



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET



- NEWS HIGHLIGHTS
- BACKGROUND INFORMATION
- COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance -

Print Post Publication Number 381667 00258

Vol.39, No.8

March 7th, 2003

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

Right Hand, Left Hand

Avoid and shun the Right Hand Snake, The greater bearded, clapped out fake;
switched off and slowly fading too, A piddling animus come true.

Pity him, the Left Hand Snake, Bemused, confused and half awake;
Just fill his idle hours and slow, With what it's safe for him to know.

Alex Anderson, Home Quarterly, April 1989

BRITAIN BACKING OUT? by Jeremy Lee:

I listened to ABC correspondent Matt Peacock reporting from London this morning, where besieged PM Tony Blair was humiliated by a Labour Party revolt, in which 199 members of his party put forward an amendment that a case for war against Iraq had not been made. Blair managed to stave off a final defeat with the help of the Conservative Opposition, which remains myopically committed to the Bush/Blair line of "war at any cost".

What has really happened in Britain is that Labour members have begun to grasp that their electorates are more important than party 'solidarity' if they want to survive in the polls. There is, apparently, a spate of resignations from Labour Party membership sweeping across the country. This, following the huge demonstrations that have swept Britain and Europe, has put 'identikit' politicians at odds with the voters as never before.

There is no ambiguity in Britain; people are opposed to the war. Will the government heed the opinions and desires of electors? If not, the democratic process is in danger.

President Bush looks agonized whenever he appears in public – as though he had a political hernia. His few remaining allies are paying a heavy price for sticking with him on an Iraqi war. Despite the war rhetoric, he must be conscious of the million or so peace demonstrators who walked through New York, and others who marched in over 100 American cities. What if the cries for peace grow louder?

IN THIS ISSUE: • *Thought for the Week* • *Britain Backing Out?* • *The Good Doctor Prescribes* • *Party Labels Divide*
• *Telstra's Tail Twisted* • *Petrol Tax* • *One Law For Us, Another For The Rest*

There is something of the greatest moment happening across the world. There is a questioning of accepted norms – especially whether or not we have reached a stage where we finally accept that wars create far more problems than they solve.

THE GOOD DOCTOR PRESCRIBES: I must admit to being a fan of Dr. Mahathir in Malaysia. An authoritarian figure, he nevertheless makes more sense than many western politicians.

Speaking at the Non-Aligned Forum recently, his summation of the world situation was masterly. He said:

"The world now lives in fear. We are afraid of everything. We are afraid of flying, afraid of certain countries, afraid of bearded Asian men, afraid of the shoes airline passengers wear, of letters and parcels, of white powder.

The countries allegedly harbouring terrorists, their people, innocent or otherwise, are afraid too. They are afraid of war, of being killed and maimed. They are afraid because they would become the collaterals to be killed because they get in the way of the destruction of their countries.

The preparations and the measures taken to ensure security go on frantically. Trillions of dollars are spent by the world for new weapons, new technology, new strategy, the deployment of forces and inspectors worldwide.

The world is in a terrible mess, a state worse than during the Cold War.

Surely at some stage we must ask ourselves why this is happening to the world. Why is there terrorism? Is it true the Muslims are born terrorists because of the teachings of a prophet who was a terrorist?.....

The Christians too were terrorized, not by Muslims but by fellow Christians who condemned them as heretics. Seems the Muslims did not have a monopoly on terrorism.

Surely at some stage we must ask ourselves why this is happening to the world. Why is there terrorism? Is it true the Muslims are born terrorists?

Frankly, I do not think so. I think it is because of a revival of the old European trait of wanting to dominate the world.

If we care to think back, there was no systematic campaign of terror outside Europe until the Europeans and the Jews created a Jewish state out of Palestinian land. It is the struggle of the Palestinians to regain their land that has precipitated, first conventional wars, then civil protest and violent demonstrations.

The Israelis demanded European support to atone for European crimes against them in the past. In desperation, the Palestinians finally resorted to what is described as acts of terror. Rightly, this is condemned by the world. But the world does not condemn as acts of terror the more terrifying acts of the Israelis; the massacres in Sabra and Shatila, the bulldozing of Palestinian homes while the occupants are still in them, the helicopter gun-ships.

This blatant double standard is what infuriates Muslims, infuriates them to the extent of launching their own terror attacks. If the innocent people who died in the attack on Afghanistan, and those who have been dying from lack of food and medical care in Iraq, are considered collaterals, are not the

3,000 who died in New York and the 200 in Bali also just collaterals whose deaths are necessary for operations to succeed? Actually, the life of any human being is sacred, no matter if the person is a friend or an enemy. That is why war is not a solution.....

It is no longer just a war against terrorism. It is a war to dominate the world. We are now being accused of harbouring terrorists, of being 'axis of evil', etc. Fortunately, many of their people are also sick of war. They have come out in their millions to protest the warlike policies of their leaders.

We must join them. War must be outlawed. That will have to be our struggle for now. We must struggle for justice and freedom from oppression, from economic hegemony. But we must remove the threat of war first"

Although Mahathir goes to the root of the problem, there is no western leader so far with the courage to say what needs to be said. And there won't be until enough ordinary people demand something better from their representatives. Then we might see spines become backbones.

