

Road to tyranny is paved with Leftie assumptions

By Maurice Newman, The Australian, 27 September 2016

When your news and views come from a tightly controlled, left-wing media echo chamber, it may come as a bit of a shock to learn that in the July election almost 600,000 voters gave their first preference to Pauline Hanson's One Nation party. You may also be surprised to know that still deluded conservatives remain disenchanted with the media's favourite Liberal, Malcolm Turnbull, for his epic fail as Prime Minister, especially when compared with the increasingly respected leader he deposed.

Perhaps when media outlets saturate us with "appropriate" thoughts and "acceptable" speech, and nonconformists are banished from television, radio and print, it's easy to miss what is happening on the uneducated side of the tracks. After all, members of the better educated and morally superior political class use a compliant media to shelter us from the dangerous, racist, homophobic, Islamophobic, sexist, welfare-reforming, climate-change denying bigots who inhabit the outer suburbs and countryside — the people whom Hillary Clinton calls "the deplorables".

They must be vilified without debate, lest too many of us waver on the virtues of bigger governments, central planning, more bloated bureaucracies, higher taxes, unaffordable welfare, a "carbon-free" economy, more regulations, open borders, gender-free and values-free schools and same-sex marriage; the sort of agenda that finds favour at the UN.

Yet history is solid with evidence that this agenda will never deliver the promised human dignity, prosperity and liberty. Only free and open societies with small governments can do that.

Gradually, the masses are realising something is wrong. Their wealth and income growth is stagnating and their living standards are threatened. They see their taxes wasted on expensive, ill-conceived social programs. They live with migrants who refuse to integrate. They resent having government in their lives on everything from home renovations to recreational fishing, from penalty rates to free speech.

Thomas Jefferson's warning that "the natural progress of things is for liberty to yield and government to gain ground" is now a stark reality.

The terms "people's representative" and "public servant" have become a parody. In today's world we are the servants and, if it suits, we are brushed aside with callous indifference. Like the Labor government's disregard for the enormous emotional and financial hurt suffered when, overnight, it shut down live cattle exports on the strength of a television show.

Or like the NSW parliament passing laws banning greyhound racing in the state. There was no remorse for the ruined lives of thousands of innocent people, many of whom won't recover. Talk of compensation is a travesty.

Or like the victims neighbouring Williamtown and Oakey air force bases, made ill from toxic contamination of groundwater. Around the world it's known chemical agents used in airport fire drills cause cancer, neurological disease and reproductive disorders, yet the Australian Department of Defence simply denies responsibility. The powerless are hopelessly trapped between health risks and valueless properties.

Similar disdain is shown for those living near coal-seam gas fields and wind turbines. The authorities know of the health and financial impacts but defend operators by bending rules and ignoring guidelines.

If governments believe the ends justify the means, people don't matter.

When Ernst & Young research finds one in eight Australians can't meet their electricity bills, rather than show compassion for the poor and the elderly, governments push ruthlessly ahead with inefficient and expensive renewable energy projects.

This newspaper's former editor-in-chief Chris Mitchell reveals in his book, *Making Headlines*, how Kevin Rudd, when prime minister, brazenly attempted to use state power to investigate "the relationship between my paper and him". Rudd's successor, Julia Gillard, wanted to establish a media watchdog to effectively gag journalists.

None of this is fantasy and it explains why people are losing confidence in the democratic system. Australians feel increasingly marginalised and unrepresented. They are tired of spin and being lied to. They know that data is often withheld or manipulated.

As they struggle to make ends meet, they watch helplessly as the established political class shamelessly abuses its many privileges. It appears its sole purpose in life is to rule, not to govern. This adds weight to the insightful contention by the Business Council of Australia's Jennifer Westacott that Australia is in desperate need of a national purpose.

It's no wonder, to paraphrase American author Don Fredrick, that a growing number of Australians no longer want a tune-up at the same old garage. They want a new engine installed by experts — and they are increasingly of the view that the current crop of state and federal mechanics lacks the skills and experience to do the job.

One Nation may not be the answer, but its garage does offer a new engine.

This is Australia's version of the Trump phenomenon. Like Donald Trump, Hanson is a non-establishment political disrupter. However, unlike Trump, who may soon occupy the White House, Hanson won't inhabit the Lodge.

This leaves Australia's establishment and the central planners very much in control. It means we will remain firmly on our current bigger-government path, financed by higher taxes and creative accounting.

Nobel laureate economist FA Hayek observes in his book *The Road to Serfdom*: "The more planners improvise, the greater the disturbance to normal business. Everyone suffers. People feel rightly that 'planners' can't get things done."

But he argues that, ironically, in a crisis the risk is that rather than wind back the role of government, people automatically turn to someone strong who demands obedience and uses coercion to achieve objectives.

Australia is now on that road to tyranny and, with another global recession in prospect and nearly 50 per cent of voters already dependent on government, the incentive is to vote for more government, not less.

The left-wing media echo-chamber will be an enthusiastic cheerleader.