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Let's Not Forget

The end of the year is often a time to reflect on the past, perhaps both near and distant. In early December, President Bush visited Paul Martin, Prime Minister of Canada, which signaled a political move to mend fences with our neighbor to the north, yet it left a disturbing impression in more than one mind.

During one of several meetings with the Prime Minister, the President said, "I'm the kind of fella who does what I think is right and will continue to do what I think is right. I will consult with our friends and neighbors, but if I think it's right to remove Saddam Hussein for the security of the United States, that's the course of action I'll take."

Are those the words of a democratically elected official?

Isn't our great country founded on, "government by the people, for the people"?

Are these the words one would choose to try and re-establish cooperation with someone, no less the leader of another friendly country? For Canada, in Bush's eyes, has been less than agreeable on the US war effort in Iraq, the proposed weaponization of space for the protection of North America, and same-sex marriages.

To me, the incredibly disturbing part of the re-election of President Bush is the lack of comments from any opposed persons in the House or Senate, as well as the media. In fact, he is now Time's Man of the Year. Perhaps it is as David Suzuki stated in a recent article (Common Ground, December 2004), any form of criticism of the President or of U.S. policy brands one as "anti-US". Obviously, the 52 percent majority that voted in Bush have bought this rhetoric, but what of the other 48 percent? This lack of vocalization scares me for it reminds me of another man who rose to power in another country not so long ago, and used the cloak of terror to quiet the masses.

We must study the past to not repeat it.

In 1932, Adolf Hitler legally manipulated his way to power in Germany, though he did not win a majority in an election. After some of his party members set fire to the Reichstag (parliament) in early 1933, an emergency decree offered the Nazi party legal authority to prohibit assemblies and arrest people on suspicion of treason. By March of 1933, the Enabling Act passed into law, which gave the government full dictatorial powers, suspending basic civil and human rights for four years. In effect, through legal means and covert manipulation, Hitler destroyed the German constitution, thus bringing the population under the rule of fear. By July 1933, the Nazi party outlawed freedom of the press, labor unions, and any other political

parties. Individuals were shot or jailed on suspicion alone. Ultimately, he put his master plan into effect—the cleansing of society.

Most of us know the rest of that story.

Today, Bush's administration opposes same sex marriages. Something supported by voters in eleven states. However, is it an issue of values or human rights? Are not persons of gay orientation as human as heterosexual persons? Do not all people possess the same rights?

It seems that a ban of same sex marriage, even if supported by a majority, is a violation of one's constitutional rights, if not basic human rights. The singling out and repression of a group within a society is not an unexplored road. It is also not one that a nation such as the United States should embark on, if it is truly to be a beacon of democracy.

Do you see history repeating itself?

Perhaps, you think I'm exaggerating?

Let's examine a little bit of history, which can be split into pre-9-11 and post 9-11.

Before 9-11 civil liberties flourished, most important of which was the writ of habeas corpus. This critical piece of law requires a person or agency that detains another to present the detained person before a court, especially in order to determine the lawfulness of detention.

After 9-11, with the introduction of the Patriot Act, this was suspended for anyone suspected of having any part in terrorism. Now, at least 1000 people, including some kids, are being held at the Camp Echo complex within the US base at Guantanamo Bay. These individuals are accounted for and have guaranteed access to the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC). However, a recent Washington Post article (December 17, 2004) reported that a secret prison exists within that camp. This CIA-run facility, which stemmed from a presidential directive approved by administration lawyers, allows undisclosed prisoners to be held outside the normal conventions of warfare.

For a nation that claims to be the guiding light of democracy the world over, this strikes me as quite incongruent. To employ non-democratic means to maintain democracy clearly shows something askew, yet this is part of the current administration's master plan.

This plan, which was formed at least as early as 1992 and known as Defense Planning Guidance, was developed by Paul Wolfowitz, current Deputy Secretary of Defense. In this document, the plan states, "America must not only be the world's policeman or its sheriff, it must be its beacon and guide. Our first objective is to prevent the re-emergence of a new rival. This is a dominant consideration underlying the new regional defense strategy and requires that we endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power. These regions include Western Europe, East Asia, the territory of the former Soviet Union, and Southwest

Asia....Finally, we must maintain the mechanisms for deterring potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role.

Endorsed by the Project for a New American Century (PNAC), a non-profit organization with the goal of global leadership by America, eight years later the plan became President Bush's foreign policy.

September 11, 2001 joins December 7, 1941 as a day etched in the memory of most Americans. Yet, much later, after the wheel of fear began to roll, subsequent evidence shows that our intelligence services knew of the attacks in advance. The debate continues as to whether the attacks were allowed to happen or not, a tactic used numerous times in America's past. Nevertheless, a new bill revamping of our intelligence network just passed through Congress, supposedly carrying our hopes for protection with it.

Using the terrorist attacks to mobilize the citizenry into fear-based paranoia, the "War on Terror" commenced. This has allowed Bush's administration to accomplish two things: unlimited funding for defense spending from Congress (current debt at \$7 trillion), and a comfortable segue into the war in Iraq.

On the first item, it must be noted that an entire book was published in 1986, entitled, *War Without End: The Terrorists: An Intelligence Dossier*, which the title sums up what the western world has to look forward to for some time to come.

This military action led to the disarmament of Iraq, despite strong evidence that weapons of mass destruction didn't exist. In fact, now, there appears to be much evidence both here and in the UK that the existence of WMD's was fabricated to enable the dismantling of Hussein's regime. Granted, Hussein was no saint. Nevertheless, to remember the detrimental effects of trying to establish a US-backed government in the Middle East, one need only go back to the placement of the Shah of Iran on the throne in 1953 by the CIA, then fast forward twenty five years to the revolution that occurred there.

But in the present case of Iraq much more is at stake, if the Defense Planning Guidance document is to be believed. It offers an unequivocal means of securing a US foothold in the Middle East soil of oil, not the media-touted liberation of Iraqi people. The President's oil friends have long wanted a US pipeline to run from the vast oil fields of the Caspian Sea region through Afghanistan into Pakistan. This US controlled supply of crude will eliminate the possibility of the US being at the mercy of inflated oil prices from China, Russia, or an unfriendly Iran.

Terrorism is a peculiar weapon to wield, no less define. Is it not the implied or actual use of fear to manipulate others to do or not do something?

If so, then Bush and Bin Laden may be more closely linked than Michael Moore has shown.

Perhaps real terrorists are those in authority, perceived or not. Until we cease the lamentation of atrocities that we did not resist when we could have, we will not truly progress and ultimately evolve.

Carl Sagan once said, "If we can't think for ourselves, if we're unwilling to question authority, then we're just putty in the hands of those in power."

It is time for the silent to speak.

Editor's note: This was also printed in the San Diego independent newspaper "The Expresso".