

# the BEACON



Journal of the  
Melbourne Unitarian  
Peace Memorial  
Church

August 2013  
Price /\$2

SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

## RUDD VS ABBOTT: IS THERE A DIFFERENCE?

EDITORIAL

It is election time and throughout the labour movement and among the mass of the people there is much debate and questioning about parliamentary elections. Whether to vote or not? Is there a difference between the parties? Does it matter who is in power? Which leader is best, etc., and given the flabby and sometimes outright reactionary nature of some of Labor's policies, it's little wonder. So perhaps it is timely to look at these questions and clarify our views. What are yours?

### To vote or not to vote!

How often have you heard someone say 'I'm not voting, THEY are all the same, so why waste my time? David Foster Wallace, from the essay 'Up Simba' said, 'In reality, there is no such thing as not voting: you either vote by voting, or you vote by staying home and tacitly doubling the value of some Diehard's vote.' The right to vote was hard won: the decision to not vote is not an argument for intelligent people. There is bad, but there is worse!

### Is there a difference?

Of course there are differences. They may be minimal on some policies; however, there are some constraints on Labor politicians, exerted on our behalf by the more progressive elements remaining in the Party, by the trade union movement, and by international organisations. There are also still some policy issues that continue to restrain a Labor government from becoming even more reactionary. For example, Labor generally supports multiculturalism and is more likely to approve higher immigration levels than the Coalition although its current policy on asylum seekers is to be deplored. Labor is the primary supporter of issues that affect Indigenous Australians such as land rights and supported a formal apology on the issue of the Stolen Generations. Labor

is also more likely to support additional rights for gay and lesbian people and is a stronger supporter of equal opportunity legislation than the Coalition. Labor MPs are more likely to support pro-choice positions on abortion and euthanasia, but the Party almost always provides MPs with a conscience vote on these matters.

### Which leader is best?

It is the media that promotes the leadership issue because it diverts us from what is fundamentally important and that is: What are the issues? What is the general philosophy of each party? What is their program? What is their plan for the future? These are what we must make our judgments on.

Sadly on many issues the differences are not clear enough: on foreign policy, on attitudes to privatisation, on social welfare and pensions, on the environment. However, this is where we need to make a decision. Is there a difference, however slight, and which party can we hope to influence the most?

Church members and *Beacon* readers have a very important responsibility

here. We need to determine our policies on these issues and utilise every opportunity to ensure that they are expressed publicly. Election day is only one day ... our responsibilities are ongoing.

Our role is to build public awareness of the kind of world we know is possible: to work toward a world free from war; to protect our environment in every way possible; to ensure a decent, dignified and secure life for every Australian, with the right to housing, health, employment, social justice and human rights; and an independent foreign policy.

These are the issues we want government to pursue. These are the policies we demand. ■

*Sadly on many issues  
the differences are  
not clear enough:  
on foreign policy,  
on attitudes to  
privatisation, on social  
welfare and pensions,  
on the environment.*

# Ethical battle *hovers over* use of drone technology

Will the ethics of war become collateral damage as America's use of drone technology takes off? writes **Joseph Camilleri**.

In an important speech delivered last week President Barack Obama has defended the use of drones by invoking the just war doctrine.

This much awaited justification rests on two fallacies: that the United States is formally at war; and that it can be just to kill someone for a crime in the absence of a fair trial.

Why did the US president feel compelled to offer this lengthy but belated explanation of America's drone policy? Put simply, because the use of drones is now increasingly contentious as it becomes the favoured response of the US military and intelligence establishment to the terrorist threat – from Afghanistan to Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and beyond.

A number of terrorists have no doubt been killed, but so have many others, including civilians. One estimate puts the death toll since 2004 at between 1,963 and 3,293. Republican Senator Lindsey Graham estimates the number to be 4,700.

The great attraction of the drone is that the killing appears risk free. The need to deploy US troops on distant and dangerous terrain is greatly reduced, while those who direct the drone are safely ensconced thousands of miles away at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia.

The CIA has been flying unarmed drones over Afghanistan since 2000. Drones were actually used during the air war against the Taliban in late 2001, but it was not until February 2002 that the CIA first used a drone for a pure CIA 'kill operation'.

Since then covert unmanned target killing has become commonplace.

The defence of drone strikes offered by Obama boils down to three key propositions:

- Terrorism is a serious and ongoing threat, therefore the US remains 'at war'.
- When detention and prosecution of terrorists is not possible, target killing becomes legitimate.
- Assassination by drones is the lesser of two evils, reducing the likely number of military and civilian casualties.



This line of argument is deeply flawed. Countries and communities are subject to all kinds of threat, including serious loss of life and property – whether it is at the hands of deranged individuals or criminal groups of various kinds. The narcotics trade and human trafficking are just two examples.

But a country is not at war with such groups except in a symbolic or metaphorical sense. In these instances, countries are not strictly speaking engaged in war. They are not taking military action against the military threat posed by another state – action which is clearly subject to the laws of armed conflict.

Obama's predecessor, George W Bush, launched the 'war on terror' precisely because it offered the United States a way of dealing with suspected terrorists outside the confines of the rule of law.

As a consequence, enhanced interrogation techniques (generally classified as torture), 'extraordinary rendition' and indefinite detention at Guantanamo became integral to the 'war on terror'.

Now in the fifth year of his presidency, Obama is still trying to distance himself from the Guantanamo fiasco, only to find himself ensnared in another can of worms – covert targeted assassinations also conducted in the name of the 'war on terror'.

