30 May 2014 9:08:57am

Frank of NQ:

EvilPundit. I could not agree with you more. This article is about stoking the embers of class warfare. I grew up in the west and had many friends on the north shore as well. I can see no value in the leftist view of begrudging a neighbour's good fortune or successful achievements or because they live in a house with harbour views.

Alert moderator

30 May 2014 9:46:13am

Desert Woman:

Frank, perhaps you should read the article again? It is not about people, it's about

12/06/14 1:43 PM

world views. What worries

me is not whether some people live in big houses with harbour views but that some of those who do are seemingly doing their best to stop others improving their housing or even affording the houses they now have.

Alert moderator

Frank of NQ:

30 May 2014 1:23:32pm

I see Qantas is recruiting for their call centre in Tasmania where first home buyers can get a \$30k leg up into their home. That should bring you some joy Desert Woman.

Alert moderator

Desert Woman:

30 May 2014 6:08:07pm

Are they being paid \$30K just to go there? What's the 30K deal about?

Alert moderator

Frank of NQ:

30 May 2014 6:36:04pm

First home buyers grant in Tas is \$30k.

Alert moderator

Desert Woman:

30 May 2014 6:52:12pm

Thanks Frank. No relation to Qantas then.

Alert moderator

Rob:

30 May 2014 7:31:10pm

Where is the \$30k coming from? Govt debt? TutTut"

Alert moderator

sdrawkcaB:

30 May 2014 12:00:37pm

Yes Frank.

And I still remember my reference to my nephew having to get his mum to pay for the age loading on a truck insurance bill so he could start work and your reply along the lines of let him take a out a loan because these costs of doing business are not the employees problem.

Not only are you against begrudging good fortune of others, you are happy to screw the new starters into the dust so they do not impose on this good fortune.

Alert moderator

jusme:

30 May 2014 9:23:24am

I'm a white hetero male too, but I see their demands less of hate, but more of 'equal to

You're right about the 3rd one though, under the direction this government is taking the country I AM anti-Australian. It's only been for the last 6 months, and most likely to last another 2.5 years because these blokes can't keep ANY promises (DD). Besides the lies and rorts, they're destroying the Australia I loved (6 short months ago) economically and morally. So you tell me, what's there to support at the moment?

Alert moderator

Robert:

30 May 2014 9:27:47am

Ah huh, so let me get this straight. You were a "lefty" but have voted conservative for 50 years because people (lefties presumably) pick on you because your male, white and Australian.

Oh, and you acknowledge you would have better off under a labor government.

Is that what you're telling us?

Really?

Alert moderator

EvilPundit:

30 May 2014 10:16:50am

Whoops, typo. I meant to pust 1996, not 1966.

Alert moderator

meredith:

30 May 2014 9:33:05am

EvilPundit, what are you scared of? What is wrong for showing respect for the marginalised in our society. I don't believe the left is "anti" male, white etc. The reason for politically correct language is so many of us spoke with a lack of respect for the individual we were speaking to. Unfortunately there are some in society who need to be pulled up short when they use disrespectful or racist language. Otherwise what do we have - individuals on public transport and elsewhere thinking they can verbally and physically abuse those that may be of a different race or gender. What you are saying is you want the right to be able to say and do exactly what you think and feel and you don't want someone criticising you for it.

Alert moderator

The Other John:

30 May 2014 9:36:38am

That is because most lefties are bigots, Julie. Anyone who opposes their views is condemned as 'far right' or 'racist' or 'misogynist'. You display this perfectly in your response to EP.

Why can't you appreciate that others have a right to their views just as you demand to have your views heard? Neither is right or wrong, but resorting to personal abuse is now so common it is becoming intolerable.

Tracey Spicer, Marieke Hardy, Clementine Ford, Bob Ellis....this list of hateful, abusive, offensive language has become such a tirade that many many people are completely switching off to whatever the left is trying to argue for. And who can blame them?

Alert moderator

Reinhard:

30 May 2014 12:29:15pm

So if I dare criticise the small minded attitudes of sexists, misogynists and racists, that makes me a bigot?
Move over George Brandis

Alert moderator

Mark James:

30 May 2014 1:13:27pm

Come on TOJ, the abuse isn't exclusive to one side of the political divide.

You don't remember the "died of shame" barbs directed against Gillard by Jones and Abbott?

You don't remember the "Ditch the Witch" and "Bob Brown's Bitch" banners endorsed by the current PM?

You don't remember the Liberal party strategist telling voters they should be "kicking her [Gillard] to death"?

You're not able to read the condemnation in your own words "most lefties are bigots"?

Alert moderator

ephemeral:

30 May 2014 9:43:11am

I think all your "anti's" are just moving towards equality. you know like gender wage inequality, non skin colour based immigration policies, and not wanting people with southern cross tattoo's to bash people (Straalyaan mate). So sorry that your time of disproportionate advantage is ending. Poor little wealthy white man, the whole world has it in for you. Hahaha.

Alert moderator

awake:

30 May 2014 9:50:36am

Which every way the wind blows and your malaise takes you. Extreme right wing from being a leftie! Whatever made you change it is showing its petticoat in your stand against women

Alert moderator

EvilPundit:

30 May 2014 10:18:05am

Voting for the party with the majority of support in Australia is hardly "extreme".

DaveS:

30 May 2014 11:10:44am

It is if it disguised itself as anything BUT extreme pre election.
And whats with this majority clap trap? It seems to be used as an excuse for everything from genocide to raising HECS debts. This whole look at the scoreboard mentality is as dumb as it sounds. Governing a country is far from a football game and deserves to be treated on a higher level than you wish it to be.

Alert moderator

Mitor the Bold:

30 May 2014 10:12:45am

Old, spent people usually think they have more to lose than they have to gain. That's why they end up as reactionary conservatives. It's a moral failing rather than a political awakening. Welcome to the club, you'll find plenty of company among the washed-up never-weres.

Alert moderator

DaveS:

30 May 2014 10:37:12am

Umm , the ALP or Greens don't hate white people nor does it favour black , yellow , cream , the bone , ivory or beige.

It seems that way when you introduce say indigenous studies and we have never had that in schools before.

All of a sudden people say 'why study that when I was at school we didn't have that and I turned out alright'. Well guess what champ they'd be wrong , as today students study a lot more than the three r's. Heck we have calculators that have more compute grunt than Apollo 11 did , yet they yearn for past lessons to be taught.

Change has scared more people than it ever harmed.

Alert moderator

Reinhard:

30 May 2014 12:23:05pm

"I cannot abide the hateful anti-male, anti-white, anti-Australian agenda of the modern Left."

Maybe if you stopped buying into the neo-con gender war / class war propaganda you would realise that being pro-female is not anti-male and being pro indigenous people and refugees is not anti-white or anti-Australian.

Alert moderator

Steve:

30 May 2014 8:32:35am

Unfortunately, you'll be right. A fair whack of people will continue to vote against their own interests by electing politicians who do not care about them.

Abbott will bring back Workchoices; he will sell off whatever assets he can slap a price tag on; and he'll do it all while telling you that either a) he won't do it, or b) explaining how it's in your best interest to do so.

Alert moderator

Cranky Goanna:

30 May 2014 9:52:00am

"Unfortunately, you'll be right. A fair whack of people will continue to vote against their own interests by electing politicians who do not care about them". That might be from a lack of other options, than a real locked on preference though.

The Liberal party of today is far removed from the wet Liberals of my parents. Even Liberal backbenchers must be looking at this Abbott/Hockey budget rampage, and feeling no connection with it. I suspect for many Liberal Voters, they can't bring themselves to vote Labor, the Greens they see as out on the fringes, independents (mostly, I'd exclude McGowan from this) and PUP are seen as too unpredictable - they might jump anyway. So either voting informal or for the current Liberal leadership, is the only way to go for them.

Be nice if the concerned Liberal back-benchers went back to their history books. New parties like PUP forming from thin air, are the exception. They are usually formed by people already in politics. There is a screaming gap out there for a new wet, conservative party since the Democrat's self destructed. Now would be the time. By the next election they could be a significant force. Someone Dennis Jensen could go to the cross benches, and get the ball rolling. The hardline Liberals might hate him, but it would be good for Australia, the voters would have somewhere else to go, and his pride would be intact, rather than associated with the direction the leadership is taking. Plus after the election, they would be a force, rather than victims of the coming rout.

Alert moderator

Harquebus:

30 May 2014 11:31:35am

Barrack Obama recently stated that those complaining about the TPP don't know what they're talking about. I wonder why that is?

Alert moderator

Paul01:

30 May 2014 8:33:36am

Interesting read Nigel but perhaps wasted on those who have lived in the greater Sydney area.

The spivs and shonks in blue ties who get paid millions are already well on their way to their tea party utopia so worrying about another term of the Tony and Joe show is a little late.

Since the introduction of federal awards under the FWA, employees on state awards do not receive pay increases, CPI, SWC, etc until the old state award reaches parity with the new federal award.

This has been happening for about 4 years and given that inflation averages around 2.5% pa that is a 10% wage cut in real terms. Really painful from someone on \$40k when prices rise and your pay doesn't.

Although this not a problem for folks who are paid 6 figure amounts and can afford \$22,000 lunches and get the opportunity of a quiet chat with the treasurer.

The horse has already bolted and Tony now wants to chase it with a fire truck.

Alert moderator

din:

30 May 2014 9:15:19am

"This has been happening for about 4 years"

which is when labour was in power in case you have forgotten.

