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“21ST CENTURY POLITICS: RECONCILING THE SPIRIT AND ETHICS OF LIBERALISM”

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew's Isaiah Berlin Lecture

I believe that liberals are much nicer than individuals of any other political ideology! In fact, they are much nicer people precisely because of that ideology. I believe that being a liberal carries, beyond our philosophy, an attitude toward others and toward life that is very generous, open and makes us enjoy life. As liberals, our attitude of openness and of tolerance, and our ability to see diversity not as a threat to our own identity but as an opportunity to deepen it, is very healthy.

I would be remiss if I did not thank you for your invitation to give this year's Isaiah Berlin lecture. This represents a great honour for me. Isaiah Berlin was a very big star in the Oxford firmament when I arrived there in 1973. I was very pleased to discover such a wonderful thinker. It was also then, at Oxford, that I discovered the Oxford movement, the declarations of 1947 and the new draft in 1967, all of which led me to become very interested in Liberal International. That interest shaped my political beliefs. I became a member of Liberal International before I was a member of the Liberal Party of Quebec and the Liberal Party of Canada.

It seems appropriate to start with a few remarks about Canada, and about being a liberal in Canada. It is not a coincidence that Liberals have come to govern Canada for the majority of the last century, a rare feat for a Liberal party. As Liberals, we have contributed a lot to shaping Canada as an original country, and I dare say, as an original political project. I see Canadian values as a reflection of liberal values.

Canada as an Original Political Project

I often speak of the Canadian exception, a country that possesses two features that are at the heart of liberal ideology.

First, Canada is truly original in that we long ago rejected the traditional nation State model, which bases its citizenship on a common ethnicity or language. The second exceptional feature of Canada is that we have developed among our citizens a strong sense of solidarity and cooperation. These two features, in my mind, are at the heart of Liberal ideology and have shaped Canada since the beginning.

Canada made a conscious choice to chart a different path from other nations of the time, a choice particularly pertinent for this era of globalization and increased

mobility. I see its founding moment in the early 1840s, when Lafontaine's and Baldwin's "golden handshake" showed their determination to ignore Lord Durham's Report (which recommended a form of assimilation of the "inferior" French population). Our unique choice was reinforced in 1867 with the passage of the British North America Act, which indicated that, in the process of adopting federalism, Canada would further accommodate the French minority.

We were not proposing to be a solely English speaking state, nor a solely French speaking state. Instead of having the traditional nation state with one language, one religion, one legal system, and one culture, we created a country in with two languages, many cultures and religions, and two legal systems, represented in both the common law and the civil code. As a result, waves of immigrants found a very different, diverse and welcoming kind of country, where they were encouraged to celebrate their own roots. These immigrants contributed to forming the original mosaic that Canada became over the years.

In fact, our dual legal system offers great insight into the advantage that the Canadian model offers. It allows Canada to understand the cultural differences between the Americans and British, who base their society on common law, and the French, and indeed all the continental societies based on the civil code. I see it at the World Trade Organizations (WTO) when Europeans, with their civilist tradition, demand that everything be codified and carved in stone, whereas North Americans are more prepared to count on jurisprudence.

All of this is to say that citizenship in Canada would not be based in linguistic groupings or other trappings of the nation state. Instead, we created a political citizenship that incites our citizens to abide by certain cardinal values, including respect for the individual characteristics of each person, a common sense of justice, and a sense of moderation in the use of power. I believe that is the heart of liberalism. We did not strive for a melting pot in which identities are blended, but rather a mosaic. Your groups, your personalities and where you come from are assets to the country. This great Canadian mosaic, a non nation state, makes for a country that in my view reflects many of our liberal values.

In avoiding the traditional nation state model, we have built a country exactly the contrary. Canada offers an identity built on political citizenship rather than ethnic citizenship. By rejecting outright policies of forced assimilation of minorities and elimination of differences, and by encouraging people to keep the cultures and traditions from their country of origin, Canada has become rich in diversity and tolerance, a modern country well prepared for the post-modern era of polarization.

