

Howard Government fails Public Education

Budget fails public education

John Howard has used Public Education Week to make a statement which further demonstrates that the Government fully intends to use the threat of withdrawing funding -- a form of blackmail -- to public (not private) schools to make education departments comply with his vision.

With a record surplus, the federal government has chosen to bypass the 2.3 million students in public schools and the 1.3 million in TAFE Colleges across Australia. Only public education is open and available to all students regardless of family background, faith and level of income.

Over the next five years public schools will only receive an increase of \$300 million. Private schools will be given almost six times as much - \$1.7 billion. The Federal Coalition Government has exponentially increased per student funding to private schools since 1996.

For every one dollar of direct federal recurrent expenditure per public school student, the federal government spent the following on a private school student:

	public	private
1996	\$1.00	\$3.50
2001-4	\$1.00	\$4.00
2005-8	\$1.00	\$5.00
2009-12	\$1.00	\$6.00

AEU Poll on school funding May 2007

A national poll of voters in marginal seats commissioned by the Australian Education Union (AEU) shows there is overwhelming opposition to the Federal Government's education funding policies.

In a poll of 400 people in marginal coalition seats, 67% of respondents agreed that the Federal Government had under-funded public schools over the last 11 years and 78% believed that any increase in federal education funding should go to public schools.

World can see our IR shame

Colin Fenwick (The Age June 7 2007)

This country's laws manifestly fail to promote freedom of association, despite the Government's frequent insistence on its commitment to this principle. Instead, the Government has aggressively promoted the freedom of individual workers not to associate at all and has provided millions of dollars to agencies such as the Australian Building and Construction Commission to enforce its own view of what freedom of association should mean.

The truth is that Australia's laws fail by a long way to promote freedom of association and free collective bargaining. The ILO has been telling the Australian Government this for 10 years. That's why the government, employer and worker delegates that make up the ILO standards committee know the Australian case well. They have heard before what the Australian Government has said and they have not been persuaded.

The Government continues to insist that our laws in fact comply with ILO conventions. It continues to insist that in promoting AWAs it is merely giving workers and employers options about the types of agreement they might make. New Zealand put that argument to the ILO in the early 1990s and it was rejected.

That is why the members of the ILO standards committee know that under the present Government, Australia is not making progress towards improving the situation and so included this country on this year's list of serious violators of international labour laws.

The standards committee is likely to again call on the Australian Government to engage in dialogue with workers and employers about how to amend Australia's laws to comply with our international obligations. It would be better if the Howard Government paid attention this time, for the good of Australia's workers and employers and the country's international reputation.

Howard's budget seen through

More privilege for the privileged

Ross Gittins (SMH May 23, 2007)

In 1974, when the Whitlam government brought the Commonwealth into school funding in a significant way, about 70 per cent of its grants went to government schools and 27 per cent to private schools (with the remainder going on joint programs). This was roughly in line with the two sectors' shares of enrolments.

Today, the budget shows public schools getting 31 per cent of the money while the private schools get 69 per cent. But public schools still have two-thirds of the enrolments.

Mainly because of Commonwealth grants, funding for non-government schools is growing at three times the rate of spending on public schools, which is far in excess of the growth in the private sector's share of enrolments.

Only about 13 per cent of students attend independent

non-government schools (as opposed to Catholic systemic schools), which is less than a fifth the number of students at public schools. But the Commonwealth now spends more on that 13 per cent than it does on students at public schools.

Get this: the minimum grant per student paid to private schools ranked as the least needy is now far higher than the grant per student paid to public schools.

Another odd feature of all this is that Howard has not imposed anything much in the way of conditions on the big grants he's paying to private schools. What they do choose to do - such as continuing to impose hefty annual fee increases on their parents - is up to them.

By contrast, he and his minister are always coming up with new conditions they want to impose on public schools, and always threatening to withhold grants if the states fail to comply.

You get the feeling his bias is as much anti-public as it is pro-private.

Howard's 'fairness' will cost you \$25,000

ACTU President Greg Combet has slammed the government's new fairness test as a farce, with claims unhappy workers will be forced to go to the High Court.

Anyone wishing to question a ruling on their AWA individual contract would have to lodge an appeal - costing them up to \$25,000.

"An ordinary person may be earning fifteen or

sixteen dollars an hour, feeling that they've had to sign an unfair individual contract and the only you can have it reviewed is to go to the High Court and maybe pay ten thousand dollars a day on lawyers fees - it's impossible," Mr Combet said.



Workers missing out on their fair share

Ross Gittins (SMH June 2, 2007)

When you divide the pie of national income between the share going to wages and the share going to profits, you find the workers' share keeps shrinking and is the smallest it's been.

