



Old Hickory's Diary - 5

Diary Entry date 30th
September 2001 ...

This time Old Hickory looks at:

1. **The destruction in New York**
2. **Dorothy Rowe's latest book**
3. **The Tory leadership contest**

The attack on New York,

At 7.30pm on 11 September I went to a promotion of Dorothy Rowe's latest book, *Friends and Enemies* (2001) at Ottakar's bookshop in Stevenage. She said that she had hoped to talk about friendship but the day's events had meant the talk would be about enemies. I had no idea of the event she was referring to and asked for an explanation. She said the event of the day had changed the world forever and that the ramifications were already world-wide. She had been in contact with her native Australia and the effect of the planes being targeted at the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York had already been felt in her home country. Telephone lines were down, for example.

On getting home around 9.30pm after the talk, I switched on the television and saw, repeatedly, a film of the whole event. It had occurred around 9am New York time, so about 2pm in the UK. The TV film sequence began with one tower in trouble for some reason. A plane was then seen crashing into the second tower and later, to the great surprise of many people, the collapse of both buildings was caught and displayed for all to see. It was just like a film of the demolition of tower blocks except that it was clearly

unexpected. A further attack had been made on the Pentagon at around 9.45am in Washington. The media account was repeated in the next few days, and the pictures from television filled the newspapers, crowding out the normal stories. Even the *Financial Times* had its front page full of pictures from the television.

It has been said that this is the worst terrorist attack hitherto, and that the loss of life was greater than the attack on Pearl Harbour. It has certainly caused more loss of life than the entire troubles in Ireland have cost since 1969. The attack was immediately called "war" but it clearly lacks the aims and definition of war, or even of the ordinary terrorism we have witnessed in Ireland or Spain. The IRA have an aim and so do the Basques, but it is less clear what the aim of the terrorists who destroyed the twin towers was. Some might try to guess that the attack was intended to make the USA stop backing Israel or leave Iraq alone, but this is not at all clear. The attack looks more like an end in itself rather than a means to an end. The suicide of the terrorists in the attack leaves no possible retaliation against the people directly involved in the deed.

Islam is against democracy, but it is not likely that the terrorists aim to get the USA to give up that form of government. So why did they attack the USA? President Bush said they were cowards but that is certainly not a reason for the attack. Indeed, he was using the word as an expletive to abuse the terrorists rather than be realistic about them. The idea that they only did what they did owing to a belief in an afterlife in paradise as a reward would not make good the claim that they were cowards. Even in the case where such a belief were held, courage would be required to earn that result. And there are many cases of young men who will give their lives to a cause they value quite free of any such reward e.g. the IRA hunger strikers or the Japanese kamikaze pilots in World War Two. Troops in the front line of almost

This article is written by Old Hickory

For further details please visit www.libertarian-alliance.org.uk

any battle have more of a chance of survival, but not much more of a chance.

The Trade Center and the Pentagon were seen as the heart of the power of the USA and a third attack was planned on the president, but it went awry. The plane that was to attack Camp David crashed in Pennsylvania some 85 miles off its target. If the public were habitually armed, the planes that reached their targets might have similarly failed. The attack felt to the authorities in the USA like war, but unless we use the term war broadly – as in the ‘war on drugs’ – it looks more like criminal activity. Because it felt like war there has been a longing to send the troops into somewhere, but where? Later comments spoke of the length of time the reaction will take and this was way more realistic. The reply would be more like an on-going job of police work than a military matter. The planning of the attack was more like a bank robbery than a battle campaign. The response will need to be of police-like dawn raids to arrest terrorists rather than the bombing foreign lands. As such, the reaction may be way less public than the attacks have been. And they may cause less loss of life. This would win a propaganda war for the USA for a change. The terrorists will be seen as killing the public while the reaction will just hit terrorists.

The final antidote to the terrorist problem is education, by way of debate and the discrediting of dysfunctional ideas. *Contra* common sense, debate is a form of trade rather than a form of war. There has been lots of cant to the effect that Islam is not a warmongering religion, maybe necessary cant given that it is! Islam is haply no worse than the other great religions, but the three Western religions of Judaism and its scions of Christianity and Islam are almost intrinsically political, even though Christianity had a long early history out of power. A live religion seeks to rule; it also makes truth claims. The aim of ruling leads to a clash with liberalism, even though liberalism seeks to tolerate all religions. The claim to truth leads to a similar unsought *de facto* clash with science. Tolerance for all religions means that no religion can rule politically but a religion that fails in that respect is basically dead. The liberal idea of

religion as a mere personal matter means well towards all the religions, but does well by none of them. Liberalism is not deliberately anti-religious but a liberal society will see religion diminish in importance. Religions hitherto have rejected the world. They all pander to envy. Why is USA hated by many throughout the world? It is because of its success. This is why so many – and not only Muslims – have found the event not quite so unsatisfactory as has been portrayed in the media. So a major cause of the attack could be envy.

