



A WEEKLY COMMENTARY

ON TARGET



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The price of Freedom is eternal vigilance –

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THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: False Witness: It cannot have escaped notice that economic systems, and perhaps even more economic reforms, are increasingly associated with questions of, or criticisms in regard to, religion.

There are several suggested, derivations of the word "religion", but the most probable, and indeed the most generally accepted, is that it is derived from the Latin word "religare", meaning "to bind back" or otherwise "to relate" – in the sense of "establishing a relationship between". That is to say, religion is truth, and I think all right-minded persons could agree with the Theosophists in their fundamental postulate that there is no religion higher than truth.

Now it is a very curious fact that almost every aspect of economics and politics, as they are active in the world today, is a denial of religion in this fundamental sense.

The financiers' continuous cry for "confidence" of the description given by the small boy in regard to faith, as belief in "what you know ain't so", is only one instance of it. The painting of such things as war, in colours intended to dissociate it as far as possible from its true description as mass murder and general lunacy, is another. The constant insistence upon an unemployment problem as though the object of life in the world was grinding and continuous work is a third. And the instinctive identification of a better economic, political and social system with the emergence of truth is an intuition of fundamental significance...

– Clifford Hugh Douglas in *"The Fig Tree"*, September, 1937

BECOMING LIKE THE USA by James Reed:

Recently, Liberal MP and Member for the Gold Coast Steve Ciobo, unveiled a plan at a Young Liberal and National Convention in Hobart to slash welfare cash for the long-term unemployed and 'stay-at-home' mothers.

Ciobo seems to think that most unemployed people and stay-at-home mums spend their cash on cigarettes, drugs and booze, for although he says in one breath that he is not advocating welfare cuts, he is reported to hold that "slashing welfare cash would encourage more people into the workforce". (*Advertiser*, 19/1/05).

Instead of cash the unemployed will receive food stamps. There will be an early phasing out of parenting payments to stay-at-home mums. Thus, instead of providing the nurturing that our lost and

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and endangered youth sorely need, more mums will be thrown back into the Monopoly-Capitalist's machine while kids are left to fend for themselves.

Australia's fertility rate is now about 1.7 babies per woman, far below replacement level.

An article in the *Weekend Australian Financial Review*, 15-16/1/05, "We Just Need More Babies", traced the birth dearth across the Western World and concluded: "All nations are facing their own extinction but at different rates. As the world travels along this path towards oblivion, the demographic clashes of countries in their death throes will only get worse."

The proposal by Ciobo will only speed up Australia's demographic oblivion.

As for the cold hearted treatment of the unemployed: yes, there are dole bludgers. However, most unemployed are victims of the globalised financial-economic system which has eliminated many of the jobs that these people once did. To add insult to injury Monopoly-Capitalists are now pushing for a comprehensive guest labour system, where cheap Asian labour is flown in to fill the jobs that Australians could do.

Thus the shortage of tradesmen is being met, not by training the unemployed in skills such as welding, but by flying in Chinese welders ("Workers flown in from China", *The Age*, 21/12/04).

Fruit pickers are also seeking cheap Chinese labour ("Growers seek Chinese Labour", *Australian Financial Review*, 29/12/04-3/1/05) and our information technology industry out-sources to India ("50,000 Bank Jobs may go to India", *The Australian*, 18/1/05).

To simply pull the welfare net out from under people without a radical change of policy, ensuring them access to a share of the massive production of this nation, will create massive social dislocation and crime – just as is seen in societies like the United States which have similar social 'welfare' systems.

THE RETURN OF THE 'BEAST' by James Reed: Back in 1987 the Hawke government's Australia Card proposal was defeated by soundly co-ordinated grass-roots action. James Riley in *The Australian*, 21/1/05, "Privacy 'risk' in national ID plan" reveals that the Attorney-General's Department is finalising a new high-tech document verification scheme (DVC) which, unlike the single number identifier of the Australia Card, will now make use of technological advances. Biometric data, including fingerprints and facial features (e.g., iris identification) could be incorporated.

