



We The People

Program 49

Who's on First.

Remember that wonderful old comedy team of Abbott and Costello from the 40's and 50's. They were unique comedians who didn't have to resort to gutter humour or blasphemy to get a laugh. Likeable straight man Bud Abbott with his bumbling loveable partner Lou Costello enjoyed accolades with some of the very best unique humour ever created. Of all their sketches the one I remember fondly is the baseball skit of "Who's On First". Simple wonderful comedy and impeccable timing, their act used original material that every person should hear regardless of age. 'Who's On First' rewrote the logic of English and added a dimension to custard pie throwing that keeps it and us forever young. Who's On First, What's on second and I Don't Know's on third, no wonder Lou was confused as the ball game got underway.

Now all this confusion and double speak is akin to the current foreign ownership laws and foreign investment rules in place in Australia. It's a topic full of double speak and half truths where one is simply confused by the rules of the game and nothing they pitch makes sense. Sadly, I feel we have become the world's quarry as we dig up the earth and sell our country ton by ton to the Chinese. The other phantom player is farm land ownership where in the last 10 years so much of our agribusiness has been sold to foreign interests. In the last 25 years foreign ownership of our land has risen from 5.9% to 11.3% and remember we have a huge country so it's a very large amount of the best of our wide brown land.

The FIRB approves 99% of all foreign ownership applications probably because no approval is required unless the purchase is over \$244 million dollars. So if a foreign company buys 3 farms to mine at \$200 million each then no approval is required. What absolute insanity. According to Kelvin Thompson more than half the milk produced in Australia is now processed by foreign-owned firms. Half the wheat export industry is controlled by foreign companies which own 12 of the nation's 23 licensed wheat exporters. Three foreign milling groups account for nearly 60 per cent of Australia's raw sugar production and 40 per cent of Australia's beef and lamb is processed by foreign firms. Nine per cent of irrigation water licenses are owned by foreigners while in Queensland foreign land ownership has quadrupled in the past five years to 4.4 million hectares. Mining companies accounted for 60 per cent of all foreign investment in Queensland farmland during 2010. In the Northern Territory, over 14 million hectares, an area larger than the State of Victoria, is foreign owned. Over 30% of Western Australia's water entitlements for agriculture are overseas owned. Last year Wesfarmers sold its Premier Coal business to a Chinese company, leaving all coal mines supplying the WA electricity grid in foreign hands.

Dick Smith is one Australian who knows just how short sighted and dangerous all this foreign ownership is and he spends much of his time promoting Australian food security. Take the iconic Mildura Fruit Company which has four directors, three of them born in Australia and one from New Zealand. It is owned by the Sunbeam Foods Group which is based in Mildura and has the same directors and secretary as the Mildura Fruit Company. So it looks very Australian. In fact Food Holdings which is trading as Manassen Foods Group, owns 100% of Sunbeam Foods which owns 100% of the Mildura Fruit Company. In 2011 the Manassen Foods Group was acquired by Bright Foods Group Holdings. The shareholders of Bright Food Holdings Pty Ltd are Bright Food Australia. Now Bright Food Australia sounds Australian enough, but it is in fact a Chinese company based in Hong Kong. Its ultimate owner is the Shanghai Municipal Government and other Shanghai Government owned companies.

So it looks to me like the ball game is on and Who is indeed on first and Why is on second while third is What's Wong. The outfielder Doesn't Care and the short stop's She'll be Right Mate. Oh no it won't, unless we do something and soon. This country is being eroded away on all fronts and unless We The People do something the ball game's over. **Until next time this is Kent Bayley**