Then there are the more particular lesser reasons that are cited. The support of Israel by USA and the ramifications of that, such as the aftermath of the Gulf war. The aim of Iraq was to eventually attack Israel. However, that is not to deny that the Israel policy does not matter or that the changing of it might not ease things. The liberal foreign policy remains what has been called isolationism: states leaving other states to get on with their own affairs. To interfere with any other state is to warmonger and the grand liberal solution to the problem of war is to end political contracts, leaving international co-operation to free trade.

But to attempt to completely satisfy Islam on that matter would never end the hatred of the USA. The Islamic whinging about the Crusades is a bit like the Irish nationalist complaint about the Black and Tans in that they never stop moaning about being given a bit of their own medicine. It is true that the Crusades and the Black and Tans were savage, but no more so than the Islamic hordes that invaded Europe long before the Crusades. Similarly, the IRA used terror before and after the Black and Tans aped them. Islam is a proselytising religion out to rule the world. Success against its parent religion will not end Islam’s quest. The only thing that can end it is rational reconsideration in debate. The Rushdie affair was a glimpse of the future of Islam, as is today’s Christianity. When Islam fights the world, the world will win. Truth is not on its side, nor is time.

The scenes of Muslim joy at the news of the attack should not be forgotten, but nor should they be considered criminal. Envy has always existed and vicarious joy is not

itself illiberal. On a much smaller scale the Great Train Robbery brought similar joy to the envious. Many also delight in mass murderers and buy the books in which naïve authors set out to discover the nature of evil, as in their studies of Charles Manson and others. Evil, in this sense, is just the lack of respect for what most would call good, rather than being a particular quality of its own. Thus there is nothing to discover but the celebration of that which rejects the world and gets vicarious satisfaction from killing people. Envy is a source of vicarious joy. But of actual harm it remains innocent. There will always be freedom of thought even if there is no freedom of speech, but there needs to be freedom of speech in a liberal society. There is a distinction ethically, *contra* St Paul, between thought and deed. It has always been possible for even a single individual to run amok and do great damage in society and there has been no shortage of such mass killers in recent years. They have usually ended up killing themselves rather as the suicide hijackers did. But there have also been those, who like McVeigh, might have got away with it if they had planned a bit better. The airways of Europe have long since been less open than those of USA and greater security will be almost bound to follow, at least up to the European mode. But, as in the aftermath to the train accident at Hatfield 2000, there has been an over-reaction. Many of the programme changes in the UK, such as the cancellation of “Ask Albert” a radio programme on Albert Ellis on 14 September seemed rather odd. Martial law is inept in a reaction to terrorism.

When Bush said that the attacks were “not acts of terrorism but acts of war” he was getting it exactly wrong. His idea to treat the states that allow the terrorists to live in their domain maybe gives him an easier target, but it is not likely to be helpful. The idea of doing ‘something’, germane or not, has become increasingly popular of late. After the Dunblane shooting in 1996, guns were banned despite the fact that most guns held were unlicensed. There have been other reactions for the sake of doing something, like the banning of certain types of dogs.

Is Osama bin Laden and his terrorist group al-Qaeda the force that organised the attack?

He did deny it but he was boasting of such an attack a few days beforehand. He has often heralded his attacks by such boasting in the past. But he later did not deny them. He has long since advocated such attacks on Americans. He attacked the World Trade Center before in 1993. Reports that he has of late been short of money and that there has been dissent in al-Qaeda suggests that he might not be behind the attack after all. But the USA claimed they had “persuasive” evidence against him by 24 September and the next day Tony Blair issued a warning to the government of Afghanistan. So war may be due after all. But targeting only terrorists would be better all round, even if it is way slower.

It is ironic that USA aided both bin Laden and the Taliban State that gives him shelter in its quest to oppose the USSR in Afghanistan. This was done on the fallacy that my enemy’s enemy is somehow my friend, an idea that has backfired on the foreign policy of USA so many times in the twentieth century. They were victim to this fallacy supporting the USSR itself during World War Two and later the Vietcong; the first they backed against Germany and the second against France. Both later hit out at the USA as a reward. After ten years of fighting, the USSR withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989. But like the Vietcong in the 1950s, the victors showed all too soon that they were not actually friends of the USA. The jihad or holy war sees the USA haply even more materialistic than the USSR, not only in the metaphysical sense but also in the vulgar sense of being affluent. Isolationism would be cheaper and better all round.

