



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET



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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"And finally, in her Christmas message to the Commonwealth in the year 2000, she said, 'For me, the teaching of Christ and my own accountability before God provide a framework in which I try to lead my life.' A framework in which Her Majesty tries to lead her life. This is an indication to us all of the quality, the extraordinary quality of our Sovereign – a noble and spiritual woman has been such a guide to us all.*

"A few years ago, it is said that two woman in headscarves and quilted jackets were in a teashop in Norfolk taking a cake out to their car. They were stopped by another woman similarly dressed sitting at one of the tables who said, 'Excuse me, but you do look awfully like the Queen.' To which The Queen replied, 'How very reassuring.' How very reassuring. How very reassuring to have such sound institutions and values. How very reassuring to have such a wonderful Sovereign. There is not much else for me to say but this:- 'Send her victorious. Happy and glorious. Long to reign over us. God save The Queen.'"

– Prof. David Flint, Australians for Constitutional Monarchy, Parliament House, Sydney, 6/2/02

IS THE COMMONWEALTH A VIABLE IDEA? by Jeremy Lee:

As Commonwealth leaders gather on Queensland's Sunshine Coast it's worth asking what brings such a diverse group of leaders together? After all, Malaysia's Dr. Mahathir is not Australia's greatest fan. Zimbabwe is still a member, and South Africa, after a period in the wilderness when Dr. Vervoert led the country out, is back again. Nigeria will be there, as will Kenya, Sri Lanka, India, Canada and Great Britain.

All have tacitly accepted Her Majesty the Queen as the Commonwealth's head.

The only other international 'club' with such diversity is the United Nations, but any similarity stops there. The United Nations is an international government in its own right, with armies, courts, finance and banking departments and binding rules which it enforces on members.

The Commonwealth is none of those things. It is a "club" for sovereign countries that meet periodically to compare notes, criticize each other, share research, express opinions – but goes no further. Non-interference in each others' affairs is implicit in the few rules.

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The United Nations currently has no allegiance to any religion or faith, save universal secular humanism. It has a rather weird shrine in the United Nations building in New York which acknowledges no god, but is available for meditation.

The Commonwealth, on the other hand, is led by a Queen who was enthroned in a Christian service which recognizes God the Creator, the Redeemer Christ Jesus and the Royal Law in the Scriptures. Again, implied in this service is the idea that rulers are servants, not masters, and that truth and freedom can never be imposed on subject peoples.

All Commonwealth members were invited guests at the Queen's coronation. Many of them don't act up to the standards expressed in the coronation service – but they do see it as an ideal towards which they should aim.

The United Nations is on the other course, that of power, money and might. It has a General Assembly, largely for PR purposes, but the real power lies in the Security Council, the UN Agencies and increasingly in the UN peacekeeping forces with their blue berets and white vehicles. A huge range of treaties, ratified by national governments without any reference to their constituencies, conflict more and more with local and customary "common" law, and threatens to displace them. Power is increasingly 'imposed' from an international law-and-enforcement organization, rather than being derived from local and regional communities whose aspirations and culture vary widely

With such power at its disposal, the UN itself has increasingly become the plaything of the huge vested interests that patronize it. Required policies are fashioned in world forums, and politicians at national level are bought and sold in the process. Voting is often bribed or coerced by aid programmes

It may be that the "global governance" idea will prevail for a time, and the alternative Commonwealth concept languish in the doldrums. But rampant power creates its own destruction, and there may come a time when the Commonwealth becomes an increasingly attractive alternative. It may not be very apparent at the moment; but it never is until the titan crumbles and the light of truth shines through the rubble.

It may be, too, that some members will leave, on account of racial differences, refugee problems and cultural diversity. But original members such as Canada, New Zealand, Australia and Britain herself will be forced to turn to each other as a power-corrupted world disintegrates round them.

Little wonder there is such a concerted effort by the power hungry to get rid of the Queen herself and all those associated with her.

GOVERNMENT WITH TICKETS ON ITSELF: The AC Nielsen Media International's AdEx report has provided details of the ten biggest advertisers in Australia. Heading the list – surprise, surprise – is the Commonwealth Government, followed in order by Coles Myer, Telstra, Nestle, Village/Time Warner, Toyota and, in 7th place, the NSW State Government.

The Commonwealth spent a cool \$150 million, about half-a-million every working day; just to tell us what magnificent ways it has devised to spend our money and, by implication, why we should keep voting for it. Every Government in Australia now has a staff of 'spin-doctors' to shape its public image. It would be unkind, of course, to call them propagandists.

New South Wales spent more on selling itself than Qantas, General Motors Holden and Unilever. What the total figure is when the rest of the States are added in is anyone's guess.

