



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance -

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"The Dalai Lama sees no conflict in being involved in both politics and religion... He believes that because politicians are responsible for so many people they must have an active moral life. 'Politicians need religion even more than a hermit on retreat. If a hermit acts out of bad motivation, he harms no one but himself. But if someone who can directly influence the whole of society acts with bad motivation, then a great number of people will be adversely affected'."*

"The 14th Dalai Lama" by Whitney Stewart 1996

DREAD? OR ANTICIPATION? by Jeremy Lee:

Whatever else, Australia is going to be on the map over the next few weeks. The Olympics, once an assembly of amateur sportsmen and women, has become one of the biggest business events in the world, in which sporting contests are mere adjuncts to corporate profit-taking. With its 'big-money' ethos, the Olympics has become, inevitably, a security operation involving all the military and police deployment of a "Desert Storm" or a Kosovo.

Many Australians may thrill with pride at the achievements of an Ian Thorpe or a Cathy Freeman; but at the end of the day it will be the corporate 'bottom-line' that will measure the success or failure of the games.

The World Economic Forum in Melbourne will only be slightly different. There'll be no races and no medals. But it will be the same corporate faces in the best seats, surrounded by the gad-fly politicians and beat-up journalists.

Only the briefest debate has surrounded the proposed 'gifts' to politicians of up to \$10,000 packages to the Olympics. Neither Howard nor Beazley have really declared themselves on the issue. Both say they personally won't take the packages. But members of their respective parties can make up their own minds!

If there is nothing improper about what many see as bribes, why won't the party leaders accept? Surely, because they implicitly know that the exercise is another example of corruption.

POLLIE-FREE: Under the heading "SPONSORS DECLARE HOMEBUSH POLLIE-FREE", *The Australian* (24/8/2000) said:

"Five of the 12 main Australian sponsors of the Olympics have bucked corporate hospitality tradition by declaring the Games a politician-free zone.

"Ansett, Holden, Energy Australia, Westfield and the Australian division of Swatch said yesterday their Olympic hospitality programs did not involve any free tickets or accommodation for MPs.

"But five of the other seven main sponsors – Telstra, John Fairfax Ltd., News Ltd., Westpac and the Seven network – have asked selected politicians to attend, although none would indicate who specifically had been invited"

Four news-networking companies and a bank! Handing 'selected' politicians free packages for the Olympics! (Not the faintest smell of corruption, mind you!)

ROCK-LIKE PRIME MINISTER: There is increasing publicity about the approaching World Economic Forum at Melbourne's Crown Casino, some heralding violent protests. Like Hercules of old, Prime Minister Howard has stated that the Australian Government would not tolerate any violent behaviour. And quite right too. But the fact that those corporate leaders who will be *inside* the Casino have, between them, done considerable violence to harmless people round the world does not seem to have occurred to the Prime Minister. Nor the fact that there is considerable justification for the many in Australia opposed to the global corporate elite.

Alan Kohler, writing in *The Australian Financial Review* (29/8/2000), said:

"..... the corporate and political establishment is making the mistake of not taking it very seriously, either at a practical, organisational level (although the Seattle riots perhaps changed that to an extent) or more importantly at a philosophical level.

"The modern anti-globalisation, anti-corporate protest movement not only uses the internet better than any corporation has yet managed to do, in a way the movement actually mimics the structure of the internet as well there is a firm thread of thought running through the movement that needs to be taken seriously, and understood, by its enemies (i.e., those who read this newspaper)."

Kohler seems to have a few misconceptions himself! But he's closer to the mark than Howard.

USING THE ARMY: To its shame the ALP seems to have 'gone along' with the new Bill to use the Defence Forces in domestic matters. A strong and condemnatory full-page article by Tony Harris in *The Australian Financial Review* (25/8/2000) pointed out

".....The Bill allows the Prime Minister, the Defence Minister and the Attorney-General to authorise this use of the ADF. But none of these Cabinet ministers debated the legislation. In fact, no minister spoke to the Bill in the two hours it took to secure its passage through the House of Representatives. It was left to the Parliamentary Secretary for the Environment and Heritage, Dr. Sharman Stone, to convince members that they could trust the Government. We also are to trust the Government that, while federal troops are protecting 'Commonwealth interests', under the direction of political ministers, they would not be infringing the liberties of Australians"

Although this legislation ostensibly concerns the rights and duties of the States, there was no consultation with State governments until after the Bill had passed through the House of Representatives.

Furthermore, it was supposed to have been the subject of hearings by the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee, which was given the undertaking on June 28th. This Committee has six members and 22 participating members. It took submissions for only one day, in Canberra, where 12 witnesses gave evidence. Of these, eight were from the Commonwealth or were retired Defence Force personnel. It considered 16 submissions, most of which opposed important parts of the law. However, it recommended that the law be passed with slight changes.

