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If It's War, Here's Why

Now that Henry Kissinger and Christopher Hitchens are both, at matching levels of pomposity and self-satisfaction, agreed on the desirability of sending in the bombers and finishing off Saddam, we suppose the Bush regime will conclude that the necessary national consensus for war has been achieved, despite the bleats of the military. All that remains to be done is to deploy Christiane Amanpour.

Was it Hitchens or Kissinger who wrote the following? "An opponent might argue that the inspections offer a better chance on containing the deadly weaponry, and also of observing the rights of sovereign states. Invasion might cause much death and destruction, and exert a destabilizing effect on the region in general. It might also trigger the use of the very weapons whose removal was its ostensible justification."

Hard to decide, isn't it? But you're right, Kissinger is simply incapable of expressing any disquiet on the imminence of death and destruction, whereas Hitchens raises the subject, if only to discount it as a matter of any great consequence.

The on-again, off-again noises from the White House about the desirability of "a regime change" in Iraq have become like white sound, always in the background, then intermittently rising to oppressive levels. What's it really all about?

We can dismiss the proclaimed reasons, starting with the "weapons of mass destruction". We buy the verdict of Scott Ritter here. Ritter, you'll recall, was formerly one of the most hawkish of the U.N. weapons inspectors in Iraq. He has stated repeatedly that Iraq is "qualitatively disarmed" and as of December 1998 was in no position to develop biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons.

Even the rabid pro-war panel on the first day of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's hearings on Iraq was unable to produce any reason why Saddam would be

crazy enough to try and offer the pretext the US has been yearning for. Beyond this, the United States has systematically sabotaged arms control in Iraq and worldwide.

It was Clinton who pulled out the arms inspectors in 1998. It was Bush who killed off the proposed enforcement and verification mechanism for the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, originally passed in 1972. The enforcement mechanism could have been used as a lever to prize open Iraq for arms inspections. In March 2002, the United States removed Jose Bustani, head of the Organization to Prevent Chemical Weapons, from office. George Monbiot of the Guardian has written that it was because Bustani's efforts to include Iraq in the Chemical Weapons Convention, thereby opening it to weapons inspections.

Other rationales for attacking Iraq have come and gone. A few months ago, former CIA director James Woolsey, but tressed by the writer Laurie Milroye, were pressing Iraq's implication in 9/11. Few now raise that excuse, though it does remind us that the nation that was host to most of the 9/11 perpetrators is Saudi Arabia.

This offers us the necessary pointer. Remember, where the Middle East is concerned, everything revolves around oil. The conspiracy mongers mumbling about the UNOCAL natural gas pipeline scheduled to run through Afghanistan and about the Kazakh oilfields are looking at the wrong page in the Atlas.

It's not "all about oil" in Afghanistan. When it comes to Iraq and Saudi Arabia it is.

Figure it. In the wake of 9/11 it becomes clear that Saudis, starting with Osama bin Laden, were at the heart of the attack, with some members of the ruling family probably involved or at least tacitly approving. Furthermore, America's local supervisors, the Saud clan, face increasing discontent. The Bush administration is led and advised

by people trained by origin and business proclivity to see everything in terms of the availability and price of oil, an optical vantage point far more powerful than the influence of the pro-Israel zealots or even the cowboy desire to whack Saddam because George Bush Sr held off, having decided that leaving Saddam in place was the best way forward.

Now, Saudi Arabia is the world's "swing producer", meaning it controls the world price by either restricting or expanding supply. Would it not be rational in the wake of 9/11 to seek urgently another "swing producer" option, and to see such an option in the form of Iraq? Iraq nationalized its own huge reserves back in 1972, taking control over sale and pricing. Either upon his own initiative, or conned by the United States, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in 1990, thus setting Iraq on the path to utter ruin, and permitting the US, via sanctions, to control once more Iraq's oil exports, drastically restricting its supply.

