A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET

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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: *"It would be fair to say that it (the capitalistic system) is fundamentally a system which enables people to combine together under a suitable organisation, so that by combining together they can achieve results which the same number of people acting separately could not achieve. To put the matter in technical language, the capitalistic system is a system of organisation designed to use real capital, by which I do not mean money, but tools, land, scientific knowledge, administrative ability, and many other things, so as to produce something which we call the "unearned increment of association."... Socialists have made a colossal mistake in arguing about the distribution of what they have called the "product of labour." The produce of labour is becoming increasingly unimportant as compared with the unearned increment of association, ... (that is, with the people combining together and) the product of the machine....*

The failure of the present economic system is not in production, it is in distribution."

– ***The Nature of the Present Crisis and Its Solution*** **by C.H. Douglas, 1932**

BRAVO FOR THE BOLIVIANS! by Betty Luks:

One would have thought that a nation's people, that is, you, me – us – considered collectively, would derive some benefits from a nation's natural resources. Surely a nation's resources are for the benefit of all? I mean *really for the benefit of all!*

From a Christian perspective, God didn't provide the resources just for the 'self-chosen few' – to exploit only for their own benefit. "God sends the rain on the just and the unjust..." – it is for the benefit of all.

Such a *policy* of distributing the benefits depends on neither the "left" wing nor the "right" wing of politics – neither wing has a long-term resolution. But, it can be resolved through a nation's *financial* system by way of *financial distribution* – as is the case with the Alaskan dividend cheques sent out annually to all citizens of that state from the oil revenues.

One would have thought in this age of *political* democracy, people would give serious thought to the much more important right of the people's economic democracy – especially in this age of technology and automation.

If more and more machines have taken the place of more and more human labour (energy), isn't it time there was an equitable *distribution* of the products of the machines, by means other than employment or the taxes of the employed?

Giving the People the right to choose: Because our needs and choices are as varied as the number of citizens of a nation, the best way of giving the people the right to choose what they want, is through the *financial* system; by way of a National Dividend for each and every citizen.

That is the beauty of the financial system. **A *money vote* is a vote of *personal* choice.**

Bolivians vote for government to exert greater control over foreign companies: According to ***The Australian***, July 20th, 2004, the Bolivian people voted "overwhelmingly" in a "critical referendum" for their Government to exert greater control over US and other foreign gas companies. The referendum called for a 1996 law to be repealed whereby foreign energy companies were given a virtual 'carte blanche' right to exploit Bolivia's vast and virtually untapped natural gas resources.

Of those who voted, 92 per cent supported a proposal for Bolivia to take back ownership of natural gas at the wellhead, meaning oil companies would be paid for pumping the fuel but would not own it.

The President of Bolivia, Carlos Mesa announced he would introduce legislation that would let Bolivia charge royalties of 50 per cent of the value of all gas exports extracted by foreign companies compared to the current 18 per cent.

A closer reading of the article does reveal 42 per cent of the people stayed away after major unions called for a boycott of the referendum, but in the last resort, the people *of the nation* want a better deal – for themselves – from the exploitation of the nation's natural resources.

An amalgam of labour unions, coca growers and native peoples have demanded that the President Carlos Mesa nationalise all of Bolivia's gas. They have vowed to bring the country to its knees if the wells, owned by multinationals, are not expropriated.

(If they mean by *nationalise*, that it is brought under centralised socialist government control of production and distribution, then this looks like another case of the "left" and the "right" coming together to keep the resources under dictatorial control – this time "left" wing socialism. It is in fact another case of the tweedle-dumb of socialism, and the tweedle-dumber of monopoly-capitalism 'dogs', teaming up, to keep the people herded under a centralised system of control – no matter by what name.)

Bolivia's 150 billion cubic metres of gas reserves are worth between $US70 billion (AUS$96 billion) and US$210 billion.

DIVIDENDS FOR ALL BOLIVIANS? – A matter of distribution for 'Bolivia Unlimited'.

Clifford Hugh Douglas and the productive potential: "Unless wrecked by catastrophe the world is on the threshold of an era in which the claims upon food, clothes, housing and the amenities of civilisation must of necessity rest upon a new basis. Work, or employment, as we phrase it, is not to be in future the main claim upon these things, since the provision of universal economic employment will become quite automatically an impossibility...

The problem is not a problem of employment, and any solution which depends on the reemployment of a considerable proportion of the unemployed population in economic production must in its nature be both unscientific and unsound. It is one of distribution, and the question of employment is one which in the future, to a large extent, each individual will have to solve for himself, just as the rich man solves it.

Now, orderly distribution is almost invariably accompanied by something which can be called a ticket system. When you exchange a thin bit of paper issued by the Bank of England for a thicker bit of paper issued by the London, Midland and Scottish Railway Company you are only exchanging one kind of ticket for another.

The Bank of England ticket entitles you to a certain amount of any goods and services; the railway company's ticket entitles you to a certain amount and quality of transportation. So that distribution is wrapped up with this question of the right to issue and to own tickets.

When any suggestion is made to increase the quantity of money tickets, it is met by a cry of "inflation," and it is suggested that inflation and ruin are one and the same thing.

Inflation robs us all: For this reason, it is very important to understand exactly what is the correct definition of inflation, which is not an increase of money, but an increase of money accompanied by a rise of prices thus robbing everyone of a portion of his wages.