Are you expecting anyone to believe shorten will turn it around ?

Alert moderator

tc21:

30 May 2014 8:38:13am

If you're not wealthy & privileged, Abbot and co do not care for you. Full stop.

Alert moderator

Ben the lawyer:

30 May 2014 9:06:19am

'If you're not wealthy & privileged, Abbot and co do not care for you. Full stop.'

No politician cares for you. Full stop.

Alert moderator

tc21:

30 May 2014 9:21:50am

True. But some are more concerned with a fair society than others.

Alert moderator

Ben the lawyer:

30 May 2014 9:35:23am

'But some are more concerned with a fair society than others.'

Some are more concerned with shaping society into what they consider to be more 'fair'. I don't think we should accept that there is one acceptable definition of 'fair'.

Alert moderator

madMax:

30 May 2014 10:08:30am

Is that called "muddying the waters" so one does not know right from wrong?
Maybe you are a real lawyer after all

Ben the lawyer:

30 May 2014 11:02:21am

'Is that called "muddying the waters" so one does not know right from wrong?'

It's more a comment on how things like 'fairness' are inherently subjective and there are no black and white answers.

Alert moderator

Rae:

30 May 2014 6:55:58pm

I'm surprised Ben.

I thought a lot of law was about consensus.

Alert moderator

rgb:

30 May 2014 9:34:23am

neither do lawyers

Alert moderator

Ben the lawyer:

30 May 2014 10:04:35am

'neither do lawyers'

That's certainly true.

Alert moderator

madMax:

30 May 2014 10:04:00am

No politician cares for you. Full stop.

when i was young and dirt poor the metal workers union cared for my health and safety. They tried to make sure i was not totally exploited. They tried to provided a stable work environment. And when i was retrenched they made sure i was not ripped off.

some of the people that worked in that union when on to politics. Take a wild guess which party

Alert moderator

Ben the lawyer:

30 May 2014 11:03:45am

'when i was young and dirt poor the metal workers union cared for my health and safety.'

So that you could keep contributing money to the union, that's all.

'They tried to make sure i was not totally exploited.'

Again, more union dues.

No one cares about anyone else. It's just the way of the world.

Alert moderator

madMax:

30 May 2014 12:22:23pm

No one cares about anyone else. It's just the way of the world

we are not barbarians. We live work and play in communities that depend on people cooperating with one another. I believe that the only way forward is to care for your fellow man otherwise our standard of living might regress back to killing raping and pillaging. I bet even you don't want to live in humanities cruel past

Alert moderator

Mitor the Bold:

30 May 2014 10:14:25am

"No politician cares for you. Full stop"

Then stop voting and advocating for them.

Alert moderator

Ben the lawyer:

30 May 2014 11:04:19am

'Then stop voting and advocating for them.'

That only holds true if I accept that politicians should care for me. I don't think that they should.

Alert moderator

tony72:

30 May 2014 8:49:00am

I couldn't agree more with the sentiment that the Australian left has moved away from upholding traditional values of social decency and more towards fringe topics more like those spruiked by the greens (hence an increase in the greens primary vote over the last decade and whats gone on in the Melbourne electorate).

I've been of the opinion for some time that Labour should drop the far left entirely and move to a centerist position like Tony Blair did in the UK .Maybe even drop the Labour name to appease the centre right liberal voters and just become the Centre party. Then the Loony far right of the Liberals and the loony far left of the Greens can fight it out and middle Australia can get the Government it deserves.

Alert moderator

Ted:

30 May 2014 9:37:09am

Would it not be good if we could get rid of the loony left and the loony right. Being born on

the north shore and being an office holder in the NLP for some years, I started to change my allegiances when I concluded that the far right was a much bigger threat to this country than the remnants of the far left.

Everything I see Abbott doing tells me I was on the right track.

Alert moderator

Rae:

30 May 2014 7:05:24pm

Gosh if we could persuade the middle to come together we could have a centralist LNP/Labor Co-alition. Wow!

I actually like the idea.

I believe if long ago memory serves Britain did just that way back during the 1870's recession or a little later trade problem they had.. I might be mistaken.

Alert moderator

The Other John:

30 May 2014 9:42:51am

It worked for Hawke and Keating. And Howard never pandered to the far right as many try to argue.

Labor is now dominated by the likes of Clare, Plibersek and Butler, all of whom follow a decidedly Green left agenda. Talk about politicians out of touch with ordinary Australians. I would love to know the last time that any of these three drank a bottle of wine which cost less than \$120? Talk about entitlements, Plibersek and hubby have been ripping almost a \$million per annum off the public for years, and neither of them would have the first clue about what it takes to establish a small business or work 7 days a week with no overtime or travel allowances.

Alert moderator

Fish:

30 May 2014 9:49:13am

Couldn't agree more! Ever since the democrats imploded, there has been a gaping big hole in the centre. Labor Right is the closest, but is held back by the Left faction. Liberal have strayed way to right with Abbott and the loony Catholic frontbench. The greatest places in the world are the ones with the biggest middle class, and centrist policies. @tony, let's start the Middle Class party.

Now in my best Gladiator Russel Crowe voice.... "WHO ELSE WILL JOIN ME???"

Alert moderator

TrevorN:

30 May 2014 9:59:10am

How can the drop the name Labour (sic) when they have never had it? The Australian Labor Party has always been known under that banner and has never adopted the British Labour in their title. The ALP do not need to move any more to the centre right. The

The ALP needs to return to it's original purpose and become a truly socialist organisation with the aims and objectives laid out in it's original charter; people above profits, equity and security for all, the provision of a safe and healthy environment in which to live and work, equal opportunity, freedom to vote and access to educational opportunities for all.

Australian Labor has a good platform. What they need to do is to be able to explain their aims and objectives simply and honestly and to be consistent in their efforts to achieve those objects. Too few of the current State and Federal MP's just don't do that. The ALP should not go off on politically tricky tangents because to do so will only land them in the same pot with the tricky lying rodents they oppose.

Keep it pure; keep it simple should be their motto.

Alert moderator

Alpo:

30 May 2014 10:11:08am

"towards fringe topics"... tony72, that's what the Liberliar propaganda wants you to believe, simply because it is People from the left who, among the very many broader and fundamental issues they are concerned about (economy, industry, workplace relations, standards of living, health, education, national infrastructure, etc...) are ALSO concerned about issues that the right-wingers simply brush under the carpet following their ideological biases.

Labor should drop nothing, Labor is here to embrace everyone who has a Progressive agenda in a common will to push this country forward in economic progress, social justice and environmental sustainability. The Greens are part of this, within their own identity as a Party.

Alert moderator

clete:

30 May 2014 1:43:47pm

Come on, Alpo.

Most Labor supporters are after a free lunch. Don't give me all that altruistic, philanthropical rubbish.

I note Labor people now refer to themselves as "Progressives".

What, progressive debt advocates? Progressive leaners? Progressive thought police? Progressive union thugs?

Alert moderator

Cobber:

30 May 2014 3:36:07pm

'Progressive' sponging off the rest of us.

Alert moderator

Alpo:

30 May 2014 5:41:07pm

12/06/14 1:43 PM

"Most Labor supporters are after a free lunch.".. No, that was Clive Palmer... and Malcolm Turnbull paid the bill.

Alert moderator

Damage:

30 May 2014 3:40:36pm

Labor interested in health? \$130 million ripped out of their last budget. Labor interested in education? \$300 million ripped out of their last budget. Labor interested in standard of living? Unemployment up during their 6 disastrous years. Labor interested in national infrastructure? You mean like their \$72 billion unfunded, unproven NBN?

Great to hear Labor still wants to link with the Greens. That worked so well last time.

Alert moderator

Alpo:

30 May 2014 5:08:51pm

What a load of ignorant crap, Damage.

To Labor putting \$16 billion into hospital funding and to Labor BER and the Gonski reform in education we now have the Liberliar Government taking \$80 billion out of hospitals and schools.

To Labor brilliant NBN infrastructure for the 21st century, here we have the Liberliar slugband useless alternative: smoke signals are even cheaper, Damage, do tell Turnbull!

In 2002, under the incompetent and do-nothing Howard Government, unemployment rate reached 7%. Howard was booted out of Government and his seat of Bennelong just when his Neoliberal gift to the country, the GFC, was being delivered. In spite of the GFC, unemployment never went beyond 6% under Labor.... but it's now trending up under this useless bunch led by Abbott and Hockey, and the Budget from Hell is a perfect initiative to push unemployment even higher.

Labor and Greens are part of the big Progressive Family.... Are Palmer and Abbott even talking to each other within the Conservative Family?... How is that Budget selling activity going?

Be ready for an early election, and do keep up that spirit.... hoping that the Damage won't be too catastrophic.