But is targeted killing 'war' and, if so, is it in accord with the laws of war?

What is clear is that targeted killing does not engage the enemy in battle, since drone attacks occur in times and places where there is no armed conflict.

How, then, can we be confident that those designated for death pose an imminent, dangerous and violent threat? Who is authorised to make these decisions? And, what

if the designation proves to be mistaken – something which is known to have happened more than once? Who then bears responsibility? And what are the processes by which those responsible for those mistakes can be brought to account?

It is difficult to see how surreptitious and riskless killing can be in any way regarded as war in a conventional sense, and how it can be subjected to the most basic rules of armed conflict, including hors de combat immunity and the possibility of individual surrender.

But this is just the beginning of the dilemma.

Who are these suspected terrorists? They do not represent an enemy state. They have no fixed address, and often have no clear organisational links.

While some may be thought to have prominent leadership roles in Al Qaeda, the majority do not. Some may be members of state-sponsored networks, but most are likely to be members of autonomous shadowy cells and extremist groups.

How can such a disparate and elusive group be engaged in anything approaching what we normally regard as 'war'?

All of which has another far-reaching implication. By virtue of their mobility and effective statelessness, these suspects can move rapidly from one country to another. What happens when a particular country is opposed to the use of American drones over its territory? Will the US accept that judgment? Or will it pursue its targeting regardless, in defiance of that state's sovereignty?

The US president cannot but be aware of these pitfalls. This is why he has attempted to limit the hostile fallout by stipulating that: there must be near-certainty that no civilian casualties will result. He has also called for a review leading to additional oversight of drone attacks.

But key questions remain unanswered: Who is authorised to make these decisions? Will the decision process be transparent? Who is to bear responsibility in the event of mistaken decisions? In what sense, if any, will US actions be subject to the international rule of law?

Beyond this, the United States needs to consider the political and strategic fallout of drone attacks. The use of the drone has already created enormous ill will towards the United States in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

This is hardly surprising when a drone supposedly targeting a terrorist ends up killing members of a wedding party.

And if the United States wishes to argue that targeted killings are a legitimate instrument against enemies of the American state, what is to prevent Russia, China, Iran, Syria or any number of other countries from using precisely the same argument in years to come.

Does President Obama intend a drone arms race to become part of his legacy? ■

---

**Professor Joseph A Camilleri OAM is Professor Emeritus at La Trobe University.**

## Is there blood on your T-shirt?

Questions from Bangladesh's tragedy

by Michele O'Neil, 30 April 2013

**H**undreds of low-paid garment workers are dead after a factory collapse in Bangladesh. It's about time wealthy consumers in Western countries faced up to why their clothes are so cheap, argues Michele O'Neil, National Secretary of the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia.

Just last week I was in Singapore at a meeting of unionists organising textile, clothing and footwear workers around the world. Safety in Bangladesh was high on our agenda and raised in nearly every issue and plan we discussed. The Bangladesh union leaders there spoke of workers' fear, of the union not being able to enter workplaces, of long hours, pay too low to live on, of the horror of fires and not just the grief of death, but the lifelong injuries and pain of those who survived. They described searching through the burnt remains of Bangladesh's Tazeen factory in November last year (where 112 workers died) for labels to prove which companies had been manufacturing there as all were denying responsibility.

Two days after that meeting in Singapore, the Rana Plaza building collapsed in Bangladesh.

More than 380 workers are confirmed dead, the rescue effort has now stopped with 900 others missing—presumed dead. Over 1000 are seriously injured. Many were making garments, some destined for export to Western countries.

Do not be fooled by global brands' promises of investigation, statements of sorrow and concern and website statements of corporate social responsibility.

This is not an isolated incident. Bangladesh is the most dangerous place on earth to work behind a sewing machine. Over the last decade more than 600 garment workers have lost their lives there, making fashion for the Western world.

Another level to this tragedy has been the revelation that only the day before, local police ordered the building be evacuated as large cracks had opened up in



columns on the upper floors. Bosses stood outside the plant the next morning assuring workers everything was OK and herding them inside. Facing a penalty of three days' docked pay for every day missed, most of the 3000 workers must have felt they had no choice but to file into the teetering death trap.

In the days since the collapse, angry workers have taken to the streets of the city of Dhaka, stopped work, and blockaded freeways and the Garment Makers Association. The Bangladesh government responded with rubber bullets and tear gas.

This industry is worth \$20 billion to Bangladesh annually. The owner of the building who sent workers back into the building before it collapsed is a minor politician in the ruling party. He had approval to build only five of his building's eight storeys. There are 51 factory inspectors in a country with 5000 clothing factories, and many thousands of other factories.

'... why do we accept in 2013 that for the sake of fashion or a bargain we turn a blind eye to the truth of the labour behind the label?'

Companies are attempting to distance themselves from responsibility by no longer directly employing manufacturing workers or owning their own factories. They then seek absolution by saying 'it's not our factory', 'I'm not the employer', 'it was an unauthorised subcontractor' or 'how were we to know?'

Shame –it's your label, it's your product, it's your profit.

Our union sometimes gets accused of forcing Australian jobs offshore because we fight for workers to receive a wage they can live on, have safety standards that protect their lives, and laws that require companies to disclose the details of their whole supply chain—whether their clothes are being made in a factory or someone's home. Well, I'm OK with that—it can't be a job at any price. Safe work with dignity is not too much to ask.

