

The Far-Right and the 2005 Cronulla Riots in Sydney

By

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There exists today a wide number of far right groups in Australia, with concomitantly diverse, and often clashing, ideological beliefs. These range from the American backed LaRouche Citizens Electoral Council, with their conspiracy theory of the British Queen being in cahoots with the Jews in running global drug trade, to the Australian League of Rights who target Jews, Asian and Indigenous Australians and who believe the Queen is the bastion of white Christian salvation.

The far-right in Australia are neither homogenous nor, to our good fortune, united. However, while the motives and methods of their racial hatred differ, there is, I have argued elsewhere, a typology that can be applied to the Australian far-right, which I have described as “a triangle of hate”.ⁱ

According to that triangle, on one bottom corner are Indigenous Australians who, the far-right believe, will divide the nation through land rights. Inhabiting the other bottom corner, are Asian Australians who the far-right regard as a fifth column waiting to act on the instructions of their Northern masters. At top of this trinity are the Jews who, through control of the United Nations, banks and media, force ordinary Australians to accept reconciliation and multiculturalism at their behest.ⁱⁱ

The far right are numerically insignificant, and they must not be taken out of context. However, vigilance against them is required because when situations of legitimate socio-economic public discontent arise they are in a position to exploit them for illegitimate ends. This has been the strategy of far right groups for many years, seen in their response to the drought and deregulation in the 1980s, the Mabo decision and land rights, and increased Asian immigration in the 1990s. Parties such as the Confederate Action Party, Australians Against Further Immigration and most significantly One Nation scaremongered on these issues and gave them a racist spin the last two decades of the twentieth century. Today it is the widespread uncertainty and fear over terrorism that the far-right are capitalising on as they pursue a campaign of Islamaphobia.

I have written elsewhere, that while “Hansonism” was a genuine grass-roots response to global change, almost every far right group in Australia took on leadership positions in the party, accordingly receiving levels of public support and influence that they could otherwise have only dreamed of.ⁱⁱⁱ This is exactly what the latest iteration of the Australian far right, the Australia First Party, did in Cronulla.

At Cronulla white people not associated with any far-right group or racist ideology felt aggrieved with the presence and activities of people of Middle Eastern origin at the beach. The far-right Australia-First Party, who alone would not have been able to assemble more than one or two hundred supporters, latched onto this genuine public discontent, positioning themselves at the helm of a rally of several thousand people who probably would otherwise never have considered associating with the far right.

So who are these far-right agitators? The Sydney branch of Australian first is headed by Jim Saleam, who has previously been associated with the neo-Nazi National Alliance and Australian National Action. After serving time in prison for an armed offence against the ANC representative in Australia, he has sought to reinvent himself as more of a suit and tie right wing figure than a skin-head neo-Nazi. As part of this process he earned a doctorate from Sydney University on the subject of the extreme right in Australia.

At the centre of far right beliefs is the *New World Order* conspiracy, to which Saleam subscribes, arguing that the driver of this evil plan is an “American/Zionist condominium,” that works solely for the benefit of the Jewish state of Israel.^{iv} Saleam argues that the New World Order is manifest in globalisation, threatening and weakening Australia’s freedom and sovereignty, and undermines traditional values through the social adoption of multiculturalism and tolerance and open acceptance towards all kinds of personal life choices. He sees Australia-first as at the forefront in combating the *New World Order*.^v

Saleam describes this *New World Order* as a fiendish caste system, in which the ‘American/Zionist,’ the politicians in power, and the rich seek to hold down and exploit the ‘average, honest, hard-working Australian.’ According to Saleam those who control and reap profit from this order will do everything in their power to see its continuance; using every craft, wiliness and deceit at their disposal, including violence if need be, to stifle and stamp out ‘good, clean Australian nationalist movements.’ In his opinion this ‘psychotic’ system... “seeks to reduce Australia to an economic production unit of the global economy, cowed by secret policeman and restrictive legislation.”^{vi}

The New World Order is, of course, a euphemism for Jews, blacks, Asians, Muslims, and in fact anything and everything non-White and Christian. Saleam is quite overt about these subjects, expressing a deep abhorrence of multiculturalism and immigration that threatens the Anglo-Celtic Australian population. “Asianisation is the major enemy of the Australian people and Nation... we are in a do or die struggle for our nation.”^{vii} He is also Islamophobic, which he combines and juggles with his anti-Semitism. “It is morally right to oppose the immigration of Moslems into our Christian-based society. But, we should not criticise the one thing that true Moslems everywhere are fighting: the Israel terror state.”^{viii} In other words, Palestinians and Moslems are tolerated as long as they’re in Palestine fighting Jews.

Cronulla must therefore be seen not as a simple race riot, but as a reflection of the anarchy that Australia First advocate in response to the New World Order.