Dorothy Rowe's latest book

Dorothy Rowe thought her book *Friends and Enemies* was germane to the problem of war and to the terrorism at the Twin Towers. She felt that these actions were a result of hatred and on a par with private personal enemies – and so the opposite of love. But we need to examine the institutions which provide the context for war and terrorism. In her talk she had an equivocation between an enemy who is hated and one who is simply on the other side of a declared war. Clearly, we might like someone whom we were duty bound to

oppose in war, so enemy means both one we hate and also one we are duty-bound to oppose. Many people have the idea that the problem of war is down to human nature. However, it is clear that modern war is a matter of the institutional clash of states. The fact that states often have to resort to conscription shows that human nature is not enough to account for modern war.

This equivocation was not just in Dr Rowe's talk but it is also in her book. She thinks that the problem of Northern Ireland is to do with the Puritans and Catholics not getting on in the province itself, when it is the result of the claim that Eire makes on the North and the quest to conquer it. The explanation that it all springs from the nature of Puritanism seems to Dorothy Rowe all the more solid as she herself springs from a Presbyterian family that told her that Catholics were bad people. But she did not stop to think that this sort of thing did not lead to terrorism in Australia, so why should it in Northern Ireland?

She cites friends who grew up together becoming enemies in Ulster (p20) but thinks this is owing to chance rather than to the clash of institutions. On this ground she opposes religious-based schools, on principle. Yet in the English Civil War of the 1640s and the Civil War of USA in the 1860s there are examples of families who divided between the two sides. An institutional clash can divide us in duty, no matter how fondly we loved each other beforehand; and even though we might go on loving each other throughout the war. Dorothy Rowe has a friend, Anthony, who showed her around Ulster and convinced her that the Puritans were to blame for the whole of the troubles. What she had heard from her parents made her all the more open to that idea (p313ff).

In her talk and in the book she put over the idea that hatred was thinking of the hated as less than human and as unclean and worthless objects (217), but in fact to hate is to personify rather than to reify. We can only truly hate people. We cannot truly hate mere objects. Whatever we think of the enemy population we are duty bound to kill. But then hatred is not as dysfunctional as Dorothy Rowe thinks it is. The clash of institutions that she tends to overlook is way

more of a menace than mere hatred. In war soldiers maybe do not think of the enemy as persons but then they do not particularly hate them either. Soldiers tend to be rather indifferent to their enemy and accept him as practical part of their duty. Dr Rowe feels that some people need enemies to solve two problems; the dullness of their lives and the angers and fears that they may have (p321). They have learnt early in life to meet their needs by creating enemies (p322). But this all seems a bit lame as an explanation of enemies and within a page she links this to a war in the Balkans that is clearly institutional in character.

The book has some insights. She cites Richard Gregory to the effect that we build up an hypothetical world rather than the facts being manifest (p47), but it is mainly a Politically Correct *Guardian* reader's outlook on the world, and it fails to get to the root cause of anything. To protect her PC outlook she attacks the idea that genetics can tell us much, despite the clear fact that humans are human genetically. She says that the twin studies in genetics have three major flaws (p185). The first is that the motivation behind them was political. She simply fails to see that motivation is just not germane to the facts or to the truth. Indeed, she is not clear whether there is any common truth and believes, absurdly, that we all have our own personal truth. Secondly, she says that not enough account has been taken of how similar the environment is when identical twins have been separated at birth (p186), despite saying elsewhere, that none of us see even the same event in exactly the same way. Finally she says that identical twins do not necessarily have the same genetic traits! She attempts to make this good by saying that in competition in the womb for space and blood supply one twin can do better than the other (p186). So she cannot even tell what is genetic and what is not. On reading through the book I am not sure that I can recommend it. Dr Rowe is one of the better of the pop psychologists but, typical of the whole *genre*, she finally has very little to say.

4. Iain Duncan-Smith as the new Tory leader.

Despite a confident declaration of victory by Clarke in the news on 8th September, Smith emerged as the winner on Thursday, 13th September by 61% to 39% of the votes cast; which were from more than 80% of the members. The result had been postponed a day in reaction to the Twin Towers terrorism in New York. Smith put together a Shadow Cabinet which Clarke denounced as way too Eurosceptic on the news reports of 22 September. He also says that he will not be going to the Tory Conference this year. He had refused to go into the cabinet, should he lose, all along. What he meant by promising his full support to Smith in the speech when the results were announced is none too clear. It is beginning to look rather like the full support which Ted Heath gave to Maggie Thatcher. The biggest change of the reshuffle is the return of Michael Howard as Shadow Chancellor. No place was found for John Redwood, who was reported as being miffed that he himself did not get the Shadow Chancellor job.

Old Hickory

“We used to fight fire with fire but now we know that the best way is with water.”

JIMMY CARTER