

Australia Dossier by Brent Melville

Hetherington targets free trade

Free trade economists dominate both of the two main political parties, and it's destroying Australia's economy.

Free trade theorists lurking behind Australia's two main political parties are being targeted by Maurice Hetherington in his campaign for the federal Parliament seat of Hinkler. Hetherington, a co-thinker of U.S. presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche who has held the office of shire councilor for years, is campaigning under the Citizen's Electoral Councils.

The seat is located on the central coast of the state of Queensland, a sub-tropical area rich in minerals and agricultural produce, which has been betrayed by the free trade policies promoted by Canberra's economists, the business oligarchy represented by the Business Council of Australia, and right-wing think-tanks such as the Institute of Public Affairs, the Tasman Institute, and the Sydney Institute (formerly the Center for Independent Studies).

For instance, sugarcane growers, already struggling under massive debt and low world prices, have been hit with imports from the cheap-labor nations of Southeast Asia. The sugar tariff was lowered recently despite protests from growers and some members of the National Party, the junior partner in the conservative federal coalition with the free market-oriented Liberal Party.

Despite protests from National Party MPs, their leader Tim Fischer went along with Liberal Party leader Dr. John Hewson's hardline "no comment" stance on tariff reductions. The rural-based National Party is a conservative, pro-tariff grouping that historically has worked in the interests of the agricultural sector. In recent

years, however, they have capitulated to the city-based Liberal Party which draws support from big business families. Hewson, the federal opposition leader, is a graduate of Harvard Business School and Johns Hopkins University and spent several years working with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington. His former employment was with Macquarie Bank, while his wife Carolyn is in charge of the trading floor at Schroeders in Sydney.

The Liberals are attempting to dazzle the electorate with a Goods and Service Tax (GST) as a quick-fix "solution" to the nation's economic woes. It just so happens that the GST is an IMF conditionality.

Hetherington's anti-free trade campaign has hit the news media following revelations in the *Bundaberg News-Mail* on Oct. 22 that small-crops farms in the region were collapsing at the rate of one every two months as a result of a \$94 million increase in fruit and vegetable imports. A story in the Oct. 27 *News-Mail*, headlined "Free Trade Policy Changes Demanded," quoted Hetherington's insistence that the free trade economic policy that has destroyed Australia's economy must go.

Hetherington "believes more jobs will be lost in the local vegetable growing and processing industry unless Labor and the Coalition change their free-trade policy. 'To take away tariffs and quotas and allow imports to flood in at a time of global recession is nothing more than national suicide,' Mr. Hetherington said.

" 'There is no such thing as free

trade because the international commodity markets are so corrupted by a few multinationals either exploiting slave labor or forcing prices down by dumping at below the local price. The major political parties have sold Australia out to this idea in the name of the so-called global free market which doesn't exist.'

"Mr. Hetherington said six tomato growers in this district, each paying out a million dollars in wages, had gone out of business in the last two years because of increased competition from Victorian growers. The Victorians traditionally sold their product to processing plants but are now being forced into the fresh tomato market because of the closures of Australian canneries unable to compete with imported products."

Hetherington warned that small-crop farms face worse yet to come: "I have been informed that thousands of tons of semi-processed vegetables have started coming into Australia through Perth. I have warned for a number of years now that Australia cannot survive on this level playing field nonsense."

Hetherington attacked the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), which "free trade idea was a front for the multinationals operating out of the United States, Britain, and Europe. 'Many people in the rural industry who support GATT just do not realize it is just a new form of the old imperial trading set-up—that means smaller trading nations such as Australia are kept as quarries for raw materials,' he said.

"Mr. Hetherington said Liberal and Labor theorists falsely argued that protection of industry slowed economic development and distorted trade. 'The fact of the matter is that the more Australia has gone into so-called free trade, the more our economy has gone downwards,' he said."