To deal with the New World Order Saleam proposes a “state of anarchy” that should be aroused in every area of Australian public life. One

must create tensions around chosen ‘target’ organisations and individuals, develop mass slogans around specific issues and publish energetic propaganda that discredits our targets.^{ix}

Saleam seeks to inject chaos and anarchy in all organisational levels of Australian societal life, advocating, among other things, the breakdown of the governmental structure and the “fomentation of acute social and ethnic divisions.”^x In Saleam’s view Australia-First are the “vanguard party” providing the “foot soldiers” for this process. As academic Rodney Gouttman observes in an article on Saleam “His counsel is that Australian independence, freedom and sovereignty will not be ‘won by gentle negotiations and parlour politics. It will be seized in crisis, not in glorious declarations of independence, but a sombre resolution to act.’”^{xi} He calls for action – “street movements” such as leafleting and public demonstration, his intent to target youth in particular. He goes so far as to openly state that future party support must come from groups that feel themselves socially alienated and/ or disadvantaged.^{xii}

So how did Australia-First and the far right perceive Cronulla? According to the neo-Nazi website “Stormfront”, in an article apparently written by Saleam, they said:

For the first time since 1966 when the White Australia Policy was abandoned and betrayed, there was a mass Australian people’s protest against the multiculti order. It was heartening and a sign of things to come. The events today in Cronulla were remarkable proof of the existence of a grassroots Australian nationalism.^{xiii}

Apart from Australia-First, the two other far right organizations noticeable among the 5000 strong in Cronulla were the ‘Patriotic Youth League’ and ‘Blood and Honour.’ As one festive contributor to Stormfront put it, celebrating the Cronulla riots, “it was not an ugly mob... they were beautiful White Australians... I hope that this is the start of citizens abandoning ‘democracy’ and taking more responsibility for community policing.”^{xiv}

The Patriotic Youth League used the Internet to talk about Cronulla, and recruitment, indicating they recruited several new members at Cronulla beach the day of the riots. Their recruitment process entails writing a cheque payable to them for \$10, posted along with a letter briefly outlining the individual’s political beliefs and convictions, and including contact details. The guidelines stipulate “One must be fanatically nationalist and wholly against

ideas such as non-discriminatory immigration.” Those seeking to join must also be between 18-26.^{xv}

While the far-right may have been enthused by Cronulla, subsequent events, or rather the lack of them, show that the far-right have been unable to capitalise on the momentum of Cronulla to enhance their membership and action. In Perth SMS text messages went out calling for gatherings at Scarborough and Mullaloo, but no-one came. In Melbourne too, there were calls for rallies targeting ‘hotspots’ with high ethnic populations.^{xvi} However, there were no more Cronullas.

While the far-right have may not have increased their external appeal as a result of Cronulla, they will feel a greater internal sense of importance. Saleam and Australia-First have now chosen to stand for election in four NSW electorates – Sutherland shire, Marrickville city, Coff’s Harbour, and Newcastle, and they claim to have received financial backing from an anonymous donor to support their election campaign.^{xvii} It is relevant to note that these places were not chose at random; Coff’s Harbour for example previously had a mayor who believed in racist Christian identity theories. Saleam is also speaking in March at the annual Inverell forum, an annual gathering of far right figures, on the subject of “the Cronulla civil uprising of December 11”, suggesting that Cronulla will be used as a base for Saleam to increase his standing, and indeed advance his leaderships aspirations, for the broader Australian far-right.

Overall, what the above demonstrates is that that there needs to be ongoing vigilance against the far right, who have shown themselves ever ready to exploit any situation to gather support, votes, money. They can make a bad situation much worse, but their organisational appeal and resonance in the community remains limited.

ⁱ Ben-Moshe, Triangle of Hate, CD ROM “Antisemitism in the contemporary world”, Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, Monash University, 2005

ⁱⁱ This typology was developed before the rise of Islamaphobia which will now have to be added to the equation.

ⁱⁱⁱ Danny Ben-Moshe, “One Nation and the Australian Far Right,” *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 35, no. 3, July 2001, pp. 22-40.

^{iv} Rodney Gouttman, “The Honorable Jim Saleam, A Self-Declared Prophet and Voice of the Extreme Right in Australia,” pp. 71-86 in *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. XIX, 2005. Quote is on p. 73.

^v *Ibid.*, p. 75.

^{vi} *Ibid.*

^{vii} *Ibid.*, p. 80. (J. Saleam, “What is to be done 2004?: Tasks for Australian Nationalists in the Coming Struggle,” September 26, 2003, <http://www.alphalink.com.au/~radnat/whatisbtd.html>.)

^{viii} *Ibid.*, p. 81. (J. Saleam, “The Refugee Invasion: Getting into the Collective Brain of the ‘Open Borders’ Gang,” found online at <http://www.ausfirst.alphalink.com.au/articles/partten/html>.)

^{ix} *Ibid.*, p. 77. (J. Saleam, “The Illusion Called parliament: What is Parliament? Understanding Parliament And The State Power,” <http://www.ausfirst.alphalink.com.au/articles/parttwo.html>.)

^x *Ibid.*, p. 78.

^{xi} *Ibid.* (J. Saleam, “Freedom For Australia From The New World Order Demands The Defeat Of America in Iraq,” November 22, 2003,

<http://www.alphalink.com.au/~radnat/austindependence/ozfreedom>.)

^{xii} *Ibid.*, p. 79.

^{xiii} Nadav Shlezinger, "Victory in Cronulla," *The Review*, January, 2006.

<http://www.aijac.org.au/review/2006/31-1/cronulla311.html>

^{xiv} *Ibid.*

^{xv} "Patriotic Youth League (Queensland Section)," <http://www.patrioticyouthleague.net>.

^{xvi} "The Age," 13 December 2005.

^{xvii} "The Australian," 4 January 2006.