The proposal has met light-weight criticism from groups such as the Australian Privacy Foundation. In essence, this is an even more sinister version of the Australia Card updated from 1987.

That a single number as such is not used is irrelevant because biological data effectively substitutes for this. This card is only one set away from the frightening world described in George Orwell's *1984 and Revelations*. This is a matter which should concern all Australians.

WAR EXPENDITURE DWARFS HUMANITARIAN AID: It took a tragedy of gigantic proportions to bring the truth into focus. The amount of money spent by such 'civilised' nations as the USA and the UK bringing death and destruction to the peoples' of the world is vastly greater than is spent by them on aiding the victims of war and natural disasters.

George Monbiot brought the matter to his readers' attention in *The Guardian* early January, 2005: On New Year's Day, characters in a TV sitcom signalled their support for a campaign to "Make Poverty History" by the wearing of white armbands on camera, and to bring the point home; during an interval, a scene of two young African children recently orphaned was aired to further play on the viewers' emotions.

Later there was media discussion of a homeless man seen in a bank queue, so overcome with concern for the disaster victims, he emptied his pockets of all he had.

"The timing," wrote Monbiot, "was perfect." And the people of Britain gave generously to the appeals.

But for him one obvious question kept recurring: "Why must the relief of suffering, in this unprecedentedly prosperous world, rely on the whims of citizens and the appeals of pop stars and comedians? Why, when extreme poverty could be made history with a minor redeployment of public finances, must the poor world still wait for homeless people in the rich world to empty their pockets?"

"The obvious answer is that governments have other priorities. And the one that leaps to mind is war. If the money they have promised to the victims of the tsunami still falls far short of the amounts required, it is partly because the contingency fund upon which they draw in times of crisis has been spent on blowing people to bits in Iraq.

US official aid to disaster victims equivalent to one and half day's spending in Iraq: "The US government has so far pledged \$350m to the victims of the tsunami, and the UK government £50m (\$96m).

The US has spent \$148 billion on the Iraq war and the UK £6bn (\$11.5bn).

The war has been running for 656 days. This means that the money pledged for the tsunami disaster by the United States is the equivalent of one and a half day's spending in Iraq.

UK official aid equivalent to five and a half days spending in Iraq: "The money the UK has given equates to five and a half days of our involvement in the war.

It looks still worse when you compare the cost of the war to the total foreign aid budget.

The UK has spent almost twice as much on creating suffering in Iraq as it spends annually on relieving it elsewhere.

The United States gives just over \$16bn in foreign aid: less than one ninth of the money it has burnt so far in Iraq.

The War is 'for the good' of the Iraqis: The figures for war and aid are worth comparing because, when all the other excuses for the invasion of Iraq were stripped away, both governments explained that it was being waged for the good of the Iraqis. Let us, for a moment, take this claim at face value. Let us suppose that the invasion and occupation of Iraq had nothing to do with power, domestic politics or oil, but were, in fact, components of a monumental aid programme.

And let us, with reckless generosity, assume that more people in Iraq have gained as a result of this aid programme than lost.

To justify the war, even under these wildly unsafe assumptions, George Bush and Tony Blair would have to show that the money they spent was a cost-efficient means of relieving human suffering. As it was sufficient to have made a measurable improvement in the lives of all the 2.8 billion people living in absolute poverty, and as there are only 25 million people in Iraq, this is simply not possible.

Even if you ignore every other issue – such as the trifling matter of mass killing – the opportunity costs of the Iraq war categorise it as a humanitarian disaster. Indeed, such calculations suggest that, on cost grounds alone, a humanitarian war is a contradiction in terms.

Distinguish between helping and killing people: "But our leaders appear to have lost the ability to distinguish between helping people and killing them. The tone of Blair's New Year message was almost identical to that of his tear-jerking insistence that we understand the Iraqi people must be bombed for their own good.

The US marines who have now been dispatched to Sri Lanka to help the rescue operation were, just a few weeks ago, murdering the civilians (for this, remember, is an illegal war), smashing the homes and evicting the entire population of the Iraqi city of Falluja.