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## Barbarians at work in a decidedly untidy Baghdad

April 15 2003

Will the incessant whining from John Valder and Alan Ramsey continue even when Iraq eventually settles into a stable, democratic country free from the genocidal, murdering, raping, torturing insanity of the past 24 years?

Perhaps they should try to grapple with the concept that to sadly lose 1000 lives in order to save 100,000 is a good investment.

**Dr Dick Crane, Lane Cove, April 14.**

Thousands march in Sydney on an afternoon and are derided as the loud minority. About 100 gather outside a hotel packed with journalists in Baghdad, pull down a statue with the aid of US troops and it's called vindication for a whole war?

I'd laugh if it wasn't such a grim sign of things to come.

**Andrew Byrne, Chiswick, April 14.**

The 55-card pack is a brilliant way to encourage US forces to recognise Iraq's "wanted" list. (Assuming they have time to play cards between other demands on their time.)

**Wendy Crew, Lane Cove, April 14.**

I hear that moves are afoot to bring Saddam back to restore stability.

**Fred Smith, Panania, April 12.**

It is hard not to get the impression that many letter writers and others hoped that Saddam would not fall. Now that he apparently has, they hope that anarchy will prevail.

Their one aim in life, of course, is to prove Mr Bush and Mr Howard wrong, no matter what the leaders do or say. Mr Blair is somewhat excused because he is on the left side of

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To the average newspaper reader, it's an invisible job. But nobody gets as much feedback - weird, wild and wise - as a letters editor. The *Herald's* Sam North explains.

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politics.

**David Morrison, Springwood, April 12.**

The images over the weekend of US soldiers protecting the Ministry of Oil building and of others hacking pieces off a Saddam statue for souvenirs, while nearby a hospital is ransacked with impunity, sums it all up.

**Kevin Dunlop, Marrickville, April 13.**

Alan Ramsey's article ("More bloodlust than a real war", *Herald*, April 12-13) was brilliant. Another point Mr Ramsey might have raised in regard to our Prime Minister. Mr Howard being "greatly moved by the scenes of jubilation" in Baghdad exposes his hypocrisy.

Just over a month ago he contemptuously dismissed worldwide demonstrations against any war with Iraq by millions, not thousands, of people as the actions of a disenchanted minority of the population. Yet the celebrations of mobs of Iraqis who, within hours of their so-called liberation, became looters and pillagers made Mr Howard feel "proud".

**W.J. Green, Gympie Bay, April 12.**

Simon Crean and his front bench are still saying that Saddam could have been disarmed peacefully but they cannot say how this could have been done.

Everyone must be pleased that they are not running the country.

**Tom Wilcox, Kew (Vic) April 14.**

The neo-cons are clambering out of the woodwork to hail the great "victory" in Iraq, although pictures of legless children in shattered hospitals begs one to question such a "victory".

I would like to congratulate the millions of people around the world who marched in peace rallies opposing the war. This massive demonstration of decency and humanity played its part in keeping the US in check, ensuring it proceeded more as a liberating force than a conquering force.

**Bill Young, Greenwich, April 14.**

The trashing of a priceless heritage at the Baghdad Museum, bodies of the dead left to rot where they fall in the streets and the callous indifference of the architects of the liberation.

Does anyone have any doubts left that the Americans are the barbarians at the gates?

**Catherine Courtenay, Seaforth, April 14.**

Philip Ruddock's offer to pay the air fare home for Iraqis in Australia living on temporary protection visas is not a generous offer. Iraq is now a country in ruins, and chaos rules. If what happened to Afghanistan is anything to go by, Iraq will be unsafe for a long time.

The Australian Government could always show true compassion and grant Iraqis here full protection visas, as distinct from its pretend show of compassion when it ran out of reasons to assist the US invade the country.

**Helen Lewers, Napoleons (Vic), April 14.**

Presumably the permitted ransacking of hospitals and destruction of irreplaceable world cultural heritage in Baghdad (despite warnings of the possibility) is simply part of Donald Rumsfeld's "untidiness".

If the Ministry of Oil could be cordoned, why not these other sites? Or is Iraq to be rendered a "non-country" ready for a complete McDonald's makeover?