Curiously enough, numbers of professional economists and bankers who stigmatised my own proposals as disguised inflation, whatever they mean by that, are now asking for undisguised inflation, with the object of raising prices.

So far as I can see, the only requirement on which insistence is made from orthodox sources at the present time in regard to inflation is that it shall be accompanied by the creation of a still further debt to the banks.

However that may be, it is essential that the issue of a considerably greater amount of purchasing power should not be accompanied by an increase of prices, and should, if possible, be accompanied by a fall of prices.

The Just Price: This is quite possible, but it is necessary at the same time to see that the producer of goods does not make a loss as a result of a fall in prices, and thus become discouraged from producing. That is half of the problem, but the other half is concerned with the fact that production will increasingly be a matter of machine production, and we require to put purchasing power, or tickets, or whatever you like to call this thing that we now refer to as "money", into the hands of large numbers of people who are not in employment, and we require to do this without taking it from the people who are in employment.

We are quite familiar with the necessary mechanism for this purpose – it is the dividend system.

<u>TORTURERS OF CHILDREN? IS THAT WHAT WE HAVE BECOME?</u> asks William Rivers Pitt, t r u t h o u t | Perspective, Tuesday, July 20th 2004:

"The biggest story of the Iraq war is not about missing weapons of mass destruction, or about deep-cover CIA officers getting their covers blown by vengeful White House agents, or even about 896 dead American soldiers. These have been covered to one degree or another, and then summarily dismissed, by the American mainstream news media. The biggest story of the Iraq war has not enjoyed any coverage in America, though it has been exploding across the international news media for several weeks now.

The biggest story of the Iraq war is about the torture of Iraqi children. A German TV magazine called *'Report Mainz'* recently aired accusations from the International Red Cross, to the effect that over 100 children are imprisoned in US-controlled detention centres, including Abu Ghraib. "Between January and May of this year, we've registered 107 children, during 19 visits in 6 different detention locations," said Red Cross representative Florian Westphal in the report.

The report also outlined eyewitness testimony of the abuse of these children. Staff Sergeant Samuel Provance, who was stationed at Abu Ghraib, said that interrogating officers had gotten their hands on a 15 or 16-year old girl. Military police only stopped the interrogation when the girl was half undressed. A separate incident described a 16-year-old being soaked with water, driven through the cold, smeared with mud, and then presented before his weeping father, who was also a prisoner.

Seymour Hersh, the *New Yorker* reporter who first broke the story of torture at Abu Ghraib, recently spoke at an ACLU convention. He has seen the pictures and the videotapes the American media has not yet shown. "The boys were sodomized with the cameras rolling, and the worst part is the soundtrack, of the boys shrieking," said Hersh. "And this is your government at war."

Hersh described the prison scene as, "a series of massive crimes, criminal activity by the president and the vice president, by this administration anyway", and that there has been "a massive amount of criminal wrongdoing that was covered up at the highest command out there, and higher".

Reports of abuses at Abu Ghraib and other American prisons have been public knowledge since the release of the Taguba Report. Recently, however, some 106 annexes to the report, previously classified, have also been released. *US News* and *World Report* detailed the sum of what is contained in these annexes in an article titled "Hell on Earth".

In it, *US News* says, "The abuses took place, the files show, in a chaotic and dangerous environment made even more so by the constant pressure from Washington to squeeze intelligence from detainees. Riots, prisoner escapes, shootings, corrupt Iraqi guards, unsanitary conditions, rampant sexual misbehaviour, bug-infested food, prisoner beatings and humiliations, and almost-daily mortar shellings from Iraqi insurgents – according to the annex to General Taguba's report, that pretty much sums up life at Abu Ghraib." According to coalition intelligence officers cited in a Red Cross report from last May, between 70% to 90% of Iraqi detainees held in these prisons were arrested "by mistake". That means they were innocent.

The orders to treat prisoners in this fashion were not manufactured by the few "bad apples" we have heard about, but came from up on high.

Brig. Gen Janis Karpinski, former commander of Abu Ghraib and now scapegoat for the abuses, says the truth about where the orders came from would be revealed in the trials of the accused soldiers.

Memos ordering the abuse of prisoners were signed off on by Defense Secretary Rumsfeld. The Justice Department and Mr. Bush's senior legal advisor went out of their way to craft arguments justifying this, claiming that torture isn't really torture and that the President is basically above the law.

Hersh insists the American news media has an obligation to report on this situation. Photographic and videotape evidence of this torture is currently in the hands of the *New Yorker*, the *Washington Post*, the US Congress and the White House. It must be released.

We invaded a country based upon the false claim that Iraq was allied with al Qaeda. We invaded a country based on the false claim that there were weapons of mass destruction which needed to be destroyed.

We promised freedom and democracy, and instead installed a CIA-trained strongman named Allawi who has all but created a dictatorship in Iraq, and who has been accused of killing Iraqi prisoners by his own hand. American soldiers have died so we could do this.

We took thousands of innocent civilians off the streets in Iraq and threw them into hellhole prisons, where they were beaten, raped, and killed. This story has faded from public view because no new pictures of the abuses have come out in the last several weeks. Those pictures are out there, and they show the rape and torture of children. The international media is reporting on it.

Coalition ally Norway may be preparing to flee Iraq because of the allegations regarding these children.

Where is the American news media? (Where is the Australian news media?...*ed*) Where are the pictures? Who is responsible for this abomination? Torturing children in the name of freedom? **Is this what we have become?"** (emphasis added ...*ed*)

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