Alert moderator

Moonman:

30 May 2014 8:57:20am

The Americanisation of Australia started long long ago - competition and corporatisation and individualism rule - now perpetuated by both sides of politics here. Why anyone would want to follow that model, with its massive gaps in wealth distribution, and widespread social problems of violence and substance abuse, and poor/falling/varying education standards, and money-driven and disparate access to health care, and crumbling infrastructure and bankrupt towns and cities, is a mystery to me. Really, a lot of countries do things much better. After decades already of 'cutbacks' and 'reforms' and 'restructuring' and 'globalisation' and 'closures', and all the spin etc., budget 2014 is the best our leaders can do? We're told, yet again, that we need pain and sacrifice, work harder, and other cliches, as if we've never heard it all before, as if

Alert moderator

Marty:

30 May 2014 9:47:58am

Because the average punter in Australia only sees the America that is portrayed on TV , al wonderful middle class families living the American dream , they dont see the working homeless who cant afford a roof over their heads , you dont see a sitcom about the homeless destitute fringe dwellers or a sitcom set in a prison full of people who cant afford the legal representation to get them off like the well to do can . If people saw the real America warts and all they may take a different view

Alert moderator

Fish:

30 May 2014 10:28:51am

Completely agree. I have spent a lot of time all over the States, mainly with work. There are some amazing things and then there are some terrible things.

Out of all the US cities I have been to, LA is the biggest enigma. It is so strange to walk along the streets in Hollywood, you have the ritziest restaurants and clubs in the world, with A listers rocking up in their ferrari's and Lamborghini's and yet there are multiple homeless people pushing their trollies filled with their worldly possessions right out the front, asking if you could go buy them a tuna sandwich. Never have I seen such wealth disparity in your face as that, especially in a first world nation. The Taxi dirvers all have guarded shields, and when talking to them, they all have been held up by gunpoint.

What I can't understand is why people actually believe that it is better to have a society that is like this, riddled with crime (America on average has 4x the murder rate than Australia), where people beg for tuna sandwiches in the streets, and can't go to a hospital, as long as they keep more of the money for themselves. Everything is a balance, and if we head down the path of the United States I think we have made a huge mistake for society in general.

Alert moderator

Nova4avr:

30 May 2014 8:57:24am

A very good article & one for apprehension & worry, about what Abbott & Co. will very likely do if we vote them in again.

When the CEO of BHP Billiton says that the budget is a good one for Australia, you can be rest assured that it suits the big end of town at the expense of everyone else & they got exactly what they wanted.

Why the LNP Govt. wants to Americanise Australia is something quite beyond me as their system is a glaring example of what not to do.

Alert moderator

I think I think:

30 May 2014 9:02:21am

Alert moderator

Steve_C:

30 May 2014 9:08:31 am

You wouldn't say that if you lived in certain parts of Sydney!!!

Alert moderator

Machiavelli's Cat:

30 May 2014 10:56:21 am

Sydney is the centre of the universe, just ask anyone in Sydney.

Alert moderator

Harquebus:

30 May 2014 11:24:25 am

You would if you lived in other parts.

Alert moderator

JohnM:

30 May 2014 9:02:52 am

I can't recall the ABC publishing an article headlined "Gillard free to push her western suburbs politics".

Why one attitude for one side of politics and a different one for the other? Isn't the ABC supposed to be inclusive and non-partisan? Perhaps its budget should have been slashed not merely shaved by about 1%.

Alert moderator

sdrawkcaB:

30 May 2014 9:27:21 am

I cannot recall that particular article either.

I can, however, recall IPA articles without the equivalent Communism Party of Australia counter balance.

Alert moderator

Mervo:

30 May 2014 9:32:17 am

I think John this is because the current Government's approach to anything, is so ideologically motivated and so far right in political terms. All that is fine in principle, but when it disproportionately affects the lives of so many, we start to wonder. Even many who voted for these old, male career politicians are beginning to demur. The impact on student access to higher education over the next few years is dramatic and we will see a return to the 50's and 60's when only those from wealthy families could afford a university education. With actual fees increasing as much as 60%, this will occur again. High taxation seems to be the hallmark of recent Conservative governments and in some paradox, the last 10 years has seen Labor as the lower taxing regime on the Treasury data. The imposts on single parent families, youth, the unemployed are a major twist on our national values and judgement about the worth of some groups. Clearly some people

Alert moderator

The Other John:

30 May 2014 9:49:38am

The thing I have noticed most is the ABC coverage of all things Abbott is almost exclusively negative. No surprises there, but recall that anything the ABC said negative about Rudd or Gillard was always prefaced by "Tony Abbott says..or The Oppositions claims...", which gave the impression that it was simply TA's negativity which was the problem. We now have the ABC making political comment about budgetary matters without Bill Shorten getting a mention. how is that reporting news as opposed to making it?

The ABC gave up the pretence of balance and impartiality a long long time ago. An epic fail for so many Australians whose views and attitudes are never represented by our public broadcaster.

Alert moderator

Lucy (original):

30 May 2014 10:19:59am

JohnM.

Why don't you write an article entitled "Gillard was free to push her western suburbs politics"?Gillard pushed.

Here are some suggestions to start with:

Gonski

NDIS

Price on carbon

mining tax

completion of west connex from Concord to the Sydney UBD

increased old age pension

plain paper packaging on ciggies

...

With the hung parliament, and the scandal-howling Abbott wasting time with nearly a hundred (lost) motions for the Suspension of Standing Orders, Gillard was not very 'free'.

Anyway, when you have written and submitted your treatise and had it either accepted or rejected by the ABC, you are free to comment on the ABC's attitude. If rejected you can then submit it to the Daily Telegraph or the Australian to test whether the rejection was due to bias or incompetence on your part.

Alert moderator

The Other John:

30 May 2014 10:53:58am

Wow. How many of Gillard's barrows are now fully implemented, fully funded and providing close to the benefits that were promised? Not too many.

Oh, we did get some ceiling insulation as I recall, and there was a mention of \$1,000 for an old car at one stage. What about the "end to the blame game". My favourite legacy left behind from Gillard is that our legislation is now riddled with phrases such

12/06/14 1:43 PM

Abbott free to push his North Shore politics - The Drum (Australi... <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-05-30/bowen-abbott-free-to-pus...>
as "In good faith", which will effectively keep "young and naive salary partner lawyers"
in green pastures for decades.

Bring on Gillard the witness at the RC into union corruption, and hail the ABC's ability to ignore the entire matter in favour of a cat rescue by firefighters story in Auburn.

Alert moderator

MoreJoy:

30 May 2014 9:09:56am

The way you describe "types" of people is not only demeaning but shows a snobbish and uppercrust attitude that belongs in the UK and not Australia. Class distinction it is called.

Make no bones about it, Tony Abbott will not be Prime Minister after the next election and the "Liberal types" will be relegated to the back benches again with their tails between their legs.

People of Australia are not stupid, they should not be treated as though they are stupid because after all they have the power of the ballot box to get rid of incompetent people who think they are better than most of us.

Keep up your vitriole and description of "types" because you will help Tony Abbott to leave politics and try to get his Knighthood much earlier.

As for "Americanising Australia" you can forget that idea. We are not a nation of "hav's and have nots", the idea is abhorrent to most people and what about telling us about the problems in America right now! America is a huge mess just waiting for someone to come along who can right all the wrongs and get a once great nation back on track!

Alert moderator

Martin:

30 May 2014 9:11:10am

I am a pro-gun, One Nation member. I went to the High Court twice to oppose Howards gun laws.

I would vote for the drovers dog, or any other candidate before I would vote for the LNP. No matter what Abbott does they will always be last on my ballet paper

Alert moderator

Marty:

30 May 2014 9:52:27am

I am also pro gun , I own a number of weapons , and hunt on a regular basis but I had no real issue with the gun laws introduced , I really didnt need n M1 carbine or an sks , hell if I really needed one of those to take down pigs I would really need to reassess my shooting ability

Alert moderator

Dave:

30 May 2014 12:08:24pm

Good comment Marty. Americans have a longstanding constitutional relationship with weapons unseen elsewhere in the western world. It's just weird.

Australians who are "pro-gun" as if that means that all firearms have a place in a functioning society are just plain thugs.

Alert moderator

rusty cairns:

30 May 2014 4:49:43pm

GDay Dave and Marty

The odd thing about the USA constitution rights to bear arms is that it was drawn up in a time when more people were injured/killed by using the gun as a club than the slow loaded non rifled gun barrels bullets they fired.

The guns evolved but the USA constitution didn't.

I especially like the comment that "the only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is with a good guy with a gun."

I'd like to add to that comment "the only way to stop a good guy with a gun from becoming a bad guy with a gun is to remove the gun."

Alert moderator

vocans:

30 May 2014 9:22:13am

Any exercise in glib stereotyping is unhelpful, as is an us vs them mentality, even if it is couched in terms of a political analysis of class. The writer is not solely to blame for most political writing seems dogged by blinkered perspectives of one kind or another. Just takes a look at these pages and especially the vast majority of comments. Search for truth? Not likely.

Alert moderator

George Spiggot:

30 May 2014 10:35:38am

Unfortunately the us vs them mentality is back.
The class war has been reignited by Abbott.

It didn't have to be.

Alert moderator

jusme:

30 May 2014 9:29:09am

Excellent point about the right holding America up as the role model, while the left use Nordic countries like Norway.

Maybe we should leave Australia out of it (that way we don't offend anyone) and make argue over the merits of USA vs Norway.

Almost seems unfair because as far as I know, Norway beats the USA hands down on ALL economic and social indicators. Norway is smaller so GDP won't be as large but size isn't everything, it's how well off their high/mid/lower classes are and THAT's where they shine because they're ALL well off.

Discuss!

Alert moderator

don't believe the media:

As an avowed socialist, i too hold the U.S up as a role model. Not a good one though. We only have to extrapolate a few years to see that we, too are heading for a vast gap in social wealth, a health system only for the wealthy, a broken and uneven education system to keep the proles stupid, corporate control of government leading to environmental, health and economic disaster and massive poverty and crime rates. I fear we will need a wake up call like many countries in Central and South America before we start to get politically aware and active enough to demand better.

