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Anti – Terrorism Bill (No. 2) 2005

I write this today to add my voice to those of fellow Australians who are deeply concerned with what these new laws will ultimately mean for our democracy.

Why the need?

Firstly, I do not understand how these laws will protect us from a terror attack. Britain, despite her many years dealing with IRA attacks, was unable to pre-empt the July attacks. No substantial answers have been offered by the Government on this regard.

From my understanding these laws are variously covered in other legislation, so again one wonders why the need.

Britians Laws

Britain has also responded to the demonstrated threat that they face by introducing new legislation. Yet the new proposed laws go beyond what the British have deemed necessary for their security.

The most notable difference is that the British laws are subject to Human Rights legislation, and judges must interpret them within the boundaries of that legislation.

Most recently the House of Commons voted against detaining suspects for three months, and have agreed instead on a period of 28 days. This would seem a more than adequate time to hold a person without charges being laid, if it is seen to be necessary at all.

Surely the fact that the person has been detained at all would mean that the secret service have reasonable grounds for doing so. 28 days seems more than enough time for evidence to be obtained, if not one must question the strength of the reasoning behind the initial detention.

Racial Vilification

Another concern is that these laws will be used to unfairly target muslims, whether they be of Australian birth or not.

Unfortunately some sections of Govt. and the media have, in my opinion, cultivated a heightened fear/anger towards Muslims in this country.

Eg. This headline from the West Australian on the 9 November 2005.

Australia gave this illegal Algerian migrant a job and a safe place to bring up his six children. He showed his gratitude by telling us Osama bin Laden was a great man, and now police say Abdul Benbrika leads a gang of Muslims who want to blow their country to smithereens.

Muslims in this country are already suffering a backlash of hatred from the ignorant in our community, engendered by comments such as this.

These new laws will be used by racist elements in society to make life difficult for ordinary Muslims to enjoy their freedom in this country.

First they were persecuted in their own countries by leaders like Saddam, and now they are to be persecuted in Australia simply for being Muslim.

Did we blame the crimes of Hitler on the Christians? Hitler did have the consent of the Pope for his atrocities. Are we as Australians going to allow Muslims to become the Jews of the 21st Century?

I was brought up to believe that all people are essentially the same. I have seen nothing in my (admittedly short) life to change this. Muslims, Christians, Jews, Atheists we all want a safe place to live, and security for our families. All groups have fundamentalists with radical agendas which they use their faith to garner support. Even some Western leaders come to mind.

Sedition Laws

It would appear to me that for a democracy to remain 'healthy', then we must encourage dissent, and critique. Along with transparency and accountability, these are the foundations of what we call Democracy.

Why should a democratic egalitarian Government discourage dissent, and opposing views? Are they so sure that their plans for us will meet with such rigorous opposition, that we need such laws?

One wonders in a healthy democracy why one even needs sedition laws, when one has anti-terrorism legislation, and criminal legislation anyway.

Does the Government intend these laws to be used against anti-war protesters, and workers during industrial disputes such as the Patricks abomination in 2002?

That the proposed laws would severely curtail the ability of journalist to do their jobs, has been noted by others, as well as the effect on the Arts if these laws are to pass.

I agree with the many other Australians that see these laws as the beginning of a police state for Australia, with little transparency, or accountability by the police and secret service.

Govt policies cause further terror

I think it is time we took a good hard look at who we are and where we want to go in the future.

The Govt. has told us time and time again that it's actions in Iraq have not made us more of a target. Yet media reports that one of the alleged terrorists was alleged to have said that he wanted to be involved in a terror attack in Australia because of our participation in the Coalition.

The west has constantly redrawn the Middle East to suit its own economical and political purposes, with the result we have today. The people of the Middle East are pawns, and the collateral damage of our ambitions in those countries.

Osama bin laden and Saddam Hussein were funded by the CIA, and there various despotic behaviour condoned while it was useful for the West to do so – yet there has been no review of these policies. At this moment a Iran style theocracy is being set up in Iraq, and we in the West are hailing this a success? How long before this comes back to bite us as well (if we ever get out of Iraq).

George Bush and John Howard's mantra "we do not negotiate with terrorists", is belligerent and dangerous.

Have we forgotten that Nelson Mandela, was once considered an terrorist as well. His vision set his people free from the state sponsored terror of apartheid. Funny what a difference looking at someone elses point of view makes.

As long as we condemn the terrorism of the suicide bombers, while we perpetuate our own state terrorism the cycle will continue.

Is that what we really want? It may be good for the US GDP, but what about things like real security, equality, and egalitarianism?

These should not be negotiable at any cost. This Bill will address none of these things and is a band-aid solution at best, and the end of our democracy at worst.

I sincerely hope that this committee will not allow the proposed Bill to encroach on the freedoms and rights of democracy that we hold dear, and have fought for through two world wars. No terror attack can ever take those away from us, unless we allow it through fear, and laws such as the proposed Anti – Terrorism Bill (No. 2) 2005