



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance -

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"Every prohibition of individual initiative is a victory for the enemy to exactly the extent that it is effective. Not only does it, in itself, represent one more step towards the Slave World, but, except under certain conditions, it sets up a habit of pathetic acquiescence which is exactly what is required."*

— C.H. Douglas in *"The Big Idea"*

THE PROPOSED ATTACK ON THE SENATE by Jeremy Lee:

Not content with his (temporarily) unassailable position in the polls, and his assumed entitlement to decide everything, from Australia's war status to who should be the head of State, Prime Minister Howard has now announced that he wishes to reduce the powers of the Senate. Instead of a "house of review" he says, it is now a "house of obstruction". It has had the temerity to block some of his legislation, which he thinks is unforgivable. Since he came to power in 1996, the Senate has passed 1205 bills and rejected 28. One or two of these were quite draconian, like the ASIO anti-Terrorism bills, which suspended or watered down a number of ancient rights and freedoms.

None of which has smoothed Howard's ruffled tail-feathers. Like Gough Whitlam and Paul Keating before him, he doesn't like his programme being questioned in any way, let alone blocked. He hasn't used the Keating phrase "unrepresentative swill" in describing the Senate, but his general attitude is much the same as the last Labor Prime Minister.

The Senate was established as a States' House, as a check on a perceived threat by a central government on these formerly colonial governments which had ceded a few of their powers for the sake of the new federation.

Few people realize that the writs for a Senate election are issued by State Governors – not the Governor-General, as in the case of the House of Representatives. Senate candidates nominate themselves to State Governors, and State Premiers can, theoretically, block unsuitable candidates. Some will remember that Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen nominated his own replacement, Albert Field, for a Labor Senator who had died in office.

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Theoretically there is nothing to stop a State Government from requiring a statement of loyalty to the State and to the Constitution before being allowed to stand for office. Why, for example, should a State allow anyone from a party pledged to the abolition of the Senate to stand for office?

The party system has destroyed the original idea, making Senators just as subservient to the Party Whip as those in the Lower House. Nevertheless, the emergence of minor parties holding the balance of power in the Senate has made it a much less odious body than that of its lower counterpart.

An excellent article by Mike Steketee (*The Australian*, 12/6/03) pointed first to what Howard and his predecessors had done to the House of Representatives:

"....So thoroughly have they debauched its role that, were it not for the requirements of the Constitution, we could close it down tomorrow and it would make no difference. Party discipline has become so tight that legislation never gets blocked in the house and seldom receives proper scrutiny. The house does not fulfill its role of holding the Government accountable, as is obvious from the farce that passes for question timeOppositions in Australia regularly complain about the decline of parliament. But their enthusiasm for reform just as routinely flags when they get into office because they are reluctant to relinquish the control the present situation gives them Howard wants to do to the Senate what successive governments have done to the house – neuter it"

It is comforting to find a few journalists capable of discerning what is going on. Whoever wins in the 'ratings game' between Crean and Beazley can hardly be expected to put up a strong stand for the Senate.

WHERE ARE THOSE WEAPONS? So complete has Howard's intimidation of his fellow members in Parliament become that no MP has so far dared ask him for the evidence of weapons of mass destruction that were the alleged reason for Australia's entry into the Iraq war. In both Britain and the US there is growing question for an explanation, and demands for an inquiry into whether intelligence information was 'doctored'. Bush, Blair, Powell and Rumsfeld are on the defensive. Dr. Hans Blix has added to their discomfort by stating his opinion that war was needless and premature, and that he remains to be convinced that WMDs exist. Most informed people had decided that it was a beat-up before the first shot was fired.

But Howard, like "Wee Willie Winkie" goes his merry way unscathed. A neutered parliament has let him off the hook.

THE LONG-TERM PLAN: Emerging here and there, like the tip of a largely-submerged iceberg, is the exposure of a long term strategic plan, written three months *before* President Bush gained office. Michael Gaddy wrote in the *Sierra Times* (US) of March 2nd, 2003, under the heading THE DEATH CERTIFICATE OF OUR REPUBLIC, the following:

".... I. Like many other supporters of the Constitution, have been asking since the 2000 election; exactly what drives the foreign policy of the Bush Administration? The answer is revealed in the doctrines of the Policy for the New American Century (P.N.A.C). Neil Mackay, in the Scotland Herald, reveals the master plan now driving the Administration:

* A Secret blueprint for United States global domination reveals that President Bush and his Cabinet were planning a premeditated attack on Iraq to secure "regime change" even before he took power in January 2001. The blueprint, uncovered by the ***Sunday Herald***, for the creation of a "global Pax Americana" was drawn up for Dick Cheney (now Vice President), Donald Rumsfeld (Defence Secretary), Paul Wolfowitz (Rumsfeld's deputy), George W. Bush's younger brother Jeb and Lewis Libby (Cheney's Chief of Staff). The document, entitled "Rebuilding America's Defences: Strategies, Forces And Resources For A New Century", was written in September 2000, by the neoconservative think-tank Project for the new American Century (P.N.A.C).

