



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET



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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance -

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: I am no longer intimidated by experts and critics and certainly not by the name-callers. After all, my daughter stood in front of a bulldozer in order to protect the Palestinian home of a family with three young children. I believe that I can speak out and that I have a responsibility as a mother to speak out and to demand that the experts, the policymakers, Congress, and the White House reflect our values – our beliefs in the sanctity of each life, in the equality of each human being, and in justice and the rule of law.

I want to close with a few short excerpts from a few of the letters we have received from around the world:

From the Director Emeritus of a Jewish Studies Program at a major US University where these words were spoken at a Memorium for Rachel: "Our Jewish Scripture says in Deuteronomy (Chapter 16, verse 20) 'Justice, justice you shall pursue'. The obverse of this biblical injunction is 'Injustice, injustice you shall oppose!' And Rachel Corrie opposed injustice..."

And from a Muslim in the Middle East: "I write to you as a parent myself and also as a Muslim who believes passionately in the freedom and dignity of every individual on our earth. It seems to me that we too carelessly forget or disbelieve our shared identity across all times and cultures, when in fact we are one human family desperately in need of peacemakers."

– Mother of Rachael Corrie, Mothers' Day, USA, 2003

NEW INITIATIVE STARTS IN BRITAIN by Jeremy Lee:

A new Constitution for the European Union is being placed before member states, and is due for ratification in 2004. Those that ratify the document will face the inevitable dismantling of their old constitutional arrangements, and will surrender their sovereignty on a permanent basis.

In Britain's case, such action would mean the end of one of the most ancient parliamentary traditions in the world, together with a unique form of Common Law based on Christianity. It would also mean the end of the Monarchy as anything other than an anachronistic tourist attraction.

There seems little doubt that the Blair government intends to ratify this document without asking in any

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meaningful way the sanction of the British people. It seems incredible that any government could sign away the essence of its own structure, its ancient rights and freedoms, its decision-making process and its responsibility to those that elected it without seeking the considered opinion of those from whom it derived its authority. To sum up, it would be the end of Britain.

There is certain to be some contentious debate about this step. A few courageous MPs may protest, and ordinary citizens express their opposition. But modern governments, while paying lip-service to the democratic process, have sub-consciously accepted Harold Laski's proposition that Parliament is sovereign, and is there to "manage" rather than "consult" the people.

There is now no room in any English-speaking country for such momentous issues to be resolved successfully through party politics, which have successfully emasculated representative government. Creating new parties to enter the fray and challenge the *status quo* has been a signal failure. It is similar to challenging the existing private bank monopoly by starting another private bank.

It is extremely hard for ordinary people, faced with such an *impasse*, to conceive any way of challenging power and money except with the same tools. C.H. Douglas stressed time and again the futility of trying to fight fire with fire. New parties, however noble their sentiments, are a waste of time, becoming mini-versions of that which they claim to fight.

Douglas suggested that the circumstances of the battle offered few avenues for a successful change until the forces of monopoly began to founder in their own bow-waves. At such a moment, small numbers of people might effect momentous changes by knowing what to do.

The movement in Britain, simply calling itself "The Few", plans to put in place a volunteer mechanism across the country to run a National Referendum on the move for a European Constitution binding on Britain. It is *not* a new party; it *won't* be standing candidates or supporting existing ones. It will concentrate all its efforts on setting up, advertising, coordinating and motivating volunteer teams in every appropriate polling place in Britain, so that the nation is enabled to speak with certainty about its own future on one day.

The whole operation will cost, it is estimated, some six million pounds. It will be made operational by 2,000 initiators, who in turn will devote time and energy to building the required number of pollsters to make the referendum available to every Briton who wishes to have a say. The subsequent collation of votes will be a mammoth operation on its own. The final outcome will have no way of enforcing itself with the sanctions of the military or the police. But it will present every politician with a position never faced in recent times – the emphatic, considered, nation-wide will of the people on a single issue. It will raise as the overriding factor the responsibility of the elected parliament to act on that expressed will.

It is becoming increasingly clear that "Parties Divide: Issues Unite". If this realistic proposal begins to roll, we can predict a swell of support which cuts right across usual sectarian divisions. Those running polls will come from "the rich man in his castle", to "the poor man at his gate". Hard-nosed miners from the Midlands will rub shoulders with the young yuppies of Belgravia. Labour, Conservative and Social Democrat sentiments will be lost in the concern for the future of a Britain in which all must live. The idea of asking the people will begin to live again in a nation which originally fostered the idea into an art form.

It was towards such united action on "one issue at a time" that Douglas continually pointed. He added

one more factor – the issue of steam. The issue, and the amount of concern that attended it, were crucial factors. It took time for, in Arthur Chresby's words, "Opinions to become Convictions". Precipitate action on a vital issue could squander the chance of success. A big issue had its own period of gestation – a time in which misgivings became concern, and concern became anger, before finally giving way to united, determined action. To judge when an issue had enough "steam" for successful action was a matter of experienced judgment, and the service offered in devising the right mechanism for the right action at the right time of incalculable value.

