

SENATE FLOOR REMARKS

The Emperor Has No Clothes

by US Senator Robert Byrd

In 1837, Danish author, Hans Christian Andersen, wrote a wonderful fairy tale which he titled *The Emperor's New Clothes*. It may be the very first example of the power of political correctness. It is the story of the Ruler of a distant land who was so enamored of his appearance and his clothing that he had a different suit for every hour of the day.

One day two rogues arrived in town, claiming to be gifted weavers. They convinced the Emperor that they could weave the most wonderful cloth, which had a magical property. The clothes were only visible to those who were completely pure in heart and spirit.

The Emperor was impressed and ordered the weavers to begin work immediately. The rogues, who had a deep understanding of human nature, began to feign work on empty looms.

Minister after minister went to view the new clothes and all came back exhorting the beauty of the cloth on the looms even though none of them could see a thing.

Finally a grand procession was planned for the Emperor to display his new finery. The Emperor went to view his clothes and was shocked to see absolutely nothing, but he pretended to admire the fabulous cloth, inspect the clothes with awe, and, after disrobing, go through the motions of carefully putting on a suit of the new garments.

Under a royal canopy the Emperor appeared to the admiring throng of his people - all of whom cheered and clapped because they all knew the rogue weavers' tale and did not want to be seen as less than pure of heart.

But, the bubble burst when an innocent child loudly exclaimed, for the whole kingdom to hear, that the Emperor had nothing on at all. He had no clothes.

That tale seems to me very like the way this nation was led to war.

We were told that we were threatened by weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, but they have not been seen.

We were told that the throngs of Iraqi's would welcome our troops with flowers, but no throngs or flowers appeared.

We were led to believe that Saddam Hussein was connected to the attack on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, but no evidence has ever been produced.

We were told in 16 words that Saddam Hussein tried to buy "yellow cake" from Africa for production of nuclear weapons, but the story has turned into empty air.

We were frightened with visions of mushroom clouds, but they turned out to be only vapors of the mind.

We were told that major combat was over but 101 [as of October 17] Americans have died in combat since that proclamation from the deck of an aircraft carrier by our very own Emperor in his new clothes.

Our emperor says that we are not occupiers, yet we show no inclination to relinquish the country of Iraq to its people.

Those who have dared to expose the nakedness of the Administration's policies in Iraq have been subjected to scorn. Those who have noticed the elephant in the room—that is, the fact that this war was based on falsehoods — have had our patriotism questioned. Those who have spoken aloud the thought shared by hundreds of thousands of military families across this country, that our troops should return quickly and safely from the dangers half a world away, have been accused of cowardice. We have then seen the untruths, the dissembling, the fabrication, the misleading inferences surrounding this rush to war in Iraq wrapped quickly in the flag.

The right to ask questions, debate, and dissent is under attack. The drums of war are beaten ever louder in an attempt to drown out those who speak of our predicament in stark terms.

Even in the Senate, our history and tradition of being the world's greatest deliberative body is being snubbed. This huge spending bill has been rushed through this chamber in just one month. There were just three open hearings by the Senate Appropriations Committee on \$87 billion, without a single outside witness called to challenge the Administration's line.

Ambassador Bremer went so far as to refuse to return to the Appropriations Committee to answer additional questions because, and I quote: "I don't have time. I'm completely booked, and I have to get back to Baghdad to my duties."

Despite this callous stiff-arm of the Senate and its duties to ask questions in order to represent the American people, few dared to voice their opposition to rushing this bill through these halls of Congress. Perhaps they were intimidated by the false claims that our troops are in immediate need of more funds.

But the time has come for the sheep-like political correctness which has cowed members of this Senate to come to an end.

The Emperor has no clothes. This entire adventure in Iraq has been based on propaganda and manipulation. Eighty-seven billion dollars is too much to pay for the continuation of a war based on falsehoods.

Taking the nation to war based on misleading rhetoric and hyped intelligence is a travesty and a tragedy. It is the most cynical of all cynical acts. It is dangerous to manipulate the truth. It is dangerous because once having lied, it is difficult to ever be believed again. Having misled the American people and stampeded them to war, this Administration must now attempt to sustain a policy predicated on falsehoods. The President asks for billions from those same citizens who know that they were misled about the need to go to war. We misinformed and insulted our friends and allies and now this Administration is having more than a little trouble getting help from the international community. It is perilous to mislead.

The single-minded obsession of this Administration to now make sense of the chaos in Iraq, and the continuing propaganda which emanates from the White House painting Iraq as the geographical center of terrorism is distracting our attention from Afghanistan and the 60 other countries in the world where terrorists hide. It is sapping resources which could be used to make us safer from terrorists on our own shores. The body armor for our own citizens still has many, many chinks. Have we forgotten that the most horrific terror attacks in history occurred right here at home!! Yet, this Administration turns back money for homeland security, while the President pours billions into security for Iraq. I am powerless to understand or explain such a policy.

I have tried mightily to improve this bill. I twice tried to separate the reconstruction money in this bill, so that those dollars could be considered separately from the military spending. I offered an amendment to force the Administration to craft a plan to get other nations to assist the troops and formulate a plan to get the U.N. in, and the U.S. out, of Iraq. Twice I tried to rid the bill of expansive, flexible authorities that turn this \$87 billion into a blank check. The American people should understand that we provide more foreign aid for Iraq in this bill, \$20.3 billion, than we provide for the rest of the entire world! I attempted to remove from this bill billions in wasteful programs and divert those funds to better use. But, at every turn, my efforts were thwarted by the vapid argument that we must all support the requests of the Commander in Chief.

I cannot stand by and continue to watch our grandchildren become increasingly burdened by the billions that fly out of the Treasury for a war and a policy based largely on propaganda and prevarication. We are borrowing \$87 billion to finance this adventure in Iraq. The President is asking this Senate to pay for this war with increased debt, a debt that will have to be paid by our children and by those same troops that are currently

fighting this war. I cannot support outlandish tax cuts that plunge our country into potentially disastrous debt while our troops are fighting and dying in a war that the White House chose to begin.

I cannot support the continuation of a policy that unwisely ties down 150,000 American troops for the foreseeable future, with no end in sight.

I cannot support a President who refuses to authorize the reasonable change in course that would bring traditional allies to our side in Iraq.

I cannot support the politics of zeal and “might makes right” that created the new American arrogance and unilateralism which passes for foreign policy in this Administration.

I cannot support this foolish manifestation of the dangerous and destabilizing doctrine of preemption that changes the image of America into that of a reckless bully.

The emperor has no clothes. And our former allies around the world were the first to loudly observe it.

I shall vote against this bill because I cannot support a policy based on prevarication. I cannot support doling out 87 billion of our hard-earned tax dollars when I have so many doubts about the wisdom of its use.

I began my remarks with a fairy tale. I shall close my remarks with a horror story, in the form of a quote from the book *Nuremberg Diaries*, written by G.M. Gilbert, in which the author interviews Hermann Goering.

“We got around to the subject of war again and I said that, contrary to his attitude, I did not think that the common people are very thankful for leaders who bring them war and destruction.

“... But, after all, it is the *leaders* of the country who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy or a fascist dictatorship or a Parliament or a Communist dictatorship.

“There is one difference,” I pointed out. “In a democracy the people have some say in the matter through their elected representatives, and in the United States only Congress can declare wars.”

“Oh, that is all well and good, but, voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country.”