

4-11-05

To: The Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee on the Government's anti terrorism bills,

As a sequel to my email of yesterday, today's letter to 'The Australian' (reprinted below) by a former Labour premier of Western Australia deserves to be a prominent addition to the Senate Committee files and should be well noted by every Australian.

The sentiments of Peter Dowding SC go right to the heart of the matter.

Yours sincerely,

Ray Bergmann,
Nundah QLD

WEDNESDAY'S gutless performance by Kim Beazley and his front bench over the so-called anti-terrorism law will relegate the Labor Party to the Opposition benches for the foreseeable future. Cosying up to John Howard and Philip Ruddock and the security services has proven time and time again to be a foolish mistake for the Labor Party. The Tampa and the "children overboard" affairs, the deportation of Australian citizens, the alleged weapons of mass destruction in Iraq and now "specific" intelligence indicating a "potential terrorist threat" have all the hallmarks of a continued campaign of dishonesty and deception. The tragedy of the Labor Party's behaviour and the weak-kneed response by the state premiers to the demand for the destruction of Australian democratic freedoms is that by giving in to Howard, Labor has become as culpable as those who are its architects. The Communist Party Dissolution Bill of the 1950s drawn up by the Menzies government pales into insignificance when compared with the tools that have been handed to the security services. These same services have historically demonstrated a complete inability to manage the power that politicians want to give them (ask the ghost of Lionel Murphy). The courts, God love them, are often unsatisfactory and weak but they are at least a last resort. Labor has conspired to give even that away. This is probably the death knell of the Australian Labor Party as we know it.

Peter Dowding SC
Former Labor premier of Western Australia

----- Original Message -----

3-11-05

To: The Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee,

The Senate was recalled this week to pass a minor change to the current act on what is said to be an immediate terrorist threat to this country. I do not believe this amendment would be needed for the Government to take action against that threat, and I believe it has more to do with getting the draconian IR package and criticisms of the main bills off the front pages of the press, than protecting the country.

No case has been made that Government's anti terrorism bills are necessary or will be effective in fighting terrorism. The bill offends against the most fundamental civil rights and international covenants signed by Australia. This is the advice received from human rights and legal bodies, as well as academics.

The resort to secrecy and the demand to trust our politicians to act honourably without public scrutiny, purportedly in the name of security, is an open invitation to the government to abuse such trust for political ends. We

are confronted with a recent history of manipulation of public fears to assist the outcome of an election (Children Overboard) and to attack a fellow member of the United Nations without appropriate UN Security Council resolutions (Iraq).

I request the Committee to resist these draconian detention and control laws, especially when enforced

in secret. Without open scrutiny a government authority like ASIO can be corrupted by gathering unreasonable powers.

Yours sincerely,

Ray Bergmann,
Nundah QLD