PARTY LABELS DIVIDE: A group of 120 Australians recently met outside the offices of Federal Minister Larry Anthony, in protest against the war in Iraq in Tweed Heads. They had a good deal going for them, as evidenced by the massive marches across Australia.

Mr. Anthony finally agreed to meet a delegation of five in a discussion that went for an hour or more. A description of the protest with front-page photographs appeared in the local **Daily News** (22/2/03). An **On Target** subscriber was among those who met Mr. Anthony, subsequently saying that the protesters had squandered a golden opportunity.

Protesters spoiled their cause by holding party placards aloft, reading "Greens" or "Democrats". They were thus depicted in the paper as a minor party rump, which was not the case.

Secondly, they believed they could achieve something by trying to persuade Mr. Anthony to change his mind. Naturally, to no avail.

Their mission should have been much simpler. They should have told Mr. Anthony that he was being paid to represent the electors in his electorate. In doing so, he should first find out what the majority of his voters wanted – and then represent their wishes in parliament. To do so it might well be necessary to set his own views aside. Does Mr. Anthony represent his party? His own views? Or his electorate?

Arguing on any other issue with a politician is a demoralizing waste of time. The adage "Parties divide! Issues unite!" is becoming more obvious all the time.

If those 120 people devoted their energy to running a carefully-worded poll through Mr. Anthony's electorate – perhaps by "voting slips" in the local paper, or by polling towns and villages – they could accumulate evidence as to what the majority of Mr. Anthony's electors **REALLY** wanted. Which would put him in an awkward position if he continued to follow the party line.

TELSTRA'S TAIL TWISTED: Despite warnings, Telstra's Ziggy Zwickowski has managed to lose almost \$1 billion at the hands of Li Ka-Shing in Hong Kong. Why must a successful Australian corporation believe it can out-best the rest of the world on the global hustings?

Telstra decided it would expand into the telecommunications industry in Hong Kong, and Li-Ka Shing,

son of the wealthiest man in Hong Kong, was ready, willing and able to receive the money Telstra wanted to invest.

One or two gurus warned of the risks involved, to no avail. And surprise! surprise! The money's all disappeared – a write-off. There is, of course, no such thing as an independent Hong Kong. Telstra was playing with the Communist Chinese government, sitting on the biggest technological boom in history. It is hardly likely to allow an Australian 'minnow' to strut its stuff in China's communications industry.

No, it won't come out of Ziggy's pay-packet. It will be paid for by Australia's long suffering taxpayers and small shareholders. One billion dollars could have saved an awful lot of farmers.

PETROL TAX: With petrol prices hovering round the dollar mark, and possibly rising to \$1.20 or more if war is declared, it's nice to know the Government is getting its fair share. Canberra has reaped an extra \$600 million in petrol tax, but says there's nothing it can do about it.

The sooner we open a genuine ethanol component in all petrol, and speed the oil shale development near Gladstone, the better.

ONE LAW FOR US, ANOTHER FOR THE REST: A battle royal is looming in the US Congress over its trade policies. A World Trade Organisation finding has determined the Byrd amendment is illegal.

The Australian Financial Review (26/2/03) said: "... The essence of the Byrd amendment – named after Democrat Senator Robert Byrd and enacted by Washington in 2000 – is to give the cash proceeds of anti-dumping and anti-subsidy duties to US companies. For a host of American industries – spanning the spectrum from giant steel firms, ball-bearing makers, pasta makers, sparkler manufacturers and crayfish farmers – it has been almost too good to be true....."

The process is relatively simple. The US Customs Service collects duties on products found by the US International Trade Commission and the Department of Commerce to be unfairly subsidized or dumped in America at less than "fair market value". The money accumulates in separate accounts for each industry, and then once a year is distributed to US companies that have put out their hands for the proceeds of fines against their competitors"

Sounds like good sense! So far about \$US500 has been handed out, and has probably saved a few industries that would otherwise have gone to the wall. But the WTO has branded such action as "illegal".. So the question arises as to who makes the laws for the US – the Congress or the WTO? *The AFR* article continued:

"...Senator Byrd attacked the WTO ban, saying the decision wrongly challenged the ability of Congress to enact laws and flew in the face of US constitutional authority. 'The WTO appellate body has rubber-stamped a ridiculous finding that was made by a misguided panel last summer. That panel decided that the WTO – and not Congress – has the authority to determine how America's tax dollars are spent. The Byrd amendment is a matter of simple justice for workers and companies hurt by unfair foreign trade practices'....."

What a quaint old fashioned notion – that the US Congress, elected by the people, should make the nation's laws! If only a few Australian politicians would heed the principle.

The matter is about to come up in Congress. What if the majority vote against the WTO? All Bush's "free trade" rhetoric will be out of the window! Could they, in all honesty, vote that the WTO is a superior legislative body to their own elected government?

"ON TARGET" is printed and published by The Australian League of Rights, 145 Russell St., Melbourne.
Postal Address: GPO Box 1052, Melbourne, 3001. Telephone: (03) 9650 9749, Fax: (03) 9650 9368.

Subscription \$40.00 p.a.