**Tony Burton, Kirribilli, April 14.**

John Valder's (Letters, April 14) assertion that "pro-war letter writers ... rush into print" brings to mind three words: pot, kettle and black.

Has he forgotten how quickly and persistently his neo-pacs assaulted readers with their neo-babble?

Well before the first shots were fired we were told of Iraqi civilians who would be killed "in their thousands". Before we'd even committed troops we were told that they "would face death in the desert".

Now that the outcome of the war is certain, it's only fitting that those who kept their counsel be allowed some voice.

**Peter Maresch, Lane Cove, April 14.**

I worked in the Middle East in the 1970s and knew Baghdad well.

There are other museums in the Middle East which are good, but Baghdad's was, arguably, the greatest, with its many precious artefacts from the Assyrian and Sumerian periods.

While bombing was going on, over Baghdad, I was thinking, "please, not the museum". It deserved World Heritage listing.

How awful that a wild, uninformed Iraqi mob has been responsible for trashing this jewel of a place.

**Helen Brolly, Kincumber, April 14.**

## **And now more feminist tenets bite the dust**

Hooray for Anne Manne's refreshing article on the disease of consumerism ("Sell your soul and spend, spend, spend: the cost of living in a material world", *Herald*, April 14).

Her identification of feminism being sucked into the fetish of worshipping paid work was spot on.

A generation ago feminism had a real opportunity to challenge the stifling male creed: that income equals power and status. Not only did it fail to do so, it blindly adopted that creed for itself, without pausing to consider whether the paradigm was really worthwhile.

The result is a huge win for the marketplace: two incomes for the price of one. Two incomes are now "required" to maintain a mortgage, pay for child care, service an increasingly frenetic lifestyle and so on, ad infinitum.

This is not progress - it is a devious form of slavery which has both men and women defending their right to wear chains.

**Lydia Smith, Cooks Gap, April 14.**

When are we going to accept that feminism has created more problems than it solved?

We had Bettina Arndt ("Baby, it's time", *Herald*, April 12-13) exposing the heartache of childless women who are victims of live-in relationships - this, when 30 years ago we were told that throwing off the shackles of marriage would bring more happiness and empowerment to women.

We had Maggie Alderson (Good Weekend, April 12-13) bemoaning the soft pornography that now typifies the fashion industry - a phenomenon unthinkable before the advent of feminism but, perversely, a byproduct of it.

I assume this is because by denying the God-given differences between men and women we have had to devalue the evidence of our bodies and create a mind-body dualism.

And now Anne Manne blows the whistle on materialism as the monster that has ridden on the coat-tails of feminism.

When is feminism going to be exposed and disposed of?

**Claire Smith, Mosman, April 14.**

## **Sickly prognosis for GP co-payment plan**

Richard Holden and Andrew Leigh ("Health's price must be right", *Herald*, April 14) argue for a small co-payment rather than allowing GPs to charge any co-payment rate. These two economists are either fooling themselves or us.

Once you introduce co-payments there is going to be no way to regulate what is charged, even if there was the will to regulate, and there won't be with our Federal Government.

These two economists say they are worried about frivolous visits to the doctor. What constitutes a frivolous visit for someone with cancer or heart disease or diabetes or gout or hypertension, etc?

Over the past 20 years I have heard many apologists for governments like these two - they may have good intentions but their good intentions are used by hard heads in government to get through exactly what they want.

I will declare my interest. I am a nurse who works in the public health system and very angry about what is happening to Medicare.

If these economists get it wrong, it will be nurses like me who would have to pick up the burden of extra work from patients flooding back into emergency departments seeking affordable health care.

**Jenny Haines, Undercliffe, April 14.**

## Living, breathing relic

There were the dinosaurs - and then there was Warren Reed ("Conspiracy of silence has turned us into a soft target for turncoats", *Herald*, April 14). Sadly it seems even the coldest of the cold wars last century hasn't been able to totally freeze this particular species. Traitors in our midst, I tell you! Oh, for heaven's sake, use your fridge magnet.

**Nik Roudenko, Glenhaven, April 14.**

## Coaching tip

In "The coach trip" (My Career, *Herald*, April 12-13), I was quoted as saying: "There are a lot of unqualified coaches who don't know what they're doing." This makes it seem that I'm criticising most coaching in general. This was not my intent - rather to comment on the lack of standardised credentials which leads to a wide range of coaching abilities, some of which are inappropriate for the complex needs of individuals who seek life coaching.

