

# Voices of Rationality From the U.S. Senate

by Nancy Spannaus

During the U.S. Senate debate on the Bush Administration's \$87 billion budget for Iraq, a pattern of behavior emerged that indicates that senior Congressional leaders are beginning to step up to fill the vacuum of leadership shown in the Democratic, and Republican, Party. The fact that the budget authorization passed on Oct. 17, obscures certain significant elements of the debate.

First, there was the passage of the amendment, put forward by Sen. Evan Bayh (D-Ind.), which called for half of the \$20 billion in reconstruction aid to be issued as a loan. In point of fact, this was an insane provision, which ignores both moral and legal reality about the condition of Iraq, and is likely to be abandoned in the working out of differences between the House and Senate bills. Yet, the fact that it passed by a vote of 51-47, with 9 Republicans ignoring the personal importuning of President George W. Bush, reflects a certain degree of independence from the ruling neo-conservative clique, that could be important on other issues, such as the investigation of near-treasonous intelligence lies and leaks.

More important was the brave leadership shown by senior Democratic Senators Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.), who, in their floor speeches against the \$87 billion package, provided an incisive indictment of the Cheney Administration's evil drive to war, as well as its disastrous failures in the post-war period. These were speeches which so strongly violated the "rules" of the Democratic National Committee against attacking the Bush Administration on its foreign and security policy, that it is notable that the DNC has not yet put out a press release attacking Kennedy and Byrd.

In effect, as Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche has pointed out, the two senior Senators have effectively stepped in to lead their party, in the face of the collapse of its credibility following the California Recall election. All the more extraordinary, then, that the President's father, former President George H.W. Bush, is presenting his George Bush Award for Excellence in Public Service to Senator Kennedy, at Texas A&M University on Oct. 7. Senior Republican figures are also moving into opposition to Cheney's reckless war policy.

## Senator Byrd

Speaking on Oct. 17, Senator Byrd said the following:

"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. [The Senator summarizes the story, with its conclusion that a little boy speaks up, 'But the Emperor has 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 Iraqis 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 Americans have died in combat [as of Oct. 17], 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 falsehood—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. . . .

"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. . . .

"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 pre-emption 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. . . ."

### **Senator Kennedy**

"Nearly six months have elapsed since President Bush flew out to the aircraft carrier and declared 'mission accomplished' in Iraq. Today, we all know all too well that the war is not over; the war goes on; the mission is not accomplished. An unnecessary war, based on unreliable and inaccurate intelligence, has not brought an end to danger. Instead, it has brought new dangers, imposed new costs, and taken more and more American lives each week. . . .

"The trumped up reasons for going to war have collapsed. All the Administration's rationalizations as we prepared to go to war now stand revealed as 'double-talk.' The American people were told Saddam Hussein was building nuclear weapons. He was not. We were told he had stockpiles of other weapons of mass destruction. He did not. We were told he was involved in 9/11. He was not. We were told Iraq was attracting terrorists from al-Qaeda. It was not. We were told our soldiers would be viewed as liberators. They are not. We were told Iraq could pay for its own reconstruction. It cannot. We were told the war would make America safer. It has not.

"Before the war, week after week after week after week, we were told lie after lie after lie after lie. . . .

"No foreign policy in our free society can succeed for long unless it is supported by our people. Our men and women in uniform fought bravely and brilliantly, but the President's war has been revealed as mindless, needless, senseless, and reckless. The American people know all this. Our allies know it. Our soldiers know it.

"We should never have gone to war in Iraq when we did, in the way we did, for the false reasons we were given. But now that we are there, two imperatives are absolutely clear: America cannot withdraw now, leaving Iraq to chaos or civil war, becoming a danger to us far greater than it did before. The misguided policy of the past is no excuse for a misguided policy for the future. . . ."