

the BEACON

Journal of the
Melbourne Unitarian
Peace Memorial
Church

July 2014
Price /\$2

SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

THE CHALLENGE: TRANSNATIONAL CAPITALISTS AND THEIR GLOBAL CONTROL

EDITORIAL

Australia is a very large country with a very small population. It is a country rich in deposits, farming land, forestry, and teeming waters. We are rich in cultural diversity and have the oldest indigenous population in the world. All this should provide a fair, democratic, dignified life for every citizen. We have everything we need to achieve this goal ... why can't we? The answer, of course, is because we are governed by a small clique of politicians who answer to a global elite whose greed for power and profit knows no limit.

There needs to be considerable ongoing debate, but more importantly, ongoing action around the Federal Budget which clearly demonstrates the class nature of our society and puts a lie to the claim that Australia is a 'classless' society. This budget exposes once and for all the deepening gap between the haves and the have nots, the gap between classes, and the determination of the ruling class to wrest every dollar it can from the lowest paid section of society in order to increase the profits of their already obscenely rich mates.

'Class' is a word that scares governments and the global elites that control governments. Enormous effort is produced by them and their media prostitutes to cover up the class nature of their policies. Thus when referring to the Budget, they use terms such as 'sharing the burden equally', 'the age of entitlement is over', and 'short-term pain for long-term gain.'

Sharing the burden equally? Our audit clearly shows who bears the heaviest burden and it isn't the wealthy. The age of entitlement is over? Governments exist to provide the people with their entitlements, which come from the wealth created by people's labour. Short-term pain for long-term gain! Sounds a lot like 'Suffer gladly this life for a better one awaits thee in heaven.'

We all know that there is nothing equal in this Budget. The values in this Budget are the values of the corporations, the banks and the transnational conglomerates. The transnational capitalist class is a global ruling class. It is a ruling class because it controls global decision-making that has come from the new conditions of global capitalism.

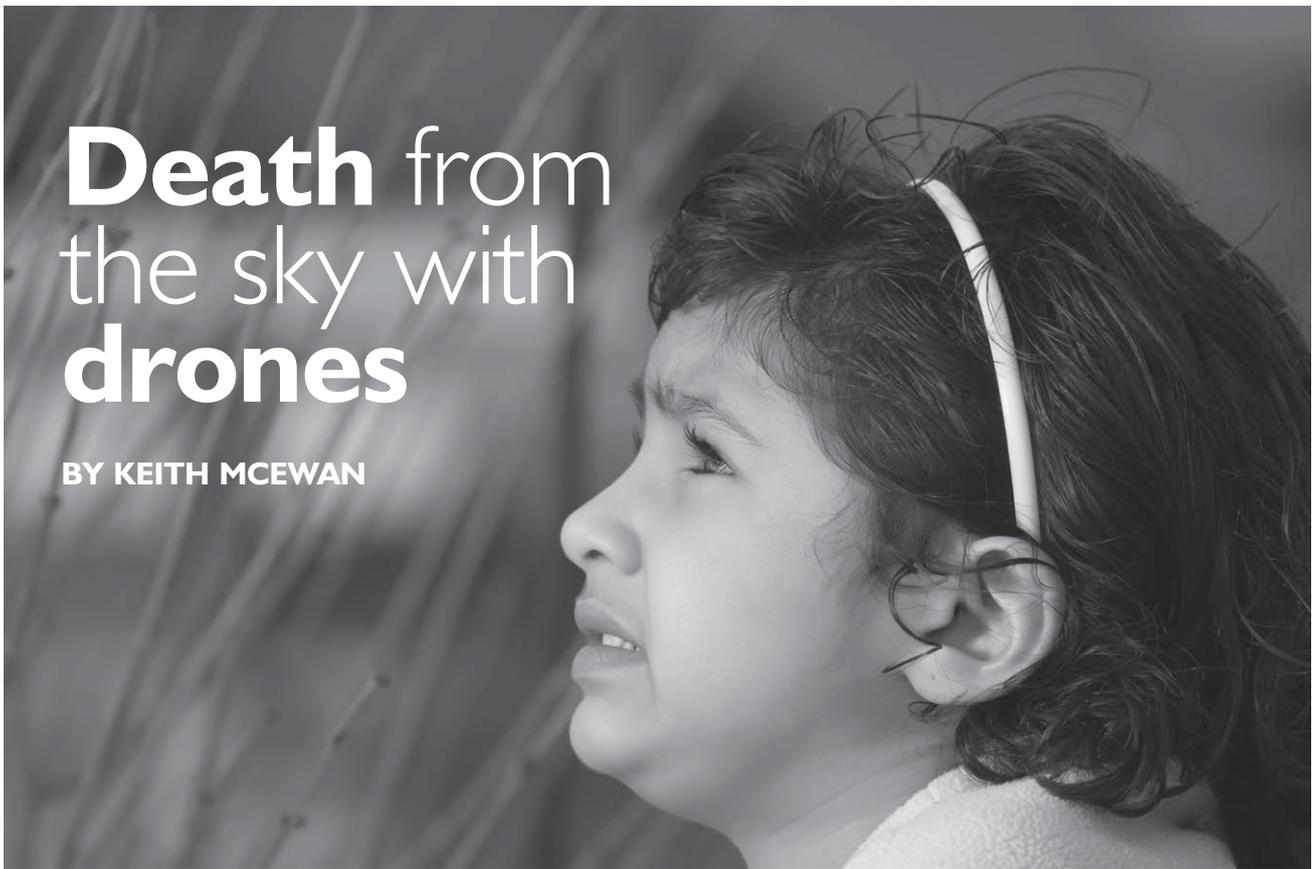
Now we have the Unitarian People's Audit that arms everyone with the truth about the Budget. Everyone now has a responsibility to act on it. How can we do this? We need to establish forums in every area where we can discuss the kind of society we want, and lobby to get it. We can pass on the audit material to others. Attend rallies, write to MPs, write letters to the editors of our newspapers, find good people who will come together to defend our future. We can no longer rely on our Parliament for justice. If we want to rid our land of social inequality, we have to do it ourselves! ■



