



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

- NEWS HIGHLIGHTS
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- COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS



The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"The Laws of Hammurabi, King of Babylon, just the same as those more ancient codes of which they were a revision, were directed towards the regulation of life of noblemen, as well as freemen, merchant or slave... Euphemistic and misleading words such as 'businessman' or 'financier' had not yet, it seems, been planted in the vocabulary. By and large the king still ruled in absolute, and his law giving justice to all, was carved in stone and placed in the market-place for the highest or the lowest to understand clearly the rules by which he must live... Merchants were unequivocally described as such, and law ruthlessly prescribed severe penalties for their corrupt conduct. They were kept in place as a caste, not of the highest order... and were conceded a place in life as an instrument whereby the people generally might live a better life... Merchandising was by no means regarded as an end in itself, and a means whereby it was the right of ignoble men to proffer any corruption to the people so long as it made 'profit' for them, and 'interest' for the so-called banker, who supplied the original 'finances' out of his secret and costless money-creative process ..."*
– *"The Babylonian Woe"* by David Astle, 1975

THE DEGRADING OF THE MONARCHICAL IDEA by Jeremy Lee:

The current controversy surrounding Australia's Governor-General shows how far we have slipped from the standards that prevailed 50 years ago.

It has always been traditionally held that loyalty to the Crown was synonymous with loyalty and respect to the nation's institutions and values. One did nothing to degrade them publicly. It was possible to have a personal aversion to the behaviour of Kings, Queens and Princes, but these were never to be expressed in a way which detracted from the office they held.

We have had some weird and erratic monarchs in British history. One Prince of Wales was even suspected of being a mass murderer. Many were adulterers. But the epithets hurled at common murderers and adulterers were withheld in the case of royalty because it was tacitly recognized that it was impossible to apply the rights of "innocent-until-proven-guilty" without jeopardizing the office itself.

In return for this uncodified principle, it was also taken for granted that the monarch never indulged in self-defence, however injurious current accusations may have been. People who attacked the monarch were considered tasteless and of little account. There was a code which the great majority observed. And because of this unspoken but widely recognized restraint a level of service was engendered in

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Kings and Regents that was, on the whole, above their personal standards. In this ethos, an instant sympathy and defence came from a public which knew that the Crown could not defend itself.

This included the media. The editor, who took the standards of society seriously, and forebore to tread into the area of personal sorrow, grief or disgrace, withheld his normal barbs from the throne because he knew that the monarch could not reply..

All that has gone. There is no area of life, however private, that today's media regards as 'off-limits'. The camera loves to invade the privacy of ordinary people in the hope of a tear. The gory details of murders and warfare are treated with a lascivious attention to detail. The mere sight of a public figure trying to thrust through a battery of microphones and a cacophony of provocative questions is an illustration. "A scoop is a scoop" – no matter who gets hurt in the process.

Whether we are better off as a result of this wolf-pack vivisection is debatable. Many would say No. But it is a concept hardly explainable to the brash young reporters of today. The journalistic schools of the last 30 years have done little to suggest that there are limits to the ambit of reporting, that there is such a thing as sensitivity, that social standards should be revered by journalists as much as anyone else.

What we are seeing at the moment is a journalistic whipping-up of a lynch-mob. It is safe to say that if Archbishop Hollingsworth were to be forced from office, he would be forgotten by the media once every ounce of prurience had been extracted from the situation. The media would turn its attention to the cremation of the office itself.

The whole objective of this campaign came into the open last night (i.e. February 23rd) with the call from the republican movement that the Governor-General should be replaced with a president who could be tried – and if necessary dismissed – after a 'trial-by-parliament'. Shades of Oliver Cromwell! The media which has whipped up most of the furore is itself avowedly republican. While we are being persuaded that the debate is centred upon the alleged failings of the Archbishop, those driving the campaign have their eyes fixed, not on the man, but on the office.

The Governor-General's mistake has been the attempt to explain himself through the media. It is safe to say that, no matter what he said, the cross-examination would have re-doubled in intensity. He implicitly acknowledged the right of the media and a media-provoked public to try him.

McGARVIE SPEAKS FOR SANITY: One of the very few thoughtful articles about this mess was one in *The Australian Financial Review* (22/2/02). Under the heading **ATTACKS ON HOLLINGWORTH UNDERMINE EVERYONE**, former Governor of Victoria, Richard McGarvie, said:

"Irreversible damage is being done by attacks that denigrate, weaken and erode confidence in institutions at the heart of Australia's democracy It is nonsense to think that unjustified attacks that reduce confidence in the holders of an office do not reduce confidence in the office..... If we were all angels any shortfall from perfection could disqualify a governor-general. Instead, from voters to governors-general, we are all frail humans. There has never been a head of state however much entitled to community respect, whose life, on intense scrutiny, would not reveal honest misjudgements, wrong decisions, failures and omissions An intrusive media that will expose wrong-doing is vital. However, one of my gravest concerns is whether democracy will be able to continue in a world where the mass media is all-pervasive and increasingly concentrated and powerfulBritish historian Lord Acton's truism that power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely, applies to all humans with power. The tendency towards abuse is as inherent in media power as in political power. If there are

insufficient ingredients for the diet, more can be manufactured. The small morsels of unproved allegations can be gathered together, continually repeated and given such prominence as to give the impression of extensive wrongdoing. Busy people lack time to analyse this. Thus, undeserved discredit can be cast upon a respected person of high rank There should be no mistake. If governors general are so denigrated that the office loses community confidence, that will be replicated with a head of state if we become a republic"

It is distressing that the Governor-General's fate ultimately lies with John Howard. Howard is a paid employee of the Crown. His personal whims and temporary political advantages are his domain. While his advice to Her Majesty the Queen should be taken into account, convention has been allowed to transfer her decision to him – a situation which once never applied.