So the US game plan could be to continue with the present "strategy of tension", or to gradually ratchet up the level of military harassment, without all the trumpet blares that accompanied the formal onslaught of 1991. More bombing raids, more attacks from the Kurdish protected areas, more thundering about weapons of mass destruction. Saddam can be counted on to

play his own weak hand badly. Last week, for example, he chose to divulge his apparent agreement for new weapons inspectors to a British Labor MP, George Galloway, who reported as much in a newspaper column. Result: the concession, if such it was, made about as much noise as a crumpet falling on a carpet.

It probably would not take much in the way of armed intervention for Saddam to be overthrown in an internal revolt. Then the US could substitute a suitably brutal successor and then have Iraq available as the swing producer, and Iran as the next target of opportunity.

So it does all make sense, and even if a full invasion ultimately does not occur, there's no downside risk in constantly raising and lowering the level of white sound. Oil rules!

FIRST HILLIARD NOW MCKINNEY

By the time you read this it's possible that Cynthia McKinney, the Georgia congresswoman will have gone down, in face of a Democratic primary challenge, just as another member of the Black Congressional Caucus did. We refer to Earl Hilliard, the first black elected to Congress in Alabama since Reconstruction. For daring to call for some sense of balance in US policy in the Middle East, some attention to what Palestinians are saying, Hilliard was overwhelmed by a primary opponent, middle-of-the road lawyer Artur Davis whom Hilliard had trounced in earlier contests, but to whom American-Jewish organizations suddenly shovelled a ton of money. Davis lashed Hilliard for being anti-Israel.

McKinney has courageously dared to prod Congress into considering the inconvenient aspects of 9/11, as they pertain to culpable oversight by the Administration, implication of the Royal Family (Bush division) with Arab billionaires and so forth. Among other brave stances McKinney has called for a measure of even-handedness in US policy in the Middle East. So she's been targeted by the Israel lobby, whose aim is to demonstrate to all politicians that criticism of Israel will bring inevitable retribution at the polls.

This summer McKinney, who won past elections by huge majorities, has faced the same treatment as Hilliard, with heavy backing for retired judge Denise Majette from American-Jewish groups, plus appeals for Republicans to cross over and vote for

Majette in Georgia's open primaries. Hilliard was simply swamped by Davis's out of state support from Jewish groups. Seeing what happened to him, McKinney looked for support from some Arab-American groups, thus drawing predictable accusation she's Terror's pin-up girl. In the Washington Post for August 13 Tom Edsall placed all initial emphasis on McKinney's Muslim backers, before noting that Majette "is heavily funded by Jews living outside Georgia."

Only a few paragraphs further on did Edsall bring himself to reveal in a roundabout way that Majette had raised almost twice as much as McKinney: "Majette recently pulled ahead of McKinney in the battle for dollars. McKinney has raised \$618,166 in the election cycle, while Majette has raised \$1.12 million. No one has accused Majette of being backed by Terror, though some of her money is coming from groups supportive of Sharon, one of the prime terrorists in the Middle East today. The slimy Edsall never went to Majette's backers to elicit garish statements of their political sympathies, the way he did from Muslim backers of McKinney.

Remember Cynthia Tucker? She's the black editorial in-house pundit at the Atlantic Atlanta Journal-Constitution. We've seen her on panel shows on CNN, churning out the verbal equivalent of over-boiled spinach. Lately Tucker has been stirred to unexpected vehemence. Against whom? Why, McKinney of course. Tucker showed that when it comes to the crunch, she is snugged down in the Man's pocket. Her paper has been unrelenting in its attempts to discredit McKinney. "[She] has shown herself to be a fringe lunatic, well outside the congressional mainstream," Cynthia Tucker wrote in one typical commentary.

Outrageously, Tucker asserts McKinney is "incapable of aiding any cause" and has the final pious effrontery to declare that "The plight of the Palestinians and their desire for an independent homeland is a serious cause deserving of thoughtful, mainstream advocates. Hilliard wasn't one and neither is McKinney."

