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"Freedom of the Press belongs to those who own one."

A. J. Liebling of the New Yorker

September 15, 2002



Commentary

How Do We Hold Politicians Accountable

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or many years I have pondered in writing about how we can hold people accountable in the political system. So far, there is no answer. Being in the political system means "never having to say 'I'm sorry'."

Examples abound. The local blatant example is the Chargers Ticket Guarantee, which was brought to us by former Republican Mayor Susan Golding and City Manager Jack McGrory. Susan is making money in the private sector and former City Attorney Jack McGrory is working for the Padres – and the taxpayers pay tens of millions of dollars a year for their mistakes. Political stupidity without penalty is strictly bi-partisan, although not necessarily even.

Democrats in Congress voted in near unanimity against the Gulf War – obviously a mistake to which many of those Democrats will now admit – but they never suffered, even at the polls. Many of those same Democrats who were against military action in the Gulf War, and are against using military action today, FAVORED a resolution permitting President Clinton to use force against Iraq in 1998. That is playing blatant politics with American lives – but these hypocrites will pay no price, political or otherwise.

Perhaps you remember the stupid "luxury tax" the Democrats foisted on the American public back in 1991. It drove luxury yacht owners to buy in Hong Kong and drove American yacht builders out of business. It made Cessna and Piper become single-digit

manufacturers. After everyone except a few socialists finally figured that economies are dynamic and not static and repealed the tax, work came back, although many remained bankrupt or unemployed. Those who instigated that stupid tax, who today will admit was a terrible mistake, are still serving in Congress. Thousands of people were put out of business, or out of work, but the politicians blithely continued without penalty.

I was just reading a piece about the World Trade Organization's ruling that could cost the American taxpayers a penalty of as much as \$4 BILLION! It seems that two decades ago some unnamed and as yet unknown negotiator for the United States made a \$4 BILLION error in negotiations. Democrat or Republican, it makes no difference, they will be untouched. The negotiator and his bosses who should have caught the problem are all sleeping between silk sheets tonight and the American people must pick up the mistake. The person/people who made the mistake will never suffer any personal discomfort.

Years ago, during a break in a political TV show in which I was a regular panelist, former Democrat Congressman Lionel Van Deerlin confided that the worst mistake he ever made was to lead the fight which ended the Bracero Program. That program brought Mexican workers to California fields for a two-year period after which they were returned and new workers imported. Ending that program caused literally millions of Mexicans to enter the country illegally over the ensuing years, costing the taxpayers billions of dollars. Van Deerlin was re-elected for years. He continues to write for the San Diego Union and is lionized at cocktail parties throughout the area.

Neither politicians nor those who support them ever pay a penalty. IF the United States decides not to preempt Iraq, and Iraq detonates a device which kills many tens of thousands, those who oppose the preemption are guilty of at least Flagrant Disregard of a Known Threat Resulting in the Loss of Life. But no one will lose their job, or their cushy retirement – much less their freedom.

In a more rational society they would be offered a pistol with a single bullet, and asked to “do the right thing.”



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