

Fair go or class warfare?

By JOSH FRYDENBERG

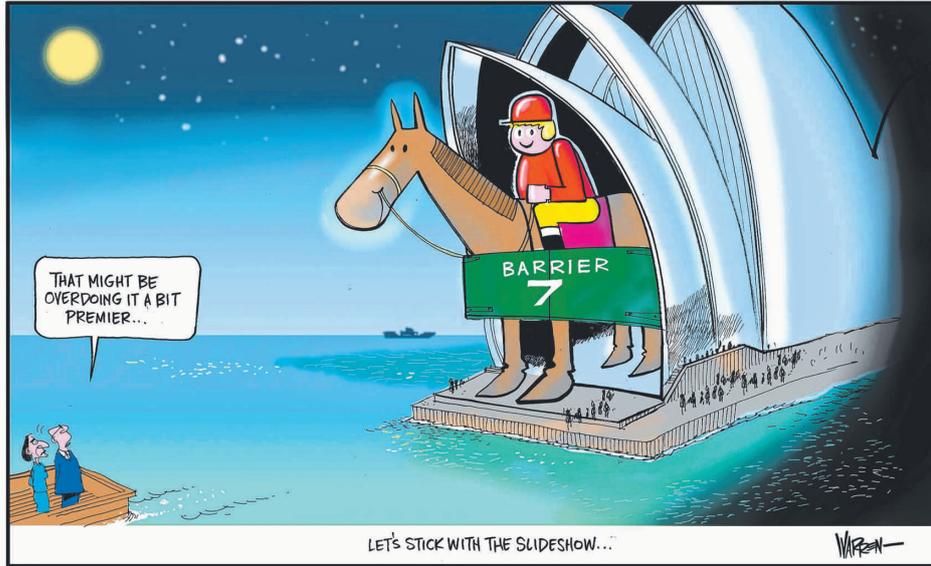
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THEY SAID IT



"The fact that the PM described the Opera House as 'The biggest billboard we've got,' simply stunned me. Imagine a French President saying that of the Eiffel Tower."

Fairfax columnist Peter FitzSimons is upset about The Everest being promoted in a one-hour Opera House light show

"The Eiffel Tower was once the world's largest billboard."

The History Channel reminds readers that for nine years the Tower promoted Citroen cars with an illuminated ad visible from 30km

Fair go or class warfare?

Bill Shorten's promises of a more equal society are based on pitting ordinary Australians against each other

Bill Shorten is taking the Australian people for granted. He is acting as if he has won the next election, issuing a range of demands. He wants a veto power over key appointments — he has warned organisations that have received Commonwealth grants not to spend the money as they would not honour the contract if elected — and just a few days ago he sought to dictate Australia's population policy by proposing a joint taskforce.

It seems Labor has forgotten it is in opposition.

We have seen such behaviour before from Bill Shorten.

After the last election he ran around the country on a victory lap. It seemed nobody had bothered to tell him he had lost.

There is, however, an upside of Labor's presumptuous approach. It is giving the public a glimpse of what it would do in office. Recent speeches from Bill Shorten, incoming Labor president Wayne Swan, shadow assistant treasurer Andrew Leigh and ACTU secretary Sally McManus are all cases in point.

Bill Shorten used his speech over the weekend to outline a five-point plan for the nation.

A five-point plan to put new taxes on your income, your business, your property, your savings and your electricity bill.

There are about three million small and medium-sized businesses, with an annual turnover under \$50 million, which employ about seven million people. Each of them will face higher taxes as Labor un-



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winds the tax relief we have already legislated. So too with income tax relief. Labor will rip up our legislation already passed that will see 94 per cent of tax payers pay no more than 32.5 cents in the dollar.

The value of people's homes will fall as Labor attacks negative gearing and no retirees' savings are safe as Labor takes away the cash refund on franking credits, which so many Australians rely upon.

Electricity bills will rise too as Labor implements its reckless 50 per cent renewable energy target and 45 per cent emissions reduction target.

After power prices doubled when Labor was last in office, you can excuse the public for being wary of Labor's plan to take South Australia's failed energy "experiment" national.

But what must be even more worrying for employers, big and small, is the return of militant unionism should Labor win the next election.

Under Bill Shorten, union law breakers will become union law makers.

The unions — despite representing only 9 per cent of private sector employees in Australia — will influence every Labor policy decision.

The unions are planning a feast at the Cabinet table and it will be the taxpayers who foot the bill.

As the modern Labor Party moves to the left and the unions entrench their power by determining preselections, it is Shorten's view that militant unionism is the best tonic to inequality.

However, this goes against Australian experience.

The Productivity Commission recently found that income inequality in Australia had decreased since the Global Financial Crisis, living standards since the 1990s have improved with each generation, and economic mobility in Australia is higher than that in the United Kingdom or the United States.

This positive story is a result of a growing economy where union power has been kept in check and private enterprise has been allowed to flourish.

It is this approach that has helped the Coalition deliver more than one



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million new jobs, a Budget deficit which is the lowest in a decade and a AAA credit rating from the three leading rating agencies.

Indeed, Standard & Poor's recently commended Australia for its "fiscal prudence" and "better budget performance".

In contrast, Bill Shorten and his Labor colleagues see themselves as modern-day revolutionaries on the frontline of a class war.

How else can one explain Wayne Swan's call to "tear down neoliberal-

ism", Andrew Leigh's reverence for Friedrich Engels and Sally McManus's infamous line "I don't think there is a problem with breaking it," referring to the law.

The problem for Labor is that in their definition of a fair go, someone else always has to be worse off.

It's about redistributing the pie, not growing it.

It's about pitting employer against employee, state schools against independent and public patients against those who choose the private health system.

Only when Labor acknowledges how unfair their plan is to increase taxes on the retiree, the small business person and the aspirational worker will they start to understand what is truly a fair go.

Only when they acknowledge that their past record and future plans for higher debt and deficits is intergenerational theft, will they understand what is real fairness.

And only when they go back to the legacy of Hawke and Keating, which they now reject, instead of their warm embrace of Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Sanders, will modern Labor be true to their forbears.

The next election will be much more than a contest of who is best placed to manage our balance sheet and who is best placed to protect our borders.

It will be a battle of ideas and the type of country that we want Australia to be.

For the Coalition, it is about freedom, choice and aspiration for all Australians, because this is truly what it means to get a fair go.

Josh Frydenberg is the federal Treasurer.