The results of not having strong laws and unions are clear: look no further than Rana Plaza. Isn't the real question why we accept in 2013 that for the sake of fashion or a bargain we turn a blind eye to the truth of the labour behind the label?

Companies that search the globe to find the lowest labour costs cannot claim ignorance to the consequences of that decision. The only way that Bangladesh factories can make clothes for the price they do is because they pay workers less than a living wage, compromise safety and punish union organising.

Well, consumers have power. Some of the companies, shops and brands selling Bangladesh-made clothes here in Australia are Target, Big W, G-Star, Adidas, Duchamp, Cotton On and Kmart.

Two of the brands known to manufacture in one of the five collapsed factories inside the Rana Plaza are Mango—which David Jones recently announced a deal to stock—and Benetton, sold throughout Australia in its own and other shops.

Bangladesh is desperate to maintain and grow its garment industry. Global brands are desperate for you to buy and wear their labels. Workers and their families are desperate.

Brand-specific codes, self-regulation and private sector audits don't work.

If you want to support demands for the Bangladesh government to act, visit Labour start. Check the websites of your favourite brands—if they don't fully disclose their supply chain and suppliers, there's a reason. Demand they release the information.

**Name and shame those companies manufacturing in Bangladesh until they agree to be a party to the enforceable factory safety agreement that IndustriALL Global Union and Clean Clothes endorse. Go to IndustriALL <http://www.industrialunion.org/make-garment-factories-in-bangladesh-safe>**

**And Clean Clothes <http://www.cledanclothes.org/action/current-actions/rana-plaza>**

**Or if you simply want to purchase ethically Australian-made clothing go to <http://www.ethicalclothingaustralia.org.au/home> ■**

## Join the campaign

Add your voice of protest on the LabourStart campaign calling to make garment factories in Bangladesh safe at this website [http://www.labourstartcampaigns.net/show\\_campaign.cgi?c=1813](http://www.labourstartcampaigns.net/show_campaign.cgi?c=1813)

### TCFUA

(Textile Clothing & Footwear Union of Australia)  
359 Exhibition Street, Melbourne VIC 3000  
PO Box 441, Carlton South, VIC 3053  
Phone (03) 9639 2955  
Fax (03) 9639 2944  
Email [nationaloffice@tcfvic.org.au](mailto:nationaloffice@tcfvic.org.au)

**TUNE INTO THE  
Unitarian Half Hour**  
EVERY SATURDAY AT 10.30 AM  
3CR • 855 AM • COMMUNITY RADIO

**Increase our Circulation:**  
Nominate potential subscribers for  
three free monthly copies without  
ongoing obligation! (Try before you buy)

# EDWARD SNOWDEN

## PART ONE

by William Blum ([williamblum.org](http://williamblum.org))

In the course of his professional life in the world of national security Edward Snowden must have gone through numerous probing interviews, lie detector examinations, and exceedingly detailed background checks, as well as filling out endless forms carefully designed to catch any kind of falsehood or inconsistency. The *Washington Post* (June 10) reported that 'several officials said the CIA will now undoubtedly begin reviewing the process by which Snowden may have been hired, seeking to determine whether there were any missed signs that he might one day betray national secrets.'

Yes, there was a sign they missed – Edward Snowden had something inside him shaped like a conscience, just waiting for a cause.

It was the same with me. I went to work at the State Department, planning to become a Foreign Service Officer, with the best, the most patriotic of intentions, going to do my best to slay the beast of the international communist conspiracy. But then the horror, on a daily basis, of what the United States was doing to the people of Vietnam was brought home to me in every form of media; it was making me sick at heart. My conscience had found its cause, and nothing that I could have been asked in a pre-employment interview would have alerted my interrogators of the possible danger I posed because I didn't know of the danger myself. No questioning of my friends and relatives could have turned up the slightest hint of the radical anti-war activist I was to become. My friends and relatives were to be as surprised as I was to be. There was simply no way for the State Department security office to know that I should not be hired and given a Secret Clearance.<sup>1</sup>

So, what is a poor National Security State to do? Well, they might consider behaving themselves. Stop doing all the terrible things that grieve people like me, and Edward Snowden, and Bradley Manning, and so many others. Stop the bombings, the invasions, the endless wars, the torture, the sanctions, the overthrows, the support of dictatorships, the unmitigated support of Israel; stop all the things that make the United States so hated, that create all the anti-American terrorists, that compel the National Security State in pure self-defence – to spy on the entire world.

### Eavesdropping on the planet

The above is the title of an essay that I wrote in 2000 that appeared as a chapter in my book *Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower*. Here are some excerpts that may help to put the current revelations surrounding Edward Snowden into perspective ...

Can people in the 21st century imagine a greater invasion of privacy on all of earth, in all of history? If so, they merely have to wait for technology to catch up with their imagination.

Like a mammoth vacuum cleaner in the sky, the National Security Agency (NSA) sucks it all up: home phone, office phone, cellular phone, email, fax, telex ... satellite transmissions, fibre-optic communications traffic, microwave links ... voice, text, images ... captured by satellites continuously orbiting the earth, then processed by high-powered computers ... if it runs on electromagnetic energy, NSA is there, with high high tech. Twenty-four hours a day. Perhaps billions of messages sucked up each day. No one escapes. Not presidents, prime ministers, the UN Secretary-General, the pope, the Queen of England, embassies, transnational corporation CEOs, friend, foe, your Aunt Lena ... if God has a phone, it's being monitored ... maybe your dog isn't being tapped. The oceans will not protect you. American submarines have been attaching tapping pods to deep underwater cables for decades.

