

## Australia Dossier by Robert Barwick

### Aussies reject fraudulent republic

*A plot to perpetuate British imperialism in a new Aussie "republic" has been defeated.*

Australians voted emphatically against becoming a republic, in a nationwide referendum on Nov. 6, in what is, paradoxically, a tremendous victory for the sovereignty of the Australian people. In voting no, the mainly pro-republican population of Australia were not voting to retain the present system of constitutional monarchy, where Britain's Queen Elizabeth II is Australia's head of state, but were voting against a fraudulent "royal" republican model, whereby Australia would have become a republic *in name only*.

The republican model rejected by a 55% to 45% majority of all eligible voters (voting is compulsory in Australia) was promoted by its backers as a *minimal change*, which would simply replace the Queen as head of state, with an Australian citizen as President, appointed by a two-thirds majority of federal Parliament. However, in the lead-up to the referendum, all opinion polls showed that the majority of Australians would support a republic, only if they were able to directly elect the President.

On this issue, Australia's British-controlled financial, political, and legal establishment closed ranks, hysterically rejecting any direct-election model as "dangerous" and "too American." On Oct. 22, just two weeks prior to the referendum, three of Australia's most senior knighted jurists, former Governor-General Sir Zelman Cowen, and former High Court chief justices Sir Anthony Mason and Sir Gerard Brennan, issued a joint statement supporting the "republican" model and attacking the idea of direct Presidential election: "Without extensive

constitutional constraints an elected Presidency could destroy the Westminster system of *responsible government*," they warned (emphasis added).

The statement betrayed the true agenda of the republican plotters: "Responsible government" is the legal mechanism the British Colonial office devised in the 19th century, in reaction to the growing republican aspirations of the Queen's Australian colonies in the 1850s to 1890s. Beginning in the 1850s with firebrand Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Dr. John Dunmore Lang, Australia's first and greatest republican who was a Benjamin Franklin-type figure in the largest colony of New South Wales, there was a growing political desire to see Australia become the great "Republic of the South Seas"; specifically, in Lang's vision, a "United States of Australia."

Desperate to stop the Australian colonies going the way of their American cousins, the British devised the "responsible government" scheme, in which an Executive composed of ministers appointed by the British governor from among an elected assembly would be "responsible" to that assembly. The system was intended to give the appearance of local control, while real control remained vested in the British Crown (the governor is appointed by, and is the representative of, the Crown). The ministers would hold office only at the governor's "pleasure," despite their responsibility to the assembly.

In the 1920s, High Court Chief Justice Sir Isaac Isaacs, who later became the Crown's viceroy, admitted the anti-American aims of "responsible government": "It is essential to

bear in mind two cardinal features of our political system which are interwoven in its texture and . . . radically distinguish it from the American Constitution," he said. "One is the common sovereignty of all parts of the British Empire; the other is . . . the institution of responsible government, a government under which the Executive is directly responsible to—nay, is almost the creature of—the Legislature. This is not so in America."

The current shift to a republic had been set for Jan. 1, 2001, timed to coincide with the centenary of Federation, the political union of the Australian colonies under the British Crown that had replaced the republican push in the late-19th century. The campaign was entirely run by assets of the Crown: The Constitutional Centenary Foundation that did the legal groundwork for the Constitutional change, was fronted by former Governor-General Sir Ninian Stephen, and funded by the Queen's Rio Tinto firm. The Australian Republican Movement, the official republican campaign body, was led by Goldman Sachs partner Malcolm Turnbull and a host of current and former employees of Australia's richest man, media baron Kerry Packer, a British royal "insider."

It was the constituencies who have suffered most from the cost-cutting, deregulation, and privatization imposed on them by the elites (farmers and blue collar workers) who most emphatically rejected the "royal" republic. Pro-republican union leader Leigh Hubbard acknowledged, "It was an anti-politician, anti-elitist vote. Here was an opportunity for people to tell the politicians to get stuffed, and they took it." The message seems to have gotten through: Opposition leader Kim Beasley has promised another vote in the next few years, this time on a model where the people elect the President—like in America.