

**Select Committee on Foreign Affairs Written Evidence****Memorandum from Paul McGowan**

1. I have already written to my MP, Mr Jim Cunningham, along the following lines. I make the points again, as an ordinary citizen, as a contribution to the Committee's work.

2. To begin with, I do not see the need for any inquiry into this matter. If the Government had adequate information before the war, it could now safely divulge all of it. On the other hand, if it will not now divulge the information it had at the time, it can only be because it knows that it was inadequate. If it was inadequate, then the Government went to war recklessly. This is a most serious conclusion to arrive at.

3. Next, it has to be accepted that the publicly stated intention of the Government was to go to war with Iraq in order to enforce its compliance with the repeated will of the United Nations, namely that it should rid itself of certain prohibited weapons. It was never formulated by the United Nations that the Iraqi regime was so offensive that it should not be allowed to continue to rule the country. Therefore, since the UK Government expended great efforts to ensure UN authorisation for war against Iraq, we cannot allow any shifting of ground away from what was explicitly formulated by the UN. Tampering with legally-binding statements is a most serious matter.

4. Now, it is increasingly often said in justification of the war against Iraq that the regime of Saddam Hussein was so injurious to the rights and well-being of the ordinary people of Iraq that a great good has been achieved by the actions of the USA and the UK. To this, it is sufficient to recall the old adage "Two wrongs do not make a right". That is to say, if the decision to go to war was wrongly made in the first place, no amount of alternative justifications will cancel out the original error. I dare say you may regard this as hopelessly academic, and even heartless, but if we do not observe basic principles then we may find we have no arguments left when great harm is done to us in the name of some other cause.

5. Further, the view is often put forward that the world is undoubtedly a better place for the removal of Saddam Hussein and his entourage. I think, though, that there have been large numbers of very worthy and innocent individuals whose death or mutilation has

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been the price of this improvement in global well-being. It is not at all obvious to me, I have to say, that the deaths of brave service personnel, consciously agreeing to give their lives on our behalf, really does make the world a better place. Would it not be a better place if these courageous and selfless individuals had remained with us, so that we might have continued to benefit from their example? And as for the innocent victims who must now bear the burden for the rest of their lives, while our attention moves on elsewhere—how is their suffering to be balanced against the importance of a man who stood for nothing except his own survival and power?

6. Some say that the protection of human rights is a matter which may well call for the use of armed force. Well, be that as it may, I say that any government which casts off clear moral principles under cover of realpolitik will pay a heavy price in the end. I also fear that other innocents in our own country, too, may pay an even heavier price at the hands of the enemies which such a government may make. Indeed, Miss Manningham-Buller has made the point only today that western Europe will suffer such attacks.

7. In circumstances such as these, we are all called to grapple with difficult decisions. But there are moments at which it is essential that we take the right course. Mr Blair, I believe, was led astray by a vision of his own "importance" on the world stage. MIPs of all parties failed to stop the Government when they had the chance. It might have been painful at the time, but it would have saved us from the present quagmire. The public, too, failed to exert its will over political decision-makers.

8. There can only be one outcome to all of this. It is clear, in spite of the delay imposed by the setting-up of inquiries, that the UK had no sufficient justification for going to war against Iraq. Therefore, the longer and the more insistently Mr Blair clings to his assertions to the contrary, the more impossible his position as Prime Minister will become. He cannot now escape political disaster. The damage to public trust in the government will continue to spread. The questions which politicians such as yourselves will have to confront is will you protect the Prime Minister or will you tell the country the truth?

*Paul McGowan*

*June 2003*

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