Under a system code named ECHELON, launched in the 1970s, the NSA and its junior partners in Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada operate a network of massive, highly automated interception stations, covering the globe amongst them. Any of the partners can ask any of the others to intercept its own domestic communications. It can then truthfully say it does not spy on its own citizens.

Apart from specifically targeted individuals and institutions, the ECHELON system works by indiscriminately intercepting huge quantities of communications and using computers to identify and extract messages of interest from the mass of unwanted ones. Every intercepted message – all the embassy cables, the business deals, the sex talk, the birthday greetings – is searched for keywords, which could be anything the searchers think might be of interest. All it takes to flag a communication is for one of the parties to use a couple or so of the key words in the ECHELON 'dictionary' – 'He lives in a lovely old **white house** on **Bush** Street, right near me. I can **shoot** over there in two minutes.' Within limitations, computers can 'listen' to telephone calls and recognise when keywords are spoken. Those calls are extracted and recorded separately, to be listened to in full by humans. The list of specific targets at any given time is undoubtedly wide ranging, at one point including the likes of Amnesty International and Christian Aid.

*continued page 10*



# Should climate change influence your vote?

by Carolyn Ingvarson

*To answer this question in a word, in case you were in doubt: Yes, climate change should influence your vote, and not just your vote, but how you look at the world around you, where you put your investments, how you shop, how you live, what you read ...*

Once absorbed, understanding climate change is life changing. I had my life changed by an act of my two friends, Alan and Jenny Bishop. They asked me to go to an ACF session of Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*. I wasn't keen. They got the tickets anyway. The thing about events that change your life is you have no idea at the time that that is what they are doing. Somehow, some of the terror that film induced seeped in. Another friend saw me at the film – 'How's your writing course going?' he asked – then swung round and looked me straight in the eyes. 'I know what you can do – write me an article for the local paper I edit – about going to this film – by Tuesday. Ok?' And that was it. When I was forced to reflect on my experience and put it across to others, I saw what it was saying more clearly, and it forced me to make an offer – if there is anyone who feels that we might be able to work together to address this awful truth then let's meet and talk about it. Twelve people came together and we began Lighter Footprints – 7 years ago. I have never been able to do much else since.

The issue for me now is not becoming loony – turning everything into a discussion of the climate. It is greatly off-putting. As the voice becomes raised, so the ears close. My mother was an evangelical Christian and we children became skilled in avoiding any opening that she might possibly take to alert us to our need to be saved. The worst thing that my husband can say to me is, 'You are sounding like your mother!'

Nevertheless, I shall go on! So why take climate change seriously as an election issue? What's the problem? Forgive me for throwing a few figures at you.

The level of GHG (carbon dioxide, methane and a range of other gases found in small amounts) in the atmosphere is now 400 ppm – an increase of 40% in 250 industrialised years – it having been stable around 280 ppm for over 12,000 years. Our global temperature has risen by .8 degrees in that time, and much of the heat captured by the effect of the GHG gas (as well as the carbon itself) is stored in the oceans, which drive our climate patterns.

The impact of higher levels of GHG on global temperature has been documented by scientists for over 100 years. The predictions made have proved to be largely accurate – but it is a complex calculation. The climate science is moving fast and each time there is a revision the risks are found to be more serious than previously thought. For example, since the 2008 Garnaut review, the melting of the Arctic ice has accelerated, and the Greenland and West Antarctic ice have been shown to be already in decline, the permafrost in the Arctic Circle has begun to

vent methane and is predicted to become a source of emissions rather than a sink by 2020.

The science community had been telling us that a rise of 2 degrees would take us to the edge of what this globe could sustain. The two degrees 'guardrail' was intended to protect us from tipping points leading to runaway climate change. However, with less than one degree of warming already, extreme weather events provide evidence that climate change is already impacting with severe consequences. Australia's 'Angry Summer' described by the Climate Commission in *The Critical Decade: Extreme Weather* attests to this.

It is now stated by the International Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) and the UNFCCC that 1.5 degrees must be seen as the maximum safe level – which would require a level of below 350 ppm of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent in the atmosphere. Remember, we are already at 400 ppm, and if we stopped emitting more CO<sub>2</sub> today, the lag in the way these things work would still take the earth's temperature to close to 2 degrees – with consequent huge impacts on the oceans and the climate patterns across the globe.

But we haven't stopped; in fact, emissions continue to rise and the impact of climate change will escalate rapidly as more emissions accumulate. We are on track for a global average temperature rise of 4°C from pre-industrial levels and this is well outside the relatively stable temperatures of the past 12,000 years in which human civilisation developed.

It is more and more evident that we need to return to below 350 ppm and to limit warming to well below 1.5°C. As this is below the current level of 400 ppm, it is clear that we need to rapidly reduce our net emissions to zero and find safe ways to draw down the excess greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

So what we should do is see that our carbon budget for a safe climate future is effectively zero. The transition to a net zero emissions world (not 'low emissions') must occur as fast as humanly possible. It has been argued that a ten-year transition may be possible but only if large changes begin immediately and emergency action is taken that is outside business as usual, and politics as usual.

And who recognises how serious our situation is?

Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, the director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany, and advisor to German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, told the Four Degrees conference in Melbourne in 2011 (and I heard him say this) that he had not told her about some of the impacts associated with a four degrees Celsius warmer world because 'some things are too difficult to tell'. He was referring to the certainty that an earth at 4 degrees hotter could only support 1 billion people and that 75% of known species of animals and plants would be gone.

He left it unclear whether he meant too difficult *personally* or too difficult *politically*. Both are relevant. Even amongst policy makers and world leaders the personal impact of confronting the enormity of the challenges we face may be overwhelming. At a political level, those who tell unpalatable truths risk being denied access to those with the power to make decisions.

But, if the severity of the problem is not explained to those in power, and the public more generally, there is no chance of planning for effective action and of gathering public support. In Australia, neither major party is ready for this message.

They say the task is to lower carbon emissions as fast as we can. Both major parties agree on this. So do the Greens, but the targets they set as effective are much higher than the others. The majors agree they will reduce carbon emissions by 5% off a 2000 base by 2020, the minimum set by countries at Cancun in 2010. Following this 5% trajectory to 2050, the resulting temperature of

this earth will be a rise of 4 degrees and it doesn't stop there with what then becomes unstoppable feedback loops. Not too smart if this risk is accepted as a real one.

Whilst agreeing on the % reduction they will be working to, the parties disagree on how to reduce emissions. As you will recall, the Greens agreed to support Labor in government in return for an Emissions Trading Scheme from 2015 with an early stable phase – the equivalent of a tax on carbon. This is what we have now in place and analysis of the impact of this indicates that at least half of our subsequent drop in emissions (of 6.8%) for this period can only be

accounted for by this tax. Some reduction relates to slowing in manufacturing, to energy efficiencies and the introduction of solar photovoltaic's on 1 million homes. Labor also supports renewable energy schemes and projects, using those funds raised from the 500 top polluters by the tax. And just recently they announced they are standing by this price on carbon as a Labor policy, now even were they to be in opposition – 'because it is right and because it works.'

The Liberal Party is determined to remove the tax and the market mechanism of an ETS and introduce a reverse auction to pay for companies to reduce their emissions – i.e. they'll give dollars to companies that can offer them the best bang for the buck – it is a quick and relatively efficient way to get to the low-hanging fruit. It doesn't generate an ongoing income stream to fund it – it must be funded from the budget. It is not connected to the international carbon markets. It will probably work for the 5% level, but moving to greater reductions becomes harder.

The Greens are continuing to stand on the research from the climate scientists that say our emissions must drop hugely and quickly – 'net zero emission or negative Australian GHG within a decade'. They have been continuing to argue for higher targets.

“

*The Greens are continuing to stand on the research from the climate scientists that say our emissions must drop hugely and quickly – 'net zero emission or negative Australian GHG within a decade'. They have been continuing to argue for higher targets.*

So there are differences between the parties, with Labor offering the strength of a market mechanism which can be ratcheted down over time and that provides an income stream dedicated to renewable energy, Liberals going for a payment to companies to reduce their emissions – along with a swag of other issues related to the take-up of carbon dioxide – through soil carbon and trees, but neither major suggesting that this is a crucial issue for the planet which deserves much greater attention. The Greens are right on it, and will continue to provide that watching brief. There is a website which offers a comparison of the three parties on climate change issues – [voteclimate.net.au](http://voteclimate.net.au).

For my part, the big issue in this next election is the possibility that the Liberal Party may get to hold both houses. There are serious concerns that the approach of the Liberals won't work well long-term, that it will require a lot more money to keep it going in the future and with likely financial constraints approaching it, budget cuts will see it drop away. There are strong forces within the Liberal Party working to undermine any need for reduction in carbon emissions on the grounds that this issue is all a beat up by extremists, and it will undermine our economy, which is based on fossil fuels, so it must be quashed. In my view, if you care about climate as an issue for this planet, then ensure that the Greens at least hold the balance of power in the Senate.

“

*The widely held view that Australia is ideally placed to replace fossil fuels with renewable energy means that our relative failure to do so can have a negative influence on other countries' endeavours to tackle climate change.*

On Friday our group Lighter Footprints went to see Greg Hunt. This was arranged for us by Josh Frydenberg, our local Liberal federal member. Eight of us had lunch with him and talked for an hour and a half. He is a man who understands the science and has never wavered from the position that we must take serious action in the face of the risk. He believes, however, that 5% is all we can do right now. He will promise no more but says it will be easier, once that has been achieved, to argue for more. He will need all his consummate political skills to stay in the seat, as the forces to undermine him are strong. I referred to the comment made by many of his colleagues in response to questions about climate change, that 'the climate is always changing', with a dismissive wave of the hand. He said he had heard it often and just shook his head. There are good people in the Liberal Party who do understand what is required, but the party removed Turnbull to show what they thought of that bipartisan agreement, and this election is being sold by them as about the removal of the carbon tax – an unnecessary burden, with never a reference to the reason we might be needing such a mechanism.

Labor has struggled since the loss of the ETS scheme – their CPRS got so close to a bipartisan agreement. The greatest moral issue of its time is in fact what this dilemma is – and it had resonance with the people at that time. It still has and Labor has been dragged back to it by the Greens and is now hanging on to that – a point of difference between the major parties.