We await Ms Tucker's thoughtful proposals for a Palestinian homeland, or perhaps even a "serious" consideration of their plight.

Hilliard recently remarked in an interview in The Black Commentator, "There is class warfare in the Black community. In Birmingham and Tuscaloosa, in the areas of Birmingham where what we call the New Blacks live, those that work for corporate

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Alabama, those that live in subdivisions that are predominantly Black, Davis won just like he did in the white areas.”

The Black Commentator asks Hilliard, “You refer to a ‘natural progression’ in Black politics that has been interrupted?”

Hilliard replies: “That’s because it was natural - Blacks building on what the previous generation had added to the foundation. So when you look at the natural progression from Martin Luther King, you would think that you would get to [Kweisi] Mfume, but we’ve been sidestepped. We’ve had a Clarence Thomas. We have a Colin Powell. We have Cynthia Tucker. We have all these other people whose ideals and views don’t sit on the foundation. It’s not building for the masses, or building for the race. It’s building for self.

“They are black in skin tone but, philosophically, they are not. So, whites understand them better than we do... You have a Condoleezza Rice: I made it because I’m smart, and because of myself. I didn’t need affirmative action, I don’t believe in it. If I can make it, everybody else can make it.”

And if of course they can make it by ringing statements of support for Israel-right-or-wrong, thus eliciting huge contributions from Jewish groups, well and good.

Imagine the uproar among the pundits, the Tuckers of this world, if somehow Arab-American money rather than Jewish-American money had been decisive in his defeat!

THE WAR COMES HOME

The war is already coming home, the ways wars always do, in the form of drugs and psychosis. Witness the murders of four Fort Bragg soldiers wives in the space of six weeks. Fort Bragg is the home of the Special Forces Command. Three of the four soldiers had recently returned from Afghanistan, where they served with Special Forces units.

“He was like my own child”, said Wilma Watson, describing her son-in-law Master Sergeant Wright. “Until he came back from Afghanistan, I didn’t worry about violence.” Wright killed her daughter. “He was getting these attacks of rage.” One line of defense, discussed in an interesting piece published in *Newsday* by UPI reporters, Mark Benjamin and Dan Olmsted, is that at least two of the soldiers had been taking Lariam, aka mefloquine. As the reporters wrote: “Lariam has been blamed for psychotic episodes and suicidal behavior for more than a decade. The official product information sheet, written by manufacturer Hoffmann-

La Roche and approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, states Lariam has been associated with aggression, paranoia and suicidal thoughts.”

It is the Army’s drug of choice to prevent malaria.

There’s nothing to equal the military as the incubator of violence. The four murdered women in Fort Bragg have paid an installment, and the payments in terms of rage, drunkenness, drug addiction and antisocial behavior will be exacted month after month for years to come, amid the resolute determination of the press NOT to connect the dots.

THE CASE OF THE MISSING TERRORIST

By JACOB LEVICH

In a mystery that raises further questions about official accounts of the September 11 attacks, a man named as a key player in the Al Qaeda 9/11 conspiracy seems to have vanished from the face of the earth.

Atif Ahmed, 30, was scooped up by Scotland Yard detectives nine months ago after the FBI, working with the New York

documents has failed to turn up any mention of Ahmed, apart from Moussaoui’s pleadings and a single ABC News story dating from November of last year.

Where Ahmed is concerned, press coverage and official acknowledgement are conspicuous by their absence. Although the US government has been secretive in its proceedings against the hundreds of persons preventively detained in the post-9/11 dragnet, arrests of alleged Al Qaeda conspirators, like Moussaoui or Jose Padilla, have been well publicized and widely reported.

Similarly, the press has closely followed the stories of other alleged Moussaoui henchmen, like his ex-roommates Hussein al-Attas and Ramzi Binalshibh. If there is a black-out, it appears to apply only to Ahmed.

Calls to the FBI’s national and New York press offices failed to yield any information about Ahmed’s status. “Never heard of the guy”, FBI spokesman Joe Valiquette said.