The plan put forth by PNAC reveals, regardless of whether Saddam Hussein was in power in Iraq, an attack there was preordained. Maybe this can explain why they continue the war beat no matter how many times this administration is caught prevaricating about Iraq. Inside the document prepared by PNAC is the following: "The United States has for decades sought to play a more permanent role in Gulf regional security. While the unresolved conflict with Iraq provides the immediate justification, the need for a substantial American force presence in the Gulf transcends the issue of the regime of Saddam Hussein." The document also outlines a "blueprint for maintaining global United States preeminence, precluding the rise of a great power rival, and shaping the international security order in line with American principles and interests. This American grand strategy must be advanced as far into the future as possible".....

It (i.e. the PNAC blueprint):

- Refers to key allies such as the United Kingdom as "the most effective means of exercising American global leadership".
- Describes peacekeeping missions as "demanding American political leadership rather than that of the United Nations".
- Reveals worries in the Administration that Europe could rival the United States of America.
- Says "even should Saddam pass from the scene" bases in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait will remain permanently – despite domestic opposition in the Gulf regimes to the stationing of United States troops – as "Iran may well prove as large a threat to United States interests as Iraq has".
- Spotlights China for "regime change" saying "it is time to increase the presence of American forces in Southeast Asia". This, it says, may lead to "American and allied power providing the spur to the process of democratization of China".
- Calls for the creation of "United States Space Forces", to dominate space, and the total control of cyberspace to prevent "enemies" using the Internet against the United States. (How long will it be before those of us who oppose this quest for empire become the "enemy"?)
- Hints that, despite threatening war against Iraq for developing weapons of mass destruction, the United States may consider developing biological weapons – which the nation has banned – in decades to come. It says: "New methods of attack – electronic, 'non-lethal', biological – will be more widely available Combat likely will take place in new dimensions, in space, cyberspace, and perhaps the world of microbes.advanced forms of biological warfare that can "target" specific genotypes may transform biological warfare from the realm of terror to a politically useful tool."
- Pinpoints North Korea, Libya, Syria and Iran as dangerous regimes and says their existence justifies the creation of a "worldwide command-and-control system".

The only reference we have seen to this document in the Australian media has been a comprehensive

article by Kenneth Davidson, Staff columnist, in *The Age* (Melbourne), March 20th, 2003: Davidson substantiated the contents of the report, asking this question:

"....The question for PM John Howard must be to what extent does his Government subscribe to the Bush strategy outlined in the think-tank's document? Howard says Australia's participation in this war is in Australia's national interests. How?

"To answer this question we must know why the war is being fought in the first place. For all I know, Bush, Howard and Tony Blair may be absolutely sincere when they claim that getting rid of Saddam is a humanitarian act that will make the Iraqis better off, or that Saddam has the will, the motive and the weapons of mass destruction capable of threatening other countries. But these are not the real reasons for the invasion. The real reasons can be summed up as deciding who controls Middle East oil and gets access to the water from the Tigris and Euphrates, and what currency will be used to pay for the development of the oil and water resources"

DECLINING NUMBERS IN THE BUSH by Betty Luks:

As if the crippling drought was not enough, many rural centres face the prospect of declining numbers warns Linda Brady of *The Morning Bulletin*, June 6th, 2003: "The crippling drought, vanishing services and a perceived lack of opportunities are driving" the young people from the bush. For every four young people who leave Central Queensland's rural areas, only one moves in to "fill the void". In practical terms that is one young person to do the work that four persons once did, which translates into three less in numbers requiring the services of the local doctor, the publican, the mechanic or the local food store.

Linda Drake, Family Support worker for "Lifeline", said a key reason for the exodus was most likely the impact of the drought. "A lot of these young people have seen their parents doing it tough," she said, "and they can see no other alternatives." The present drought came hard on the heels of the early 90's drought, which left many a farmer and grazier in a precarious financial situation.

Another reason for the decline in numbers is that many young women are unwilling to live in the such isolation. "A few years ago," she explained, "young women really targeted young men on the land – they saw them as having great prospects – but even young women can now see what has happened to farming, thanks to the drought, and life on the land is less appealing."

Pity Linda Drake couldn't see what the *policies* of successive governments have done to the people on the land! If it wasn't for the diabolical *financial policies* of governments, in the good times the farmers and graziers could have 'put enough away' to see themselves through the bad times.

One young person observed that governments and the bureaucracy continually move the goal posts with such things as land clearance and irrigation. "Sometimes you look at the sums and they just don't add up," said Emerald farmer Wayne Reeves. He also thought many young people did not want to struggle and battle through like their parents. "It is," he said, "a hard life – hard on families and hard on relationships."

One wonders how long it will be before the cities feel the effect of what is happening in the bush?

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