**WE ARE GOVERNED BY A SMALL
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Death from the sky with drones

BY KEITH MCEWAN



Imagine if you were walking in a street in your locality, standing in the school or church grounds talking to family members or friends, when you are alerted to a noise that human rights advocate, Geoffrey Robertson, refers to as a buzz of death – like a motor mower in the sky.

If you were in Yemen, Pakistan or Afghanistan you would know that the objects floating in the sky above are unmanned small aircraft fitted with armaments that are able to kill targeted people when fired by controllers from a CIA base in America, 12,000 miles away.

Called 'drones', such unmanned aircraft were originally used as reconnaissance or surveillance craft; now most of those employed in the US 'war on terror' are fitted with hellfire, laser-guided missiles.

Currently, CIA-controlled drones fly more hours than the US Air Force and more US Air Force 'pilots' are being trained for unmanned aircraft than for conventional warplanes.

Waging a horror war on civilian populations from remote, casualty-free bases in the US, the CIA as an intelligence service, is recognised as non-combatant for the purpose of war law and so does not have the transparency and accountability obligation like the other branches of the US government. It is therefore impossible to discover with any certainty the number of casualties caused by drone strikes.

One report in 2011, based on frontline war zone investigations, claimed that there were 385 civilian deaths, which included 168 children.

Other surveys have suggested several thousand deaths with 20 per cent of them being children.

The Obama administration seems to have given the CIA carte blanche to choose targets for execution and to carry out these executions without answering for or even admitting that they have taken place, and that they have caused civilian casualties.

The battlefield utility of drone technology – currently available to forty nations – means that it will be widely used in future conflicts.

Drones will become more compact – more difficult to detect or shoot down – and already there are plans for bird- and even insect-size drones capable of crawling inside homes or squatting on window ledges to listen and send 'kill' messages without the need for any 'pilot' in Nevada to press a button.

People in Yemen are terrified as the drones fly over their villages. In 2012 Obama authorised 46 drone strikes, causing anger and a growing hatred of America.

A UN team investigating casualties in Pakistan said that US drone strikes violated the country's sovereignty, while the Pakistan government claimed that such strikes by US drones have killed at least 400 civilians. In addition, many of the drone attacks are aimed at suspected low-level

tribal militants who may not pose a direct threat to the US forces occupying their country.

