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Security

by L. Neil Smith

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I saw on television recently that they're planning to close down the street in front of the White House -- and call it a "pedestrian mall" -- for fear that something like the Oklahoma City bombing might happen on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Fine. Most Americans don't know how tightly-controlled Washington has already become, with sheaves of guided missiles poised to destroy a straying passenger airliner (or even good old

Klaatu and Gort as they try to land their saucer on the White House lawn for a friendly interplanetary chat). This is a city where you're forced to obtain a police permit, not for a gun -- guns are strictly forbidden and therefore in abundant supply -- but for a camera tripod.

One of the basic truths everyone seems to be avoiding these days is that when our national leaders begin hiding behind guided missiles, body armor, "pedestrian malls", bulletproof glass, and tripod control, it's probably for a reason. If you make a career of stealing people's money and screwing with their lives, you're an idiot if you don't expect

some of the more frangible among them -
- oops, did I let a Buckleyism slip,
there? Just pretend I made a reference to
those pots in our society most liable to
crack under stress. Now where was I?
Oh, yes ... the more frangible among
them to begin screwing back.

Equally, you're a lunatic yourself if you
believe, as Bill Clinton has repeatedly
claimed since the disaster in Oklahoma
City, that you can dismiss it with the
petulant accusation that anyone who
rejects your "benevolence" is crazy.

At one time in the history of our
technology, miners used to carry cages
with canaries in them, deep into the
mines, as a precaution against anoxia or

poison gases. When the canaries, with their faster metabolisms, passed out, the miners knew it was time to get back topside in a hurry. Individuals like the Oklahoma City bomber are a civilization's canaries, indicating to everyone with half an eye to see (except, of course, for politicians and bureaucrats, society's chief generators of metaphorical gases), that something has gone dreadfully wrong.

Unlike politicians and bureaucrats, most Americans have a fair idea of what it is. They know that events like the Waco massacre and the Ruby Ridge murders are just the visible tip of an iceberg. Despite the most strenuous efforts at

truth-suppression on the part of the mass media (who have sold out contemptibly to a government they were intended to continuously oppose) we've reached a kind of saturation level where everybody knows personally of some blatant violation of individual rights that somehow didn't make the evening news.

It may be "ancient history": the Hutterite boy in the first World War who, as a pacifist, submitted to conscription but would not wear the uniform. Chained up by the wrists from an overhead pipe in a flooded basement at Leavenworth, he died of pneumonia during a freezing Kansas winter. When his mother arrived to claim his body, she was informed that

it had already been buried -- in an Army uniform.

It may be something more recent: Mormons peacefully practicing plural marriage, according to their religious beliefs, whose homes were raided, whose families were herded together, sorted out, and photographed holding numbered cards, and who were illegally locked up by the government until they signed documents renouncing polygamy - - instantly converting their children into bastards. This travesty happened in the 1950s. Yes, I said the NINETEEN fifties.

Clinton's protestations are, of course, ridiculous. It should be perfectly

apparent, even to someone with only half a brain to think, that he and his wife are hell-bent on doing to the Bill of Rights what the Oklahoma City bomber did to the Murrah Building, or their Attorney General did to the Branch Davidians. They and their party have engaged in a relentless war against the very concept of individual rights for more than 60 years, and the only response ever heard above the level of a craven whisper from Republicans is that they, too, can strip Americans of their liberties -- only they can do it cheaper than the Democrats.

Nothing since the election last November indicates any real change in

that symbiotic relationship. Today the only free press in the world, the internet, thunders with horror stories of house invasions, property seizures, kidnappings of children by witch doctors pretending to be protectors, false imprisonments and beatings, framings and murders of innocent civilians, none of them occurring in South Africa, Bosnia, or Haiti, but right here in America.

And one by one, as we see in Oklahoma City, canaries are beginning to keel over.

It's time for all of us "miners" to get topside in a hurry. "Topside" means a return to the basic operating principles that made this the most peaceful,

prosperous, and progressive nation a sorry, bloodsoaked world had ever seen. "Topside" means beginning to hold sacred once again 481 words that let each and every one of us know exactly where he or she stands, and that we may sleep peacefully at night without worrying that black-shirted goons may smash our doors in, tie us up, wreck our homes, steal our children, seize our savings and possessions, stomp our pets to death, and get away with all of it, Scot free.

Those 481 words are the first ten amendments to the Constitution. The Bill of Rights. The highest law of the land. One or two of them may put you off a

trifle, but you can bet your last dime that somebody else would love to repeal whichever one you happen to rely on most. So far, most of us have refrained from that kind of "mutual assured destruction" because, deep down, each of us understands that those 481 words are all that ever made America different from any monarchy or dictatorship, powerful or petty, on the planet. They are what must be enforced -- stringently -- if we are to be different once again.

Americans need to see the Bill of Rights enforced. They need to see commitment, a massive national undertaking comparable to that involved in sending astronauts to the moon or fighting World

War II. They need to see several thousand politicians and bureaucrats hauled out of their offices in manacles and leg-irons, preferably by federal marshals exactly the way "inside traders" were treated in the 80s, before this country can be entirely sane again.

One benefit to such an undertaking -- that of rebuilding a free America -- is that it would deprive the canaries of any legitimacy they might otherwise claim. Ironically, it would create conditions under which Clinton would be correct in observing that there is no justification or need to resort to violence out of a fear that the government is scheming to take your rights away. But it would deprive

him and his own "Dark Forces" of their legitimacy, as well.

The alternative? Well, that would be going on the way we have, wouldn't it? With the politicians and bureaucrats doing whatever the hell they want to us - - and more and more of the canaries among us popping off -- until all of America's streets are turned, first into sidewalks, and then into prison walls.

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