"That Needs to Change"

by Phyllis Schlafly Mar. 8, 2006

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"That needs to change" was Oprah's reply to Nan Talese of Doubleday, publisher of "A Million Little Pieces." After James Frey's "memoir" was exposed as a tissue of lies, Doubleday had tried to escape responsibility by saying that publishers don't fact-check non-fiction books.

To President Bush's approval of the $6.5 billion sale of terminals at six of our most important ports to the United Arab Emirates, Americans are shouting, "That needs to change." We are fed up with the post-9/11 failure (i.e., the refusal) of the Bush Administration to secure our borders and ports.

Bush's defense is, "Trust me." Sorry 'bout that. Bush's constituency prefers the Reagan maxim, "Trust but verify."

Ports pose a vital security concern because fewer than five percent of the more than 14 million containers that go through U.S. ports every year are inspected. We hope the other 95 percent of containers don't contain bombs or contraband.

The fact that the UAE has been helpful in some respects since 9/11 does not trump the facts that two of the 9/11 hijackers came from the UAE and some money to finance 9/11 was laundered through that country's banking system. Dubai was the main trans-shipment point for the Pakistani nuclear engineer who ran the world's

largest nuclear proliferation ring and shipped equipment to enrich uranium from there to Libya, Iran and North Korea.

In defending the sale and pledging to veto any bill Congress might pass to cancel the deal, President Bush said, "I want those who are questioning it to step up and explain why all of a sudden a Middle Eastern company is held to a different standard than a great British company." That's easy to explain.

In the first place, Dubai Ports isn't just a Middle Eastern company; it's wholly owned by a Middle East government. We oppose this deal for the same reason that we successfully blocked Cosco, a company owned by the Communist Chinese government, from taking over the port of Long Beach, California.

To those who are looking for a standard for U.S. decision-making, here it is: the ports are American property and we're fully entitled to make any decision we believe is in the best interest of the United States of America. No law requires us to treat all countries the same.

We've been friends with England since 1814, connected by history, common law, language and wartime alliances, and there is no reason why we can't prefer England over a country that votes against us in the United Nations 70 percent of the time, and whose total existence depends on selling us oil at exorbitant prices.

The Committee on Foreign Investments in the United States didn't do a mandatory 45-day investigation. CFIUS was so casual that it failed to require Dubai Ports to keep copies of its business records on U.S. soil where they would be subject to orders from U.S. courts, and failed to require the company to designate an American citizen to accommodate U.S. requests.

Those obligations are commonly attached to U.S. approvals of foreign sales. CFIUS merely asked Dubai Ports to operate our seaports with existing U.S.

managers "to the extent possible" and to take "all reasonable steps" to assist the Homeland Security Department.

The UAE has resurrected three has-been politicians: Republican Bob Dole (KS), and Democrats Tom Downey (NY) and Carol Browner (Clinton's head of the Environmental Protection Agency), to lobby for the port deal. They have a hard sell.

Former presidential candidate Gary Hart was plucked from political limbo to sound off on television. He said the deal illustrates "the confluence of the age of terrorism with the age of globalism, and we're just going to have to get used to it."

No, we don't. The American people are ready to ditch globalism and free trade if that means we must acquiesce in a deal made in London to let a Middle Eastern government run our ports in New York, Miami, Newark-Port Elizabeth, Philadelphia, New Orleans, and Baltimore, and exercise some control over the great U.S. Army port at Beaumont, Texas.

Lacking logical arguments, those who back Bush's position try to tar their opponents with smear words such as "racism" and "scaremongering." David Brooks outdid himself in his New York Times column by hurling a torrent of ugly epithets: "xenophobic," "Know Nothing," "nativist," "isolationist," "mass hysteria," "hatemonger," "collective mania," "reactionaries," "panderers," "bogus," "blowhard," "America First brigades," "xenophobic hysteria," and ending up with "garbage."

In a national radio debate in which I participated, the pro-UAE-deal spokesmen's principal argument was that the Arab world would be terribly upset by a cancellation of the deal, and we should be sensitive to their concerns because we all have to live in this world together. Au contraire. They should be sensitive to Americans' patriotic feelings and quietly withdraw from the deal just as China

National Offshore Oil Co. (in the face of U.S. opposition) last year withdrew its $18.5 billion all-cash bid to acquire Unocal, one of America's oldest oil companies.

It's bad news for Republican candidates that Bush has allowed Hillary Clinton to get to his right on a national security issue.