

## **A new indigenous policy could end the New Racism**

By: Andrew Bolt

The Redfern riots have given John Howard the perfect chance to end our New Racism. If he's reluctant, he should look across the Tasman. It took the Tampa to save John Howard from what seemed certain defeat at the last election. Now, again facing defeat, Howard may be miraculously saved by his second Tampa -- the Redfern race riot. And if he wants proof of how much voters ache for a chance to rescue their country from the preachers of New Racism, he need look only at the earthquake that's hit New Zealand.

Just a few weeks ago, New Zealand's National Party was badly trailing the ruling Labour Party of Prime Minister Helen Clark. But then the new National leader, former Reserve Bank governor Don Brash, got up at the Orewa Rotary Club and gave a profound and electrifying speech. New Zealand was on a dangerous drift towards racial separatism between Maoris and non-Maoris, he warned. And this racism had to be stopped. "We are one country with many peoples, not simply a society of Pakeha (non-Maori) and Maori where the minority has a birthright to the upper hand," he said.

Brash attacked Labour for helping to create "a racially divided nation, with two sets of laws, and two standards of citizenship". This was divisive and backward-looking, and had created a culture of grievance that dragged back even Maoris themselves. And it was morally wrong. "In this country, it should not matter what colour you are, or what your ethnic origin might be."

So Brash vowed to abolish the Maori seats in Parliament, strip all race-based clauses from the law, scrap regulations forcing local governments to consult Maori groups, stop further haggling over land rights, and replace social welfare programs for Maoris with ones that applied to everyone who needed the help, regardless of their race. "Having done all that, we really will be one people."

You can imagine the uproar. The Prime Minister warned that this talk would lead to blood in the streets -- although it was only Brash himself who ended up being pelted with mud during a Waitangi Day "celebration". Commentators called him a racist -- although he has a Chinese wife and is rejecting racism. But the silent voters? Trust them to back a man who proclaims the old liberal truth that we are brothers and sisters under the skin. Last week Brash's party exploded from just 28 per cent in the polls to 45 per cent -- putting it well in front of Labour for the first time in four years.

How much John Howard needs a bit of that magic. And what a reason he's been given to echo Brash's warnings, now that we've seen in the Redfern riot the future of the ethnic separatism that our governments have so foolishly funded.

It is already racist and divisive enough that we have an Aboriginal-only "parliament" in ATSIC, as well as taxpayer-funded Aboriginal-only services such as the Aboriginal Legal Service, Aboriginal health services, Aboriginal housing bodies and the like. It's even worse that Labor governments in Victoria and South Australia now have "Koori courts" for Aborigines only, and that judges in the Northern Territory have tried to work tribal law into their judgments. And what madness inspired the Victorian ALP to recently demand special seats in federal parliament for Aborigines? But now here comes Mark Latham's federal Labor Party, promising far more of this New Racism that has delivered nothing but hatred and failure.

His policy platform, approved last month by Labor's national conference, promises to honour the "distinct rights which attach to Indigenous Australians as a group". It says Aborigines must be allowed to "exercise their rights to self-determination within the Australian nation", and promises to give them new "indigenous specific projects" and guaranteed places in local "management structures overseeing the management of parks, waterways and other public spaces". Young black criminals will be handed over to be dealt with by their respective elders using traditional methods. And, of course, there will be an apology for the "stolen generations" myth, plus "compensation on a compassionate level" without the need for the "adversarial court system".

Yes, Aborigines will be spared having to do what everyone else must when claiming compensation – that is, having to prove to a court they deserve it. Separate rights. Separate laws. Separate courts. Separate elections. Separate services. And all based on race, and race alone. Labor's racism is monstrously stupid and dangerous, and to excuse it by saying it's meant well does not make it any more wise. What happened to that humanist ideal – and Christian one – of seeing us all as individuals, not to be divided or defined by our race?

Of course, Australia is not yet as bad as New Zealand in such racist separatism. We have proportionately fewer Aborigines, for a start. But this argument over whether Aborigines are of us or apart from us – enjoying "distinct rights" – is a crucial battle in a bigger war over multiculturalism and the New Racism. It is a battle in a war over what Australia actually is. Are we a nation of individuals, equal before the law, and united in a common citizenship? Or are we a collection of tribes, unequal before the law, with different citizenships, depending on our race or ethnicity?

And we can see already what our drift backwards into tribalism is bringing us. Squabbles over which race or ethnic group deserves what. The electoral bribing of ethnic bosses, with separate services for "their" people. Arguments over whose ancestors did what to whom, and who should now pay. The parading of old wounds and endless demands for compensation. The insistence on racial differences most of us would otherwise have never noticed. The vilification of our past and the cramping of our future. Redfern. And always this looking backwards,

backwards.

This is the issue that could be Howard's new Tampa – an appeal to voters to save this country from the New Racists who seek to divide us, using our government and our money. Could be. But probably won't. Does Howard really have the vision and words for this fight? Is he inspiring enough to show us this isn't an appeal to racists, but a rejection of them? Does he have the largeness to convince us this is not about bashing blacks, but offering them – and any marginalised Australian – a better future in the mainstream? And after eight years of saying little about all this, would Howard in raising it now seem to be arguing from moral conviction – or sweaty desperation?

So perhaps Redfern isn't Howard's new Tampa, after all. Perhaps it is Peter Costello's instead.

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