

OPINION

Money matters

In 1991, during that year's presidential election campaign, Bill Clinton's staff adopted a catch phrase to help keep their minds focused on one single issue. 'The economy stupid' captured the essence of the politics of managerialism that had taken root at the centre of America's political life since 1980. In the 1980s, the United States adopted 'Reaganomics', the British pursued 'Thatcherism', and the Australian Labor Party drew upon 'Economic Rationalism' to set an agenda that was to yield 13 years of government. Throughout the English speaking world, politicians employed the word 'reform' to promote their desire to create the conditions of a free market.

The 1980s continue to exert their influence in the 1990s. Whilst many in opposition try to focus on the social consequences of government policy, economic considerations continue to hold sway over the mainstream of political life. The American and British conservative governments did not lose power to an opposition promising social reform. Bill Clinton swept into the Whitehouse after promising improved economic management. In Britain, Tony Blair's Labour Party ended more than a decade of Tory rule by promising responsible economic management. Today, when a politician speaks of reform, he or she is far more likely to talk about economic reform than social reform.

Readers of the *Alternative Law Journal* may want to put the world of commerce and economics out of their minds and it certainly would not be their choice of topic for their reading matter. However, we must acknowledge that the language of economics dominates contemporary political discourse. It is also important to acknowledge the commercial world's agenda often has significant social consequences. The key is to find a place for the social world in today's po-

litical climate. This issue's focus on 'Money Matters' hopes to find a place for those social consequences while taking a look at the world of commerce and our constantly changing commercial laws.

In our lead article, Miranda Stewart takes us into the tax reform debate and provides useful insights into the issues and the jargon. Elsewhere, Esther Stern and John Mountbatten have made timely observations about the waterfront dispute in their article 'All Quiet on the Waterfront' and Julian Blanchard describes the reporting practices of companies about their social and environmental impact. Peter Tsingos shows how we can use the language of economic reform to promote plain English, and Peace Declé suggests the tort of intentionally inflicting emotional distress might yield a means to compensate the stolen generation.

The Federal Courts are being used to hear the dispute over the mining at Jabiluka. Rebecca La Forgia illustrates the limits of economic analysis to suggest the Mirrar people should be assisted by international human rights law in her article 'When Money doesn't Matter'. She draws on other international case law to show that indigenous rights to ensure survival and continued development of the cultural, religious and social identity

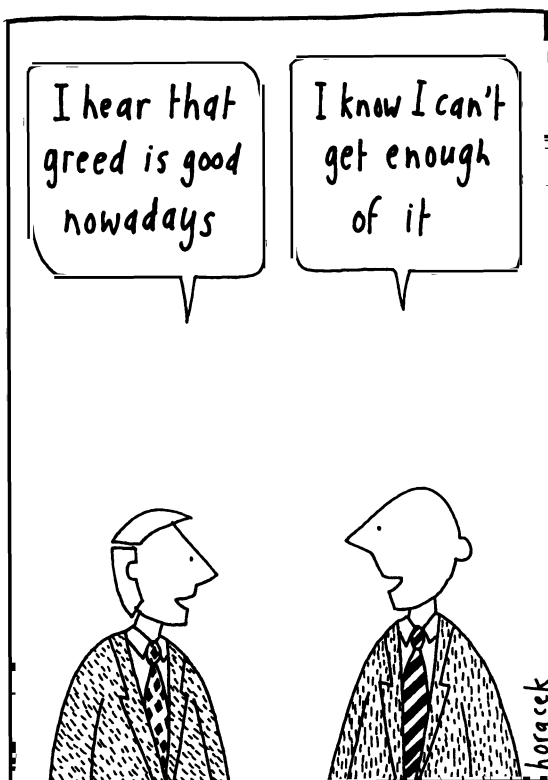
do matter. Our courts and our corporations should take note. Finally, Senator Andrew Martin provides a needed break from all this economics to outline a Democrats' model for the appointment of High Court judges. While not all readers will agree with his model, most will acknowledge that new ways of making appointments should be canvassed.

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