

Australia Dossier by Kelvin Heslop and Allen Douglas

Cartels To Grab Australia's Wheat

The federal government is aiding Her Majesty's cartels to seize control over one of the world's major grain supplies.

On April 4, 2000, the Liberal Party/National Party Coalition government announced an "independent review" of Australia's wheat marketing legislation by a three-person committee, whose findings will be released in October. If the committee delivers the verdict which the pro-globalization Coalition government appointed it to find—that the nation's "single desk" exporter of wheat should be broken up—the results will be devastating, both for Australia, and for the global wheat trade.

Although Australia produces only 1-2% of the world's wheat supply, almost all of its production is exported, so it supplies 20% of all the world wheat trade, usually ranking in the top three world exporters. The nation's single desk exporter, AWB Ltd., which pools and sells all grain, has charged that the cutthroat sales competition between individual Australian exporters which would follow its break-up, will immediately wipe out at least 10% of the 550,000 jobs in the wheat industry, wreaking havoc in rural Australia, and also globally, as the cartels' ability to drive down prices for Australian grain will likely force down prices paid to other producers, worldwide.

The threatened break-up of AWB Ltd., formerly known as the Australian Wheat Board until it was privatized last year, is a case study of how a corrupt federal government chops up and sells off public assets to the benefit of the raw materials and other cartels which own the government, under cover of "deregulation" and "fostering competition." The backdrop to this smash-and-grab, is the global financial

crash now under way, which the London/Wall Street financial oligarchy intends to survive by controlling the necessities of life, e.g., the world's food supply.

The review committee appointed by the Coalition government is chaired by Malcolm Irving, the chairman of Caltex Australia, which is 50% owned by Texaco, one of the few remaining "sisters" of the world oil cartel, which has in past months driven oil prices through the roof. Caltex was recently successful in its push to have the government deregulate fuel prices. The chief advocate of splitting up AWB Ltd. is a 13-organization alliance led by Cargill Australia and Louis Dreyfus Australia, the local arms of the global grain cartel.

The "review" was established under the auspices of Australia's misnamed "National Competition Policy," and is being overseen by the chairman of the National Competition Council, Graeme Samuel, a former merchant banker with Macquarie Bank, the private bankers in Australia to Rio Tinto, which is owned by Queen Elizabeth, and which is the second-largest raw materials company in the world. "Competition policy" began under the previous, Labor Party government, which was as pro-free trade and pro-deregulation as its alleged *bête noire* in the Coalition, when the three-person National Competition Policy Review released its report on National Competition Policy in 1994. Otherwise known as the "Hilmer report," it became the bible of deregulation in Australia; its premise was that most government assets, in electricity, transportation, water,

gas, postal, telecommunications, etc., should be broken up and sold off, and most government regulations removed from the economy, so as to "foster competition," i.e., domination of the economy by the cartels, led by Rio Tinto.

Of the three people comprising the National Competition Policy Review, two of them were top employees of Rio Tinto, including Fred Hilmer, who had worked for the company for two decades. In 1996, Rio Tinto helped install the present Liberal/National Coalition in power, and a former lawyer for Rio Tinto, Peter Costello, became federal treasurer. Costello, in turn, appointed Graeme Samuel to oversee the National Competition Council, established in 1995 with vast powers to enforce "competition policy." Since then, Samuel has cut a swath of devastation through Australia's economy, leading up to his overseeing the present review of the wheat industry under Caltex's Fisher.

The Australian Wheat Board, which was established in 1939 to prevent cutthroat competition among wheat growers, was privatized last year after a big fight. However, the cartels achieved only a partial victory, in that AWB Ltd. is controlled through its Class A shares, which are only available to growers themselves. According to a recent poll, 85% of all wheat growers oppose breaking up the single desk, because the international grain cartels would have no interest, as AWB Ltd. does, in maximizing returns to the individual farmers through economies of scale, marketing clout, etc. Whatever is left of AWB Ltd. will also be taken over by the grain cartel, as desperate farmers, competing against one another to sell their product, will be forced to sell their Class A shares, which, through one ruse or another, will wind up in the hands of the cartel.