

We The People

Program 199

### **We the People The Clock Maker**



Good day to you. Just a few days ago I was discussing the growth on the Gold Coast and indeed Australia's cities, with a listener. He said while he didn't trust the Council or the State Government he is cautiously happy about the development going on. I asked why and he replied that it was '**growing the economy**' and that was a good thing. Again I asked why and he said, well there are more people and there is more money flowing through business. I questioned how it could be good for us if our overall quality of life declines, while a few get very wealthy and many more have their real income reduced accordingly, so how is that good. The analogy I used to bring some clarity was about an everyday clock with brass gears and cogs and workings that of course ultimately tells the time. Now in my view the insatiable appetite for growth is illogical and unsustainable because as an equivalence, if we have a perfectly good clock which tells the time, why would we want to build a bigger clock with bigger gears and bigger hands that still only indicates the time. All that effort and expense at time keeping using a larger clock when what we have is fine and affordable and sized correctly. Does this mean a bigger timepiece will tell the time better, no it doesn't and in the same way, growth for the sake of it is not better, it's a fallacy. Only the clock maker wins along with his apprentices.

The same misdirection applies to economics, which the ardent disciple claims is about money. Economic rationalism is an art form used by those, who for the most part, want to engineer society a certain way and its usually tinted with fear and mystery if not smoke and mirrors. The word 'economics' is used endlessly as a semi-holy word and while at times its appropriate, it's also used as a placebo to make us feel a little better when in reality it can't and often is not the right prescription at all. Economic growth is frequently just a euphemism for a bigger clock, while the truth is, economics is about **people** not money.

Take the contemporary measure of GDP as some kind of unassailable measure of the nation's well being. The greater the GDP number the better off we are, apparently. However, that's simply not the case if you look closely. The latest GDP figures suggest things are booming now but if you look at GDP per person, then things are pretty flat. In fact, GDP is not even the best measure of individual welfare. If you want to adjust for inflation and look at people's disposable income, things are even worse and dare I say, our common sense tells us that. So what do we do now the resources boom is over and Labor's federal debt is destroying the nation's health, while the Coalition don't have the courage to make the tough decisions. The answer, according to the experts is to build a bigger clock, so we are told we must celebrate our country's population reaching 24 million. This dry arid continent full of endangered species and little water and poor soils must now support a population of 50 million by the century's end. That's the bigger clock syndrome in full flight just as the Gold Coast is being forced to digest a doubling of population in the near future. Let me remind you that only the clock maker and his shareholders will win this race to see our lifestyle and the Gold Coast forever ruined and we are surely not on our own.

So with this all pervading sense of unease and fear of the future and endless cranes on the skyline, just stop and think when you have to vote. If the major parties don't inspire you then find the best candidate who will support and address your concerns and that includes the independents. The recent Council elections put the biggest clock maker back in power and when finished we'll have a huge clock which simply tells the time but costs us a fortune and regulates our lives. I for one am ticked off by this stupid notion at all levels of government that bigger is better. Next time someone tells you that growth is always good and always sustainable, pass on the clock analogy and tell them you are satisfied with the timepiece you have.

**Until next time this Kent Bayley**