Thus the only publicly available information about Atif Ahmed is contained in an ABC News item dated November 14, 2001, which remains accessible on the network’s Web site. Headlined “British Police Nab Terror Suspect,” the story reveals that Ahmed was picked up at his London dwelling and

The slimy Edsall never went to Majette’s backers to elicit garish statements of their political sympathies, the way he did from Muslim backers of McKinney.

City police, linked him to accused “20th hijacker” Zacarias Moussaoui. At the time of Ahmed’s arrest, law enforcement sources told ABC News they had found telephone records and other evidence suggesting that Ahmed, a British national, was a co-conspirator with Moussaoui.

In his own trial on capital conspiracy charges, Moussaoui, an admitted Al Qaeda member, has identified Ahmed as a “very important part” of the 9/11 terror plot. Moussaoui has also claimed that Ahmed was a double agent working for British intelligence. That charge, if true, would have alarming implications about the extent of 9/11 foreknowledge among Western intelligence agencies.

Yet, since the day of his arrest, Atif Ahmed has been all but erased from the public record in what feels eerily like a deliberate news blackout. A review of online newspaper archives, Internet search engines, unsealed court papers, and relevant government

detained at the request of US law enforcement officials, who claimed to have uncovered telephone evidence suggesting that Ahmed “was working with” Moussaoui. Further unspecified evidence was said to have been found during a search of Ahmed’s apartment.

As of the story’s filing, Ahmed was being held without charge under the British Counterterrorism Act. “Sources say the FBI wants Scotland Yard to keep Ahmed in custody until it can be learned just how deeply he may be connected with Moussaoui,” the story said.

The rest is silence. Despite the seriousness of the allegations against Atif Ahmed, there has been no press follow-up, and it is impossible to discover whether he has been charged or released, or indeed whether he is living or dead.

Moussaoui has moved for a court order compelling the prosecution to produce any and all information relating to Ahmed, but

the government has so far failed to respond. Meanwhile, on the rare occasions when Moussaoui has been allowed to communicate indirectly with the outside world — through incidental remarks in court hearings and in a series of handwritten motions recently unsealed by the court— he has persisted in naming Ahmed as both an al Qaeda conspirator and a British double agent.

Moussaoui's claims are self-serving, since his defense strategy relies on establishing that the FBI and other intelligence agencies knew all about the terror plot, and therefore must have known that he himself was not part of the "Nineteen Martyrs Team." Yet his charge that Atif Ahmed was working for British intelligence is suggestively consistent with the apparent news blackout.

THE MYTH OF NEWPORT: IT WASN'T DYLAN THEY WERE BOOING

BY BRUCE JACKSON

Bob Dylan performed at the Newport Folk Festival this August 3, and apparently it went very well. All the articles I've read and reports I've heard on radio and seen on TV say there was none of the angry booing that so famously accompanied his 1965 performance, when he appeared on stage with members of Paul Butterfield's blues band at the Sunday night closing concert.

The July 25, 1965 audience, so the story goes, was driven to rage because their acoustic guitar troubadour had betrayed them by going electric and plugging in. The booing was so loud that, after the first three electric songs, Dylan dismissed the band and finished the set with his acoustic guitar.

There's a host of other associated narratives about goings-on in the wings: Pete Seeger and other Newport board directors were so repulsed and enraged they struggled to kill the electric power; Pete was frenetically looking for an axe to chop the major power line; people were yelling, screaming, crying, beating breasts, rending garments. Greil Marcus tells some of those stories really well at the beginning of his 1998 Dylan book, *Invisible Republic*.

Great stories. None of them true.

I was one of the directors of the Newport Folk Festival that year and I was in the wings during Dylan's Saturday night performance. Every time I heard those stories retold, I'd say, to whoever was talking, "That's not how I remember it. Nobody made a move for the power. Nobody took a

swing at the sound man. It wasn't Dylan the audience was booing."