Alert moderator

Jess:

30 May 2014 2:50:23pm

If people aren't happy with the Nordic Countries we should aim for Canada (who also beat the USA hands down on social and economic indicators).

Our social development is closer to Canada then USA and our demographic is closer to Canada then the nordic countries.

Alert moderator

Alpo:

30 May 2014 9:36:16am

Nigel, there is one thing that unites everybody: The concern for their standards of living!... The standards of living of the top 10% in the country (not just Sydney) will increase under this Government of Liberliars. Everybody else will be worse off. Among those worse off, I grant that there are probably a 20% of ideological right-wing Talibans who will always blame the Left: if they are doing OK under a Labor Government, it's just because of the "good job" of the previous Coalition Government, if they are doing badly under a Coalition Government it's because of the "mess" of the previous Labor Government.... and so on. Overall, there is a core of about 30% that ensure a permanent vote base for the Coalition. Something similar happens in the Left (ALP + Greens). So, the real battle is for that 40% (or less) in between. Those people tend to be rather pragmatists, and some opportunists. If their standards of living fall the Government is gone. No "age of entitlements is over", "personal responsibility is in", propaganda crap will be able to save the Government of the day.... This is, in fact, the scenario we are in at the moment. The People have stopped listening to this Liberliar Government, ergo, bye bye Tony!

Alert moderator

paulri:

30 May 2014 9:36:57am

What bollocks!

I like to believe that Australia is still a democracy, and not an autocracy. The party is more than one individual, as Labor painfully found out under Rudd's dictatorship, and if Abbott tries to drive a personal agenda then he won't last. He already has a few nervous nellies and dissenters on the back bench. Politicians of all stripes are poll driven, and if they start to get on the nose for any length of time then they'll realise to their detriment that their tenuous grasp on power will be short-lived (Howard comes to mind)

The other distasteful element about this article is why are we so Sydneycentric? Firstly, I'm

sure that the "North Shore" attitude/outlook is not uniquely North Shore, and secondly there is more to Australia than just "Sydney/North Shore", and that the rest of Australia should be heard too.

Alert moderator

clate:

30 May 2014 9:38:43am

"..and post-war history suggests a conservative federal government can expect at least three terms and possibly up to nine ."

Did you miss that bit? Get used to it, and suck it up.

Labors excesses and incompetence whilst in government always leads to a pendulum swing. So, if you Labor voters don't like this Abbott government, you've only got your party leaders to blame.

Alert moderator

Robert:

30 May 2014 2:59:55pm

Good point, but with literally a few months to the promised DD we may not need to "suck it up" for too long.

Alert moderator

DA:

30 May 2014 9:39:28am

'the average worker is indolent at best and dishonest at worst'

I don't see this attitude in Tony Abbott or other North Shorians; rather, they tend to be pro-workers, unlike the ALP who are more interested in looking after bludgers.

Alert moderator

JP:

30 May 2014 11:54:33am

The argument for the lazy/suckerfish worker comes from three strains of thought-bubble you allegedly hear from 'NSers'.

1. Australians are so unproductive relative to machines from the year 2100. Businesses must be suffering because workers are thus lazy, and incapable of working at twice the speed of sound. This is often cited as a 'productivity problem in the economy', with the counterargument that unbuilt mines tend to be unproductive and bring the last few years productivity measures down (people tend to spend more than they earn on a mine that isn't extracting any ores yet, for some odd reason).

2. Wages are too high, and everyone who isn't the CEO should take a pay cut/pay freeze. No further explanation required.

3. The economy, consumers and workers don't make jobs. Business owners make jobs out of thin air, and workers should be grateful for employment without pay, let alone with pay. Usually only reserved for a special kind of business owner who doesn't want to have

this view published, and often inherited their position due to circumstance. Aggressive use indicates definite window shifting rhetoric.

Whether you accept that these arguments are made for more than window shifting the media debate, and whether you accept any truth out of them is up to you.

What isn't up for debate is that some people believe that business owners and their friends see workers as little more than expenses they'd readily squish out if they could. Any accountant will tell you of the dream business with any level of revenues, with zero expenditure or capital investment per year.

Alert moderator

Rae:

30 May 2014 7:21:40pm

Wouldn't you love all workers to just go to work and home again, eating out the stored up food for about three days.

Everybody not working just stay home those three days.

Can you imagine it.

Alert moderator

Harquebus:

30 May 2014 9:52:47am

Economics is fatally flawed at its core and its growth ideology is now running head first into the physical realities our finite world and they don't like it. No amount of stimulus, productivity increases or government "savings" is going to help. Tony Abbott will fail just like Kevin and Julia failed and every politician that comes along spouting the mantra of perpetual growth will fail. Physics trumps political and economic ideology every time.

Alert moderator

Hidi:

30 May 2014 9:53:59am

Oh Whoopee Do !! So Nigel Bowen some obscure freelance journalist thinks Australia is equally divided between the Sydney North Shore and and the Sydney Western Suburbs.

Perhaps if our intrepid Nigel could hop on his tricycle and peddle over the great dividing range he would find there is more to Australian politics than NSW.

Alert moderator

Rae:

30 May 2014 7:25:19pm

He might even discover the Bogan is a river with a great many survivalists living along it's banks. They wouldn't give thanks for any part of Sydney.

Alert moderator

Terry:

30 May 2014 10:00:43am

The ALP will only return to government when it drops its obsession with minor, ornamental, unpopular or frankly loony policies to concentrate on the issues that affect the bulk of Australians. Spending thousands of hours and precious media time on same sex marriage and defending what everyone (except those who will not see) knows are economic migrants has cost it government. Mismanagement could have been forgiven, but there was no sign of apology: all efforts were spend to appease those sitting in inner city coffee shops, not those working in the suburbs.

Skating carefully around Godwin's Law, the ALP reminds me of the Red Army in 1940. Obsessed with political purity, stripping officers of insignia, appointing commissars to help command and allowing soldiers to vote for decisions etc.

Only when faced with horrendous defeats did those responsible cancel all such politically correct nonsense and concentrate on the real job.

The ALP has two years to change course.

Personally I doubt it will happen. Mr Shorten is another Party mouthpiece, unable to provide leadership. Those prepared to speak the truth have either left the Party or given up.

Faced with a lying (and proud of it) Liberal gov't and an ALP that refuses to face reality, no wonder PUP wins votes. (The Greens have reached their zenith: there is a limit to those who believe in fairy tales.)

In fact, I suspect that next election Mr and Ms Informal might win a few seats.

Alert moderator

Jess:

30 May 2014 2:55:38pm

Ironically a fair few places in the USA has used same sex marriage as a way to stimulate demand with private sector money.

Weddings stimulate pretty much every sector of the consumer economy.

Alert moderator

Kerrie:

30 May 2014 3:58:52pm

Don't assume that there are only two parties now and only two in the future because 1) there are 4 parties and many micro-parties now and 2) the Liberal party has not always existed: it could go the same way as The Country Party.

Alert moderator

Mitor the Bold:

30 May 2014 10:08:28am

People used to wonder what it would have been like if Mark Latham had got in. He was Labor's Abbott. He was aggressive and uncompromising, and ultimately dangerous. Luckily for all of us, like Palin in America, he was seen for what he was: incendiary, divisive and corrosive.

Unfortunately for us, the Right's Latham did get in - he's in charge now and is making merry with his radical, un-conservative, divisive agenda. If he survives two terms or more Australia will no longer be the Lucky Country - we'll be the Rio de Janeiro of the Pacific Rim. All gated communities and Westie favelas. Even now, who'd brave the nighttime streets of Bankstown, Penrith, Dandenong, Gosnells, Lizbeff, or Mount Gravatt. Expect more of this under Abbott/Hockey's entitlement-free (unless you're already rich) new world.

Alert moderator

Coogara:

30 May 2014 12:46:55pm

Mitor;

Interesting you admit that many suburbs are unsafe after many years of ALP government. Is this the outcome of the welfare state! We will however avoid becoming a banana republic through adequate balancing of the budget. This budget was a good start displaying a level of maturity in Abbott.

Alert moderator

Alpo:

30 May 2014 5:53:11pm

Oh dear,

Suburbs unsafe because of the welfare state? Banana republic? Maturity in Abbott?.... Seriously Coogara, have you ever considered a career change and become a comedian?... You are really funny.

Alert moderator

Evan:

30 May 2014 10:11:38am

And much of the blame rests on Keating's shoulders for creating all those Lib voting tradies.

I do think this is largely true.

Perhaps the hope is for the Greens economic policies to prevail.

Alert moderator

Rob:

30 May 2014 11:55:09am

Actually Evan they are more forward looking. fairer and sustainable policies than those of either of the other parties

In reality they seem to be the ONLY hope.

Alert moderator

Anubis:

30 May 2014 10:16:49am

One aspect of Abbott's fauxsterity budget that seems to have been overshadowed and which affects all compass points of not only Sydney but the entire country are the changes in funding for pension concessions.

Its also interesting that a question in question time yesterday on this very subject wasnt

answered by Abbott at all except for some guff about the pension increasing with indexation each year.

A quick calculation would put the increases of an end to concessions at around \$1000-\$1500 annually so unless Abbott is figuring a huge spike in inflation all concession holders, self funded retirees and non self funded retirees are looking at massive increases in almost all of their expenses and all city, suburban and regional concession holders will feel it..as will the government, eventually.