"Steam" is now escaping from safety valves in many parts of the English-speaking world. People have had government and politicians up to their ears! They have few ways of expressing their frustration. Last year's huge protests in Britain over the seemingly inconsequential issue of fox-hunting became the touchstone for an outpouring of frustration over the way the nation is being run. If that steam – which is still there in quantity – can be directed into a constructive outlet which lets the people speak, the sky may be the limit!

AUSTRALIAN POLITICIANS DISGUST VOTERS: A survey conducted by *The Australian Readers' Digest* towards the end of last year showed politicians came last in the professions trusted by the public. A summary of the survey, carried in *The Herald Sun*, 27/11/02, said: "... In the least trusted stakes are politicians, then car salesmen, marketers and trade unionists. Politicians were seen as dishonest by 66 per cent of those surveyed"

This has been amplified in a major survey conducted by researchers at Monash University. An article in *The Age*, 6/3/03, said:

"Victorians view politicians as liars who distort things to suit themselves, arrange jobs for the boys, and believe they do not run the state in the community's best interests, Monash University research shows. The research shows most do not know who their local State MP is and view state politicians as unimpressive. 'Politicians are overwhelmingly seen in a negative light,' says the research paper by Dr. Colleen Lewis and former speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Dr. Ken Coghill. "People no longer trust or respect them, and a political career is not thought of as an honourable or respected career.'...."

The article went on: "...The \$100,000 research project funded by the Australian Research Council and the Victorian Parliament, found many voters could not pick their local state MP from their Federal MP or a local councilor.

"The research found that people viewed MPs' benefits as excessive. Older voters reminisced that politicians from the old days 'were not simply robots' Voters believed politicians specifically created a profile to win a seat in parliament. 'They complain that they do not hear from MPs until an election is imminent, at which time they are flooded with leaflets and letters,' the research said."

Voters also condemned the media for their coverage of politics and the spin doctors employed by politicians..

Dr. Lewis said: "I think it demonstrates a lack of interest by the voters out there of the actual workings of the institutions which govern them"

WHY? Could it be that ordinary folk no longer equate their MP with representation? Apart from Cabinet Ministers – who are part of the Executive – back benchers no longer vote on conscience, simply doing what they are told by the party whip. They receive large salaries, large electoral allowances, excessive superannuation without ever sticking their necks out.

Like Britain, Australia has largely lost representative government, with faceless, nameless robots filling up the benches, anxious not to rock the boat and really concerned only when there is a risk of losing the next election. Nothing will change until voters themselves have devised another way of getting their attention.

WHAT SORT OF 'DEMOCRACY'? The latest news from Iraq shows an ominous slide in the situation, with continued looting and lawlessness. Nick Hordern, writing in *The Australian Financial Review* (21/5/03), commented:

"During the 40 days of seeming drift since the fall of Baghdad, the prospects for a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq have been growing steadily worse. Public health and security remains parlous. The latest bad news came yesterday, when the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, said Iraq could be in the throes of a radiological contamination emergency.

"I am deeply concerned by the almost daily reports of looting and destruction at nuclear sites," ElBaradei said ..."

Meanwhile, the various contending factions for power are making life difficult for an American administration which has not even got the lights on, the water running and the hospitals working. Nearly all Iraqis have arms, or access to them. Attempted policing of the situation without speedily restoring essential services place American soldiers in an invidious position. Sooner or later the world will see the US never had any intention of returning freedom and democracy to the Iraqi people. The possibility of a "puppet government" benignly carrying out America's wishes is mere wishful thinking. It will either be "Stop pretending and rule with a rod of iron" – or it will be "Get out".

Or perhaps the already-touted war against Iran will divert attention away from US failings in Iraq?

FANNING THE FLAMES OF WAR by Betty Luks:

"There is no proletarian movement, not even a communist one, which does not operate in the interest of money, in the direction indicated by money and for the period permitted by money, all this without the idealist in its ranks having the faintest suspicion of the fact." – Oswald Spengler in *The Decline of the West*.

Why do I get the feeling we are being 'set up' yet again? *The Australian's* report "US seeks bases in Australia", May 22nd, 2003, informing us of America's interest in setting up military bases in Australia has left me feeling very uneasy.

Claiming the huge financial burdens Australia will now have to bear in the 'war against terrorism', (the latest 'symbolic menacing-shadow' we are to fear now that communism has 'collapsed'), will be financially too much for us, *The Australian's* editorial of May 23rd, 2003, approves of such an intrusion on Australian soil.

But we're writing about the same nation which the *Sydney Morning Herald*, May 20th, 2003, revealed ("Richest nations arming rights abuses: Amnesty") supplied at least two-thirds of all global arms transfers for the years between 1997 and 2001! They are not putting out the fires of war. They are continually fanning them!

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