



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY



ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance -

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"Certain doctors and other persons permitted by law to dictate to their shabbier fellow-citizens sent out an order that all little girls should have their hair cut short. I mean of course, all little girls whose parents were poor. Now the case for this particular interference was this, that the poor are pressed down from above into such stinking and suffocating underworlds of squalor, that the poor people must not be allowed to have hair, because in their case it must mean lice in the hair. Therefore, the doctors propose to abolish the hair. It never seems to have occurred to them to abolish the lice...the lesson of lice in the slums is the wrongness of slums, not the wrongness of hair...it is only by eternal institutions like hair that we can test passing institutions like empires."*

– *"What's Wrong with the World"* by G.K. Chesterton, 1910

DOWNER'S CHICKENS COMING HOME TO ROOST by Jeremy Lee:

There now appears to be a major rift between Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Defence Department, which has spattered egg on Foreign Affairs Minister Alexander Downer.

For the second time *The Bulletin* has run a feature article outlining Intelligence briefings passed to Mr. Downer about the Timor situation prior to the referendum. These warned that the militia were being armed and co-ordinated from Jakarta under the direction of General Wiranto – a fact subsequently denied publicly by Downer.

There is a hue-and-cry in Canberra as to how such sensitive material could have been leaked. But there has been no denial.

In *The Bulletin's* November 30th edition, National Affairs Editor John Kelly raises some issues based on the Intelligence reports which require immediate public answers:

ON DOWNER: *".... Despite denials at the time by Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, the Australian government was fully aware of the duplicitous role of the Indonesian military (TNI).*

ON PROPAGANDA: *"The documents ... show up as a farce a ceremony engineered by the Indonesian military in which militia members handed in their weapons: the DIO (Defence Intelligence Organisation) reported the TNI ...in fact then handed back those weapons to the militia."*

ON GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS: *"... The revelation of the DIO documents reflects tensions within the bureaucracy in Canberra: the defence department, and in particular its military intelligence arm, the DIO, believe the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT) and Downer are trying to absolve*

themselves of any knowledge of the almost certain destruction in East Timor after the election.

"Defence sources are angry that DFAT officers and Downer have not been held accountable by Prime Minister John Howard for opposing the use of peacekeepers in the lead-up to the ballot. There is a strong view in the defence department that DFAT and Downer repeatedly ignored warnings from DIO and others that the TNI would 'scorch' East Timor after the ballot..."

ON INDONESIA'S SECRET POLICY: *"All necessary force was to be employed, but with maximum deniability, maintaining public adherence to Indonesian commitments under the agreement while privately subverting the process of self-determination in East Timor ..."*

ON ALEXANDER DOWNER: *"...The new documents will again raise the debate about Australia's role in the East Timor tragedy. They also require Alexander Downer to answer two questions: If he did not know about the assessments that Jakarta was running the militia, why not? If he did, why did he lie to the Australian public?"*

The whole sorry affair is made more distasteful by the fact the unsuspecting East Timorese were urged to vote without fear by numerous posters which said "We will not desert you!". The massacre which followed will hardly persuade Timorese to trust the word of politicians in countries like Australia in future.

IS ACEH NEXT? Over a million people recently gathered in the Indonesian island of Aceh to demand a referendum similar to the one in East Timor for an independent Islamic state. Indonesia's new President Wahid has said such a referendum may be held next year. Nobody is holding their breath.

On November 26th about 2,500 Acehnese forced their way into the parliament in Jakarta to demand such a referendum.

Indonesia is in an invidious position. With an archipelago of 17,000 islands and a major economic crisis there are obvious fears that their empire may shatter in pieces. Australia can expect no help from Indonesia on the question of the increasing flood of boat people – probably the reverse. Australia is going to have to toughen up considerably, despite Amanda Vanstone's reassurances.

In a personal letter to *The Bulletin* (30/11/99) Philip Ruddock, the Minister for Immigration, gave some idea of what is going on. After pointing out that Australia issued 28,569 business visas in China to visit Australia in 1998-99 (not including Hong Kong or Taiwan). Ruddock continued:

".... I make no apology, however for the fact that my department scrutinises applications for visitor visas from China very closely – 12.76% of visitors from China fail to leave Australia within the validity of their initial visa. This is about six times the global non-return average of 2.18%. The non-return rate for China is 75 times higher than for low-risk countries such as Japan"

If our quick reckoning is correct, this means some 3,000 mainland Chinese overstayed their visas during the last year. How many from other countries? And what happens if they're caught? A three-year stay in a detention centre at our expense?

Meanwhile, the boat people keep coming.

ELECTIONS, ELECTIONS: By the time readers see this, the results of two national elections will have been declared – New Zealand and Malaysia.

New Zealand polls appear to favour a change in government to a Labour coalition – although polls are increasingly unreliable; remember Jeff Kennett?