It is a moral issue – not only do we have almost the highest per-capita domestic emission rate in the world (because of all the cheap coal we burn for electricity) and an enormous historical carbon debt, but we also export coal and gas at very high levels to be burnt elsewhere. Put together, this contribution to carbon emissions puts us up to number 5 in the world. Yet still we hear that we produce few emissions compared to the rest of the world so we should wait for others to do things first – and it's true our domestic emissions are small in the total. But we are falling way behind other countries round the world – both large and small – in taking action. Australia is exposed to greater risk of damage from climate change than any other developed country. We have some of the best solar, wind, tidal and wave resources in the world. These resources, once harnessed, are free, forever. We also have the wealth and technology to lead the way.

If we don't lead the way, who will? If it is difficult for us then for which country is it easier? Europe has led the way, but is now (like the US) in the grip of an ongoing recession.

We can't expect India and China to take the lead when:

- their per capita income is far below ours and there are many people living on less than \$2 per day
- their historical contribution to the climate crisis is far less
- their per capita emissions are far less
- a considerable contribution to their growing emissions comes from manufacturing for the Western world.

If Australia were to take a strong stand ahead of the pack then we could exert influence on the developed countries similar to ourselves and start a chain reaction of escalating ambition. There are other small countries pulling their weight and when these are put together, their contribution is significant.

Australia does punch above its weight in these matters, with many countries watching what we do. As Garnaut says, '... it would have a positive effect if Australia were to announce that we had established mechanisms that would allow us to catch up over time with the average effort of developed countries and to stay there once we had caught up.' The widely held view that Australia is ideally placed to replace fossil fuels with renewable energy means that our relative failure to do so can have a negative influence on other countries' endeavours to tackle climate change.

These are the issues that we in the climate movement are lobbying for. (We put statements like the ones I've just mentioned here into a submission to the Climate Change Authority to put pressure on the government.)

So if there is not a likely government we can elect in September that will be leading us to a strong reduction in emissions, if the best we can hope for is a balance of power in the Senate, then what else can we do?

You can join groups like ours who do the hard yards of lobbying. We do lots!

But there is one thing you can all do – you can check out where your investments are going, and ask your super funds exactly where their money is going, and get out of supporting fossil fuels – or press for this.

Let me finish with some words from Bill McKibben, who is currently in town. He's an American climate activist who describes himself as a quiet Methodist Sunday school teacher who has been jolted out of his complacency, been pushed to centre stage, and is now working with ordinary people around the globe to raise awareness of this global issue and suggest some actions.

He sees the fossil fuel industry as a very strong direct lobby on government, being the vested interest with most to lose from a reduction in carbon emissions and, in addition, as the force which is behind the deniers. He believes we must have a strategy to deal with that force.

I quote here some pieces from an article on Bill in the Conversation Hour: 'The fossil fuel industry are outlaws against the laws of physics.' He contends that the fossil fuel industry needs to lose its veneer of respectability, the way the tobacco industry has. 'If it is wrong to wreck the climate then it is wrong to profit from that wreckage'.

In 2012, a disturbing report called **Unburnable Carbon: Are the World's Financial Markets Carrying a Carbon Bubble?** was released. The report concluded that investors were exposed to the risk of unburnable carbon: 'If the 2°C target is rigorously applied, then up to 80% of declared reserves owned by the world's largest listed coal, oil and gas companies and their investors would be subject to impairment as these assets become stranded'. He launched his visit to Australia with this – 'The truth is that Australia's coal has to stay in the ground, along with Canada's oil, and the huge reserves of gas in the US, and so on ... If that carbon is poured into the atmosphere, the equation laid out above won't work, and the planet will overheat disastrously'. McKibben concluded that if you invest in fossil fuels, 'You're betting that we're going to tank the earth'.

He warned the carbon bubble means 'Your pension is being used in a \$6 trillion climate gamble'. He encourages universities and colleges to divest themselves of fossil fuel investments. He commented that 'students are demanding that their boards of trustees end their

investments in the fossil fuel industry whose business plan guarantees these kids will not have a future really in which to carry out their educations'. Divestment movements have also sprung up in Australia and Canada in the higher education sectors. The **Uniting Church in Australia** has pledged to divest itself of fossil fuel investments.

He highlighted the investments by Australian financial institutions in fossil fuel projects. In Australia, there has been much debate about investments by banks in respect of **fossil fuel projects** – particularly by the Big Four (Westpac, ANZ, the Commonwealth Bank, and the National Australia Bank).

The **Whitehaven controversy** and the ANZ Out of Order campaign certainly highlighted mining investments by financial institutions. The Future Fund has also come under scrutiny for its accounting of climate risks in Freedom of Information applications by the Climate Institute.

So there you have it.

The diabolical dilemma that Garnaut refers to is that we must shift to an economy that is not based on carbon, where energy is sourced renewably, and carbon is being drawn from the atmosphere and the oceans, and we must do that across so many different nations and have made real inroads by 2020.

We will need to determine what is our fair share and help some of the other countries. We are a country that will feel the impacts of climate change – early and deeply, and yet we are the country with the strongest fossil fuel lobby, fighting every possible approach to achieving such change. Our major parties have their arms held up their backs by this powerful lobby and the Greens with good policies have limited influence.

Action must come from the people, as it is now beginning to – with changed behaviours, and changed investments, and through building grassroots pressure groups. I trust that you too will play your part in this drama because you must, and because in the lifetime of your children, this planet will be no place to live if you don't. ■

## DID YOU KNOW...

### zero gravity ballpoint pens

When NASA first started sending up astronauts, they quickly discovered that ball-point pens would not work in 0 gravity. To combat this problem, NASA scientists spent a decade and \$12 billion developing a pen that writes in zero gravity, upside down, underwater, on almost any surface including glass and at temperatures ranging from below freezing to over 300 C. The Russians used a pencil.