The Commonwealth, despite this advertising budget, is dispensing with the real and valuable material it once provided. For the first time the Pocket Year Book is not appearing, and the Commonwealth Year Book is now such a price - over \$80 - that few can afford it. Presumably that too will disappear, on the grounds that there was "insufficient demand".

It would be possible for the Commonwealth to print off a really useful guide to government services, together with a range of statistics from unemployment to foreign debt, from budget figures to defence, voting and taxation, hard-bound with photos, which would rank in usefulness to the Telephone Book with its Yellow Pages, for about one-third of the current amount it spends on advertising. AND distribute it to every household in Australia!

What's more, it could include as an appendix the Constitution, so that we no every household in Australia has access to it.

The assumption is, of course, that the Government is open and honest, and wants you to have as much information as possible, rather than hiding its performance from prying eyes.

TAX-PUNTING: Further to the sad news that the Coalition Government has managed to lose \$3 billion plus of our money betting on derivatives, a few accountants are speaking up.

The Australian (26/2/02) said: "The exclusion from the federal budget of almost \$4 billion in currency losses incurred by Treasury was as shonky as the bookkeeping practices of US energy giant Enron or failed insurer HIH, accountants said yesterday 'The method in the budget is a violation of generally accepted accountancy practices. It's generally accepted that you should recognize exchange gains or losses in the period in which exchange rates change. You don't wait for settlement,' said Jeffrey Knapp, technical consultant with the Institute of Chartered Accountants

"The swaps were entered into over more than a decade as part of a strategy to borrow money cheaply in the US, but it went disastrously wrong when Australian rates converged with US rates and the dollar slid from about US80 cents in 1996 to US51 cents last year.

"Budget papers show the portfolio is now a \$3.8 billion liability that gets \$189 million worse every time there is a 1-cent decline against the US dollar"

The Treasury Casino scorecard over the last seven years looks like this:

1995 - \$864 million profit; 1996 - \$651 million loss; 1997 - \$2.1 billion loss; 1998 - \$599 million profit; 1999 - \$838 million loss; 2000 - \$1.9 billion loss; 2001 - \$200 million loss.

We suggest that Mr. Costello should confine his Treasury officials to "two-up", with a \$20 limit! More seriously, the loss figure could have saved Ansett and got another airline flying alongside it.

If people like Alan Bond, Larry Adler and Jodee Rich face criminal charges for a little "creative accounting", should not the same apply to Peter Costello and his Treasury cronies? Or does government service offer immunity?

QUEEN PUTS HER DETRACTORS TO SHAME: Her Majesty arrived in Adelaide, disembarking with her usual dignity and decorum. She was met by an equally dignified Governor-General. The slavering media rat-pack was waiting to pounce on any hiccup which could be turned into more sensation and crowd frenzy – but were thwarted.

There were no armed guards with crew-cuts and dark glances running in front of a bullet-proof car that sped like some armoured hearse past the waiting crowd. Instead, the Queen, as is her custom, started meeting with her well-wishers along the route. You wouldn't see that in many republics!

Peter Beattie, the urbane Queensland Premier, announced that he would treat the Queen and her representative with courtesy. How awfully nice of him! After all, he himself is a Minister of the Crown, and – presumably – has taken the oath of loyalty to her.

Dare we say it? There is a swing of sympathy towards the Governor-General among ordinary Australians, who are getting a little tired of the never-ending gossip tidbits and the personal attacks. There is an innate sense of "fair go" among ordinary Australians. Kipling's words are apt:

"If you can keep your head, when all about you
Are losing theirs, and blaming it on you"

(While we're about it, don't miss Diane Teasdale's Press Release in the *On Target* Bulletin)

THE MIDDLE EAST REVISITED: Much attention is being given to a Saudi Arabia proposal for peace in the Middle East. The proposal suggests that, in exchange for a united Arab support, Israel's borders should return to the pre-1967 situation, with the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem being given to the Palestinians. Sharon's Likud claims to be interested, and is sending envoys to Riyadh to discuss the merits of the idea.

Perhaps we are over-sceptical, but the idea has been on the drawing-board for a long time. It has always been spurned by Israel, which has continued to build settlements in the occupied territories, thus fanning the hatred of the Palestinians.

If Prime Minister Sharon was to accept such a proposal it would be the greatest volte face since 1948, when the State of Israel was founded amid such controversy, with the creation of over 1 million Palestinian refugees from their homeland.

Eric Butler's small but quite prophetic booklet, *"Censored History"*, written in the mid-seventies, made this point (p.32):

".... Moderate Arab leadership would accept the permanency of Israel as an independent State if conquered Arab territory were returned, the Palestinians provided with a guaranteed State of their own, and adequately recompensed for territories taken from them by the establishment of Israel"

In the unlikely event of Sharon changing course, what a lot of bloodshed and heartache could have been saved if Israel had seen sense 30 or 40 years ago!

(*"Censored History"*, \$7.50 posted, from League bookshops)