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Bitter and painful lesson for Singapore after Optus bid

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PAULINE Hanson has been decried as a chauvinist pig who is a misfit in Australian politics. But ironically, when it comes to the control of local industries, it appears that the rest of Australia is no different.

Just look at the dilemma that Singapore has got itself into. Claustrophobic Singapore, in its desire to spread its corporate wings into Australia, has shockingly found that its legitimate foreign investment in the aviation and telecommunications markets has been blatantly described as a cultural threat to Australia.

In putting up a stiff resistance to Singtel's bid for Optus, Kerry Stokes, the owner of Seven Network denounced the Singapore Government "as a repressive regime that cannot be trusted with control of the Optus satellites" (which also carry Australian Defence Department traffic).

Singapore has already been accused of spying on Australia, which naturally the former has vehemently denied.

And Australia asserts that control of Optus would further facilitate spying. The truth is spying is a free-for-all game.

It is an open secret that Australia with its ally, the US, is involved in state-of-the-art techniques in spying over all its neighbours.

Geof Dixon, chief of Qantas, condemned Singapore Airlines as "having imperialistic tendencies" in its bid for control of New Zealand/Ansett.

Australia flaunts its free trade policy in the international arena while backstage it unzips its ugly colours of xenophobia ala Pauline Hanson.

Where is the social conscience and fairness that Australians traditionally attribute to themselves?

Why was Virgin Airlines allowed entry into Australia whereas SIA is held in contempt? Singapore is a strong trading partner of Australia.

If Australia wishes to put its beef and dairy produce on the shelves in Asean countries, it had better shrug off its jingoistic style.

As for Singapore, this slap in the face is a good lesson "to look before you leap".

When our Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad cautioned Singapore to go slow with developed countries lest they use it as a backdoor for their designs in Asean, Singapore's Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong retorted instantly that other countries should not ask Singapore to walk when it can run.

Now that it has come to grief with Australia, who can it blame?