



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET



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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance -

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"Most people of necessity, and especially in these days of mass propaganda, form their opinions at second hand, and a great deal of opinion formed in this way is purely negative. Little or no critical faculty is applied to it, but on occasion, it is regurgitated as though it has been formed as a result of personal experience. This is always true, but when the opinion refers to a complex or subtle problem, it is a mathematical certainty that what is registered is either a minority opinion popularized, or has no intrinsic value."*

Legislative action based on proposals submitted to a large electorate must, from the very nature of the case, place the population at the mercy of a trained bureaucracy, and if, as in the case of the British Civil Service, this is irremovable and, to the public, irresponsible, the result is indistinguishable from a dictatorship of a most undesirable character."

— C.H. Douglas *"The Nature of Democracy"*

COVERING UP THE JENIN HORROR by Jeremy Lee:

Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the UN, has put together an investigative team to reveal the truth about the West Bank town of Jenin. But Israel is going to make life difficult for such an idea. Even the most dispassionate of journalists are now asking aloud whether Israel has something to hide. Such speculation is appearing in papers which have always favoured the Israeli cause.

The Australian (23/4/02) reprinted a full page article by Marie Colvin from Britain's *Sunday Times* which does not make pleasant reading. She was one of the first journalists on the scene: *"....As the rescue teams spread out over Jenin camp last week after the Israeli army claimed victory in its battle against several hundred armed Palestinian radicals, it was clear something cataclysmic had occurred UN Middle East envoy Terje Roed-Larsen cuts right through the propaganda by stating the obvious: 'No military operation can justify this scale of destruction. Whatever the purpose was, the effect is collective punishment of a whole society.'*

".... My conclusion after interviewing scores of refugees is that there is no evidence Israeli troops entered the camp aiming to massacre Palestinian civilians. But in many cases they shot first and did not take much care to find out if the target was a civilian or not."

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"Under the fourth Geneva Convention, they are required to protect the civilian population and wilful killing of a civilian is a potential war crime.

"I am also certain that numerous Palestinians were held hostage in their homes while Israeli troops used the building as a base or a firing post, and that others were taken door to door as human shields, sometimes thrown into rooms ahead of Israeli troops.

"Both are violations of international law, which protects civilians in wartime.

"As for the bulldozing of the Hawamish area, this seems to have been out of a combination of fear and revenge rather than premeditated"

What Israel needs now is another war somewhere – anywhere – which will replace the grim images leaking out through the media with a fresh sensation. In an interview with Maxine McKew on the 7.30 Report on Tuesday, April 23rd, one of Israel's top historians expressed the belief that it was Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's intention to expand the War across the Middle East.

HOUSEHOLD DEBT AND INTEREST RATES: The threat of future interest rate increases looms ahead. The theory is that, as inflationary pressures take off, increasing interest rates will put a brake on borrowing, slowing economic activity until inflation is curbed. It's a dreadful theory in which immense damage to Australians loaded with debts and mortgages results in an increase in bankruptcies at both industry and home levels. More homeless destitute become the tool of financial regulation.

We have quoted the household debt figures recently, showing them to be at levels not experienced in Australia before.

The Australian (23/4/02) reported: " Australia now has one of the highest household debt levels in the Western world, and the Reserve Bank is widely expected to begin lifting official rates at its May meeting..... Figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics yesterday show debt as a percentage of disposable income grew to a record 119 percent, one of the highest rates among developed nations.

"In the fourth quarter of last year alone, household borrowing increased by 24 percentage points to \$559 billion. The Standard & Poor's Report says average credit card debts increased by 15 percentage points to \$1,965 last year, while the average home loan in December was \$157,969 – nearly 20 percent higher than a year earlier. Normally the largest drivers of default are unemployment, divorce and personal trauma Divorce is up 17 percent in the past 10 years and personal bankruptcies have increased 30 percent in the past 12 months"

All that was during periods of record low interest rates. Rate increases will result in harrowing stories across Australia. And GATS, with imported 'rice-bowl' work forces, should top it off nicely!

WHAT IS A 'CONSCIENCE' VOTE? About once in a blue moon a Bill comes before Parliament in which the Prime Minister allows a "conscience vote". Party members are unshackled from the Whip and allowed to make up their own minds on the merits (the rights or wrongs) of the Bill in question. Because he has announced a "conscience vote" the Government does not stand or fall on the Bill.

What would happen if an enlightened Prime Minister announced that a "conscience vote" was required on every Bill? Surely, we'd get a much more intelligent and less fearful vote on all legislation? Members could become 'representatives' again, instead of mere party hacks. The Opposition would be able to abandon the current situation where they are duty-bound to oppose everything the Government proposes. The merits of Bills would rise above the "footy-team" approach.

