

The 2008 Irving Kristol Lecture

Introductory Remarks by Christopher DeMuth

Guest: John Howard

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The recent Prime Minister of Australia and his wife have traveled 10,000 miles to permit us to honor him. Canberra and Washington are not quite antipodes, but they are very close to that. Which reminds us that the Anglosphere is in fact a sphere--the English speaking people have populated and settled the expanse of Planet Earth like none other. And civilized it: On the Heritage Foundation/*Wall Street Journal* "Index of Economic Freedom," of the top ten freest nations on Earth, eight consist of the United Kingdom and its offshoots, including the Australia that nurtured Banjo Paterson and the America that nurtured Irving Berlin. Oil goes up, real estate goes down, but the hearty civilization that first emerged in the English middle-ages persists, prospers, paints and Googles the globe, and continues to attract. Admittedly there were a few missteps along the way. As we are nowadays dispensing apologies, I hereby apologize to India, Zambia, and Tanzania for the British affliction of Fabian Socialism, and offer fervent best wishes to the reformers in those nations who are striving yet today to overcome that awful legacy.

Can our achievements be replicated as well as our mistakes? William F. Buckley taught us a boggling number of truths. One of the most important is that our civilization--the civilization of democratic capitalism--must be understood "whole, or not at all: as springing, season after season, from a trampoline of assumptions which are the warp and woof of freedom and progress." Our fabric is woven of private property, competitive markets, disinterested law, and observed restraints on conduct and most of all on government itself. But the springs that give us lift lie deeper: high degrees of social trust, of spontaneous association, of openness to others, and of assimilation, resilience, and reverence. And there is a frame which holds it all together, which is individualism: the basis of social and political organization is the person--not the family, clan, tribe, religion, or race, not to mention class or gender.

We in the Anglosphere gained what we have through a thousand seasons of trial-and-error and of resistance to those who, yesterday and today, would destroy the whole creation by subsuming the individual to some collective ideology of power and plunder. We must not forget or falter, nor doubt our growing advantages as humanity progresses from mineral economies to intellect economies. For ourselves and for those who emulate us and depend on us, we have four great tasks: to improve each of our national systems of freedom, to deepen and fortify the ties among our systems, to remain open

and welcoming to all who would join in our adventure, and to effectively counter those who oppose it.

So it is altogether fitting that Americans should honor this magnificent Australian who has devoted himself to not one or two but all four tasks, and with such stupendous tenacity and success. May his example be studied and followed north and south, and the bonds of affection and cooperation between America and Australia continue to grow in the third century of our common enterprise.

The 2008 Irving Kristol Award for John Howard is inscribed:

*To John Winston Howard
Stalwart all-rounder of politics and policy
Who made good government a popular cause
And advanced Australia fair and free*