If the boot had been on the other foot - if it had been the profits share that was shrinking - you'd never have heard the end of it.

If we focus just on the "total compensation of employees" (which includes employers'

superannuation contributions on their behalf) and the "total gross operating surplus of corporations" (the main national accounts measure of profits), we find that, in 1999-2000, the share of national income going to labour was 70.3 per cent, leaving the share going to capital at 29.7 per cent.

By the December quarter of last year, however, the wages share had fallen to 66 per cent, while the profits share had increased to 34 per cent.

That's a shift of a remarkable, unprecedented 4.3 percentage points in the space of just six and a half years.

40 years ago: 1967 Referendum



Progressive unions in Australia have a long history of support for Aboriginal rights; their role in the 1967 Referendum campaign was an example.

On May 27th 1967 after years of campaigning there was a Referendum to change the Commonwealth Constitution which up until then had said:

“The Parliament shall ... have powers to make laws for peace, order, and good government [for] the people of any race, other than the aboriginal race in any State”. Another clause said that “In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth ... aboriginal natives shall not be counted”.

The 1967 referendum achieved the highest ever Yes vote of close to 91%

ACTU President Sharan Burrow said: “The referendum was a major milestone in the long struggle by indigenous Australians for justice and paved the way for equal rights and equal pay for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

workers.

I congratulate the many people who helped achieve such a tremendous victory in the 1967 referendum.

But it must be acknowledged that the high hopes that accompanied the referendum have not been realized, despite the best efforts of the many indigenous leaders since that time.

The continuing high level of disadvantage among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is a national disgrace.

The 17 year gap in life expectancy between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians is probably our nation’s most shameful statistic.

After eleven years in office, the Howard Government has no one else to blame for the inadequate health services, poor community infrastructure and lack of education and employment opportunities that still beset indigenous communities,” said Ms Burrow.

ABC mini-series creates stir!

Sue Smith's ABC mini-series about the 1998 dispute between Patrick Stevedores and the Maritime Union of Australia has got John Howard (and his megaphones in the press) charging the ABC with 'leftwing bias'

"One of the most lopsided pieces of political propaganda I've seen on the national broadcaster in years" Howard told a business lunch in Cairns.

More interesting was the broad support for the series:

Mike Carlton:

Bastard Boys, the ABC's drama about the 1998 waterfront war, has aroused the entirely predictable fury of the ABC-haters. Their attack has been two-pronged. One, to sneer that the show was a turgid melodrama and a waste of money. Two, to screech that the whole thing was a nefarious left-wing conspiracy to damage the Howard Government in this election year.

Me, I thought it was terrific. On a technical level, it was elegantly directed and shot: for one thing, it takes high cinematographic art to light an entire dockyard at night. The script hummed along, with appropriate

moments of tension and light relief. Writers and actors did a masterful job of capturing the authentic cadences of Australian dialogue.

Having spent some time covering that brawl between Patrick and the Maritime Union, I'm also prepared to say that, allowing for reasonable dramatic licence, Bastard Boys got the story about right. If anything, the Howard Government escaped rather lightly.

Playwright Stephen Sewell:

"Bastard Boys is drama. It might be drama about real events, but it is still drama. It is not a news report, it is not a documentary, and the standards of fairness and balance that might apply to those media have never applied to drama. Where is the balance in Macbeth? Who would ask Tom Keneally to give a more rounded and sympathetic portrayal of the Nazis in Schindler's List? Drama springs from passion and determination to tell a good story exploring the themes of what it is to be a human being in a world of conflict. And as soon as authorities - whether Government or Church - start telling writers and artists how to practice their art, that's when it ceases to be art and turns instead into propaganda."

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Unions Australia is a "one stop shop" to quickly and easily join a union with just one phone call to

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Howard's IR reforms mean more people are turning to unions than ever before - Unions Australia makes joining easy!

Bathurst: Howard gets the silent treatment

Four hundred people turned up to protest in Bathurst on May 25 as Howard attended a business lunch arranged by Liberal MP, Kerry Bartlett.

The protesters turned their backs and remained silent as soon the Prime Minister got out of his car to attend a lunch with Bartlett and the Chamber of Commerce.

"We turned our backs on him and remained silent. It was a powerful way to get our message across that we have no respect for him and his IR laws," said Brett O'Brien, the AMWU Rights at Work coordinator for Macquarie.

AMWU delegates Peter Tully and Kerry Cooke have been running a strong campaign in the area.

"We've seen so many examples of workers being done

over, treated unfairly, sacked for no reason or asked to sign AWAs that cut their pay. But we've been able to raise the issue in the local papers and really spread the word about the reality of what these laws do to the ordinary worker," says Tully.

"It's been a long campaign now, but we won't give in until we see the back of Howard for the last time."

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