

Deep Integration, Jesus Style

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Friday, April 28, 2006

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Now that Prime Sinister Stephen Harper has begun walking down the road to deep integration or at the very least, prostrate homage to w.Caesar, as Canadians who value not thinking in lockstep with “Pax” Americana, we need to stand up and call our government to account. Remember, they are a minority government, after all.

Throughout this week, we’ve seen an [Ipsos poll](#) indicate that two-thirds of Canadians support Harper’s use of “God Bless Canada” to wind down his speeches, while only one quarter of us are opposed to it. If it’s something godly he wishes to assert, I’m sure he could have come up with a phrase that wasn’t so American. Perhaps David Frum has found a new job.

This week we also learn that the media are not allowed at Canadian military bases when our soldiers’ bodies are returning home from Afghanistan or wherever. In the House, the defence minister said it’s a private affair for the families even though he and Chief of Defence Staff Rick Hillier will attend whenever they can.

This robs the nation of a chance to mourn our children who die for a national cause. Even if this national cause has dubious merit, imperial overtones, a surrogate support for American forces to keep us from directly helping out imperial overtures in Iraq, or if it is doing more harm than good as less of a humanitarian intervention and more of a humanitarian violence exercise, our children are dying for our government’s commitment. The nation deserves an opportunity to publicly acknowledge their sacrifice.

On a more political side, barring media access to the return of flag-draped caskets keeps public opinion from rising too wildly against the commitment of troops overseas to a questionable mission. Further, any ruling political party takes a hit whenever our children’s bodies come home. This is unavoidable. Barring the media from disseminating these facts helps Harper’s spin and message control.

Even the UK government allows the media to broadcast the return of their children’s bodies from Iraq, a place of more blatant imperial dalliances than Afghanistan’s supposed nation-building exercise.

In addition, debate in the House this week revolved around lowering the flag on the Peace Tower when one of our children dies serving our country’s edicts. Again, our defence minister rose to state that not doing so merely follows almost a century of military policy.

It’s time to change that policy.

Traditions are important. They define who we are. Before World War Two, tradition dictated no need for the flag to be lowered. These days, after the media eroded the uninformed and ignorant US public’s support for the Vietnam War, after embedded and compliant journalism in both Gulf Wars, and after the US pilots bombed Canadians in Kandahar, we live in a different social, political and information climate.

Not lowering the flag when there is such public support to do so is a weak, meaningless observance of tradition for no grand cause other than tradition. It is easier to do nothing than something new and meaningful.

We cannot let our prostrate prime minister continue to pander to his American Idol in the White House. In a week in which we also rolled over on softwood lumber despite justification of our position from such unfriendly bodies as the WTO and NAFTA, we need to let George W. Harper know that we have had enough.

To continue to slide towards a northern version of American policy idiocy will be all of our faults. To remain apathetic and compliant has a price we will pay in the future.

We must take a lesson from the energy of those in the campaign to de-elect the scoundrel David Emerson in my federal riding of Vancouver-Kingsway. Despite his "election" hundreds of people continue to protest his place in our governance. He is a mockery of electoral and parliamentary democracy. His sinister boss's pandering to American role models is an insult to us all. It will be an insult we are all complicit in unless we act to stop it.

We must allow the media to broadcast the return of our children's bodies. We must force our leaders to lead us out of an anachronistic tradition and lower the Peace Tower flag. And Stephen Harper needs another way to honour his god without the pretense of American pomp and circumstance.

If we let him rule this way, it is our fault.

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