Our church is a public and usable asset with portable seating and excellent conference, meeting and function facilities. We welcome its use by those who support our motto 'Seek the Truth and Serve Humanity'. Interested individuals or groups can contact the church office – we would be delighted to speak to you. A donation is payable.

### PAYPAL ACCOUNT

The church has now opened a PayPal account. If you have access to PayPal – all you need do is log on and the church's PayPal address is **admin@melbourneunitarian.org.au** Visit our web page and click on the link. You will be able to pay your subscription and make donations.

ECHELON is carried out without official acknowledgment of its existence, let alone any democratic oversight or public or legislative debate as to whether it serves a decent purpose. The extensiveness of the ECHELON global network is a product of decades of intense Cold War activity. Yet with the end of the Cold War, its budget – far from being greatly reduced – was increased, and the network has grown in both power and reach; yet another piece of evidence that the Cold War was not a battle against something called ‘the international communist conspiracy’.

The European Parliament in the late 1990s began to wake up to this intrusion into the continent’s affairs. The parliament’s Civil Liberties Committee commissioned a report that appeared in 1998 and recommended a variety of measures for dealing with the increasing power of the technologies of surveillance. It bluntly advised: ‘The European Parliament should reject proposals from the United States for making private messages via the global communications network [Internet] accessible to US intelligence agencies.’ The report denounced Britain’s role as a double agent, spying on its own European partners.

Despite these concerns, the US has continued to expand ECHELON surveillance in Europe, partly because of heightened interest in commercial espionage – to uncover industrial information that would provide American corporations with an advantage over foreign rivals.

German security experts discovered several years ago that ECHELON was engaged in heavy commercial spying in Europe. Victims included such German firms as the wind generator manufacturer Enercon. In 1998, Enercon developed what it thought was a secret invention, enabling it to generate electricity from wind power at a far cheaper rate than before. However, when the company tried to market its invention in the United States, it was confronted by its American rival Kenetech, which announced that it had already patented a near-identical development. Kenetech then brought a court order against Enercon to ban the sale of its equipment in the US. In a rare public disclosure, an NSA employee, who refused to be named, agreed to appear in silhouette on German television to reveal how he had stolen Enercon’s secrets by tapping the telephone and computer link lines that ran between Enercon’s research laboratory and its production unit some 12 miles away. Detailed plans of the company’s invention were then passed on to Kenetech.

In 1994, Thomson SA, located in Paris, and Airbus Industrie, based in Blagnac Cedex, France, also lost lucrative contracts, snatched away by American rivals aided by information covertly collected by NSA and CIA. The same agencies also eavesdropped on Japanese representatives during negotiations with the United States in 1995 over auto parts trade.

German industry has complained that it is in a particularly vulnerable position because the government forbids its security services from conducting similar industrial espionage. ‘German politicians still support the rather naive idea that political allies should not spy on each other’s businesses. The Americans and the British do

not have such illusions,’ said journalist Udo Ulfkotte, a specialist in European industrial espionage, in 1999.

That same year, Germany demanded that the United States recall three CIA operatives for their activities in Germany involving economic espionage. The news report stated that the Germans ‘have long been suspicious of the eavesdropping capabilities of the enormous US radar and communications complex at Bad Aibling, near Munich’, which is in fact an NSA intercept station. ‘The Americans tell us it is used solely to monitor communications by potential enemies, but how can we be entirely sure that they are not picking up pieces of information that we think should remain completely secret?’ asked a senior German official. Japanese officials most likely have been told a similar story by Washington about the more than a dozen signals intelligence bases which Japan has allowed to be located on its territory.

In their quest to gain access to more and more private information, the NSA, the FBI, and other components of the US national security establishment have been engaged for years in a campaign to require American telecommunications manufacturers and carriers to design their equipment and networks to optimise the authorities’ wiretapping ability. Some industry insiders say they believe that some US machines approved for export contain NSA ‘back doors’ (also called ‘trap doors’).

The United States has been trying to persuade European Union countries as well to allow it ‘back door’ access to encryption programs, claiming that this was to serve the needs of law enforcement agencies. However, a report released by the European Parliament in May 1999 asserted that Washington’s plans for controlling encryption software in Europe had nothing to do with law enforcement and everything to do with US industrial espionage. The NSA has also dispatched FBI agents on break-in missions to snatch codebooks from foreign facilities in the United States, and CIA officers to recruit foreign communications clerks abroad and buy their code secrets, according to veteran intelligence officials.

For decades, beginning in the 1950s, the Swiss company Crypto AG sold the world’s most sophisticated and secure encryption technology. The firm staked its reputation and the security concerns of its clients on its neutrality in the Cold War or any other war. The purchasing nations, some 120 of them – including prime US intelligence targets such as Iran, Iraq, Libya and Yugoslavia – confident that their communications were protected, sent messages from their capitals to their embassies, military missions, trade offices, and espionage dens around the world, via telex, radio, and fax. And all the while, because of a secret agreement between the company and NSA, these governments might as well have been hand delivering the messages to Washington, uncoded. For their Crypto AG machines had been rigged before being sold to them, so that when they used them the random encryption key could be automatically and clandestinely transmitted along with the enciphered message. NSA analysts could read the messages as easily as they could the morning newspaper. ■

**END OF PART ONE**

# from our readers



## Editor's note:

There has been so much outrage since we sent out the notice of Australia Post's stamp issue with Israel. That outrage needs to be directed to where it might have some outcome, namely the CEO of Australia Post, Ahmed Fahour. Australians for Palestine have written him a letter (see below) and we encourage all our supporters to write in similar vein asking for the stamps to be withdrawn. You should also make a complaint via Australia Post's Contact form <http://tinyurl.com/australiapost-com> and write a letter to the Postal Industry Ombudsman, GPO Box 442, Canberra ACT 2601 or fax him on (02) 6249 7829.