Four States – NSW, Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania – all criticised the way the Bill was introduced without their advice. (Condensed from Tony Harris's article).

Among powers given to the ADF in this Bill are, in Harris's words: *".... the power to search vehicles and buildings without a search warrant, to search people, to direct the movement of people and vehicles, to exclude persons from property and areas, to take property considered to be dangerous and to detain people suspected of acting dangerously in order to surrender them to the police 'as soon as practicable'. They are wider powers than those ordinarily enjoyed by the police"*

The Howard Government would obviously protest that these measures were necessary to "protect the people". It is the argument always used by authoritarian powers to remove the freedoms and liberties of the populace.

LET THE PEOPLE KNOW: A campaign is spreading all over Western Australia, where Service Stations are putting pump-signs up, setting out how much of the current petrol price is tax. A newspaper photograph to hand (*AFR*, 25/8/2000) showed one in very large print:

"UNLEADED (cents per litre) 52.7; PLUS TAXES (per litre) 47.2; PUMP PRICE (per litre) 99.9". It clears up any misconceptions, and should be spread across Australia.

ANOTHER CLEAR VIEW OF OUR EMASCULATED STATE by Alfred King:

It was as a young man, trying to manage the costs of his first motor car, that I was introduced to the real impact of World Government in our everyday life. I had a strong interest in buying my petrol inexpensively, and enthusiastically searched for the stations with the lowest prices. I was studying economics at the time, and we were taught that the oil companies were operating in a competitive environment in which the price of petrol was set by the free market law of supply and demand. This free market principle is held up by the chattering classes as the best (and only) way to get the product that the consumer wants to him (or her) at the cheapest possible price. With this in mind, I knew that one station would only have to reduce the price of its petrol by a couple of cents to be able to sell all of its stocks. Yet I did not find this competitive culture in operation. As I searched, what I found was the same high price being charged by all companies, and when the price changed, they all changed in perfect synchronicity. Quite an achievement. The lofty theories of our highly educated economists are one thing, the reality of human nature is quite different.

"All monopoly is anti-social", as the great man once said.

The oil industry was one of the first of a number of industries targeted for complete control by the proponents of World Government. The evidence from a number of unrelated sources overwhelming shows that the oil companies act as a cartel, which is a fancy name for a monopoly. Total control.

What we have seen in recent weeks through the petrol price issue is proof that that these MNCs operate as a power above nations to extort from the individual whatever tribute they see fit. If you want the privilege of running a motor car, you must pay the danegeld.

Where is 'our' government in all this – the Prime Minister who was recently honoured in Israel for his services to Zionism, and the Treasurer who is on the IMF Board? The usual rouse in this situation is call an inquiry, which is known at the outset not to come to any conclusions which could restrict the oil companies in the way they set petrol prices. There have been many such inquiries, all with the same non-result. However, John Howard is touchy even about this minor step. He has angrily rejected calls from Queensland Premier Beattie for an inquiry into petrol prices and tax changes. The Prime Minister admits that neither he nor the US President has any control over the price of petrol in their respective countries. (This, in spite of the Treasurer recently admitting on TV that he does not fully understand how the price of petrol is set.)

The question which this immediately raises, and which the media is remarkably silent on, is that if the people of Australia, which is a major oil producer, do not have control over the price of their own petrol through their elected representatives, then who does? Is this a desirable state of affairs or should we do something about it – perhaps look after our own interests for a change?

ONE MORE STEP CLOSER TO UTOPIA by Alfred King:

Is there anybody left who still thinks our present government is a conservative one? In Brave New World, the establishment handed out a sweet treat to people to help them accept something that it wanted to happen. Here in Australia, first we witnessed the disarming of the population on the pretext of the actions of a single mad man, sweetened by a cash handout to 'all good children'. The same government has now quietly passed legislation which allows it to use the Army against our own civilians. This is change indeed, but is it progress? The establishment of a totalitarian regime is always preceded by a disarming of the population.

Would anyone care to predict what will be the next link in this chain of events?

THE FIVE DOLLAR (QUEEN'S) NOTE from Phillip Benwell, National Chairman, Monarchist League of Australia.

"You will no doubt be pleased to learn that following months of lobbying, the Reserve Bank of Australia has now advised that the five dollar note bearing the Head of The Queen will continue to circulate during the one year period of the Note produced to honour Sir Henry Parkes and furthermore will continue to be reprinted according to demand. This means that every protest we have launched this year has met with success, albeit of varying levels."