Such drone attacks undermine the rule of law so proudly proclaimed by their operators, when they are used by governments which claim unreviewable power to kill anyone, anywhere on earth, at any time, based on secret criteria and secret information discussed in a secret process by largely unnamed individuals.

After the September 11 terror attack on America, the US began to launch drones from bases in Pakistan and Uzbekistan for combat missions inside Afghanistan. More than a decade later, after killing more than 5,000 people – many of whom are believed to be civilians, including women and children – the US has expanded the use of drones into Yemen, Somalia and Pakistan. As well, the US has set up drone bases in Djibouti, on the Horn of Africa and flies unarmed Reaper drones out of Ethiopia. Drones based in the Seychelles are used for surveillance flights over East Africa.

Drones are also deployed by Israeli forces in Gaza to terrorise and kill Palestinians. As well, Israeli-owned drones, equipped with sensors and cameras, have been used by the RAAF to target anti-government Islamic fighters in Afghanistan.

A Stanford and New York universities study 'Living Under Drones', in 2012 estimated that of the total casualties killed, only two per cent were high-level targets.

As a growing awareness of the use of drones to assassinate innocent people has grown in America, thousands of people have gathered in front of the White House to protest.

Former Australian prime minister, Malcolm Fraser, is critical of US presidents from George W Bush to Obama having unlimited war powers to unleash drone attacks on

people living in countries with whom America is not at war.

He states that the US base at Pine Gap in Central Australia has played a key role in US drone strike targeting – this being almost unknown by the Australian people.

In the recently published fourth edition of his book *Crimes Against Humanity*, Geoffrey Robertson calls for the US to make its drone operations more principled and transparent by adopting the following guidelines:

- Moving overall responsibility from the CIA to the Department of Defense, which is more accountable and more likely to recognise the rules of international law.
- Those on the target list be given the opportunity to surrender and seek a judicial review of whether the evidence against them proves that they are the sort of active terrorist or combatant who belongs on the list.
- Rules of engagement must exclude any killing if civilians are likely to be present.
- Rules must prevent the killing of a target that can be neutralised in other ways (e.g. if there is a reasonable prospect of capture or arrest).

Geoffrey Robertson adds, 'Unless such steps are taken, drone killings will be correctly characterised as summary executions, and approval of them en masse may turn out to be Obama's Guantanamo'.

Furthermore, in his preface to the fourth edition of *Crimes Against Humanity*, the author makes the telling point that in 2009 President Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, just as he was authorising the CIA's 'drone war' to execute summarily several thousand unconvicted terrorist targets and anyone who happened, however innocently, to be in the near vicinity. ■

DID YOU KNOW...

'The Budget should be balanced, the Treasury should be refilled, public debt should be reduced, the arrogance of officialdom should be tempered and controlled, and the assistance to foreign lands should be curtailed, lest Rome will become bankrupt. People must again learn to work instead of living on public assistance.' – **CICERO, 55 BC**

So evidently we've learned bugger all over the past 2,069 years.

STOP PRESS

If you would like a hardcopy or electronic version of the **People's Commission of Audit**, please contact the church office and we will send it to you.

The Normandy landing and World War II: the lies grow more audacious

By **DR PAUL CRAIG ROBERTS** Global Research, 7 June 2014

If there were any doubts that Western 'leaders' live in a fantasy make-believe world constructed out of their own lies, the G-7 meeting and 70th anniversary celebration of the Normandy landing dispelled the doubts.

The howlers issuing from these occasions are enough to split your sides. Obama and his lap dog Cameron described the Normandy landing on 6 June 1944 as 'the greatest liberation force that the world has ever known' and took all the credit for the US and Britain for the defeat of Hitler. No mention was made of the Soviet Union and the Red Army, which for three years prior to the Normandy landing had been fighting and defeating the Wehrmacht.

The Germans lost World War II at the Battle of Stalingrad, which was fought from 23 August 1942 until 2 February 1943, when most of the remnants of the powerful German Sixth Army surrendered, including 22 generals.