The second characteristic of the Canadian identity which contributes to our exceptionalism stems from the fact that we are truly northerners. Indeed, solidarity is at the heart of our identity as much as winter is. When it's minus 25 degrees, and minus 35 degrees with the wind chill factor, even the strongest, most autonomous individuals learn very quickly that to survive requires solidarity. With our vast land mass

and trying climate, a smoking chimney in the distance serves as a welcome call for travellers in need. Shelter protects us from the harsh environment, as does the warmth and strength of our communities. From a historical perspective, we learned to survive with cooperation from our aboriginal communities. If you don't cooperate and build a spirit of solidarity, you won't live past October!

Having refused to build itself upon one language, one religion and one culture, Canada chose from the outset to define itself instead by a shared belief in certain cardinal values: respect for the distinct characteristics of each person, a common concern for justice, and a sense of moderation in the use of power. In short, one might speak of a passion for balance in characterizing the Canadian spirit. This passion for balance is still reflected today in our discomfort with radical ideologies, in an active concern to find the happy medium in human affairs. For Canadians, prosperity without fairness has no meaning, cohabitation without solidarity has no meaning, power with no counterweight has no meaning, wealth without generosity has no meaning, diversity without sharing has no meaning. Like liberals, Canadians are resolute in their cultivation of the passion for balance!

Two Pillars of Liberal Ideology: Confidence and Conscience

Thus, I believe that the Canadian experiment has a lot to do with the two pillars of liberal philosophy and liberal ideology. One pillar is what I call the confidence factor. The other pillar is conscience.

Confidence, the first pillar of liberalism, is a fundamental element



of the human spirit. Each of us, at different points in our lives, can pinpoint where we have been individually confident in our endeavours. It is an inherent feeling of knowing that you are on a just and prosperous path. However, confidence can also be understood by the collectivity, as whole societies can be confident in their collective endeavours. A confident western society after the Second World War, for example, created the ties that now bind us socially, economically and politically, reflected in institutions such as the United Nations, for peaceful resolution of disputes; the World Trade Organization, for establishing rules to foster global commerce; or the Internet, which links individuals and societies in the ultimate form of democracy—free information sharing.

Confidence is more than simply liberal markets, but rather is reflected

in relations of trust that bind us. A hallmark of confidence is courage; this courage that has allowed more individuals and societies to enjoy unprecedented prosperity than ever before in our common history. That is the pillar of confidence.

Conscience is the second pillar of liberalism. It is more than awareness or tolerance. It means prosperity within our means, reflected in choices made by individual citizens and societies after careful reflection. That reflection requires an evaluation of our future goals and the greater horizons we wish to achieve, based in an ethic of morality and compassion. Conscience encompasses social, economic and political prosperity, but requires individuals and societies to have the courage to consider what kind of prosperity they wish to enjoy, which may require changes and choices.

In past centuries we have confidently consumed greatly. This second pillar of liberalism suggests that in the future, while we must remain confident, we must embrace an enhanced ethic of conscience.

At this, the dawn of the 21st century, I am convinced that we are entering into a new civilization. In my view, at this time in our history, we are reaching the limit of what confidence, alone, can build and produce. We are extremely confident, but we are missing a counterweight to our confidence, as existed for most of the 20th century, through communism and socialism. A better and much more “liberal” counterweight, in my mind, is an ethic of conscience, which is central to the liberal ethic.

From this perspective, I think that the emblematic figure of Isaiah Berlin constitutes a source of incomparable inspiration. One need only read “Freedom and Its Betrayal,” a compilation by Henry Hardy of famous radio lectures that Berlin devoted to the six enemies of liberty: Helvétius, Rousseau, Fichte, Hegel, Saint Simon and Joseph de Maistre. Today, freedom is under major threat even from those who would claim to be its servants.