Alert moderator

TrevorN:

30 May 2014 10:18:56am

What you city and north shore types have failed to realise that the geographical centre of greater Sydney is now centered somewhere around Parramatta and by far the largest number of it's citizens live in the western areas. The time is fast approaching when the business centre will move westward too. They will have to follow the people.

Already places like Parramatta, Blacktown and Penrith (to name a few) are cities in their own right and are growing in influence.

The north shore/city mob should one day jump into their BMW's and venture to the west past the Gladesville Bridge and come and have a look for themselves instead of preaching their snotty views at us.

What western Sydney realises is that the eastern suburbs are just tired overcrowded smog laden slums destined to become a simple tourist attraction known as the "old city" and a place for the westie kids to go when they are on social study trips in their school busses.

So let James Packer and Paul Keating have the Sydney CBD and the eastern and northern beaches (good riddance) while we get on with taking over the politics of this state and Australia.

Alert moderator

Machiavelli's Cat:

30 May 2014 11:00:00am

And yet most of Australia doesn't care where the centre of Sydney is.

Alert moderator

TrevorN:

30 May 2014 12:02:15pm

So... this "rest of Australia" you mention: where is it and what do they do there?
Would we westies need a passport and a 4wd to go there?

Alert moderator

Coogara:

30 May 2014 11:46:45am

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Trevor:

Indeed, this is where the article is wrong. While north shore may be LNP heartland, its opportunity to govern lies elsewhere. To achieve government, Abbott appealed to a wide section of the community not just north shore types. Stopping the boats hit the right note with many people. Also having prudent fiscal policy was important to many people. People want stability in the economy not spending like a drunken sailor with a credit card.

That Abbott may be around for some time attests that he is offering something to people. He is certainly offering leadership unlike the vacuum that was there in the Rudd/ Gillard era. He can be defeated however by any party that can put up a charismatic leader with a pragmatic but visionary team.

Alert moderator

Alpo:

30 May 2014 5:57:25pm

"People want stability in the economy not spending like a drunken sailor with a credit card."... Actually, this is exactly what people did under Howard, and according to the Liberal mythology those were "happy days". If you could untangle yourself from this contradiction it would be much appreciated... I will skip a comment about the rest of your post, debunking nonsense is becoming a bit boring.

Alert moderator

Maynard:

30 May 2014 10:20:02am

What a lot of bilge.

If this is the level of political analysis from the ABC no wonder Bolt is seen as a dangerous right wing intellectual and The Australian a tory rag.

How about engaging with some real ideas not nonsense.

Alert moderator

ejj:

30 May 2014 10:28:52am

This article is just another form of biased discrimination.

Unfortunately this discrimination is legal as it is neither racial or sexual.

Alert moderator

Troy T:

30 May 2014 10:31:36am

Nigel, Swan and Gillard tried the same 'class war' politics, which, as you know, failed miserably. Australians simply refuse to be boxed into any geographical or philosophical box. Our society is very dynamic and we all aspire to get to any geographical location and the best we can get. We do not accept perception of such ridiculous, imaginary boundaries.

Strangely that you should 'box' Tony Abbott into a box, outside the 'common people' and didn't do the same to Kevin Rudd. Tony Abbott took mortgage on his home to pay for education of his daughters. Kevin Rudd had beach houses on the Queensland coast and wealth of over 100 million dollars.

Our Union Leaders try the same line of politics all the time. However their politics is understandable. By talking about class war, Union Leaders try to deflect the facts that they use the poorest paid workers for their personal political purposes and their safe trip to parliament.

What is your interest in such ridiculous notion?

Alert moderator

Artful Dodger:

30 May 2014 12:08:09pm

Actually Trpy- I thought description of the fundamentals in the North Shorian mind set is spot on.

If you want to call that mind set or objection to it- or in my case ridicule=class warfare, go ahead.

I live a among such a mind set and although financially I am at about the same or even slightly better level than most I cannot for the life of me understand the ego centricity of it-any more than I can understand the reverse snobbery of many of the union leader you mention.

My interest in such a ridiculous notion is an interest in ideas generally.

Alert moderator

burke:

30 May 2014 10:32:04am

The budget imposed a new tax, or levy, on the wealthy, high earners. The stated purpose was to help pay off the debts incurred by the previous government. While this is the plain truth, I cannot see it anywhere in these columns. Why is that?

Alert moderator

Harquebus:

30 May 2014 11:16:07am

It's only a temporary levy. Cuts to welfare are permanent.

Alert moderator

Coogara:

30 May 2014 12:41:03pm

Harquebus:

Yes indeed there are also cuts to middle class social services such as: heavily subsidised education. free health and welfare. There is much more to be done such as including a residence as part of the assets for old age pensions.

Alert moderator

Alpo:

30 May 2014 6:00:32pm

Coogara,
Australia needs only one cut: A cut in the term of this Government. A DD and

fresh elections by the end of the year would be an extremely good medicine to stop the metastasis of the current Neoliberal cancer.

Alert moderator

MT_Syd:

30 May 2014 2:26:32pm

The deficit levy has been widely reported on the ABC

It amounts to a massive \$400 for someone earning \$200,000

hardly comparable to the hits that low income earners are coping

Alert moderator

Rae:

30 May 2014 7:34:24pm

We know hardly any of them will pay it Burke. That's why.

It is 2014 the games are out in the open now.

Any high income earner with any brains and skill would be a corporation now and getting a rebate.

Try harder.

Alert moderator

magb1:

30 May 2014 10:45:55am

"entire episodes of Q&A have passed without a single question from the audience about same-sex unions"

Yes Nigel and I've also noticed not a single question about Global warming or the environment - even when the shadow environment minister was on there! What's happening with Q&A - apart from the students protest it's becoming so formulaic.

Alert moderator

KevinS:

30 May 2014 10:46:02am

Mr Abbott's North Shore roots? Roots that had no greater influence as that of upper middle class/public schoolboy (private school in Australia) role modelling that has come from his father and his upper middle class Australian born mother.

Like all immigrants, parental and culture, economic and social attitudes as well as life experience have a very measurable contribution to the adult that becomes the voter, worker, business owner or politician and ages in Australia: In this case including Mr Abbott. No different to those born in Australia with free settler or convict origins.

Just as I am a mixture of my parents and family life as are all of us so is Julia Gillard, who recognised the melding of Welsh parental influence and beliefs combined with growing up in a suburb of Adelaide.

I'm Tassie born and live in Tas but attended university in Sydney and short on money lived in Sydney's West for a few years. I socialised with friends from the Lower and Upper North Shore

and the Eastern/Southern Suburbs. Being the same age as Mr Abbott, I'm commenting on the Sydney then and how I find it on business trips back.

North, South, East or West, I encounter then and now bigotry and narrow mindedness just as I encounter the most generous of people: Their postcode, parentage religion or income did not then nor does it now, determine their ilk.

Sydney's Westies are a mixture of incomes, education, culture and religions, like most parts of Australia. They should not be used as the pawns in political/ideological struggles and Westies should not allow themselves to be the conduit by which politicians wage their ideological agendas. Good society, community and governance is never achieved that way.

The Budget Paper No 2 by ill thought process or by specific design of cuts or funding allocations has a social time bomb in it that could add to a lot of tensions. Sydney's West of course is the litmus, but also through much of Australia, negative outcomes are more likely and communities including Tasmanian are left shaking their heads, wondering if the price of their community is worth the ideology being played out in Canberra.

Anyone who has witnessed or is aware of the loss of social cohesion in Britain or the US knows what I mean. Australia does have challenges and they are significant, but tearing apart Australian communities to ideologically change socioeconomic beliefs, rather than building accord and along with it a benevolence to achieve generational change, is not the way. There are many in the Coalition and the ALP who wouldn't even understand what that statement means.

I don't think the Coalition government, Mr Abbott and Joe Hockey specifically nor the ALP truly has the national interest at its heart. I'm dubious of Clive Palmer, Greens and especially the Senate. Watching all this is almost living Ancient Roman history and Shakespearian plays at The Globe rolled into one.

Alert moderator

Greg:

30 May 2014 10:55:48am

I'm not all that happy about the use of the map of Sydney as the map of political Australia, but the broad point stands.

Ever since Hawke and Keating moved Labor from the Socialist left to the left-liberal centre, the "Liberals" have drifted steadily to the right. The further they go, the thinner the population. So, having left Labor the educated centre (the children and grandchildren of old Labor), the right looks to come at them from the left. The Murdoch tabloids, talkback radio, increasing amounts of commercial TV (Channel 10 especially, which is why nobody watches their news) and the Big Fear campaigns about boat people, terrorists, and debt are designed to get the poor to vote against their own best interests, in order to tax them and withdraw their public support.

Paint Labor as "elitist" inner-urban trendies and leave unscrutinised the super-elitist old-money oligarchs and the ruthless new-money chancers behind the right. It's worked very well so far.

Alert moderator

MJLC:

30 May 2014 10:57:08am

An extremely strange article to reply adequately to - I'm sure much of the societal analysing is probably quite on the money (it isn't my area in any way, shape or form - I've lived for extended

periods in three states of Australia, and NSW wasn't one of them), but I'm left with this strange feeling that the subject in question and the number of words applied to it/him (and which words have been chosen) are seriously in mismatch.

