

Australia Dossier by Allen Douglas

What Eurasian Land-Bridge?

The government's new report on Asian infrastructure carries not a single mention of the "new Silk Road."

Deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer has outdone himself this time, in making a laughingstock of himself and his government. Widely known as "Dim Tim," because of his imperviousness to reality, Fischer is also the Minister for Trade and Industry; in that capacity, on Dec. 2, he launched his government's definitive new report on Asian infrastructure, "Asia's Infrastructure in the Crisis—Harnessing Private Enterprise." The report contains *not a single mention of the greatest infrastructure project in the history of mankind*, the 11,000 kilometer Eurasian Land-Bridge, stretching from Lianyungang, China to Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

But, it is not just "Dim Tim's" usual blockheadedness, rivalling that of the cigar store Indian himself, fellow free trader U.S. Vice President Al Gore, which caused his government to overlook the project around which all global strategic reality is now pivoting. In fact, Fischer's government is keenly aware of the Land-Bridge and its implications. So, to not mention it, can only mean that the government is bitterly *opposed* to it, as per the report's radical free trade axioms.

Two incidents, in particular, prove that the blackout of the Land-Bridge is intentional. First, in mid-1997, one of Lyndon LaRouche's Australian associates had contacted Dr. Frances Perkins, the head of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade unit which authored the report, and verbally briefed her on the Land-Bridge, and sent her a copy of *EIR's* 290-page report, "The Eurasian Land-Bridge: The 'New Silk Road'—Locomotive for Worldwide Economic De-

velopment."

Second, and more important, the work on the Land-Bridge by Lyndon LaRouche and his wife Helga Zepp-LaRouche, widely known as the "Silk Road Lady" for her advocacy of the project, figured prominently in the wild attack which Fischer launched on LaRouche in early June 1996, in which Fischer squealed, "There is no place in Australia for the type of agenda being pursued by the LaRouche organization." Only hours before that attack, Fischer had met with European Union Trade Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan, who had just attended a major conference in Beijing on the Land-Bridge at which Zepp-LaRouche was a featured speaker. Sir Leon, in his typically arrogant British fashion, had demanded that the Land-Bridge be built, if at all, under private auspices, "or else."

In contrast to Brittan's insulting behavior, Zepp-LaRouche's passionate advocacy of this great project resonated strongly with her hosts. In other words, Sir Leon had taken a political drubbing at the hands of Zepp-LaRouche. Clearly "not amused," Sir Leon whispered in "Dim Tim's" ear as soon as he got to Australia, and "Dim Tim" went up like a skyrocket. His attacks on LaRouche made front-page news for a week.

Aside from blacking out the biggest infrastructure project in the world, the report also ignores the deepening global depression, with such lunatic prognostications as: "The immediate financial crisis stage appears to be over for most regional [Asian] economies"; and, that "most economies should recover in the next

two to five years."

Notwithstanding Fischer's pious proclamations on Dec. 2 about how "it would be wrong to be simply a fair-weather friend of Asia," the report prescribes measures for the further *looting* of Asia, through privatization of the region's infrastructure, to wit: "Crisis-induced infrastructure asset sales will provide investment opportunities for Australian infrastructure investment firms."

Over all these measures hangs the stench of corruption which invariably accompanies "privatization" scams, in which private interests loot the infrastructure base built up over decades with public funds, as has happened in Australia. The report waxed eloquent about two privatization models in particular: that of the state of Victoria, where citizens are now dying because of the privatization of infrastructure, particularly in the health sector, and that of the water supply in Manila. Both of these were scripted by the Tasman Institute, an Australian front for the British Crown's Mont Pelerin Society. Tasman, together with its fellow Mont Pelerin think-tanks, helped design the federal government's privatization program, the world's second-largest (behind Margaret Thatcher's Britain), *while at least six members of the federal government are long-standing associates of these think-tanks*. In other words, their cronies, whom the government has employed as "consultants," have made a bundle from government policy!

No wonder, that the report's executive summary concludes: "These reforms should provide commercial opportunities for Australian businesses and consultants. The Australian government should promote and facilitate such reforms . . . and assist Australian business to access these opportunities."