After Dylan's August 3, 2002 concert occasioned all those retellings of the Legends of 1965, I decided to check both the legend and my memory: I took down the original tapes made from the stage microphones during that performance. (I have all of the Newport board's audiotapes, save some that Peter Yarrow borrowed and, to my knowledge, never returned, and some that were made for us by a Providence recording company that shortly thereafter went belly-up and disappeared, along with our half-inch four-track master tapes.)

The entire event, from the beginning of Peter Yarrow's introduction of Dylan to the beginning of Peter's introduction of the next performer, takes 37 minutes. You can hear the audience very clearly throughout. Yarrow's talk is clear, the musicians' performances are clear, the audience's responses are clear. No doubt the sound of the people in the front of that great open-air theater come through more loudly than people far in the back, but there's no reason to assume

I was one of the directors of the Newport Folk Festival that year and I was in the wings during Dylan's Saturday night performance. All the booing you can hear from the stage is in response to things Peter Yarrow said, not to things Bob Dylan did.

that they didn't cheer and boo the same things.

This is what is on the tape, what people on stage, in the wings, and throughout most of the audience heard:

YARROW: One, two. Can I have some volume on this microphone? Hello. One, two. Ladies and gentlemen, at this time there's a little microphone setup to be done. Cousin Emmy's a gas, right?

[laughter, applause]

There's someone that's coming on to the program now, as a matter of fact, the entire program tonight was designed to be a whole group of small performances. You know I will be performing later with the group that I'm a part of, you know. [Yarrow was a member of a pop-folk group named Peter, Paul & Mary.]

[light applause]

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And we are all limited in the time that we can be on stage for a very specific reason. The concept of the program tonight is to make a program of many, many different points of view that are together and yet without the huge expanse of the performing of any group. We will be very limited in time and so will each person who comes up. The person who's coming up now...

[a single note from each string of an electric guitar struck by someone apparently checking the tuning]

Please don't play right now, gentlemen, for this second. Thank you.

[three more guitar notes]

The person who's coming up now is a person who has in a sense

[two brief bursts of feedback hum]

changed the face of folk music to the large American public because he has brought to it a point of view of a poet. Ladies and gentlemen, the person that's going to come up now

[Yarrow pauses a long time, drawing it out; a few hoots at the pause from the audience]

has a limited amount of time

[very loud booing and yelling, shouts of "No, no, no"]

his name is Bob [pause] Dylan

[enthusiastic and sustained cheering and applause from the audience that had watched the electric band set up and which was now watching Dylan plug in his own electric guitar]

[a minute or so of noises of things being moved around, levels checked, voices talking about where to set things. No hoots, jeers, calls, or yells from the audience. Minutes 0:00—7:32 on the tape]

DYLAN & GROUP: "Maggie's Farm,"

[applause, retuning, a voice says "Ready?" a little more tuning, Dylan says "Okay." 7:32—8:25]

DYLAN & GROUP: "Rolling Stone" 8:25—14:19

[applause, returning, murmur of musician's voice, 14:19—15:03]

DYLAN & GROUP: "It Takes a Lot to Laugh, it Takes a Train to Cry," 15:03—18:26

[applause, musician's voices saying "Let's go, man, let's go." Sounds of movement, which I take to be Dylan and the band moving off the stage, followed by audience yelling "No, no, no." 18:26—18:44]

YARROW: Bobby was [booing]

Yes, he will do another tune, I'm sure. We'll call him back. Would you like Bobby to sing another song? I don't know where he is.

[huge applause, happy yelling. "Yes, yes, yes."]

Listen, it's the fault of the, he was told that he could only do a certain period of time.

[audience yells]

Bobby, can you do another song, please? He's going to get his axe.

[audience chants: "We want Dylan, we want Dylan."]

He's coming.

[audience continues chanting: "We want Dylan. We want Dylan."]

He's going to get an acoustic guitar.

[audience continues chanting at the same level: "We want Dylan. We want Dylan."]

