

Australia Dossier by Michael J. Sharp

Political murder stuns Australians

The killing of state parliamentarian John Newman is the first-ever assassination of a serving politician.

In what is being widely described in the nation's news media as "Australia's first political assassination," anti-crime campaigner and New South Wales state Member of Parliament John Newman was gunned down in early September in the driveway of his home in the Sydney suburb of Cabramatta, a center of Australia's Asian community.

Evidencing the nation's shock and horror, Newman was given a state funeral—Australia's highest form of respect. Nineteen federal cabinet ministers, including Prime Minister Paul Keating, New South Wales state Prime Minister John Fahey, New South Wales Gov. Peter Sinclair, most of the state's 64 Labor members of parliament, former prime ministers, state prime ministers, and representatives of all of Australia's numerous ethnic communities were part of the 3,000-strong gathering who showed up to pay their respects, both to the man, and to the passing of an era in the nation's history.

The assassination marks a phase change in the famously relaxed political life of Australia, once known by its citizens as the "Lucky Country." As Lyndsay Tanner, a federal member of parliament for Melbourne, put it in the Sept. 10 *Herald Sun*, "Until now, Australian politicians and even senior politicians have mingled freely with the community. . . . If the threat of physical violence becomes common . . . MPs will be swamped by security guards and become more remote from the rest of the community."

The federal government has announced a review of security arrange-

ments for the nation's politicians.

The police, in a steady stream of press releases, claim they have no motive for the crime, yet there is some revealing speculation in the nation's media. A former staff member of Newman, Ken Chapman, told the *Herald Sun* on Sept. 12 that he "believed Mr. Newman, who had campaigned strongly against Asian crime in the area, might have been killed by a local gang as an attempt to gain control of the area." Chapman said that Newman "had been working on a blueprint based on international techniques to combat the growing influence of the primarily Asian crime organization at the time he was killed."

Newman himself had told the New South Wales Parliament in March that Asian organized crime gangs were "very menacing and bold," that "matters were getting out of hand," and that "we have this small, terrible element in the Asian community."

Newman was a renowned anti-crime campaigner and had received numerous death threats. His car had been paint-bombed three times and, in 1991, a shot was fired through the window of his office. Only four days before his death, he told a colleague, "The bastards are still out to get me." Notwithstanding all this, police dropped video surveillance of his house two weeks prior to the slaying.

Though law enforcement officials claim they have no idea of the motive, their actions indicate otherwise. The New South Wales police are looking overseas to bring in high-ranking Asian police to assist the 50 detectives

now working on the case. One police source told *EIR* that the "ST" gang is very active in Cabramatta with about 200 members running a variety of strong-arm tactics, including extortion and a drug distribution network which has reputedly replaced the notorious King's Cross red-light district as Sydney's heroin center.

In the second week in September, a Melbourne court heard evidence from a police prosecutor that one of the world's largest Triad organizations, Sun Yee On, is expanding its organized crime operations in Melbourne, and that its stronghold is in Sydney. A former intelligence officer in New South Wales Special Branch told *EIR*:

"This [organized crime problem] could have been avoided 11 years ago. The Special Branch identified the gangs behind this terrorism and drug trafficking and nothing was ever done." He said that "all of the suspects were photographed, intelligence reports were filed. All that was needed was to keep a squad on the gangs." The source concluded that "this hit had all of the hallmarks of the Triad or Tong, and Newman was on the verge of exposing them so they moved on him first."

The Hawke Labor government, which took power in 1983, formally disbanded the Special Branch and wound down Alien Registration, administered by the Immigration Department in the early 1980s, supposedly in response to the pressure placed on them by civil liberties and privacy lobby groups. The government issued an edict that all files on suspects be destroyed. Included in these were files on the very groups that Newman was going after. Ever since that time, the police intelligence agencies have had their hands tied, a problem which has been compounded by extensive budget cuts.