Just as his dire reminder invites us to be cautious, so too do Berlin’s positive reflections on the nature of liberty. They invite us to be ingenious in its promotion. The work of Isaiah Berlin, assembled by Henry Hardy in “Liberty,” provides a salutary lesson that we urgently need to adapt for our own time. Liberals, as embodied so well in Berlin himself, have to discover the tragic sense of human existence and at its core, the practice of freedom. Freedom ceaselessly forces us to choose between competing values that are not necessarily equivalent and that are sometimes reconcilable but often irreconcilable. I believe that we are at this juncture.

I know that in some liberal circles, conservative, pure market economics have met with some support. In my view, this very conservative economic approach, the so called “Washington consensus” that elevated the guiding principles of privatization, deregulation and liberalization, brings with it certain dangers, as all dogmas do. As the theory goes, “if you do all of these things, in all circumstances, in every country of the world, you will meet with success.” I believe it’s more complex than that, and I believe Isaiah Berlin knew that. To every

particular problem you have to find an appropriate solution.

If we reduce the human being to a consumer, a producer and an economic actor, we are missing the whole spiritual dimension of human existence. As a liberal, I feel that it is imperative that human freedom and the ability of the individual to develop, to grow and to fulfil his or her destiny, be central to our vision of society. Indeed, equality of opportunity must remain a key liberal objective.

In my view, just as Marx eliminated all metaphysics by reducing the human being to a mere economic player, the so called “Washington consensus” has made the same error; their angle of vision is far too simplistic and reductive. If we attribute a scientific character to the laws of the marketplace we commit the same colossal error as Marx did with his theory of historical materialism.

For, in the end, it is the human being—not some scientific pretension—that is the driving force of history. That is why I turn with no hesitation toward liberalism. Liberalism is the most humane perspective there is, and the one best suited to adapting to the rapidly changing world that we find ourselves in. There is a balance and a dynamic that has been central to the liberal approach. Balance has been a key feature in the progress of modern society.

The Spirit of Liberalism and Confidence

Liberals, and liberalism, have contributed substantially to that immense progress—that

modernity—for 350 years. It has also been at the heart of that extraordinary miracle, because development remains the exception on our planet and it is a miracle, made possible by the constructive “tandem” of the state and the market, a relationship that has been fashioned by liberals. Indeed, markets would not even exist if there had not been a state to guarantee property rights and other individual rights in this very country.

The United Kingdom and Holland were the first countries where individual property rights were recognized at the level of a national market and where the modern economy first emerged. The formation of a market economy, and then an industrial economy, required the formation of intermediate-size communities between the cities which segmented economic flows and the empires which stifled them. Economic modernity involved the weakening of the traditional allegiances that impeded the logic of the marketplace, and the introduction of a social division of labour.

The state market relationship is a dynamic one and in my view, we are just as wrong to want to eliminate government intervention in favour of market forces, as were those in the communist countries who suggested that governments should make all the decisions. Here, more than elsewhere, a search for balance is indispensable.

As an abstract entity, the essential goal of the state is legitimacy, that is, the deliberate quest for that which is fair, reasonable and equitable. Its time horizon is the long term, by means of laws and constitutions. The state makes privileged use of

constraint. This is the universe of conscience.

As for the market, it wants to respond as well and as quickly as possible to the consumption and production needs of societies. The market has as its essential objectives, efficiency and profit. Closer to instinct and desire, it does not share the time horizon of the state: its horizon is the imperious one of immediacy. This is the universe of confidence.

And so, it is clear to see that the state market dynamic is highly important, and the need to regulate it will not disappear. In fact, it is essential to liberalism, and its mode of production, capitalism. For this reason, the rule of law is the essence of liberalism.

We saw examples this past year of the type of excesses that can occur when market actors ignore state regulations and act without conscience. The New York Stock Exchange fell 16 percent last year because confidence evaporated in the wake of the ethical failures of Enron, WorldCom and others. Investors lost confidence when they sensed that their trust had been misplaced or abused. For confidence to continue to be the engine of progress, we have to make sure that there is a conscience and an ethic to counterbalance it, as the two go hand in hand. Moreover, our system must be respectful of the public conscience.