Bobby's coming out now. Yes, I understand, that's okay. We want Bobby, and we do. The time problem has meant that he could only do these few songs. He'll be out as soon as he gets his acoustic guitar.

[audience continues chanting: "We want Dylan. We want Dylan." Then bursts into enthusiastic applause. 18:44—20:26]

[bit of microphone hum, harmonica testing, Dylan says "Peter, get" then a few words I can't make out. Tunes guitar. Dylan says, "You got another one?" A bit more tuning, mumbled conversation, occasional sounds from the audience 20:52—22:42]

DYLAN: "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" 22:42—27:37

[applause 27:37—28:32, someone in the audience yells "Tambourine, Bobby." Someone else yells, "Tambourine Man." Dylan says, "Okay, I'll do that." Tunes, fusses. Dylan says, "All right." 29:13]

DYLAN: "Mister Tambourine Man," 29:13—35:29

[applause. Dylan says "Thank you very much." Audience calls "More, more." 35:29—35:40]

YARROW: Bob Dylan, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you, Bob. Thank you. The poet, Bob Dylan. Thank you, Bob. [audience

continues applauding through this.] One, two. One, two. Thank you, Bob. Ladies and gentlemen, the next group that's coming up [audience: "No! Bob!" Boos. Rhythmic clapping.]

is the group from which all this music started. You know the tradition of blues in our country originally came from the African tradition and the African tradition

[boos and rhythmic clapping continue]

Ladies and gentlemen, Bob can't come back. The African tradition, when it was brought over originally, was brought over into the deep South, and the music became, to a large extent

[boos and yells continue]

Ladies and gentlemen, please be considerate of Bobby. He can't come back. Please don't make it more difficult than it is. (35:40—37:04)

That's what is on the tape made on stage at Newport, Rhode Island, on the night of July 25, 1965.

Three things stand out:

First, you can hear a lot of individual things yelled by the audience and the general responses of the audience.

Second, all the booing you can hear from the stage is in response to things Peter Yarrow said, not to things Bob Dylan did.

Third, it was Peter Yarrow who first started drawing attention to what guitar Dylan was using. He twice said that he was coming back with an acoustic guitar, and he stressed it each time. I remember wondering at the time why Peter was making such a big deal of what instrument Dylan was going to use.

I've heard people say that Dylan himself gave proof of how upset he was at the boos when he came back to do those encores with that acoustic guitar rather than two more electric songs with the Butterfield group. Nonsense: Dylan and the blues band did three songs together because that was all the songs they'd prepared to perform together. They hadn't prepared more because they'd been told beforehand by us Newport board members that three songs was all they'd be allowed to do.

I know that at some subsequent performances Dylan's electric guitar was indeed booed by people in the audience. But I've never known if those boos were from people who were really outraged and affronted at the electric power or people who read some of the first renderings of the Legend of Newport '65 and thought that was the way they were supposed to behave to be cool. After all, by the end of that summer

everybody knew Dylan had gone electric, so why go to a concert if you knew beforehand that you were going to be unhappy and your ears were going to hurt? Maybe to have a good time, screaming and yelling, the way kids do.

After listening to the original recording, I can't help but wonder if that whole short period of public rage at Bob Dylan's electric guitar wasn't just one more passing fad manufactured out of some warped stories that came out of a performance that just who was really there—at the time, if not in the reconstructions of memory—thought was pretty damned fine.

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BONO BETRAYS IRELAND BY ANDREW COCKBURN

The people of Ireland, currently suffering under the deluges of a terrible summer, are being further depressed by an avalanche of mendacious propaganda urging them to vote Yes in a referendum on the Treaty of Nice to be held this October. A torrent of homilies from agents of Big Capital, including the major parties, the German Chancellor, the Economist, and, predictably and nauseatingly, Jesse Helms best friend: U2 warbler Bono.