And, to cap it all, non-elected Party Whips would be out of a job.

Is there not something distasteful (not to say illegal) in requiring a Member of Parliament to swallow his conscience and vote according to orders? Doesn't such a process automatically bring the worst type of representative to the top, while automatically disqualifying those who have some integrity?

Prime Minister Howard, after some deliberation, has decided there will be NO conscience vote on Stem Cell Research. What's he really saying?

"I have decided that all members of the Coalition Government will vote as I tell them, whatever they believe to be right or wrong/ And, if they don't, disciplinary action will be taken against them! That's democracy! That's the Westminster System! And that's the way its gonna be!"

Gilbert and Sullivan, the geniuses of comic light opera, put it this way in *The Mikado*:

*"When in that House M.Ps divide,
If they've a brain and cerebellum too,
They have to leave that brain outside,
And vote just like their leaders tell 'em to."*

Another far greater Teacher said something to the effect that "No man can serve two masters"

THE SUMMIT CALLED FOR DOUBLING AUSTRALIA'S POPULATION: Those who missed feedback from the Melbourne "Population Summit: 2002" – the "brainchild of the brainstorming bizoids"* from the 'top end of town' – will find the extracts from an article (*Ballarat Courier*, 5/3/02) by student Alice Barnes of interest.

"I was one of the few Ballarat students to represent regional Victorian youth at The Population Summit," wrote Alice.

"I suffered through the economic debate, a debate where everyone supported the notion (except One Nation's representative Robyn Spencer Ed) that an increased population was part of Australia's future, despite our decreased fertility rate (of 1.7 percent).

"In the environmental forum, during which Dr. Barry Jones and Dr. Tim Flannery spoke sceptically about our capitalist consumption habits ... they too supported the proposed growth. The last session I went to before our lavish lunch paid for by Richard Pratt, fellow students and teachers alike heard the humanitarian side of the argument, with Rev. Tim Costello and friends also pushing the case of the population expanders."

A group of panellists were asked where were all of these extra people going to live, and the vision (or nightmare?) is for 100 more cities the size of Canberra and our capital cities would become larger.

Why do these people want to double the population within 50 years? So that they have queues of people buying more goods, so that they can make more money, so that they have queues of people buying more goods, so that they can make more money ... *ad infinitum*.

*'Bizoid', the new word coined by Deidre Macken (*AFR*, 2-3/3/02) to describe those from the business end of town who want the 'doors to remain open' and Australia's population to double in number.

WHY DO WE COMMEMORATE THE ANZACS? by Betty Luks:

Australians observed Anzac Day again this year. We remembered the war dead, the cream of our youth of a number of generations. We acknowledged and gave recognition to the acts of human courage and bravery displayed in such terrible circumstances and conditions.

Reference would have been made to our young men and women serving in the Armed Forces in Afghanistan, East Timor and other trouble-spots around this troubled world. Their attendance to duty, their loyalty, etc., would have been noted as well as their bravery on the battlefields. And so it should.

But we live in an age of incessant propaganda, and too few apply their 'critical faculties' to the examination of the question, why the war/s and should we, as a nation, enter into these conflicts – is it 'right'?

The same sentiments Australians express about their brave fighting men has been and is accepted by other peoples and cultures.

The Law of Magnanimity:

- "Death is better for every man than life with shame." Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf*.
- "Death is to be chosen before slavery and base deeds." Roman, *Cicero*.
- "Courage has got to be harder, heart the stouter, spirit the sterner, as our strength weakens. Here lies our lord, cut to pieces, our best man in the dust. If anyone thinks of leaving this battle, he can howl forever." Anglo-Saxon *Maldon*.

For what reasons would these men risk their lives? What values would stir these men to give all in the battles? Surely those self-same values which made us, once, a civilized people? Values which all civilized people would share. The love and protection of individual life, the right to be free, the law of mutual love and co-operation and much else.

The Law of General Beneficence:

- "In Nostrand (= Hell) I saw murderers." Old Norse *Volospá*.
- "I have not brought misery upon my fellows. I have not made the beginning of every day laborious in the sight of him who worked for me." Ancient Egyptian *Confession of Righteous Soul*.
- "He who is cruel and calumnious has the character of a cat." Hindu *Laws of Manu*.
- "I have not caused hunger, I have not caused weeping." Ancient Egyptian *Ere*.
- "Love the stranger as thyself." Ancient Jewish *Old Testament*.
- "Do to men what you wish men to do to you." Christian *New Testament*.

The treatment of the Palestinian people by the Israeli military is not civilized and should be condemned by all decent people.

(Further reading: "Yes Virginia: There is Right and Wrong" by Kathleen M. Gow, Ph.D. Available from all League book services).