

Angus Taylor and the Liberal Party's Moral Decline

Statement by PJ Keating

The Liberal Party, battling an extreme version of itself - One Nation, has again fallen back to its default political policy: racism.

Angus Taylor, announcing a policy at primary odds with an immigrant nation, says a Liberal government under his leadership will adopt Trump ICE-style policies to weed and 'boot out' people who fail to adhere to 'national values' and who are responsible for the erosion of national culture including the Balkanisation of communities.

And, to hammer the point, sitting beside Taylor at his policy launch was Mr Racial Opportunism himself; John Winston Howard, late of anti-Asian migration in 1988 – the picket fence suburban racism of his first round as Liberal leader, and the wilful anti-humanitarianism of his electorally-driven Tampa atrocity of 2001.

Angus Taylor, for base political reasons, has elected to walk away from the best instincts of the Liberal party – the party of Robert Menzies, of Harold Holt, of Malcolm Fraser, of Andrew Peacock, of Brendan Nelson, of Malcolm Turnbull.

Angus Taylor came to the Liberal leadership with a reputation of being mainstream Liberal; that is, a keeper of the Liberal party's best longer-term instincts both in social and economic policy.

And many people, myself included, wished him well in consolidating the Liberal base and in fighting One Nation with a conservatism anchored in principles. If not righteous, decent.

But by adopting racism with its shabby appeal to differentiation and primal instincts, Angus Taylor marks himself out as a political leader unworthy of the leadership of a party that has managed Australia for the greater part of the last century and which celebrated the country's unifying values.

Racism is not simply immoral and abhorrent, it is absurd. The notion that some of us are in some way different to the rest of us – in some way born differently, of some alien biology.

The two-party system has served Australia well over the last century and more. But more than that, it has superintended the development of a country where notions of equality and justice have underpinned the flourishing of one of the most open and decent societies in the world.

The blight of Pauline Hanson is that her dumb bigotry offers a fantasy. The fantasy that Australia in the modern age can return to a monoculture. A monoculture which fails to acknowledge or accept that a continent of our scale is able to turn its back on the multilateralism of neighbouring states or on the vitality of their societies. And, more than that, shun them while disparaging any contribution they may make or bring to us as migrants.

How dispiriting for the rest of us is Angus Taylor's cowardice in not even attempting to stand and argue for principles that have been integral to Australia's strength - principles his party has long championed.

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