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Most people assume that this treaty, negotiated by the member governments of the European Union in 2000, simply provides for the admission of new member to the EU — up to 13 — from Eastern Europe. Propagandists for the new order like to stress that this enlargement is what Nice is all about. It is not. Nice is essentially about a sinister overhaul of the system by which the people of the EU are governed. The most important provisions of the agreement changed the system for governing the Union, which currently gives small and big countries a roughly equal voice, to one in which the big countries — particularly France, Germany, Italy and Britain — have the decisive say.

EU procedures require that the treaty be ratified by all member states. For most European regimes, this posed no problem, the document being duly rubber stamped by pliant Parliaments. The Irish, however, have an irritating constitutional stipulation requiring that changes in the way the country is governed be submitted directly to the people for ratification in a referendum. In June last year the people duly tramped to the polls and resoundingly rejected the treaty, 54% to 46%.

Bellows of dismay rang through the chanceries of Europe. Gerhard Schroeder came to Dublin and pronounced that the Irish people would have to vote again until they came up with the right answer. The Washington Post wagged an admonitory editorial finger, repeating the conventional official wisdom that the Irish had exhibited disgraceful selfishness in basing their rejection on a desire to stop Poles, Czechs, Rumanians and other prospective members from gaining access to the payouts from Brussels enjoyed by the Irish.

This analysis was wholly false. Basically, the Irish rejected the treaty not because they wanted to keep Polish farmers and other East Europeans away from the trough, but because, like most European citizens, they are increasingly outraged at the attrition of European democracy in favor of rule by unelected officials in Brussels issuing edicts on everything from tax policy to the composition of Ireland's incomparably superior pork sausages. They noted that, under Nice, Ireland would lose its right to select one of the powerful European commissioners and would have its representation on the Council of Ministers severely diluted. Nor were they happy at the creation, under Nice, of a 60,000 man Rapid Reaction Force under EU command and slated for intervention abroad. Encouraged by a skillful No campaign spearheaded by the Green Party and Sinn Fein, the voters delivered their wise verdict.

That should have been the end of it. The people had spoken. But the Irish ruling clique, notoriously corrupt, bowed the head and bent the knee in obedience to orders from their betters. Disgracefully, Prime Minister Bertie Ahern apologized to his fellow European leaders for the indiscipline of his voters and announced that Schroeder would be obeyed: Ireland would vote again.

Little is being left to chance. Last time, an over confident government allowed state funds to be used for the presentation of arguments on both sides. That will not happen again. P.J. Mara, Dublin's pre-eminent political fixer, has been enlisted to run the yes campaign. The President, Mary McAleese, has unconstitutionally intervened in a political debate by indicating her preference for a yes decision. There has thus been much for

the people to bear, and then....Bono.

With a typical blend of arrogance and ignorance, the butcher shriek of the Liffey went on Irish radio and declared that the Irish people had voted the way they did because they were not properly informed on the issues. Ever eager to brag about his access to the corridors of power, he declared that "I go to meetings with politicians in Europe, they always bring it up.....I think to vote No is going to make Ireland look very selfish."

Thus Bono reiterated the dogma, endlessly pounded into Irish heads, that they have been the welfare queens of Europe.

This is not the case. An example, arduous investigation by Irish marine biologist and entrepreneur John King lays bare the figures on the pillaging of a vital resource. Over the thirty years since Ireland joined Europe, the Irish have received some twenty billion pounds (the currency that was replaced by the Euro at the beginning of this year) from Brussels. Not a small change. However, in joining, Ireland agreed to give up territorial control of its rich fishing grounds, leaving them open to plunder by other European fishing fleets. In consequence, those fleets, especially the Spaniards, have extracted an average of 14 billion pounds worth of fish every year since 1972. This state of affairs is coming to an end, as Irish waters are now swept clear, with barely a fish left to nurture what was once the Irish fishing industry.

The only ray of hope is that, despite the barrage of persiflage, polls indicate that the Irish voter will once again stand up for democracy, once more sending Ahern and Bono scurrying off to make what excuses they can to their overseers.

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Ending the Big Lie: Electric Dylan Never Booed at Newport