The Limits of Modernity: the Case for Conscience

A second argument I would like to propose in favour of stronger ethics concerns the limits of modernity, and the role that liberals have in helping our civilization move into post

modernity. Modernity, of course, was a great success for those who have had the privilege to experience it. Consider that we have vanquished many of the epidemics that killed millions of citizens around the world for centuries and centuries. And yet, we cannot ensure that the poorest of the poor have access to essential medicines.

Indeed, our progress through modernity has had an effect on our size. Whereas there were one billion human beings on the planet in 1850, there were three billion when I was born in 1951. Today, we are six billion, and estimates are that there will be around ten billion people on earth by the end of this century.

Culture of Excess Must Give Way to Goal of Sustainable Prosperity

If we look at the culture of excess that some of our consumption has spawned, we are in deep trouble. While it is true that the “limits” of the planet have not yet been reached, our planet’s resources are not infinite. As our population grows to 10 billion, and as prosperity spreads throughout the developing world, we will have a critical problem if we allow consumption to continue at the same rate and with the same pattern as it has over the past 150 years.

I want to make sure that we have not just sustainable development but a sustainable prosperity. Modern society’s culture of excess must give way to allow us to achieve this goal. Building wealth is an objective all nations can share, but this process needs to be undertaken with a conscience if it is to bring truly sustainable prosperity. There will be choices to be made. I will make some observations to this end.

For instance, the production of just one kilo of beef requires 2,000 square feet of land and 100,000 litres of water, a precious and scarce natural resource. In comparison, the production of one kilo of soy, which yields comparable nutritional value to beef, requires less than one percent the amount of land and less than one percent the amount of water.

Under current conditions, how can we persist in our dietary habits? If we are going to have one billion cars and SUVs on the planet with all the pollution that this entails, we have a problem.

I am very committed to the WTO's role in achieving a sustainable prosperity. I believe that the next round of WTO negotiations—which are referred to as the Doha Development Agenda—will not only spread development and prosperity, but also make certain that progress occurs in a sustainable manner.

The Tragedy of the Common Good

Without question, reason has enabled us to achieve some incomparable feats. However, the powers it develops and the rights it ascribes itself cannot be divorced from the responsibilities that are its necessary corollary. Development is a by-product of confidence, but we also need to develop a conscience to counterbalance the effects of unrestrained consumption. Confidence is important in an economic sense, but there's more than that to our common humanity. We need an ethic of consideration and care that must go beyond the administration of justice that we have experienced in modernity. We need more than an ethic of justice; we

must also couple that ethic with an ethic of care.

The introduction of an ethic of consideration, of care, is much needed. In my view, the present potential of the human brain without the ethic of care leads to dire consequences. In psycho-neurological terms, the problem can be posed this way: human beings have attained a level of intelligence that enables us to act upon our environment to the extent that the consequences of those actions are often beyond our ability to rectify. From the standpoint of our species, enterprises such as the development of our informatics capacities or artificial intelligence research are intended to make up for this phylogenetic shortfall, for no one knows when we should be biologically caught up in this regard. As human beings, we have “evolved” [developed] so much that we can now cause serious problems that we are manifestly unable to solve (at least, at the moment).

For example, we can spill millions of litres of oil into the sea but we are relatively impotent or inefficient when it comes to repairing the damage. We are producing more food, but cannot prevent one part of the world from suffering from famine and the other from obesity, cholesterol related cardiovascular disease, and so forth. We have refined water treatment technologies, but one part of the world still lives in drought zones while another wastes water without even thinking about it.

We can now intervene on the genetic code, and in certain spheres we are even preparing for bioengineering that targets nothing less than the whole of the human genome, but we

know almost nothing about the consequences of such transformations. We have been able to create formidable weapons—e.g., chemical, atomic, biological—but have difficulty ensuring their control and limiting access to them.

In short, more than ever, we find ourselves in the position of the sorcerer's apprentice!

