

We The People

Program 130

Which Bank....the Bendigo Bank



The origins of modern banking can be traced to early Renaissance Italy, to the rich cities in the north like Florence, Venice and Genoa. Modern banking practice, including fractional reserve banking and the issue of banknotes, emerged in the 17th century. Merchants started to store their gold with the goldsmiths of London, who possessed private vaults and charged a fee for that service. In exchange for each deposit of precious metal, the goldsmiths issued receipts certifying the quantity and purity of the gold they held in trust but only the original depositor could collect the stored gold. Gradually the goldsmiths began to lend the money out on behalf of the depositor, which led to the development of modern banking practices and promissory notes evolved into banknotes. Thus, the goldsmiths of London became the forerunners of banking by creating new money based on credit.

We all have a bank account and a general view of banks and often it's a poor view as they make what seems like indecorous amounts of profit and sometimes do it in a way which betrays the customers trust. When banks get into trouble it's the only business the government guarantees and that makes them very special and with very special social and national responsibilities. This is a position which requires banks to have a very specific duty to we the people, all the people.

Now with all that in mind let's transmit ourselves to Bendigo in Victoria. This is a regional centre and an historically important town of 92,000 people who are clearly proud of their history. The Bendigo Bank was born from a desire to build a bank for the people from modest roots. There was a promise they would always be a community bank and never lose contact with their customers and we applauded their goals. Now sadly, they are the fifth largest bank in Australia and in my view have taken on the trappings of a big bank where the customers view doesn't count as much anymore. In Bendigo a local group of Muslims want to build a mosque and a large number of locals don't want that, as they apparently believe the religion is incompatible with their community. This is of course their right and they have formed a group to stop the Mosque being built and are raising money to do so. Now as I understand it there are around 230 Muslims involved and at last count about 5000 locals against it. The Bendigo Bank has stepped in and cancelled the bank account of those opposed as they say it doesn't fit their business profile or goals of being inclusive and tolerant. I called the Bendigo Bank and was told "no comment" except to say they can choose who does business with the bank and effectively make that self proclaimed and self righteous moral decision. I have called and written to them with no success and finally last week went to a Branch of the Bendigo Bank on the Gold Coast and met with the manager. He was pleasant and said he knew little about it but he took the time to listen which is in stark contrast to the Banks Board and senior management. They are bunkered down in isolation and unavailable for discussion or commentso much for their community bank ideals and tolerance.

So let's recap. The Bendigo bank has closed the account of those Australians in Bendigo who are mounting a campaign to stop a mosque being built. The Bank claims it has a charter of being inclusive and tolerant yet there is no reference to their values on their web site and when requested they couldn't supply them. When asked what the shareholders thought there was no reply. This level of discrimination and unilateral decision making is wrong and on a scale that's breathtaking. I certainly won't be doing business with them because they are inflicting their own political correctness and veneer thin values on their own customers who have every right to open an account for a perfectly legal purpose. The principal here is an important one which apparently escapes the Bendigo Bank heavy weights who must be salivating at the thought of new Islamic money in the future. Remember, in times of national trouble we the people guarantee the bank's deposits and that means the bank is in no position to decide who has a greater right to have an account. Which bank flouts that social responsibility.....the Bendigo Bank.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley

Trailing Message for Air Play

I recorded the narrative you have just heard on Friday last week as usual and it captures a moment in time. However that evening I received a call from the managing Director of the Bendigo Bank, Mike Hirst. We spoke for quite a while and he explained that the main reason the bank closed the account of the opposing group was essentially due to the conduct of people visiting the Stop The Mosque face book page. The banks letter asking for the closure of their account was posted on the site and then the he says the language became very offensive and calls were received by the bank which were threatening and obscene and worried some staff. I found Mike Hurst a straight forward honest man so much so he admitted they should have handled the issue differently and have been more available for comment. He was also candid about the banks lack of experience with this type of attack through social media. I have chosen to offer this follow up to balance opinion and I also offered him equal time on air if he wanted which is in keeping with the code of fairness 4CRB subscribes to. In the end, you the listener will be the judge and I suspect the Bendigo Bank will be a lot more accessible in the future which is great news. I will report back as the matter unfolds and I have been pleasantly surprised by this friendly responsible and open follow up by the Bendigo bank.

Again ,until next time this is Kent Bayley