DOES REITH HAVE ALZHEIMERS? That amazing wizard of the mobile phone, ex-Defence Minister Peter Reith, has finally recalled that he was told the truth about the "children-overboard" incident well before the election. The ramifications were lost on him, he said, because "it wasn't a very good line". Of course, he never even thought to mention it to the Prime Minister, whose own Department also knew the truth. Everyone, it seems, know the situation except the Prime Minister himself.

While we are on Peter Reith, he has retired on an annual payout of \$104,000 a year. Obviously not enough, because he has taken an advisory job with a firm supplying armaments and equipment to the Defence Force for another \$100,000 a year. He will be a consultant to Tenix Defence Systems. *The Australian Financial Review* (22/2/02) commented:

"Key defence firms this week expressed dismay that Mr. Reith moved directly into the sector whose commercial fortunes he controlled until the last federal election. The firms were also distancing themselves from speculation surrounding the identity of a second defence firm for which Mr. Reith is believed to be working"

But the poor fellow has to earn an extra buck or two, if for nothing else but to cure his Alzheimers.

TREASURY CASINO: Brisbane has its own casino, located in the former Treasury building near Parliament House. Its nose must be severely out of joint from the activities of the Treasury in Canberra, which has been gambling taxpayers' money on derivatives, and has managed to lose a sum estimated to be between \$2 billion and \$3 billion. The losses were incurred as a result of the fall in the Australian dollar. The betting, apparently, was that the dollar would strengthen against other major currencies.

Anyone betting that the Australian dollar will strengthen doesn't deserve a place in Australia's Treasury Department. The crime is exactly the same as that which bankrupted Barings Bank and landed Nicholas Leeson in a Singapore jail. But Leeson never went as far as Australia's Treasury geniuses – he lost a mere \$1 billion.

The little Treasury flutter has cost every Australian man, woman and child over \$100. I don't know about you, dear reader, but I can't afford it!

SHARON APPROACHES THE ABYSS: Even the most militant Israelis are stunned at Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's latest intentions. Addressing his nation on February 2nd, he proposed the building of a buffer zone between Israel proper and the occupied territories. *The Weekend Australian* (23-24/2/02) described it thus:

"Government sources said the zone would consist of a 200km-long, 300km-wide area that would include fences, minefields, and trenches and take a year to construct."

Obviously, this could end up as a modern 'Berlin Wall' between the Palestinians and the Israelis, along the lines of the idea by World Jewish Congress chief Isi Liebler that multiculturalism, while necessary for Australia, was not right for Israel, where Jews and Arabs should be separated.

One hitch in Sharon's proposals is that for a number of years, against both promises and the views of many in the West, Sharon, as did former Prime Ministers Netanyahu and Barak, has been building Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories. They have been built on the ruins of Palestinian homes and orchards, and stand like fortified islands in the middle of hostile territory. What will happen to them? Or has the bloody intifada and suicide bombing attacks made them expendable? Spokesmen for a number of these settlements have expressed outrage at Sharon's proposals.

The whole Middle East is now boiling into a ferment that is likely to spread into all-out war involving surrounding nations.

ANOTHER 'SUMMIT' – THIS TIME FOR POPULATION NUMBERS by Betty Luks:

The one truth many people find hard to grasp is that there really is only one Party, the Money Power Party; although the policies are administered by many sub-groups – Liberals, Labor, Democrats, etc. Whilst it *appears* the policies of the various sub-groups are not always the same, just ask yourself, are their policies leading to further centralisation of Power or are their policies giving the People, that is you, me, more freedom of choice and more security within the social organism?

A case in point is the 'refugee' issue. A clear message has been going out to those in power, 'Australians have had enough of their nation being flooded with the hotch-potch of peoples from all over the world'.

Knowing this, John Howard exploited the anger within the electorate and won back government even though he did not deserve to get back into power. He had already betrayed the people on the GST, but skilfully steered clear of that issue and 'blew-up' the *Tampa* incident. Polling on the issue during the election was as high as 96-98 percent against illegal refugees 'jumping the queue' and demanding they be allowed to stay in this country.

Politicians of all persuasions have known for many years the people were unhappy with the wider immigration policies of 'tweedledee' and 'tweedledumber'.

But now 'the movers and shakers' (read power elite) are at it again in their push to further dilute the homogeneity of the nation. *The Age's* Paul Heinrichs has 'seen the light' and "traces the development of a neglected debate whose time has finally come." ("A Vital Summit for a Reason of Numbers", 10/2/02)

OH! REALLY? THERE WAS NO DEBATE – NEGLECTED OR OTHERWISE! The major parties had an agreement between themselves NOT to open up immigration to public debate. It was only the brave souls who fearlessly spoke out, it was they who finally opened up the issue for the 'man in the street' to have his say. And that was in spite of the 'toxic sludge' heaped upon them by the 'politically correct' elite.