Without question, reason has enabled us to achieve some remarkable feats; however, the powers it develops and the rights it ascribes itself cannot be divorced from responsibilities. And, responsibility means conscience: for indeed, how can we feel the weight of responsibility if we have no conscience of the consequences of our actions? And, *mutatis mutandis*, what is true for the individual applies also to societies.

This conscience, or ethic of care, must be applied throughout society, at every level: government, corporate and academic, with the individual level as the foundation. The significance of each individual's shift toward a new consciousness cannot be overstated. The current situation is of an urgency rarely encountered in human history.

The individual now finds himself in a situation where his or her smallest private decisions—combined with those of others, of course—can bring about veritable catastrophes. And it is not just people in wealthy societies who too often abuse our planet—for example, by operating gas guzzling automobiles—but also individuals in developing societies, when their dream is too often to behave like their counterparts in rich societies.

Consciousness Raising: Building the Momentum

But the story here is not all doom and gloom. There are individuals who are beginning to adopt and demonstrate this ethic of conscience, individuals from whose actions we can derive momentum, until the ethic of conscience becomes an integral part of each individual's decision making process. More and more individuals are volunteering in their communities. In Canada, for example, 7.5 million people, nearly one in three, volunteer their time. More people are choosing to take public transit, recycle, use fewer pesticides, and buy ethical funds rather than regular mutual funds.

There is increased evidence of responsible corporate behaviour. At its Peru operation, the Toronto-based company, Barrick Gold, is focusing not only on revenue, but on community development, by helping to provide education and training for the local population. I was very impressed with what they were doing when I visited the Pierina Mine last fall. Scientists around the world have been working on genetically engineered products to help a greater number of people produce more nourishing food.

For example, a product called "Golden Rice" has been engineered to address vitamin A deficiency, the leading cause of blindness among children in developing countries. In India, they have developed a genetically engineered "pro tato" that will be disease resistant and yield greater crops.

Governments, too, have been showing an increased sense of conscience. As International Trade

Minister, I can point to the labour and environmental side agreements to NAFTA, as well as our commitment to greater transparency and development in the new WTO round. I am also proud to be part of a government that has ratified the Kyoto Protocol.

All of these examples point to more socially responsible behaviour inspired by a greater sense of conscience. This is a good start, but if we want to enjoy truly sustainable prosperity, we must be committed to instilling all of our respective activities with an even higher degree of conscience. And if we want this ethic of conscience to permeate all levels of society we must ensure that individuals use their power, particularly in democracies, to influence the state and their society. Many believe they can't make a difference.

The Role of Politics

Political involvement has been in decline as the population's confidence in its public leaders has diminished. In Canada and in most Western democracies we lament the lower turnout election after election. We must, as liberals who believe in democracy, make individuals want to contribute. We have to fight the widespread cynicism of so many about the present political debates. We have to re instil confidence in public leaders and the role of government.

Moving beyond the political passions to the ethical passions that animate today's actors in "so called" civil society will contribute a lot to re-instil this confidence in the role of politics and of government. The political project aims at re

establishing conscience in its appropriate place along with confidence in the liberal philosophy. This will create a space where conscience will inform confidence, which has been the driving force of modernity. That space will allow for a dialogue with engaged citizens who have turned their back on politics. Liberals and democracy both need this dialogue. For it must be acknowledged that the triumphs of confidence have recently led to the narrowing of conscience—I thus hope for the emergence of ethical passions.

As we respect the intelligence and interest of citizens, we must counter the dumbing down of the political discourse and both modernize and actualize the issues central to this era of revolutionary changes. I believe this political liberal project will connect us with many who have abandoned the field of politics. It will re engage individual citizens in the crucial role that politics plays in shaping our society.

We have to move beyond the political passions of the 19th and 20th century that focused a great deal on social advancement and national liberation movements. Both were important and engines of history. Both of these political passions brought forward groups, mostly led by men. It is no accident that many new social movements are for the first time being led by women, whereas the union movement and national liberation movements were and still are mostly headed by men. I believe the leading role of women in the emerging society will inevitably strengthen the ethic of care, because in centuries past, men have been more responsible for the emergence and endurance of the ethic of justice.