While there are many well-qualified life coaches, especially those with the proper academic qualifications and experience to help people to better cope with their issues, there are many who are in over their head when it comes to helping a client resolve more complex and often psychological issues.

**Gabrielle Droulers, Director, Centre for Career Development, Sydney, April 14.**

## What's old is new

Philip Ruddock seems to be getting stuck into ATSIC ("Ruddock to curb ATSIC loans power", *Herald*, April 14). Strange how the Howard Government is gradually implementing proposals that Pauline Hanson made in her maiden speech. She described ATSIC as "a discriminatory organisation that has failed dismally the people it was meant to serve".

Makes you wonder why Mr Howard dumped on her so much when she first appeared. Maybe we should call Ms Hanson the greatest prime minister Australia *never* had.

**Bob Vinnicombe, Sefton, April 14.**

## Give us a break

Ross Gittins (*Herald*, April 14) correctly highlights that when economic equity is decreasingly pursued through government regulation, it needs to be increasingly pursued through taxation. He also plausibly suggests that some people concoct pseudo-economic arguments to fit their wallets.

Between 1975 and 2000, higher taxing OECD nations had, on average, virtually identical economic growth rates per capita to lower-taxing nations. Successful northern European countries have vastly higher tax levels than Australia. Yet the Australian Industry Group ("Tax break sought for medium paid", *Herald*, April 14) wants tax cuts on incomes of more than \$50,000 - ie, for those in the top fifth of the adult income distribution.

Roughly, the more equally a given amount of money is distributed the more community wellbeing it generates. And it is unfair to pay many Centrelink clients about \$150 a week below the minimum net wage.

**Brent Howard, Rydalmere, April 14.**

## Bringing back Beazley a step to the right

Surely the Labor Party is not so desperate to even contemplate Kim Beazley as leader? His opinions when he was Opposition leader sounded as if they were produced in a Liberal Party think tank. Since then he has sounded more like a consultant to the PM than a Labor backbencher.

If they are that desperate, Cheryl needs a job, and Bob Brown thinks of new ideas so often that I am sure he could spare a few for Labor. If Beazley is the best they can think

of, then why don't they displace the National Party as the Liberal's official Coalition partner?

**David Neilson, Armidale, April 14.**

## Extra fees just to sleep

Integral Energy seems to think turning on the air-conditioner when it's 44 degrees outside is a "luxury", for which the pampered swine of western Sydney must be made to pay through the snout ("Electricity hogs to pay for luxuries", *Herald*, April 12-13).

For someone living in western Sydney (ie, west of the demographic centre, as opposed to west of the Cahill Expressway), where summer temperatures are consistently higher than the eastern suburbs and the house doesn't even begin to cool down until 3am, an air-conditioner can make the difference between getting small children to sleep in reasonable comfort or having them toss and turn in a lather of perspiration all night.

**Chris Larkin, Rooty Hill, April 13.**

## Where's devious Des?

I deplore the descent of *The Bill* into soap. However, while the pursuit of the predatory Chandler continues, will someone inform me of the fate of Danny's pursuit of Simpson who, without reasonable doubt, murdered Chief Inspector Conroy and of the disappearance of attention to the bent and devious Des whose actions caused the destruction of Sunhill Police Station and the deaths of so many of its well-liked staff?

**Clyde Philip Long, Castlecove, April 14.**

To all readers who can't understand *The Bill* or *Taggart*, etc (Letters, April 14). As long as you have teletext, select page 801 and there it is, subtitles for any free-to-air program.

**Michael Stanbridge, Bonnet Bay, April 14.**

## Ya can't miss it

Is Don MacTaggart new to the area (Letters, April 10)?

Doon Doon is a locality just south of Uki about 15 minutes from Murwillumbah.

**Paul Russell, Redfern, April 14.**

## Extreme commuting

In view of recent reports, why would anyone catch a train

(unless, of course, they had a penchant for Russian roulette)?

**J. Peters, Gloucester, April 14.**

## Here's the bird

Re Target (*Herald*, April 12-13) Guillemot! You what! We've most certainly been gulled.

**Valmai Sutton, Chatswood, April 14.**

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