



More than welfare to NZ visit

THE Federal Government's claim that its New Zealand counterpart should contribute more to our outlay on social welfare has justification. New Zealand recognised that when its high commissioner to Canberra, Mr Ted Woodfield, agreed yesterday the arrangements should be reviewed. However, there is much more than that to the relationship between the two countries. It would be a shame if the "welfare bludge" appellation were to dominate discussions between the Prime Minister, Mr Keating, and his New Zealand counterpart, Mr Bolger, during Mr Keating's three-day visit starting tonight.

It is Mr Keating's first foray to New Zealand for more than a decade. There is much to discuss. But by making the welfare issue prominent, and linking it with New Zealand's desire for a public affirmation of continuance of unrestricted travel and residency arrangements between the trans-Tasman neighbours, Australia has revealed the "big brother" tactics with which it approaches New Zealand.

On Wednesday, senior Canberra officials released figures showing the welfare budget was being drained by an annual \$500 million in unemployment, pension and other benefits to New Zealanders living in Australia, of which Wellington contributed only \$17 million. By comparison, a

far smaller number of Australian beneficiaries in New Zealand received \$73 million. There can be no doubt the release of these figures a few days before Mr Keating's visit was intended to put pressure on New Zealand, whose officials were being privately told out of Canberra yesterday \$200 million would be a fair contribution.

Mr Keating is entitled to press the issue with Mr Bolger. After the diplomatic overkill from Canberra yesterday there is little doubt that it will be pressed and no doubt that new arrangements will be sorted out. But it should not affect their discussions on a host of trade, defence and other issues. Mr Keating has, after all, indicated he wants the talks to be free-ranging, and the first priority of both prime ministers is to rekindle the relationship. Despite New Zealand's concern that the Keating Government has tended to take its eye off the ball when dealing with New Zealand, the relationship remains important, strong and intact. There is no question it is in both countries' interests to keep it so.

But it is natural that differences will arise as each society evolves. New Zealand has expressed an interest in joining the North American Free Trade Agreement, while Australia places greater emphasis on the role of the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation group. That, in turn, reflects some divergence in their approach to trade with Asia, which will become increasingly important as the Australia-New Zealand Closer Economic Relations agreement develops. Both countries count CER a success, but have differences about what few matters might be incorporated into the treaty, and at what pace. Australia wants more open tax and aviation policies. New Zealand wants progress on second-generation CER issues, including harmonisation of laws, standards and qualifications.

Defence issues will test both leaders. Mr Keating will

question whether New Zealand, which has cut its budget drastically and spends little more than one-third per capita on defence than Australia, is pulling its weight. Mr Bolger will respond that New Zealand's priority is to spend defence dollars on operational equipment, making its commitment stronger in those terms. On regional security issues, however, including Bougainville and Cambodia, the two allies have more common ground. Issues such as those should raise the talks above the level of any dispute over welfare payments.

Punishing the war criminals

IN the aftermath of a South Australian Supreme Court jury's acquittal of an accused war criminal on Tuesday government prosecutors have reaffirmed their intention to continue to pursue cases arising from incidents in World War II. That is the proper course. Tuesday's result ought not to be used to criticise the legislation or the process by which Australia has belatedly decided to attempt to bring war criminals to book.

Australia has domestic and international obligations to fulfil in these matters. In 1957 four Geneva conventions were enacted into Australian law. They bound signatories to prosecute persons accused of war crimes, regardless of nationality. There is no time limit for murder prosecutions in Australia, and when in the mid-1980s reports indicated relatively large numbers of alleged war criminals had migrated, mainly from Europe, to Australia immediately after the war, the Government was duty bound to act. In

1988, after a long political debate, the War Crimes Amendment Act (amending the 1945 War Crimes Act under which 296 trials were held and 148 death sentences passed), came into effect. It described war crimes as offences committed in the course of political, racial or religious persecution; or offences intended to destroy in whole or in part a national, racial, religious or ethnic group.