Nineteen months previously the largest invasion force ever assembled on planet earth invaded Russia across a one thousand mile front. Three million crack German troops, 7,500 artillery units, 19 panzer divisions with 3,000 tanks, and 2,500 aircraft rolled across Russia for 14 months.

By June 1944, three years later, very little of this force was left. The Red Army had chewed it up. When the so-called 'allies' (a term which apparently excludes Russia) landed in France, there was little to resist them. The best forces remaining to Hitler were on the Russian front, which collapsed day by day as the Red Army approached Berlin.

The Red Army won the war with Germany. The Americans and the British showed up after the Wehrmacht was exhausted and in tatters and could offer little resistance. Joseph Stalin believed that Washington and London stayed out of the war until the last minute and left Russia with the burden of defeating Germany.

Hollywood and popular writers have, of course, buried the facts. Americans have all sorts of movies, such as *A Bridge Too Far*, that portray insignificant events, however heroic, as turning points in the war. Nevertheless, the facts are clear. The war was won on the Eastern front by Russia. Hollywood's movies are fun, but they are nonsense.

Russia is again on the outs with 'the world community,' because Obama's plan to seize Ukraine and to evict Russia from its Black Sea base in Crimea has come a cropper.

Crimea has been a part of Russia for as long as the US has existed. Khrushchev, a Ukrainian, stuck Crimea into the Ukrainian Socialist Republic in 1954 when Russia and Ukraine were part of the same country.

When the Washington-imposed stooge government in Kiev recently declared that it was abolishing the use of the Russian language and arresting Ukrainians who had dual Russian citizenship and began tearing down Russian war memorials consecrated to the liberation of Ukraine from the Nazis, the people in Crimea used the ballot box to disassociate from Washington's stooge government in Kiev, first voting their independence and then voting for reunification with their mother country.

Washington, and the other G-7 countries following Washington's orders, described this Crimean act of self-determination, which is exactly comparable to the act of self-determination declared by Britain's American colonies, to be a case of 'Russian invasion and annexation.' Similar efforts to disassociate from Kiev are underway in other former Russian territories that today comprise eastern and southern Ukraine.

Washington has equated self-determination in eastern and southern Ukraine with 'terrorism' and has encouraged its stooge in Kiev to use military violence against protesting civilians. The reason for branding separatists 'terrorists' is to make it OK to kill them.

It is extraordinary to any learned person that the president of the United States and the titular heads of state of the Western European countries would publicly declare such blatant lies to the world. The world has historians. The world has peoples whose knowledge vastly exceeds that of the 'mainstream media' aka the Ministry of Propaganda or as Gerald Celente brands them, 'the prestittutes.' Whatever name we use, the Western media is a collection of well paid whores. They lie for money, dinner party invitations, and speaking invitations with large honorariums and book contracts with large advances.

I know. They tried to recruit me. ■

Australia may be complicit in killing its own citizens and many others

By **EMILY HOWIE**

Would you be comfortable if Australian security personnel were enabling the killing of Australian citizens who had not been charged with crimes, who had not faced a trial and who were in a country that Australia was not at war with?

These are the questions at the heart of a long overdue debate, because Australian security personnel are reportedly doing exactly that.

Last month it was reported that two Australian citizens, Christopher Havard and Muslim bin John had been killed by a United States drone strike in Yemen – a country with whom neither the USA nor Australia claims to be at war. Neither man had been charged with any crime.

The Australian government denies any involvement in or prior awareness of the operation. However, mounting evidence suggests that the joint Australian-American defence facility at Pine Gap outside Alice Springs is intimately involved in the US's drone strikes. Last week American investigative journalist Jeremy Scahill stated that he has access to top-secret documents, some obtained through leaks by former NSA employee Edward Snowden, that prove this.

Scahill said the documents show that the Pine Gap facility, along with similar facilities in Canada, UK and New Zealand, provide critical information to the US 'that can be used to track and kill individuals around the world'. According to Scahill, the Australian government is fully aware of the extent of the US assassination program.

Personnel at Pine Gap do not fire the drones' weapons, but they show drone operators where to point their barrels.

Since 2001, thousands of people have been killed in covert US drone strikes in places like Yemen, Pakistan and Somalia. The strikes are conducted secretly by the CIA or the US military's joint special operations command.