We have already notified the media and contacted all federal politicians, but this needs strong public support if our protest is to have any effect. We would be very grateful for your help.

## Sonja Karkar

Co-founder and editor  
Australians for Palestine  
<http://australiansforpalestine.com>

## Letter to Australia Post CEO, Ahmed Fahour re Australia-Israel joint issue stamps

Dear Mr Fahour,

It has come to our attention that Australia Post has released a joint stamp with Israel to commemorate the Battle of Beersheba of 1917 in which Australian troops fought the Turks and turned the tide leading to the subsequent end of Ottoman rule in Palestine.

According to Australia Post stamp issue policy, two or more countries can collaborate to produce stamps that "commemorate a significant event or subject that they have in common". Since Israel did not exist at the time of this major Palestine Campaign - and would not exist until several decades later - it is impossible to fathom how Australia Post could agree to re-write history on a postage stamp.

Quite simply, this release is outrageous and insulting to the thousands of Palestinians who took part in that campaign on the British promise of freedom and independence for the Arab people from Ottoman imperial rule. Britain's betrayal immediately after victory, with the Balfour Declaration offering the Jews of Europe a homeland in Palestine, is well documented and the direct cause of the highly inflammatory situation we are seeing in the Middle East region today.

None have endured the catastrophic consequences of that decision as much as the Palestinians who continue to see their land, their culture, their history and their very existence being swallowed up by the usurping State of Israel. This has only been possible because Western nations continue to whitewash Israel at the expense of Palestinian dispossession, oppression and denial of their basic human rights.

It is one thing to fawn and pretend that Israel's existence has validity, it is another to falsify history. Australia Post ought to be thoroughly ashamed for having acquiesced in this blatant attempt to expunge all mention of the Palestinians in Beersheba. Just to be clear, it was the Palestinians who fought valiantly alongside the ANZACs and it was a Palestinian who led the attack on the city from the east that helped bring the allied forces victory. He was awarded an MBE for his service.

Three decades later, the 4000 Palestinians of Beersheba were terrorised into leaving their city when the newly created Israel captured it in 1948. They have never been allowed to return to their homes.

Simply, this commemorative stamp issue must be withdrawn if Australia Post is to be on the right side of history.

Yours sincerely,

Sonja Karkar  
Co-founder and co-convenor  
Australians for Palestine



# MELBOURNE UNITARIAN PEACE MEMORIAL CHURCH

‘SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY’

Tel: 03 9417 4178 (10 am to 3 pm weekdays) Fax and Answering machine: 03 9417 4178  
110 Grey Street, East Melbourne (opposite the Mercy Hospital)  
Services, Sunday 11 am

## IN THIS ISSUE:

### Editorial

**Ethical battle hovers over use of drone technology**

**Is there blood on your T-shirt? Questions from Bangladesh's tragedy**

**Edward Snowden**

**Should climate change influence your vote?**

## Beacon Editorial Board

Peter Abrehart

Marion Harper

Donna Sensi

Julie Stafford

**The Editorial opinions expressed are those of the Editorial Board.**

Opinions expressed in the editorial, articles, letters, etc., in the *Beacon* are those of the writers themselves and do not necessarily reflect the policy of the Melbourne Unitarian Church or any other organisation to which a particular writer is affiliated. Titles and affiliations are used for individual identification purposes only.

## MELBOURNE UNITARIAN PEACE MEMORIAL CHURCH

110 Grey Street, East Melbourne 3002

Email: [admin@melbourneunitarian.org.au](mailto:admin@melbourneunitarian.org.au)

Website: [www.melbourneunitarian.org.au](http://www.melbourneunitarian.org.au)

Monthly Journal of the Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church  
Est. 1852

Registered by Australia Post

Post Print Approved  
100003043

SURFACE  
MAIL

POSTAGE  
PAID  
E. Melbourne  
Victoria  
Australia  
3002

Simply cut out this form, fill in the details, and forward it along with your subscription. Why not do it now? If you are already a subscriber, send one to a friend.

To: The Editor, **The Beacon**, Melbourne Unitarian Church  
110 Grey Street, East Melbourne, Victoria 3002 Australia

Please forward a copy of **The Beacon** every month. Enclosed is \$20.00 for twelve months subscription. (A\$20 Overseas and \$10 concession)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Also send a copy to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

## A GIFT THAT SAYS YOU CARE

A Gift Subscription to **The Beacon**, the ideal gift that lasts a whole year.  
Please enter my gift subscription to the following:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Donor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Enter payment of \$20.00 (A\$20 Overseas, \$10 Concession) for one year's subscription to the Editor, **Beacon**, Melbourne Unitarian Church, 110 Grey Street, East Melbourne, Victoria 3002 Australia. Cheques payable to Melbourne Unitarian Church.