On Tuesday Mr Ivan Polyukhovich, 76, was found not guilty of charges, laid under the 1988 legislation, relating to the murder of 850 Jews in Nazi-occupied Ukraine between May 1942 and September 1943. It took more than three years to bring the case to trial, delayed by an unsuccessful High Court challenge to the 1988 Act. But after a nine-week trial it took a jury less than an hour to determine its verdict. Legal observers have interpreted the brevity of the jury's recess as an indication of concurrence with remarks by the trial judge, Justice Cox. The judge had warned during his summing up of the difficulty of convicting anyone on evidence about events half a century ago, despite identification by witnesses.

That may have been so in that particular case. It is probably inevitable prosecution cases will be weakened by such long interventions between the alleged commission of crimes and the placing of evidence before juries. Indeed, it was one of the fundamental arguments put by opponents of the legislation during the 1980s political debate. However, it is not an excuse to do nothing. War crimes are war crimes no matter when they were committed. And, although the 1988 legislation was designed with the intention of resolving World War II cases, it has modern relevance also. Sadly, warfare still occurs. As a large body of evidence arising out of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina attests, so do war crimes. When they occur, they must be pursued within the full rigour of the law.

Letters to the editor

Men with pants down do not fight

YOUR story on the Davenport boxer shorts billboard has sparked an outpouring of criticism aimed at women's groups.

Supposedly, women's groups are required to express outrage at that billboard because they complained about one that carried a near naked woman.

This is ridiculous. A group dedicated to improving human rights in Tibet is not accused of a double standard for failing to speak out on Bosnia.

Save The Whales activists aren't called hypocrites if they stay silent about the button wrinkle work.

Amnesty International is not criticised because it doesn't join Animal Liberation in sabotaging fox hunts.

The world is so full of injustice that an activist group can only hope to be effective if it concentrates on the agenda before it.

Women's groups are not against billboards, they are against the exploitation and degradation of women.

It is sophistry to demand they must also staff the barricades for men.

The fact that there are no groups dedicated to protecting men from degrading and exploitative images is a clear indication that men do not feel disempowered or under attack.

Why should they? Men have journalists, talk-back radio hosts, editors and TV presenters more than happy to do their job for them.

GREG WATERS
Potts Point, NSW

Let's be multi-monarchical

AS a staunch supporter of constitutional monarchy, I am appalled at the thought of Australia becoming a republic.

However, I do accept that Australia is now a multi-cultural society with a large portion of our population not of English extraction.

I recognise that many of these people find it difficult to swear allegiance to the monarch of a foreign country, ie, England, to which

groups that make up modern Australian society.

For example one year our head of State could be the Queen of England, the next year someone from the Dutch royal family, the next year the Spanish royal family, perhaps one year the President of Italy or the Philippines and so on.

Australia could become a "ward of the world".

We would be benignly watched over by the royal families or heads of State of



High Court may disagree

A NUMBER of your corre-

This way you can prove your innocence

I REFER to George Bindley's letter 'Who's Doing the Abusing, Minister?' (14/5) and

There are two main reasons for the requirement that people paid disability

this unconvincing, I hope he watched one of the television current affairs programs the

for the data-matching program. The data-matching pro-

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In brief

NEW ZEALAND had colour TV years before us, and pay TV is up and running there. To enable us to catch up with the world could we not consult NZ as to how it should be done? — J.E.J. CARSON, Forster, NSW.

IT used to be the "in" thing for MPs to hang a shingle in their office wall with the homely "The Buck Stops Here". It seems that they have bequeathed these to their senior Public Service adviser. — BILL, ADAMS, Malanda, Qld.

NOW that the Defence Department is going to rid the ADF of Scottish pipe bands, are these to be replaced with Irish piper bands under the Director of Music Maestro Keating and piper major Kenally blowing hot air? — F.R. WILLSON, Smithfield Plains, SA.

NO GLASSES and two ladies-in-waiting. The tower perhaps? — BARBARA MCARDLE, George Town, Tas.

BEATS me why we worry about having either — a monarch or a president. Surely the Parliament's two houses are enough; they could be constitutionalised to handle their stalemates. Every executive function is theirs in practice. The Prime Minister is de facto head of State anyway. Simplify. Simplify. — FRANK HAINSWORTH, Burreigh, Qld.

WHEN Australia becomes a republic we shall be able to establish a new national identity according to Keating. Does this mean we will

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