



A MODEST FARMER

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Cold comfort on a return trip

Regular readers of this column will have noticed that, as I get older, I am taking an increasing and morbid interest in my imminent demise. Mavis is responsible for some of this, she being upset because I didn't win a ministerial State funeral. In spite of this I know that there will be no corners cut when my time comes; I know that Mavis is planning that I am arrayed in my striped trousers in my coffin as I go with proper dignity to my cremation.

Talking about my coffin, this seems a proper place to announce that copies of my book, *One More Nail*, are still available, post free, if you send \$9.95 to Brolga Books, GPO Box 568, Adelaide. The dust cover shows a coffin labelled "Trade Barriers" and about a third of the book deals with my battle to get one more nail hammered into the coffin of trade barriers. The book would make an ideal present for some of your high protectionist friends if you are unfortunate enough to have any.

However, my funeral plans are under a cloud just now. I recently saw a TV program in which an American company advertised that it would, for a suitable fee, freeze you in a big fridge immediately after you died. Then it would slip you into a kind of large, cosy sleeping bag and insert the whole lot into a big stainless steel tube which would be filled with liquid nitrogen. You would then be kept in a state of suspended "inanimation" and stored on a rack with other tubes. Proper arrangements would be made to assure that there were no power failures because the nitrogen would have to be kept frozen to prevent you going off.

In 200 years, if medical science continued to progress as much as it has in the past 200 years, they might be able to pump life back into you. Your contract would oblige them to thaw you out then so that some medico could patch you up under the then-existing Medibank scheme and you would be turned out into the world of 2200.

At first glance, the idea seems too morbid to be taken seriously, but the more you think about it the more enticing it becomes. Just imagine the fun I would have if I could suddenly stalk the world in 2200. Mavis, Fred or Eccles would not be there to boss me; I would be my own master at last, able to please myself for once.

The first thing I would do would be to visit the family farm and give my great, great, great-grandson a burst about how I used to work in my time and ask querulously why he had let the rabbits in and the tomato weed get away. Then I would head for the city, travelling in a kind of rocket. My first call would be to the National Farmers' Federation, to be told that they were in the middle of a drought and prices were very disappointing. Then they would tell me that other things hadn't changed much either; everybody still recognised that tariffs ought to be lowered but not just yet. I would learn that the textile, clothing and footwear industries were still whimpering behind their tariff wall and we were still making the most expensive cars in the world.

Then I would find the grave of Mr Ray Aitchison, who used to be the lobbyist for the clothing industries. He, as I had, would have long since died and have gone to his reward. I would hope they had fried him properly on both sides. When I found where he was buried, I would dance on his grave as he danced on my political grave in 1977.

I would then find out how the 2200 government was going and it would sadden me to be told that the same lies were being told, only louder, and that their leaders were still going overseas to thunder about the dangers of protectionism, and then rushing home to make their own trade barriers even higher.

I would be told that the highly protected industries had succeeded in throttling the mining boom which was imminent when I shuffled off this mortal coil. They did this by making the cowardly government (governments evidently had not changed much over the years) keep imports out, so making it more difficult for exports to go out.

The Mining Council was still cowering in its foxhole, frightened to have an opinion of its own in case the government frowned at it. Indeed, everything looked much the same as when I left it, except that we had stayed still while the rest of the world had gone past us. I was told that the government was hoping for some kind of international aid from the ASEAN countries.

However, there was one startling development. Everyone was pushing little wheelbarrows around in front of them. These were to carry their money in. Money was by now worth so little after 200 years of inflation that they needed barrows instead of wallets.

When I looked in my wallet I found I only had \$100, which I was told would only buy me a toothpick. At this stage I headed back to my tube.