



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

Print Post Publication Number 381667 00258

Vol.39, No.6

February 21st, 2003

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"Hence these (Rousseauist) ideas led directly to the massive squandering of inherited resources at the Revolution, and to the cultural and ecological vandalism that Burke was perhaps the first to recognise as the principal danger of modern politics. In Burke's eyes the self-righteous contempt for ancestors which characterised the Revolutionaries was also a disinheriting of the unborn. Rightly understood, he argued, society is a partnership among the dead, the living, and the unborn, and without what he called the 'hereditary principle,' according to which rights could be inherited as well as acquired, both the dead and the unborn would be disenfranchised. ...His preferred vision of society was not as a contract, in fact, but as a trust, with the living members as trustees of an inheritance that they must strive to enhance and pass on..."*

From *"Why I became a conservative"* by Roger Scruton, February 2003

WHO SHOULD MAKE THE DECISION? by Jeremy Lee:

Prime Minister Howard has just made a startling assertion. While conscious, he said, of public opinion, he would personally make the final decision as to whether or not Australia went to war.

He didn't even say his Cabinet, his Party, his Government or the Parliament. He made no reference to a referendum. Just he alone.

This, surely, is the completion of the power-circle - from "the divine right of Kings" to "the divine right of Prime Ministers".

The wars of history were usually led by Kings, Princes, Emperors or Generals who advanced with their forces into battle. From Alexander the Great to Napoleon, they shared the risks with their soldiers. When Henry IV shouted "Once more into the breach, dear friends, once more!" he did so from the front.

The change in the last 100 years has seen politicians making military decisions without risk to themselves. This coupled with the enormously-increased potency of weapons, has made the main sufferers civilians – mainly women and children – who in earlier times were protected.

We have now reached a point where an outbreak of fighting can obliterate hundreds of thousands of

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civilians in days. John Pilger, writing on January 29th of Tony Blair's position (see his article in the February *New Times Survey*) said:

"...Using the archaic 'royal prerogative' he did not consult parliament or the people when he dispatched 35,000 troops and ships and aircraft to the Gulf; he consulted a foreign power, the Washington regime.

"Unelected in 2000, the Washington regime of George W Bush is now totalitarian, captured by a clique whose fanaticism and ambitions of 'endless war' and 'full spectrum dominance' are a matter of record"

It may be that the amazing growth of the Peace Movement round the world is finally enough to deter leaders from the insane step of war. If it cannot, the resulting carnage may finally be enough – if any of us are left – to produce a universal determination that it will never happen again. This means withdrawing from one or two elected "servants of the people" any right to declare war against other nations in the name of "peace".

Sincere though he may be, John Howard is now claiming a power which does not belong to him. He is by-passing the elected parliament, the people and the age-old injunction "thou shalt not kill". He cannot foresee the consequences of his actions.

MORE ARE SPEAKING OUT: I was never an enthusiastic supporter of Jon Valder, former federal president of the Liberal Party (1985-87). He was also once chairman of the Sydney Stock Exchange. But a recent article in the *Australian Financial Review* (11/2/03) was forthright and hard-hitting. He pointed out that Australia had never attempted to gain justice for its own citizens interred in the atrocious conditions of Guantanamo Bay. He went on:

"... So much for the reciprocal benefits of our alliance with the US and all this hypocrisy about liberty and justice. But it is a glaring example of how weak-kneed and pathetic we have become in our relations with the US.

"Our government keeps telling us over and over again how we must go along with everything the George Bush team says and does. This includes his coterie of Christian fundamentalist colleagues and advisers who probably begin each day by singing 'onward Christian soldiers marching as to war'. But the frightening reality is that they and George Bush control the largest arsenal of weapons of mass destruction the world has ever known. And that's not to mention the pressure being applied from the New York Jewish lobby"

Valder concluded with his hope that John Howard in Washington *"might be fair enough to tell George Bush what a huge majority of the Australian people feel, despite what he himself might think. He might also find a moment, and the nerve, to put in a word for those 'detainees' still languishing in cages at Guantanamo Bay...."*

John Valder has recently launched a loose alliance of "Liberals Against War".

By the time this is read, chief weapons inspector Hans Blix will have made his second report to the UN Security Council. It seems unlikely that anything he says will deter the war-mongers, who appear to have made up their minds. There is no logical reason to shorten the time weapons inspectors need. The cost of the team is \$A135 million a year. If war is declared a sum of \$US100 billion is being touted. Some weapons have now been discovered. Is this a sign of better Iraqi compliance? If so, it should be extended rather than cut short.