As a personal journey to apply some order to random thoughts rattling around inside Mr Bowen's head it undoubtedly has merit - I'm not sure how worthwhile it is beyond that point to a wider audience.

Alert moderator

The Skeleton Inside:

30 May 2014 10:58:25am

Great article. Thought provoking.

Alert moderator

Sandra S:

30 May 2014 11:02:36am

Nigel, I am not sure how you derived your view of Abbott, because from what I can see from the current budget, Abbott and Hockey have very strongly attacked, what used to be their constituency. People who try to earn and save money.

Howard used to say that the government needs to provide incentive for people to save for their old age by providing many concessions for people to save. The current budget is doing quite the opposite. It is punishing the people who saved some money for their old age. If the current budget is passed it will (in 2017) RE-SET the income and asset threshold levels. As a result tens if not hundreds of thousands of the current part-pensioners will lose their Age Pensions and many other pensioners with any savings will have their pensions drastically reduced.

This is more socialist budget rather than the budget that supports rich. Pensioners, with any savings, are the biggest losers out of the current budget - not the pensioners without any savings.

Alert moderator

KevinS:

30 May 2014 12:05:04pm

Sandra S. I think Nigel was saying that Hockey and Abbott's North Shore is not the same as for every North Shore resident. It might strike Messrs Abbott and Hockey to their economic and ideological core, but food hampers and assistance are increasing in need in some parts of their beloved N/S. It's not specifically that those in the North Shore are carrying more of the taxation burden, it is a multitude of factors that Abbott and Hockey are never likely to encounter as they are part of the problem. A very different life is being experienced behind the door of "the perfect street frontage" to the behind the front door of Abbott and Hockey's homes.

You are right about the pensioners with assets and the budget pain but Sandra those without savings are being hurt too. Young, old and between and small business as well. Not corporate Australia. The fact is the budget like too much of the Tax Act and other legislation and entitlements/benefits structure has loopholes that rich and poor slip through, even the constituency you mention, if they are well informed/advised and choose to do it. It is the designed or unintended, e loopholes that are exploited that is the hidden

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cause of the so called budget emergency that we have.

Legal but Westfield paying corporate tax of 8cents in \$. Apple and Google less than that. Millionaires paying no tax to low income not working when they can. All expensive minorities with the penalised other Australians sitting in between. Abbott and Hockey don't get it, though.

Alert moderator

emess:

30 May 2014 11:15:24am

I would put it another way Mr Bowen.

Perhaps if the ALP addressed the social issues important to the inner city types, that would get most of those issues out of the way.

Perhaps rather than ignore patent injustices, perhaps the ALP might redress them.

One could pass legislation to address 90% of those issues in one day in Parliament.

How hard is that?

Or you can spend the next ten years telling people to abandon their principles.

Up to you.

Alert moderator

Coogara:

30 May 2014 12:29:52pm

emess:

"Perhaps if the ALP addressed the social issues important to the inner city types, that would get most of those issues out of the way"

Then the ALP would become a minority party fighting with the Greens for 8% of the vote. Alternatively the ALP might like to focus on the needs of the greater number of people in the electorate. More importantly if elected, actually do something about it. The ALP for example talked about but did nothing about a NW Sydney rail link. The O'Farrell government got into office and made it happen.

Alert moderator

keith:

30 May 2014 12:31:13pm

well said emess

Alert moderator

Esteban:

30 May 2014 12:51:23pm

People are more inclined to vote for what you are promising not vote for what you have delivered.

To maintain the inner city vote the ALP only needs to present itself as the party most likely to deliver on say gay marriage.

It would be counter productive to deliver gay marriage because the electoral advantage would be lost.

Alert moderator

MJLC:

30 May 2014 2:29:24pm

"People are more inclined to vote for what you are promising not vote for what you have delivered"

Congratulations on your esteemed wisdom Esteban.

I continue to be astounded by the number of folk who comment on matters political who can't/won't grasp this basic truth - whether it's "They'll rewards us over boats" today, or "We saved you from the GFC" yesterday.

For the benefit of anyone who struggles with this concept, allow me to put it in metaphor form; We are not eating at a restaurant where we get to nibble and be treated royally first before cruising up to the counter to pay our bill (which we're happy to do because it's been a wonderful experience) and thank everyone for their excellent service, we are in McDonald's where we pay up front and then wait around to get what we've paid for. We probably pause whilst eating and wonder why we came back to this joint in the first place (why is it the burgers never taste like you remembered them?), and may be inclined to not even empty our tray contents into the bin but rather leave them on the table for someone else to clean up.

I feel a greater grasp of reality may be obtained if politicians and their spruikers understood the question they need to ask is "Do you want to upgrade that to a "large"?", and not "Cracked pepper sir?".

Alert moderator

Esteban:

30 May 2014 4:11:23pm

Is your post inspired by the doco on SBS last night?

Many voters are experiencing that phenomenon that happens when one eats too often at the pay upfront establishments. Having paid at the outset one becomes accustomed to eating and leaving straight away.

You can see where this is going MJLC. The distracted diner when finally eating at a pay at the end establishment can forget that the payment has not been made and wander off into the night.

Many Australia voters have eaten and are proceeding to the exit. Fortunately the Italian waiter, well versed in the ways of the Contiki tourist from his trainee days in Rome, is vigilant and emabarrassment is avoided.

Alert moderator

MJLC:

"Is your post inspired by the doco on SBS last night?"

Nope. The telly went off straight after "Call the Midwife", although Mrs MJLC and I are indeed dining out tonight - must remember to rant loudly about "broken promises" and shout "bill now!" if I get told certain items on the menu aren't available. Hopefully Clive won't be hanging around outside looking for someone to offer him a free feed.

Alert moderator

emess:

30 May 2014 1:42:31pm

Well, coogara, given that Australian attitudes towards most of these social issues have moved on from the fifties, it may well be that the opposite is the case, and such reforms would enhance election success for the ALP.

The point I was making was that Mr Bowen did not even look at the possibility.

Alert moderator

Coogara:

30 May 2014 11:25:35am

Abbott and more generally the LNP actually appeals to a wide cross section of the Australian electorate rather than to a narrow well healed group. The author is caught in some old stereotypes which will never explain the electoral success of the LNP.

It's nonsense to suggest a shift to US approaches just as it is inaccurate to suggest we are close to Scandinavian approaches. We are a comparatively low taxed economy but with excellent services. Certainly we have reached the level of sustainability of those services given current revenue. This would suggest cutting middle class welfare such as subsidised education, free health and welfare for those who are well off. Paradoxically this not be something the north shore crowd want. A strong social welfare system will primarily support the needy.

There is only so much you can do with wages. Its about demand and supply. If you have skills in demand you get a good wage. The easy way to keep wages low is to increase migration levels.

Alert moderator

Artful Dodger:

30 May 2014 12:49:24pm

Actually Coogara I think Nigel is making the same point in his article

But the mind set of North Shorians he described is factual-they DO have that "we are better and know better than them" attitude.

Some eighteen months ago I attended a cocktail party in my blue ribbon Lib electorate.

Just about every one there was a member of the Liberal Party.

One told me how angry she was that a motion to ban Muslims from ever entering Australia was defeated at a Lib party meeting.

When I said that if that ever happened we can kiss goodbye to our trade with Indonesia and other Muslim countries I was dismissed with an "umph"

Now this person came from a farming background- a private school education and one would think was no dummy.

But to that person Muslims were like lefties- not quite up to standard.

Bow _ I am not saying we North Shorians types are all like tjhat-most of my friends are not but in the ranks of the LNP that mind set prevails- and that is what the article is about.

Sorry but if we are moving towards a US style health- education and IR system a shift to the US and away from the Scandinavian approaches is occurring.

Alert moderator

whatif:

30 May 2014 11:29:26am

The people who voted him in got what they deserved and the rest of us will suffer, as for his north shore he has to keep them happy if he doesn't he wont have a seat in parliament after the next election.

Alert moderator

Artfull Dodger:

30 May 2014 11:42:13am

What a great article -loved it. As a resident in Perth's Western Suburbs I can relate to the Weltanschauung of Sydney's North Shore-the fundamentals are exactly the same. Interestingly enough though-20% of us voted Green at the recent WA Senate election rerun.

Loved the bit " while displaying a Google like ingenuity at using negative gearing property,family trusts and self managed super fund to minimise his or her tax,your North Shorian (o WA Western Suburbian) remain all too painfully aware they are getting a bad deal" When we try to suggest that there is something grossly unfair in that some like us have the "opportunity" to use those tax minimisation (evasion) schemes but others do and that WE should be the ones doing the heavy lifting rather than the vulnerable= we are met by a stony silence.

You could be right -Abbott may have a clear road to Americanise us but there is a chance global events may stop him in his tracks.

For one the US itself is going through a sort of self assessment period- Google is opening them up to alternatives to the American Way and the Pursuit of Happiness thing. They are beginning to understand they do not have the best educations-health-justice and other systems in the world.

Secondly -there are influential capitalists like those in the Inclusive Capitalism Initiative who having accepted the failure of free market economics and financial capitalism are moving towards capitalism for the majority.

Thirdly. The rapid advance in technology-robotics etc will require a reform of society- something the North Shorians will have to learn to accept.

Fourthly. The global economy is still in transition from the unsustainable lending for speculation of the past two or more decades, with its resultant global debt of \$54TR+to a more sustainable-environmentally friendly economy.