Many people are concerned that there are a disproportionate number of civilians among the dead and that there is no mechanism by which to investigate and hold accountable the US for those deaths. The UN is currently investigating around 30 drone strikes to assess whether those incidents caused excessive civilian casualties.

It is possible that civilian deaths from drone strikes could constitute war crimes and serious human rights abuses, such as extrajudicial killing. If the allegations about Pine Gap are true, then Australian officials who provide information upon which drone strikes are based could be complicit in any abuses committed by the Americans.

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Civilian harm and legal risks for Australian personnel are only part of the problem. The current secret, unregulated drone war sets other dangerous precedents.

In September 2013, the UN expert on extra-judicial killing warned that drones are increasingly accessible and affordable and undermine global stability. It won't be long before drones are in the hands of states that Australia does not consider to be allies. It's not in our security interest for drones to be used outside of the well-established principles of international law.

Drones are not just undermining a rules-based international order they are fuelling resentment of Australia and its allies. In March 2013, Yemeni youth activist Farea Al-Muslimi testified before US congress about the growing anger and resentment in Yemen following US drone attacks there. Al-Muslimi explained 'what the violent militants had previously failed to achieve, one drone strike accomplished in an instant. There is now an intense anger against America'.

The Australian public deserves to know if we are involved in the US drone program, and if so, we have a right to an explanation of the legal and policy basis on which Australia is involved.

While some government information may need to be withheld for national security reasons, the government can safely provide answers to some basic questions. Is Australia at war with any state or armed group? Is Pine Gap's intelligence used to target and kill people overseas? If so, what is the legal justification for our involvement? Have Australian personnel at Pine Gap been advised as to any risk they face of complicity in war crimes or other violations of Australian or international law?

Australia opposes the death penalty at home and abroad, yet our government has shown little regard for the deaths of its own citizens without trial.

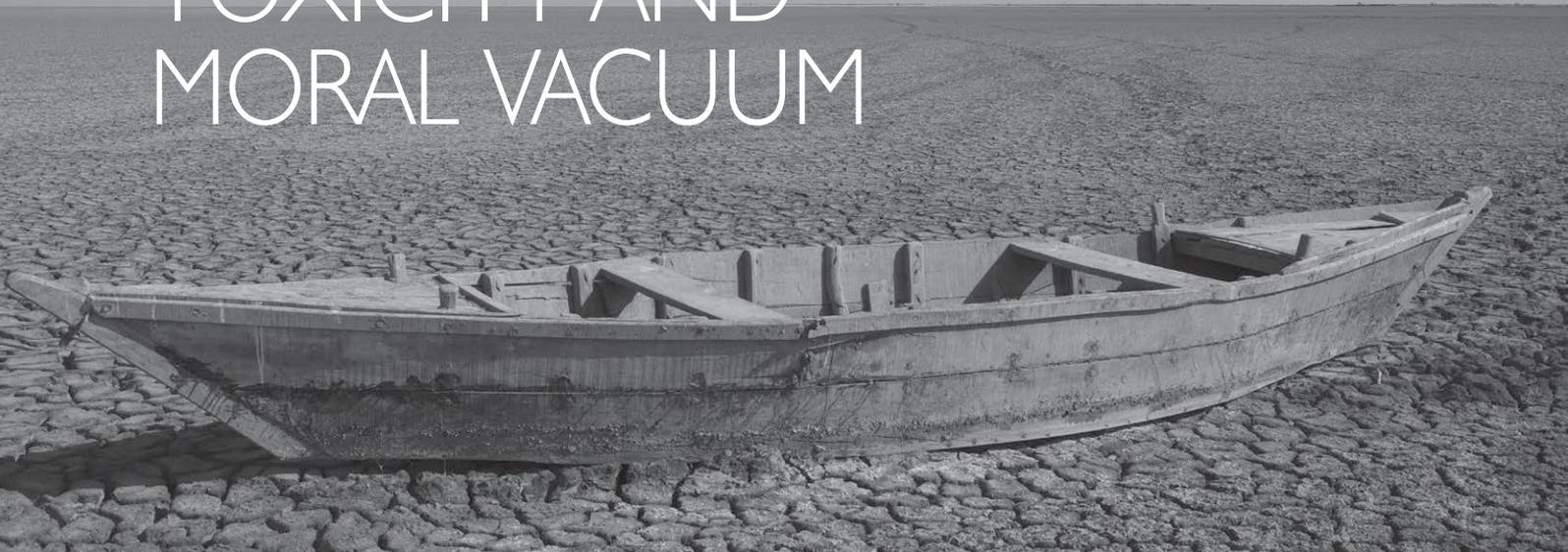
Accordingly, the Human Rights Law Centre has asked the UN special rapporteur on counter terrorism to investigate the legality of the deaths of the two Australians.