It has long been thought impossible to move beyond the horizon of a commutative justice based on retribution, reparation of wrongs and the punishment of crimes. Post modernity has invited us to look beyond this horizon, as strikingly illustrated by the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.

It is time to move beyond the great message of the philosophers of the Enlightenment where reason meant a belief in progress and justice. We need to consider how to reconcile our confidence with a conscience, which will require tough choices. But this reconciliation, in my view, is central to liberal political objectives.

American Supremacy and the New Conscience

The United States has attained a predominance unequalled in the history of humanity. Its government has unparalleled power and its society has extraordinary might. Thus, the American hegemony extends into the private lives of every individual, and into their very homes, notably via radio and television. I have been surprised of late at the immense surge of anti Americanism, even among its European allies. It is not the traditional critique seen on the continent, but a primary anti Americanism that is frankly not very helpful or productive.

By the sheer immensity of its weight on the planet, the United States may have become imperial, but I do not see an imperialist intention. Quite the contrary, the United States often has the temptation of isolation on its continent.

If the political task I see as crucial to the future of the planet is to succeed, we need this reconciliation of confidence and conscience to take place in a country like the United States, given its influence.

In many instances in its past, the United States has been up to it. Consider that the United States, within the past year, has made its fire-fighters heroes, just as it has jailed its corporate icons of the 1990s. The United States has shown that it can make such an important shift.

Consider Time Magazine's Persons of the Year for 2002. They were not business or government leaders, nor were they men. They were the three female whistle-blowers who tried to warn Enron, WorldCom and the FBI about the problems looming on the horizon. That is a sign of conscience in the United States, one that has been seen as part of the United States' ethic in the past, and one that we need to see more of in the future.

In the United States, nascent capitalism was marked the most by the austere Protestant ethic, by the asceticism of accumulation, by long term work and by a concern for the benefit of the whole community. It was not simply "get rich as fast as possible and ignore the rest." The nobility of the motives and objectives of the country's founders, fleeing famine, disease and war, and wanting to build a new, classless society, continues to constitute the framework of American public life.

It is in the U.S. that Franklin D. Roosevelt developed the New Deal that gave birth to the Providence State. The New Deal is a brilliant example of energetic liberalism, the

audacity of which salvaged capitalism, following the stock market crash of 1929 and the Depression of the 1930s. In retrospect, no one doubts the undeniable contribution that the Americans tried to make at the Conference of Versailles in 1919: the famous Fourteen Points of President Woodrow Wilson. After World War II, the Americans made an extraordinary contribution through the creation of the Bretton Woods Institutions, the OECD [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development] and the United Nations.

At the same time, it is regrettable that the United States has not ratified the Kyoto Protocol, the International Criminal Court and the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel mines. We must recognize, however, that no country in its time of predominance has ever readily accepted limitations on itself in a multilateral arena. Furthermore, when Americans act internationally, they are charged with being arrogant unilateralists. Yet, when they decide not to intervene, they are accused of egotistical isolationism!

The United States, however, has a choice between coercion and persuasion. If they choose to use force too readily, military or other, they will almost certainly succeed in the short to mid term. In the longer term, however, they would likely face a growing number of hostile states or groups. This is likely an unsustainable route. The alternative, of course, is to use a more subtle approach, which relies less on military and economic might, but more on international leadership based on consensus, and on their solid values that have had such

extraordinary appeal to so many on all continents.

Accepting this approach would mean that Americans would have to accept not having their way every time and everywhere. But, in the longer term, this “softer” approach would likely earn them increasing respect and the goodwill that accompanies genuine respect. I often tell my American friends that they cannot go around the world bullying people.

The alternative, of course, is to translate their values and their objectives into institutions that will promote them long into the future. It is in my view that this is the sort of advice that we should be giving our American friends.