Lastly-surely the ALP would have learnt some lessons as to how better relate to the electorate at large-particularly with the help of the North Shore (and Perth's West) arrogance.

Alert moderator

Esteban:

A very useful article. If I ever have to move to Sydney then I shall live in the North Shore.

Alert moderator

Kangaroo Edward:

30 May 2014 12:41:10pm

What's the point?

Alert moderator

Stephen W S:

30 May 2014 1:28:10pm

The author has hit the nail on the head. What is going on in Australian politics is a war of ideology. LNP ideal is to Americanise Australia even more but with Abbott's UK heritage showing a bit with the reintroduction of knighthoods. UK or USA as the LNP ideal just means elitism and greater benefits for the elite. to which group our politicians see themselves as naturally belonging to.

The ALP has a different ideology. Once it was to raise the poor up by increasing their wealth a bit but now they seem to have lost that dream and gone a bit more to the LNP view of the world by allowing the elite to get more and more wealthy and then making the rest of us equally poor. A warped view of the world but totally achievable unlike making us all equally well off.

The major casualty of these similar but competing ideologies is the aspirational middle class. A few are rising up but most are being push further down the economic pecking order.

To get away with this the LNP and ALP have been dividing us up into competing groups.

At present Abbott & Hockey are telling us we must all share the burden of fixing our budget mess. However, all are not sharing the burden.

A good example is Westfield's reported effective company tax rate on real profits of only 8% instead of the nominal tax law rate of 30%. This is achieved by companies taking advantage of the myriad of tax laws that allow accelerated deductions, investment allowances and things such as REIT's.

If we should all learn to stand on our own two feet and accept that the age of entitlement is over then the Business Council of Australia which has pushed hard for selective economic reform should also accept that the age of entitlement for business to lobby for new concessions and grants etc. is also over.

Furthermore, as part of the process of fixing the budget existing concessions should also be reduced. Because business is such a delicate self interested creature this will not be easy to achieve but a wind back of excess and in some cases outdated deduces and concession will help fix the revenue side of the budget. Maybe no deductions and a low rate of tax say 2.5%% might simplify corporate taxing?

Another concession that should go is negative gearing of rented property. What sort of investing in our future does this promote? Just making a loss to save tax!

Our whole budget system has been distorted by over 50 years of pork barrelling and vote buying

The time is right for a real statesman PM if he is genuinely concerned for Australia's future to be open to consider modelling a range of tax revenue reform measures and not just look at spending policies only. Unfortunately, we do not have a real statesman PM at present and I cannot see one, male or female, on the horizon at present.

Alert moderator

Mark:

30 May 2014 1:43:55pm

As someone from rural WA I find this article a bit arrogant arguing over which part of Sydney should be running the country. It always intrigues me how the green vote is highest in inner city suburbs where you would think if they liked trees so much they should move to the bush. Then again the Greens dont talk about trees much anymore, they are more interested in refugees and gay and lesbian rights or any other minority group issue. As we have become one of the most urbanised countries on the planet we have created soft, sheltered, imaged obsessed people arguing between super socialisation on the left and capitilist "winners" on the right all in a complete vacuum of reality and what really matters in life.

Alert moderator

KevinS:

30 May 2014 2:27:40pm

Just as presidential voting trends or polls in particular US states are a good indicator of the presidential election outcome.

Sydneys West voters are really a microcosm of Australia's. A sample that reasonably indicates how Australian voters may vote in an election. You're from a regional area but in the main population areas of Australian States and territories there is the equivalent of the Sydney West, even in WA with particular area of Perth.

What Queenslanders' think seems to have all in Canberra sit up and take notice as well.

Colin Barnett's specific policies have done little to help rural WA particularly the South West. My view is that Mr Barnett regularly turns residents attention towards the East and away from focussing on the Barnett government economic failures. I live in Tasmania, I know where the blame for failure is and Canberra is only a part of it. I listen to Colin Barnett taking potshots at Tasmania (some of which I agree with) but am left wondering where all the royalties that WA is earning is going. I can tell you that waivers of royalty payments are most certainly a part of Tasmania's woes.

Alert moderator

Henry Porter:

30 May 2014 1:48:58pm

" If the Greens were in government, we would see how green policies would work, from top to bottom."

They were and look what they did to Tasmania; I still have nightmares thinking about the dishonest, delusional "concession speech" their leader gave after his election loss boasting about the fabulous job he'd done on state education (highest illiteracy rates in the country), employment (highest unemployment in the country), and state finances (remind me is Tassie or

I've heard criticism of PUP offering simplistic and populist solutions to the country's problems but the Greens have made it an art form. Its only when they had any level of responsibility put on them is the disconnect between their propaganda and the real world shown to be even greater than those in the major parties who they rail against.

Alert moderator

AgentSmith:

30 May 2014 2:15:14pm

As a resident of Adelaide, I always roll my eyes whenever someone talks about 'the North Shore', 'Westies', etc. Its such a Sydney-centric view of this country.

Hear ye, hear ye, breaking news. Most of Australia is not Sydney.

Alert moderator

Esteban:

30 May 2014 2:26:21pm

The article draws attention to the two quite disparate rumps of support that the ALP enjoys.

Pity the ALP politician who is the personification of the midway point between the two rumps. Not pleasant.

Alert moderator

Gordon:

30 May 2014 3:16:54pm

Noice! The only place to be, is the last place you'd want to be.

Alert moderator

Reinhard:

30 May 2014 3:06:11pm

The battle for the hearts and minds of western Sydney is nothing new, but speaking as a well-off "inner city type" from Balmain, I don't believe that we need to "rethink our political priorities" just to get "the westies" on side. Our first priority should be the fight against the barrage of lies and misinformation from the right wing press and shock jocks who prey on people's concern for their own well-being. Such concern may be perfectly acceptable but the manipulation of those concerns by unscrupulous media and politicians cannot be condoned. Howard was the master manipulator who managed to tap into small minded xenophobia and bigotry and the great "Howard's battlers" oxymoron was born. It was especially successful after 911 and Tampa when the issue became even more polarising and refugees were effectively re-branded as potential terrorists. Abbott & co carried on Howard's gross manipulation and exaggeration by constantly keeping the refugee issue in the media during the election campaign , using ridiculously false memes like Fiona Scott's infamous "refugees are clogging up the M4 and the emergency rooms".

That all changed after Sept 2013 of course, and now it's become "an operational matter"

Alert moderator

A happy little debunker:

30 May 2014 3:24:32pm

Reinhard,

Tend to agree on the Tactic, but would naturally replace 'right wing press' and 'shock jocks' with 'Australia's 5th column of ABC dissenters' and 'Schlock Jocks' for all those that prey on people's concern for their own well-being.

Just a point of clarification in the 'preying on peoples concern for their own well-being', which parties and media's are playing up the perceived 'injuries' from this budget?

Alert moderator

Reinhard:

30 May 2014 4:50:38pm

You don't seem to get it, try telling students, pensioners and people with a chronic disease that any "injuries" from this budget would only be "perceived"

Alert moderator

R Supwood:

30 May 2014 3:32:47pm

I'm a rare or lonely lefty up here in atmospheric north shore Sydney; Most of my acquaintances, through my wife's connections, are plain, harmless right wing types, feeling hard done by (don't we all, at times) because they work hard and see money dribble away. Most of them are unbelievably undereducated beyond the natural limits we all have, as it isn't necessary to have wide and deep feelings to make money. Actually, the harder and narrower you are, the better for some. The dedicated professionals are usually modest, the business types are ruthless, even in shouting and putting. The ladies do or don't like someone because of colour, even if it's hair, lips, waistlines and fantasies about manhood and capability. Policy doesn't rate a mention, though something about private school fees, medical expenses and holiday and travel costs count. Good luck to anyone similar, especially in making money by luck or fashion or mystery. They tend to hate or at least suspect tradies, workers, foreigners, others. Xenophobic? Not really, but narrow, selective, class and gang and mate and friend and family aware.

Australia is way down the end of the world's tracks and we might seem like savages to others elsewhere, yet many know what's good for them. Why they vote, as here, for a down to the bone liar, superstitious fool and potholed intellect as the current PM, is pure, reactive tribalism, to give the other bastards a go after the Rudd-Gillard run. That hasn't changed much from Barton on. Selfish and simple.

Alert moderator

Artful Dodger:

30 May 2014 4:55:07pm

Oh dear me Supwood- I do feel for you. I too am a leftie- not in the atmospheric North Shore Sydney but in the equally atmospheric Western Suburbs of Perth where some even hate the "Western" common with the region of Sydney,

But I am not lonely nor alone- many of my friends in this very LNP electorate think as little of our PM and the Government as I do. Some 20% of the normally Lib, electorate voted Green at the recent WA Senate election.

They are not all undereducated, many are well informed do care about the environment and the vulnerable in our society.

But I have to agree the majority of them are as you described- their intellect does not venture beyond money-wealth and position and many display the nastiest of motives
Maynard Keynes accused Capitalism of.

I had an interesting chat with a rusted on LNP from the atmospheric heights of MELbourne's Toorak the other day- she now reckons Abbott is a bully. Seems that is the current gossip going around Melbourne's Catholic Liberal sect.

OMG- if that spreads West we may yet be rid of an Abbott but get a Bishop instead.

Alert moderator

lance karbuncle:

30 May 2014 3:39:43pm

Hello, hello - Australia is obviously much smaller than I was led to believe. I am looking forward to Nigel Bowen's analysis about all other Australian cities, and after that, perhaps he could cover country regions. This should keep him in work for some time.

