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THE AGENDA OF THE GREENS†

Kevin Andrews MP

*Federal Member for Menzies
Shadow Minister for Families, Housing and Human Services*

Tonight I want to say a little bit about the Greens for a number of reasons, not simply because they are political opponents of the party which I represent, but more significantly because I think that they represent a threat to western civilisation. Now you may say that is a big call, but nonetheless I hope to argue that and to have persuaded you by the end of my talk to at least consider that as a verifiable proposition.

I say that because, if you look at the basis of the society in which we live, it is essentially based on a number of principles and those principles have their origins in Greece and Rome and the Judeo-Christian ethic, subsequently changed in part by the events of the enlightenment, but they nonetheless remain the pillars of the civilisation in which we live.

And the basis of that civilisation, I think, is founded on two things. One is a sense of, or notion of, human freedom or liberty – the liberty of the individual which is at the basis of western civilisation compared to many other civilisations that we can point to and other cultures in the world today. And second, a sense of the dignity of each human individual. It is a sense of human dignity and freedom which is the basis of the civilisation in which we live and you can trace the origins of that back to Greece and beyond Greece, through Rome and the establishment of law which was then taken by Christianity and became part of the great birth of the life of Europe and the great European experiment. There were changes, I will admit, with some of the events of the enlightenment, but nonetheless, they remained the great foundational principles of the culture in which we live.

There are a couple of things that flow from this, if you believe this proposition. One is that there is a sense that we as humans are not the creators of our own destiny. Yes we can create aspects of our destiny, but indeed our destiny is created by something greater. Call it God if you like, call it the creator, depending on your own particular beliefs, but nonetheless, we as humans are not the creation of the destiny of this world in which we live. But having

* While Warrane College accepts responsibility for producing these papers, the opinions expressed in these papers are those of the authors. Enquiries should be directed to the Master, Warrane College, UNSW, PO Box 123, Kensington, NSW 1465, Australia.

† An after dinner address delivered at Warrane College on 27 July 2011. A podcast of the talk, including the question and answer session, is available at www.warrane.unsw.edu.au under 'Publications'.

said that, humans are indeed an important and indeed the most significant component of the world in which we live. And that is true of the whole Judeo-Christian ethic which underpins, as I suggest, Western civilisation.

Why is that important when we look at where we are? Well, in terms of the great civilisations that we have now, that notion of human freedom and human dignity remains foundational. If you look, for example, at the great documents which have come into existence, such as the documents that founded the civilisation and nation of the United States of America, human freedom and human dignity are at the basis of them. If you look at the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, a document which was constructed after the Second World War - after the world had been caught by the ravages of two great wars, and people were searching for a way in which we could have peace on this globe, and move forward in terms of prosperity - human freedom and human dignity are at the basis of that document. They are at the basis of many other documents that have been constructed over the past 50 or 60 years around the world.

Even if you look at the Common Law - the basis of the legal system under which we live in this country - again those notions of freedom and dignity of the individual are at the basis of it. I say that because what this focuses on is the essential humanity of all of us. And that humanity is reflected in the notion that we have free will and we can make choices, but we ought to respect all other human beings in their free will and their choices as well. That is reflected not only in the Judeo-Christian ethic. You can go back to passages of the Old Testament and the concept of loving your neighbour, which was so well espoused by Jesus in the New Testament. But if you look also at documents such as the Golden Rule of Immanuel Kant, one of the great philosophers of the Enlightenment, you have the idea that you treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself.

So whether you are talking about Christianity, or before that Judaism, or you talk about the basic philosophy of the Enlightenment, then you can see that this notion of dignity and freedom of the individual is at the basis of our civilisation. I say that to draw a contrast with the Greens because if you start to look at the Greens – and I have written about this in much more detail on my website in a paper which I constructed last year – the Greens start from a different point of view.

Take the Greens as a political movement, for a start, in Australia. There are two “strands” of the Greens. The first, which is probably best known, is the environmental movement in Tasmania, which began with the Tasmanian Wilderness Society and the organisations and bodies which existed prior to that. This was established by people such as Bob Brown and was very much about protecting the environment.

The second strand of the Greens, which has its origins here in New South Wales and was led by Jack Mundey and the builders labourers’ movements, including the Builders Labourers’ Federation. Mundey himself, in an interview which was recorded and published many years later by the ABC, described his movement as “environmental” or “ecological Marxism”. He said at the core of this movement was a sense of this left-wing Marxism, which had underlined the aspiration of many people from the left for a very long time. I think that description of “ecological Marxism” is a very apt description of what the Greens are, in terms of their ideology.

