

Youth Suicide and Howard's Australia

by Reid Tuesday, Jun 13 2006, 1:51pm

national / social equality/unity / commentary

Thank you for your article (link below) on Howard and particularly for highlighting his disregard for Australian youth. I am appalled by his attitude to young Australians. Australia has one of the highest youth suicide rates in the developed world and little wonder; the short-term interests of corporate profit, crushing taxation laws and the introduction of 'guest workers' have stolen the future from the majority of our youth. Our youth now experience ever-increasing difficulty obtaining work skills needed for their survival.

The two most destructive factors are taxation (up to 47% personal tax) and the 'guest worker' program. If any doubt existed regarding the real reasons behind Howard's Industrial Relations reforms, then doubt no more. Corporations are rushing to the 'slave labour' agents who supply expedient (but poorly skilled) cheap labour from Asia. The lure of immediate increased profits by reducing labour costs is a temptation few companies could resist. Australian companies that continue to support our youth will soon find themselves at a severe disadvantage, as other companies that utilise the services of cheap labour will gain a competitive edge. Australian companies with integrity will soon be forced to adopt imported labour in order to survive.

From a capitalist, free market perspective Howard's policies seem progressive, but few have analysed the social costs and long-term effects of this American model.

Australian youth have traditionally obtained training and job skills on site. Companies and businesses invested in the training of our youth in return for trainees becoming permanent valued staff. Specialist training produces the more efficient and capable person for the (specific) task. Costs involved in the training process were later recovered after the integration of trained staff into the company or business. This was the model that supported Australian business and Australian society for hundreds of years and delivered one of the highest living standards in the developed world.

The above system was self-sustaining and delivered a continuous supply of Australian skilled labour to the Australian workforce.

Enter the highest taxing government in Australian history and a Prime Minister who takes delight in the destruction of Australian values and traditional social models. A leader who has unashamedly attacked the life-blood of the nation, Australian youth! To describe Howard's tax policies as a disincentive is putting it mildly. I have had the privilege, honour and pleasure to train Australian youth during the course of my business activities. Today the brightest and most capable of my trainees have left the country due to the crushing tax burden of 47% in the dollar.

Furthermore, the skills they have acquired in Australia are highly prized in the developed world. Due to Howard's tax disincentives and the substantially higher wages offered overseas Australia has lost its most valuable asset to other nations. After ten years of the Howard government Australia is now suffering one of the worst skill shortages in its history - these are the real consequences of Howard's destructive policies and inept management.

The Australian people would expect that Howard has learnt from his mistakes and has embarked on a course of remedial action to re-institute traditional working systems and relieve Australian workers from crippling tax burdens. But to the disappointment of the people Howard maintains his obsession with a sub-standard American model. Howard has resorted to the quick fix, the most destructive option he could have taken – the imported guest (semi-skilled ‘slave’) worker program.

The short-term interests of business are served due to depressed labour costs offered by ‘guest workers’; profits are immediate but at the cost of reduced quality and standards. In the long-term national self-sufficiency is compromised by the elimination of a renewable local supply of skilled labour. The cycle of labour and skills renewal has been broken by the policies of John Howard. His attack on traditional Australian values and methodologies is unrelenting, the nation and the quality of Australian life have been severely degraded as a result.

Once business is corrupted by cheap labour, traditional training programs become a cost burden. Our (precious) youth who are now finding it almost impossible to obtain required job skills for their future survival are becoming disillusioned and dejected. We are in effect teaching our youth to devalue themselves by not supporting their needs at a critical time in their development. John Howard offers our youth a world hostile to their needs. But that is not his concern, his priorities are short-term profits and fleeting mirages of ‘success’. Howard’s ‘reality’ has become an Australian tragedy.

Save our youth, save the nation – sacrifice Howard not our youth!

See:

http://cleaves.zapto.org/clv/newswire.php?story_id=230

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