An assessment by Stephen Koukoulas in Wellington (*Australian Financial Review*, 26/11/99) contained two bits of information giving a lead to the odds being placed on Labour:

"The key plank of the Labour agenda perhaps can be best captured in Clark's campaign launch when she said Labour would 'put the interests of New Zealand ahead of free-market purism every time.'

"... Household debt levels have surged, from about 55 per cent of disposable income in 1990 to 100 per cent in 1999"

In the crazy world of economic orthodoxy, this is a sign things are booming – consumer confidence and all that.

Malaysia expects a Mahathir victory. His economy is recovering faster than any in Asia – and is still Malaysian-owned.

AUSTRALIA FLEXES ITS MUSCLES: Following last week's emphasis on the imminent World Trade Organisation shindig, *The Weekend Australian* (27-28/11/99) told us on its front page that the WTO replaced GATT in 1995 as the global body for making and enforcing trade. It has 135 members, with China and Taiwan soon to join; that the coming millennium round will run at least three years; and that the world economy would receive a \$1 trillion-a-year boost and Australia \$7.5 billion if all trade barriers were removed.

Not everybody believes these magic figures, figuring they really reveal a more frenetic rate at which we take in each others' washing – with increasing casualties in the process.

All is not well, however. The leading article said:

"Australia has issued an unprecedented threat to walk away from the new Millennium Round of world trade talks due to begin next week unless there are big cuts in farm trade barriers.

"The warning from Trade Minister Mark Vaile came amid fears that the world's trade ministers would abandon the three-year trade talks The talks are shrouded in gloom after negotiators in Geneva failed this week to agree on a draft text to launch the new trade round. Veteran observers said they could not remember such a poor beginning to a new trade round"

Perhaps – just perhaps – the global market, under the heavy hand of the WTO is not the answer. But then Prime Minister Howard says there IS NOTHING ELSE! And he couldn't be wrong – could he?

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS: This gem appeared in *The Bulletin* (30/11/99):

"Free travel on national highways may soon be a thing of the past after Transport Minister John Anderson forecast tolls would be charged on main roads. The first highway to attract a toll, Anderson noted, could be the proposed Western Sydney Orbital, due to be completed by 2007."

Our Deputy Prime Minister would be just the chap to snip the ribbon on Melbourne's CityLink, when it finally starts electronically extracting \$3.77 for a one-way trip to the city. Charges are expected to start just in time for Christmas – although, who knows? They keep finding excuses to delay. Perhaps John Anderson can speed things up.

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GUARDING OUR MOST PRECIOUS TREASURE by Alfred King:

Delivering the A.N.Smith Memorial lecture at the University of Melbourne on *Media Accountability*, the lawyer and former journalist Paul Chadwick said the media needed to become more accountable if they are to remain relevant to society. *"In a democracy, no public power is legitimate unless it is accountable,"* he said. *The Age* reports Mr. Chadwick recommending that the media establish a stringent model of self-regulation, covering all levels of media organisations, that meets contemporary benchmarks of accessibility, independence, fairness, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness. It would have the power to award compensation to aggrieved parties. The substance of this suggestion is no different to the current one with the Australian Press Council overseeing – it is asking the wolves to guard the sheep – with the resulting mass carnage inflicted on our culture and values.

No greater influence impacts our thinking than the media. This makes it vital to the establishment. All the programming and news portrays a secular humanist view that man establishes his own moral values apart from the influence of anyone (including God), and that he determines his own destiny. This life-view has no absolute, eternal reference point – everything is relative. The rules can be made up as we go along. But how do we know if sexual promiscuity is immoral or not? Why shouldn't we cheat in business?

Ted Koppel, the news-anchor for the US ABC's "Nightline", in 1987 said, *"we have constructed a tower of Babel and it is a television antenna, a thousand voices producing a daily parody of democracy in which everyone's opinion is afforded equal weight regardless of substance or merit. Indeed, it can even be argued that opinions of real weight tend to sink with barely a trace in television's ocean of banalities."* This relativistic approach means we need to guard our minds carefully, because so many warped ideas are floating around.

The Establishment media relies heavily on subliminal messages to get its message across into our minds. Our problem is more what our **subconscious** minds are exposed to than our conscious minds. According to William Bryan Key, in his book, *Subliminal Seduction*: *"The conscious mind discriminates, decides, evaluates, resists or accepts. The subconscious apparently merely stores units of information, much of which influences attitudes or behaviour at the conscious level in ways about which science knows virtually nothing. The vast communications industry realised long ago the resistance to advertising develops at a conscious level. However, there is little if any resistance encountered at the subconscious level, to which marketing appeals are now directed."*

The fact is that the individual is sovereign in his own life. Each of us must take control of what we allow to come into our homes – we can't look to government or industry protection to tell us what is good for us. We'd call the police if someone entered our homes and stole something of value – and that is what television is doing. I recommend the reader to evaluate the amount of time spent watching the TV and the kind of programmes watched – we are being attacked in an area we are unable to resist. The subconscious mind has no walls around it. You may want to develop an alternative way to use your time more effectively.

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