Why do I say that? Because the Greens are concerned fundamentally, not about humanity, but about the earth. They have this concept of “Gaia” - that the earth is some living organism which is to be protected above all and that that comes first and is primary to any other considerations.

You need to look at their policies in detail and go back to their originating documents. There's the book, *The Greens*, written by Bob Brown and Peter Singer (the author of *Animal Liberation* and such other works) whose views about life are based on the idea that to put humanity first is very much an engagement in what he calls "speciesism" – that is, that we put our species above any other species on this earth. He says that animals should be treated at least equally with humans. He goes so far as to say that sexual relations between humans and animals are okay provided that there is consent, whatever that means, on both sides. I am using that as an illustration of what he says. I am not trying to characterise what he says. I am just trying to report what he says if you go to his works.

Go back to that book, *The Greens*, by Singer. It is interesting that the co-author of the Greens manifesto with Bob Brown, is Peter Singer – a radical animal liberationist. And when you go to the Greens' global document, something to which Greens parties and organisations around the world have signed up as a kind of global manifesto, it is quite clear that humanity, as we understand it in the Judeo-Christian west, as we understand it in western civilisation, is not the primary objective of what we do. But somehow protecting the environment, the ecology, is the primary objective of all policy. Now that is a radical change from the underlying basis upon which our civilisation has been built because human dignity is not at the forefront and human freedom is not at the forefront.

Indeed, my view is that what the Greens' ideology represents, is a form of soft totalitarianism. By totalitarianism I mean, in this context, the view that the proponents of that idea have what they see as a perfect view, and the only view, that the world should be living under into the future. You see manifestations of that even recently. There is this idea that, because of some hacking incidents a few years ago on a newspaper in London, now we should license who can operate the Press in Australia. They believe that we can decide who is a fit and proper person to publish a newspaper. I presume that also means a newsletter, and could also mean something that is online. In other words, in this age of blogging and the internet, there are some people who can decide who is fit and proper to publish when so many thousands of people publish in the new media, these days. That to me is a form of totalitarianism, which doesn't represent either human dignity or human freedom.

Therefore, my view is that the Greens represent something quite radical. Now there will be people in this room who are conservative coalition voters. There will be people in this room who are Labor voters. But my argument is not with people who are Labor supporters and voters in this room, because I think that the mainstream parties in Australia broadly represent, and are broadly supportive of the pillars of western civilisation as I have described them. Yes we have arguments about what is the best policy to put in place, what is the best program that you should have, whether or not you should run the economy this way, whether or not you should deliver programs that way. Is it best to put in rail or roads? Is it best to have a public hospital system or have private health insurance? There are a range of arguments about everything you like, but it is my contention that the basic ideology of the parties, is very much similar. That is, I believe that we still support the civilisation in which we exist. That is radically different for the Greens.

If the Greens policies were to be fulfilled - that is, if the consequences were to flow from them actually being in a position to put them in place, and to effectively govern - then that would radically change the nature of the society in which we live.

So my contention is that the Greens represent something radically different from mainstream political parties in this country and indeed in America and the UK and elsewhere around the world. I think it is a dangerous thing that they represent in terms of the ideology that they are

putting forward. We will see that flow through in a whole range of policies. If you say that the environment, the world, is what should be considered, then you can see that that flows through to things like economic growth, which they do not support. It flows through to saying that world trade is something that should be questioned. It flows through to questioning the whole capitalist basis of our society.

It also flows through to social programs as well. If there is no primacy for the individual human person, the human person has no call on any particular programs, or no particular place above others. So euthanasia is okay, because humans don't have any intrinsic dignity. Abortion is okay because humans don't have any intrinsic dignity. According to Peter Singer, you can wait until children are a few months old before you decide whether they have any defects or diseases or imperfections. If they have, you can decide that infanticide is okay. Gay marriage is okay, but it doesn't have to stop at two consenting adults. It can be more than two consenting adults.

And so you can see that this would lead fundamentally to a total reorganisation of the society in which we live. And it is my belief that such a reorganisation of society would lead to a breakdown of the society in which we live and an end to civilisation as we know it.

Now you may say that is a big call and it is not going to happen, but if you look at these policies that are sought to be implemented, incrementally, one by one, over a period of time, then it seems to me that the result is going to be a radically different society than the one we live in at the present time. That is why I have been speaking and writing against the Greens for some time now, because I think they represent a threat to our way of life beyond any day-to-day differences I might have with the Labor Party over any particular policies we argue about in the public space and within the Parliament.