



Source: AFP, AP, 'Israel urges UN to throw out Iran', *The Australian online*, 28/10/05.

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Today Harriet Miers requested that her nomination to the US Supreme Court be withdrawn. This seems like good news, but may not turn out to be. The president is an idiot, the sneering puppet of a vicious, venal cabal, and he likes to have his friends around, but perhaps someone will whisper in his ear that he needs to nominate someone who is actually qualified, and better still, someone who will quell the dissatisfaction among his lunatic Christian supporters, that fanatical minority whose voice is so disproportionately loud. Tomorrow, perhaps, two of the most important advisers to the President and Vice President, respectively, may be indicted for criminal acts in connection to the faking of the case for war in Iraq. It will be interesting to see whether they fall on their swords. Bet not. Meanwhile, 1,869 American soldiers have died in Iraq since 'mission accomplished' in May, 2003. The official estimate of the wounded is over 15,000, though other sources suggest as many as 30,000. Some 4,700 Iraqi security personnel have died in 2005 alone, and estimates of total Iraqi casualties of the war range from 25,000 to 100,000 (as projected by the British medical journal *Lancet*). Perhaps no one will ever know, let alone how many have been hurt. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran, whose constituency bears comparison with the US President's 'base', just called for Israel to be wiped off the map, while the Israeli army was firing rockets at jihadists in Gaza. In New Orleans and Florida, after the hurricanes Katrina and Wilma, services have yet to reach those in need, but Halliburton has contracts to 'help', which must be a comfort. The death penalty is in place and frequently used, despite the so-called 'culture of life' championed by our fearless leader, not to mention the demonstrable inequities of its application, or the immorality of the state killing its citizens. But then, the administration means to retain, as if legal, the right to torture prisoners of war. In Kansas, the six person majority on the state's elected Board of Education insists that the ironically-named 'intelligent design' be taught as one of a number of alternatives to evolutionary theory. In a world where the stupid lead the ignorant, that one seems especially galling.

I've spent the day at work at an elite, northeastern women's liberal arts college, teaching arcane interpretations of performance art in the period 1965 to 1975. I can live with myself, because it seems to me that at this point, increasing the store of intelligent, critical thought in the world is what I can best do. Still, sometimes (given the good fortune not to have to duck gunfire, bombs or houses falling down), you just have to cover your ears, not let the noise drown you. So, first the rant, then the recipe. Tired, and sharing in that alienation and disaffection which is the lot of so many who don't recognize the legitimacy of our so-called leaders ('political

depression', it's been called), the thing to do is spend a little time in the kitchen, concentrate for a while on preparing a quiet, civilized meal. As the English cook Fergus Henderson wrote of this dish in his book, *The Whole Beast: Nose to Tail Eating*, 'Even just writing this recipe down, its soothing qualities have quite restored me from the fragile state in which I was.'

Fish Pie
A Pie for Four

3 fillets of natural smoked haddock
10 black peppercorns
3 1/3 cups of milk
3 1/4 to 3 1/2 pounds potatoes, peeled and cut into quarters
2 sticks plus 1 tablespoon unsalted butter, and more still
3/4 cup all-purpose flour four 10-minute hard-boiled eggs, peeled and minimally chopped
sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

In an ovenproof dish, cover the smoked haddock and peppercorns with 2 cups of the milk and bake in a medium to hot 375F oven for approximately 20 minutes. Check whether the fish has cooked through: it should easily flake when prodded with a knife. Remove it from the milk, strain and save the milk, and flake the flesh off the haddock skins into hearty bite-sized chunks.

Meanwhile, boil your potatoes. When they are cooked, drain and mash them, blend in the rest of the milk and 10 tablespoons of butter, and season with salt and pepper. While the potatoes are boiling, melt the remaining 7 tablespoons of butter in a non-aluminum pan, and when it's starting to bubble, add the flour and stir until the mixture smells biscuity (this suggests the flour is cooked), but do not let the mixture change color. There must be no browning at all, so be cautious with the heat. Then add the warm fish milk, whisking as you go to avoid lumps (whisking in aluminium would turn the sauce a nasty gray). Let the sauce thicken until it easily coats the back of your spoon, and check the seasoning.

Now we are ready to construct the fish pie. In a pie dish place your haddock and hard-boiled eggs. Pour your fishy white sauce over, leaving room for you to spread on the top layer of potatoes. Then run a fork across the top of the potatoes, as if plowing a field. This is no mere decoration, but aids the crisping-up factor.

Dot the top with little knobs of butter, place the pie in a hot 425F oven, and cook for 30 minutes or until piping hot and golden brown. Serve with boiled peas.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Frazer Ward.