Conclusion

This is our project at the dawn of the 21st century. I’m convinced that we are entering into a new civilisation. I believe it will be a post modern civilisation. I want liberals to be at the heart of it as much as we have been at the heart of modernity, with an emphasis on reconciling the spirit and ethics of liberalism. Liberals have a perspective that can help us respect the values of north and south, of the privileged and the less privileged. We must always remind ourselves that the whole purpose of the exercise is to allow people to fulfil their ambitions and to foster happiness.

I have had the great privilege this evening to share my views with you. I would like to leave you with the following. To those who tell me “Minister, you dream in colour; it is impossible to reconcile ethics and the spirit of liberalism; it is too late,” I say “NO.” Not only is it not

unthinkable, actually it is inevitable; inevitable because when conscience dissipates, confidence collapses. Reconciling the two is in my view, the political task of our generation.

Hon. Pierre S. Pettigrew, Minister For International Trade (Canada)

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL

I have many qualms about the policies of the USA, but in writing about these I think it is important to start on a positive note. The United States began well in that at least four of the original states (New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Delaware and Maryland) had a clause in their Bill of rights to this effect:

“As standing armies in time of peace are dangerous to liberty, THEY OUGHT NOT TO BE KEPT UP”¹.

However, this positive start cannot continue for long with any discussion of the policies of the USA. As the victims of the US penal system, being held at Guantanamo Bay, can testify (if given the chance) the US has not carried on with the same intent as it began.

There are many faults in the USA and its present government. This almost certainly applies to all governments. This I believe to be a truism in that the perfect government just like the perfect person is a non-existent entity.

However, I consider that there are certain specific points that should be made with regard to the USA.

Probably the most important for a Liberal is the US attitude to the

International Criminal Court. The policy that the United States has adopted towards the International Criminal Court is at odds with a vast number of countries who have become signatories and does not sit well with Liberals. This point cannot be stressed enough. We Liberals must do all that is possible to alter this attitude. The USA might consider itself above the rest of the world, but I am sure that eventually it will have to concede the inaccuracy of this opinion. For the immediate future there is a need to inform the current US administration that interference in the setting up, maintenance and mandate of the International Criminal Court is not acceptable and impedes the global vision that we all embrace, that of a just world. The US government has been campaigning against this court with such tactics as cutting off military aid to countries who support the Court. In case anyone thinks this propaganda: “The American Servicemembers’ Protection Act (ASPA) revokes military assistance to countries that have ratified the ICC unless they conclude a separate bilateral agreement with the United States by July 1, agreeing never to hand over U.S. personnel to the ICC.”²

The same source for the above comment gave a number of individual incidents of “schoolyard bullying” by the US government. This is in the interests of protecting its citizens from the international court. Do they know already that their people will be guilty or are they against international justice per se?

When considering that such attitudes might change when the US government does, the absence of a strong alternative must be borne in mind. Anyone reading this might

¹ James Madison, Alexander Hamilton & John Jay ‘*The Federalist or The New Constitution*’, Essay 24 by Alexander Hamilton, London, Phoenix Press, 2000 (117).

² Human Rights Watch bulletin, 1st. July 2003.

think 'surely there is the Democratic Party'. To that I say that in all fairness no there is not. The Democrat and Republican Parties are not sufficiently separate. Strom Thurmond who died just recently started off as a Dixiecrat he then went on to become a Democrat and then he became a Republican. His politics barely changed and they needn't have either. During the Vietnam War there was a member of the House of Representatives, for Los Angeles, who stood out against the war. In 2002 the successor to that same constituency stood out against the war. I don't know how many people voted alongside the Representative in the 60s but I am sure I remember that of the Representative in 2002 she was on her own, abandoned by her Party. In both cases the constituents of these Representatives were used as cannon fodder for a war hungry republic, the USA.

The USA is a republic not a democracy. James Madison said that "a democracy" "will be confined to a small spot" whereas he goes on to state "a republic may be extended over a large region"³. This would appear to be accurate when looking at the expansionist policies of the USA. I believe that it has become less of a democracy the more it has grown. Yet the US drive to impose 'democracies' on other countries continues. These countries are in several cases far more democratic than the USA prior to the US intervention.