Cheers Nigel.

Alert moderator

graazt:

30 May 2014 3:49:53pm

A very entertaining and inciteful article.

These latte-sippers... trying to save the bogans from themselves. Why do they even bother? It's not like many basket-weaving, watermelon, ivory-tower types actual suffer personally from the policies of the "not my problem" party anyway.

Their patrician attitudes towards the plebs just engenders resentment against them.

Let these people reap what they sow I say. That's more educational than whiny "do-gooders" acting all morally superior. The plebs will increasingly realise under the new world order just how much social mobility will be afforded to accomodate their aspirations.

Alert moderator

Paul Taylor:

30 May 2014 4:02:02pm

If the May,2014 Federal Budget does not re engage the Left & Centre on bread & butter distributional issues then what will?

It is not only deregulation of the industrial relations system leading to lower take home pay to people in Western Sydney; who in increasing numbers are dealing with mortgage stress, job insecurity & four hours of commute to work but also the potential under the current Coalition government for greater use of 457 visas to exacerbate unemployment. Add greater use of robotics in automation with 3D printing in manufacturing as companies look to cut costs & you have a recipe for even much larger unemployment & lack of job opportunities.....as reported in todays press robotic automation technology could cost the Australian economy all up 5 million jobs.

This is what you will get with the outdated Coalition economic prescription of a Sydney 2nd International Airport at Badgerys Creek....BUT with it will come a noticeable rise in both

And the ALTERNATIVE:

Build a high tech environmentally sustainable city (business & residential) at Badgerys Creek that offers a combination of employment opportunities (high paid & low paid); that embraces new technologies like robotics & 3D printing; an educated & skilled workforce that makes better use of the employment talents of women, with increased productivity & international competitiveness & exports. Achieved through co investment & collaboration from our major Asian trading partners Japan, China, South Korea & traditional investors US, UK etc with local private & government industry....substantially reducing the 4 hour drive to work. The Federal Government owns the land & can generate from its sale or lease in planned stages extra revenue to be reinvested in combination with reforms to Superannuation & engineered tax incentives for commercial infrastructure & business investment...whether it be interconnecting & upgrading rail & road with the Sydney CBD, the privately owned Mascot International Airport & a 2nd privately owned , constructed & financed FLOATING International Airport out to sea off Port Botany. The technology behind floating structures has advanced dramatically over the last 5 years....from the building of major floating gas platforms off the Australian WA Northwest coast, the proposal for the worlds first floating airport in the Thames estuary London...the Gensler designed London Britannia Airport... to combating the cost of flooding to housing in Holland.

Alert moderator

polony:

30 May 2014 4:27:52pm

The USA is still a socialist country.

It has socialism for the rich and capitalism for the poor as seen in many other countries.

I would prefer Australia to be the opposite, but the power of our mining industry makes this unlikely.

Alert moderator

Lord Fitzroy:

30 May 2014 4:51:16pm

That's fine, but the logic of this article still assumes that political agency is owned only by the North Shore and the Inner City, and that westies are pawns that need to be drafted to one or other army.

I am no longer a Westie, but it doesn't take much to imagine that they might be most responsive to some recognition of their own political agency. Like most people they have a keen sense of when they are being taken for granted, looked down upon or used.

Alert moderator

Patricia:

30 May 2014 4:56:22pm

As I board my train at my local station on Sydney's North Shore each week day I look at the hordes of school kids who attend the many private schools that dot the Pacific Highway, from

Milsons Point to Wahroonga. I see those students who attend the prestigious catholic schools such as St Ignatius Review and St Aloysius Milsons Point and ponder how many are budding Abbots and Hockeys. I fear the message in this article is absolutely right, the Abbots and Hockeys and their followers are simply looking after their own interests. I am afraid I am a lonely voice in the leafy North Shore suburb in which I reside but I do hold out that people will see the light and think beyond their own selfish interests.

I was lucky enough to have received a very good education at little cost to my parents or me which has placed me well financially and professionally. I never forget where I came from and the people who did not have the opportunities I had. I am afraid I cannot say the same for most of my neighbourhood.

Very good article!

Alert moderator

Perspective1001:

30 May 2014 4:56:54pm

Without a shadow of a doubt, reading all this "There's US and there's THEM' hyperbole" would have to be the most useless time I have ever spend.

What does this article solve, prove, disprove and/or add value to our common good?

There's any amount of subjects screaming for attention. Tealeaf reading would easily have a higher priority.

Alert moderator

True Blue Ozzie:

30 May 2014 4:58:08pm

The only way the Abbott Government could get out of its rats nest, would be to call an election now with its disgraceful budget.

Even if they changed leaders now, they couldn't save face on the rotting budget!

To save face and respect from their rusted on supporters, having an election now is the only way Abbott &C can leave Government with a chance of winning again in some years to come. Watching the last two days of question time, shows a desperate government, who waste more time Labor bashing than they do on their budget polices and selling them!

But Abbott is leading as if he's in operation, he's never been PM material never ever, nor should he have ever been the leader of the Libs.

Alert moderator

Napoleon:

30 May 2014 5:10:33pm

Those who try to make a comparison between the north shore of Sydney and its western suburbs have not visited the west for at least 5 years. There's very little difference except probably in language and tattoos. Look at the Mac-mansions and the number of luxury cars and you realise that the disparity of the post war period is disappearing. Howard's battlers are middle class, cashed up westies with more disposable income than the north shore middle class.

Alert moderator

Greg:

I am located in the wrong area.

Too right, it is about bread and butter issues.

Labor let us down out in the west, well before Tony Abbott got a look in.

We haven't forgotten the hardship of placing 600,000 single parents onto Newstart.

Reading an article yesterday, it was inferred people don't know why they didn't like Rudd. Which is an absolute nonsense, out here in the west we woke up to the exploits of Therese Rein overseas amassing great wealth from her business aiding the "unemployed" and "disabled." < You could go a long way to funding an NDIS, if the money didn't end up in the wrong pockets! > People saw through the cons, we realised who was benefiting and who was being duded.

As for the favouring of wealthy mates, it doesn't matter which way the pendulum swings. Their parrasitic ways are just too obvious too hide.

It's a journalists' classic default, to refer to people in the west like we are cattle class. Come for a visit. You may find out that we are people too.

Alert moderator

Alpo:

30 May 2014 7:02:28pm

Greg, do you realise that Therese Rein's company Ingeus also operated in Australia? Therefore, do you realise that she made her money helping the unemployed under the watch and blessing of the Howard Government?.... Please keep your crocodile tears for yourself, mate, and think about the hardships of the betrayed People of Australia now, which are far worse than they ever were under the former Labor Government. Manufacturing is closing down, thousands unemployed, government services are being cut, thousands of unemployed people, support is being withdrawn: hence the unemployed are also becoming hopeless.... and all "thanks" to this Government of LIARS, and in just 8 months and without any GFC whatever!!.... The sooner they are gone, the better.

Alert moderator

SA westie:

30 May 2014 5:53:00pm

Why does Bowen assume that the progressive left focuses on the needs of upper class women in his attack on so-called "inner-City types"? Feminism is not an elite issue as you imply. You need to recognise that half the working class is female, Nigel, including those who live in the western suburbs and that women are disproportionately over-represented amongst low income earners. Consequently it is women who will be most hurt by the Abbott budget as feminist organisations have pointed out: <http://www.nfaw.org/budget-2014-women-biggest-losers/>

Alert moderator

Stirrer:

30 May 2014 6:04:46pm

Years and years ago I graduated from the West of Sydney- just above Penrith to higher up the

Mountains- I left home at 6.00 am and got home at 7.30pm.

Being years ago we were not allowed to borrow more than 75% of the value of a home and our repayment could not be more than 25% of MY take home pay.

I worked in an office - was a PAYE worker- paid my full tax every week. Things were tough but we did not have any mortgage stress- life was pleasant.

Then I really moved on- I got transferred to WA; joined the corporate world and as my then wife said -I was flying.

Wow- I graduated to the leafy Western suburbs of Perth- I did what they all do- formed a family trust- did a bit of negative gearing- took full advantage of super tax benefits- and paid less tax than I did when I was in the West of Sydney.

I did the 'google' thing Nigel wrote about. Now I have what John C Bogle-the founder of Vanguard Mutual Fund- one of the most successful funds ever- says in his book "Enough"=precisely that-enough.

But I am honest enough to admit I would have never got here without taking advantage of opportunities which were and still are not available to others.

Now I wonder where our country would be if ALL Australians did the "google" thing. Now I think the ones who did not are the real heavy lifters while I was a bit of a leaner.

The fundamentals Nigel writes about the North Shorians are true-that IS the mind set of many. I believe it is that mind set which needs to change.

Alert moderator

rabbie:

30 May 2014 7:23:31pm

Labor under Rudd and Gillard successfully negotiated Australia through difficult economic times. Not only that, they were working to build a better, healthier, fairer, more educated nation.

In contrast, Abbott and Co have taken the wheel of the nation and are careering through society knocking down or damaging everything in sight. There are economic vandals and social hoons.

Alert moderator

Sarah:

30 May 2014 7:41:51pm

If this article referred to countries rather than areas of Sydney it would rightly be derided as extremely offensive generalisation.

Just absurd

Alert moderator

Comments for this story are closed, but you can still have your say.