THE PRICE WE PAY FOR RHETORIC: Under this title the forthright columnist John Carter, writing in the NSW rural paper *The Land* (6/2/03), observed:

"This drought is now replicating the 'great' 1902 drought as a national disaster.

"Between 1896 and 1904 Australia's cattle herd fell from 12 million to seven million. The sheep flock fell from 100 million to 57 million. Queensland was worst affected with a 64 per cent fall in cattle numbers and 57 per cent in sheep.

"This time we start with twice as many cattle. They are already dying in large numbers in the north. Farm debt levels are far greater than in 1902. One export sheep abattoir owner has said that his operation will be halved. This is a microcosm of what will happen all over Australia.

"The prolonged drought that grips half of the US sees their Government declaring affected areas 'disaster zones'. They are making cash grants of \$US15 per cow, \$13 per heifer with a ceiling of \$US40,000 to preserve their breeders.

"Australia's drought is now wider than the US's but there is no government action to preserve the nation's breeding herds and flocks.

"The Prime Minister, John Howard, keeps repeating that Australia can't 'roll up in a ball and ignore the rest of the world' while his agricultural policy does just that.

"It is time he broke new ground and adhered to his own words. If he wants a free trade agreement with the US he had better get used to paying large sums to farmers as the US isn't about to stop subsidizing its own.

"Time is running out for all Australians. Our trade deficit is growing at more than \$2 billion per month, our net foreign debt is now double the \$180 billion that saw the end of Paul Keating as P.M.

"The IT and service industries that were to preserve us are in tatters. The building industry is running out of steam. The government has lost more than \$10 billion on faulty defence contracts and foreign exchange speculation.

"It spent \$1 billion on GST and electoral advertising. It sold off our gold reserves.

"Tony Harris (the former NSW Auditor-General) estimates that it must find \$87 billion for Commonwealth Superannuation (politicians and public servants).

"The National Farmers' Federation, our farm lobby in Canberra, has disappeared without a trace.

"In 1902 Federation had just begun with a group of colonies feeling their way. One hundred years on, there is no excuse for the disgraceful buck passing being practiced by Ministers.

"NSW is far from blameless. The Carr government goes to the election with eight of the 17 most marginal electorates seriously affected by an agricultural policy concentrating on John's Disease instead of a drought that has already killed more stock than John's Disease will kill in the next five centuries.

"They will be held accountable in those eight electorates. Instead of throwing money at genocide in Iraq, the Federal Government should be following the US domestic assistance example"

CONTRITION: As this is written (Friday, 14/3) ABC news portrayed the massive peace march (150,000 plus) through the streets of Melbourne. It covered the political spectrum, was orderly and peaceful, but was an expression of concern shared by the big majority of Australians.

Here in Toowoomba – a country town – 1,000 people assembled – church leaders, the elderly, school-children, ex-servicemen. Again, there was unanimity: war is no longer a solution.

What does it take to turn such an agreement into a force which the nation's leaders agree to represent? How can elected representatives be made to realize that they do not have a monopoly of wisdom, and that serving other masters will, in the end, destroy them and their nation?

It can be easy and glib to quote Scripture to support a personal argument. But occasionally it can be of benefit when we are clearly off the track. In September 1995 the World Bank cited Australia as by far the richest *per capita* nation on earth. It is turning to ashes before our eyes.

The book of Deuteronomy offers a timely warning:

"Beware lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments ... lest, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, then your heart becomes proud and you forget the Lord your God"

"Otherwise, you may say in your heart, My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth."

"But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth"
(Chapter 8, 11-18)

BRAVO TO OUR SAILORS by Betty Luks:

Bravo to the three (now eleven) Australian sailors who had the intestinal fortitude to say no! when put under pressure by their superiors to agree to anthrax vaccination! (ABC 7.30 Report, February 11th, 2002). Two days out from Darwin on the way to the Middle East, the HMAS *Kanimbla* crew were informed they were to be inoculated against anthrax and were handed consent forms which signified they agreed to be vaccinated.

Aware of the serious health problems American Gulf War veterans were suffering, Able Seaman Simon Bond asked his sister to find all the information she could on the anthrax vaccination and the possible side-effects.

The information, sourced from an American government authority, convinced him he didn't want to be inoculated and refused to sign the consent form. The form legally discharged the manufacturers of the vaccine, the pharmaceutical company, from any responsibility for any side effects, and the Naval authorities who had organised the vaccination programme.

The Able Seaman wanted it known he was not opposed to the possible American/British/Australian attack on Iraq, he was after all in the armed services, but was opposed to having the anthrax vaccination. The following evening the 7.30 Report informed the viewers that out of 16,000 British troops destined for the Middle East only half had consented to the inoculation.