As well as this republican nature it must also be noted that the USA is an empire, which shows a greater lack of consideration for other countries than almost any other, with possible exceptions such as Albania under Enver Hoxha. Where this isolationist

attitude is damaging is shown with examples such as the war in the Congo, a third world war in all but name, is described as "a local ethnic rivalry"⁴.

There has never been a situation such as the present world situation. The British and Spanish Empires were vast in size, but it goes further than that. With the North American centred British Empire (before the US rebellion and invasion of India) the British and Spanish empires existed at the same time as several others the Napoleonic French, the Austro-Hungarian and Russian. Put these together alongside the non-European empires the Ottoman Turk, Mogul Indian, Chinese and Japanese this is most of the world's surface covered by nine empires. There are probably a few others I have missed out that existed at the same time. The current state of affairs is very worrying because there is now just one hyper-power, the USA. There is nothing in place to keep this power in check. There are a number of governments intent on doing anything but keep this in check. These include the British and Italian governments and at least most of the new member states of the EU. Possibly the most disturbing thought for the next few years is that the one body that could act as a check on US power is the EU. The biggest block on such a balance to US power being exercised is the behaviour of these countries governments. In their tacit support for US power they are endangering world peace for decades to come. However, Europe is our only hope of providing a counterbalance and a strong and united Europe should be what we as Liberals, work tirelessly towards.

³ 'The Federalist or The New Constitution', Essay 14 by James Madison, (62).

⁴ Report Dated July 8th, 2003, New York available from <http://hrw.org/reports/2003/ituri0703/>

MUSICAL CHAIRS

When the music stopped at the LIBG Exec, Robert Woodthorpe Browne was left in the chair with Sharon Bowles as vice chair. Ahmad Mallick shifted to joint Secretary, with Monika Skowronska, replacing David Griffiths, of course, who remains on the Executive as a vice president. Dai Liyanage replaced Ahmad as treasurer, joining David Reebak.

The rest of the Executive is as follows
President - John Alderdice,
Vice Presidents - Sharon Bowles, Tom Dale, Jonathan Fryer, David Griffiths, Charles Kennedy, John Melling, Richard Moore and Graham Watson.
Executive members - Hugh Dykes, Gary Lawson, Fiyaz Mughal, Frances Peacock, Stewart Rayment, Bruce Ritchie, John Ryan, Baldev Sharma, Sue Simmonds, Julie Smith & Anneliese Waugh.

BURMA - NO CHANGE

The ruling military junta in Burma has said it is too early to provide a timetable for their plan for a transition to democracy. A road map for Burma's democracy was first announced on 13 August by the newly appointed Prime Minister, General Khin Nyunt. But the labour minister in the military-run government, Tin Win, said the plan was still in its early stages. Tin Win said the government had appointed officials to revive the National Convention - a committee which would draft a new constitution - but he did not say when the convention would be formed.

The last free elections, in 1990, were won resoundingly by the NLD, but the military generals refused to recognise the result.

Meanwhile the Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi has begun a hunger strike in protest at her continued detention, according to the United States government. A petition will circulate at the Lib Dem's conference.

EVENTS

21st-25th September Liberal Democrat Autumn Conference, Brighton.

21st September 6.15pm Foreign Policy after Iraq - Liberator fringe with Jonathan Fryer, Nick Clegg MEP & Michael Meadowcroft.

24th September 8.15pm LI(BG) fringe details to be confirmed.

13th October West Africa Forum, NLC 6.15pm - Kayode Fayemi, Director of Centre for Democracy & Development, with panel of Ron Fennell & David Brewin, both ex-World Bank.

16th October LI Congress, Dakar, Senegal..

12th-14th November . ELDR Congress, Amsterdam. Includes a joint meeting of the Dutch, German & British groups of LI on the 12th.

---NLC= National Liberal Club, 1 Whitehall Place, London, SW1A 2HE Underground: Embankment

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