



Australian Parliament Adopts Carbon Tax

In a display of disregard for public opinion, leaders of the ruling Australian Labor Party (ALP) pushed through legislation in the lower house of parliament that will burden their nation with a whole new form of taxation: a carbon tax. Following the razor thin legislative “victory” — a vote of 74 to 72 — opposition leader Tony Abbott (left) of the Liberal Party (LP) gave a “pledge in blood” that his party would dismantle the new tax as soon as his party regains power.



According to [an article for the Sydney Morning Herald](#), the massive legislation was pushed through the Australian parliament with an untimely rapidity reminiscent of President Obama’s effort to nationalize the American health care system. In the words of *The Sydney Morning Herald*:

Against last-minute efforts by the opposition to delay the passage of the bills and 11th-hour pleas for amendments by some business groups, the government passed its 18 pieces of legislation by a vote of 74 to 72 just before 10 a.m. ...

Opposition Leader Tony Abbott has vowed to repeal the legislation if he becomes prime minister, though the government has insisted he will not be able to manage that.

The bills were passed with help from crossbench MPs Rob Oakeshott, Tony Windsor and Andrew Wilkie, as well as Greens MP Adam Bandt.

As is typical when politicians seek to impose a further economic burden on the public, Australian legislators are claiming the new tax will be relatively small. According to the *Morning Herald* article, the “average household” will be burdened with an additional \$9.90 AUD a week in their cost of living—roughly \$530 a year in terms of U.S. dollars. In exchange, the legislation will reduce other taxes, and increase the amount of government largesse. In the words of the *Morning Herald*: “To compensate households, the government is cutting income taxes and boosting payments such as pensions and other benefits, as well as offering various lump sum payments. ... [Increased costs] will be offset by an estimated \$10.10 in extra benefits and tax breaks.”

But in the minds of politicians, all tax cuts are temporary, while new taxes last forever. Furthermore, given the expansive authority of legislation that covers 60 percent of Australia’s carbon emissions, the ability of the government to extract vast sums of tax revenue while reshaping the lives of nearly 22 million Australians is staggering. Although the direct economic impact on the average family may seem relatively minor at first, the rate of taxation will grow steadily, even as the government will make citizens more dependent on government handouts.

As the *Irish Times* reported on October 13:



Written by [James Heiser](#) on October 17, 2011

Carbon dioxide emissions will be taxed at a rate of \$23 (€16.89) a tonne from July 1st next year, rising by 2.5 per cent a year for three years. In 2015, the package will convert to an emissions trading scheme.

The public will be compensated for resulting price rises through tax cuts and increased social welfare payments. The package is also aimed at encouraging investment in clean and renewable energy and will provide assistance to some affected industries, such as steel.

As [reported on June 7 for The New American](#), the proposed carbon tax was roundly rejected by the people of Australia. As Alex Newman wrote:

A poll taken earlier this month revealed that almost 60 percent of Australians opposed the so-called "carbon tax." Just 28 percent were in favor of the scheme, with the rest undecided. Close to 75 percent of those polled believed the government's plan would leave them worse off financially while offering little or no benefit to the environment.

The ALP's callous disregard for the opinion of an overwhelming majority of the people it purports to represent is typical of the Statist mentality at work in collectivist political parties; the ALP's [affiliation with the Socialist International](#) signals a manifest contempt for public opinion often at work in redistributionist economics. For the Socialist, the views of "the people" must take a back seat to the schemes and calculations of a political class bent on remaking the whole of society.

The Australian carbon tax will be a very powerful weapon in the hands of environmental radicals and economic redistributionists to further devastate their nation's economy. Impatient with efforts to convince the majority of the population of the rightness of their schemes, the ALP leadership is now imposing its will on the entire populace and economy of their nation.

For the handful of Australians daring to protest the restructuring of their entire country by a most razor-thin margin, there would be nothing but contempt from the political elite. According to [an October 12 article](#) for the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

The government's first question time since passing the carbon tax legislation in the lower house was almost inaudible at times today.

The public gallery erupted in chanting, with the speaker Harry Jenkins cautioning visitors to behave themselves.

Mr Jenkins said he would not be clearing the gallery, but said: "I will not be endangering those who are employed by the Parliament to keep order in the gallery."

A member of the public in the gallery kept goading Prime Minister Julia Gillard with chants of "Liar."

About 80 protesters chanted "democracy is dead" and "no mandate".

Contrary to the views of Mr. Jenkins, most Australians will agree it is his own party that is endangering representative government in Australia. And the protesters no doubt have it right: The ALP lacks a mandate to fundamentally restructure the Australian economy, and when a single turncoat member of parliament is sufficient to accomplish such a betrayal of the interests of the nation, representative government may prove to be as good as dead.



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