While our concern extends to all civilians killed by drone strikes and to the responsibility that our government might bear in those deaths, it is unacceptable that our government has failed to provide any public explanation as to why the US killed two of our citizens. Their families have a right to know what happened.

It's high time Australia began the conversation about our involvement in the US's secret and dirty wars. ■

Emily Howie is director of advocacy and research at the Human Rights Law Centre.

REDEFINING POLITICS IN AN AGE OF TOXICITY AND MORAL VACUUM



AN ADDRESS GIVEN AT THE MELBOURNE UNITARIAN CHURCH ON 25 MAY 2014

By **BARRY JONES**

THE BEGINNINGS OF POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

The formative influences in my childhood and adolescence were the Great Depression, which I can just remember, World War II, and the brief period of post-war optimism when organisations such as the UN, UNESCO, WHO and FAO were set up, just before the onset of the Cold War in 1948.

I was a convinced anti-Nazi by the age of six, and my first political hero was Franklin D Roosevelt. Charles Darwin was an early inspiration and he has never let me down. I was deeply devoted to the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi.

The year 1950 was a big one for me: I became an undergraduate at Melbourne University, the only one in Victoria at the time, joined the Australian Labor Party (despite it being under growing National Civic Council influence) and read James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Ulysses aside, the intellectual highpoint was hearing the philosopher Bertrand Russell give three lectures at the

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Moral issues underlie the protection and preservation of the planet, and its biodiversity, for the long term, which we ignore in our pursuit of greed.

Assembly Hall for the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) in July.

I observed him at close quarters, as an enthusiastic groupie.

He said: 'Three passions, simple, but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind.'

I have never forgotten his words and they inspired my own priorities in public life.

All three goals are now under challenge.

In public life now, love is essentially self-love (including the immediate family), short-term economic advancement, at whatever the social or environmental cost.

As to the search for knowledge – on paper the current Australian population is by far the most highly educated cohort in our history, with 4,000,000 graduates and the unprecedented capacity of the ICT revolution to give us immediate access to the world's greatest libraries,

universities, laboratories, observatories, concert halls, giving us unparalleled access to profound understanding of the visible world, and ourselves. I jest of course. Every day on the tram I see young people mesmerised by the smart phone, yearning for communication, with such profound messages as 'I'll see you in five minutes.'

The suffering of mankind? Medicine and disaster relief aside, campaigning for human rights, that is, the rights of others, is now regarded as a certain vote loser in the age of retail politics, most clearly demonstrated in the case of our treatment of asylum seekers/refugees – nameless, faceless, outside the law, unreachable, without a history, without an identity.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, then the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the USSR and China's adoption of a state-controlled version of capitalism, the Western liberal democratic model seemed to be the only paradigm left standing but, twenty-five years later, political institutions generally seem to have lost authenticity/legitimacy. Politics is in bad shape in Australia, but the same is true, probably worse, in the United States, Canada, France, Russia, Greece, Italy, Papua New Guinea and to a lesser degree in the United Kingdom and New Zealand. Much of Africa and the Middle East is *hors concours*, notably Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Egypt, Pakistan, Syria and Thailand. China is hard to categorise, and North Korea is in a class, or even world, of its own. South America is generally better than it was 20 years ago.

So, we are not alone, if that is any consolation!

A VALUES DEFICIT

We live in an age of unprecedented prosperity, in which the major influences have been secularism, materialism, utilitarianism, urbanisation, remoteness from nature, institutional failure (especially in churches, but also in corporations, political parties, sporting clubs and trade unions), emphasis on immediate economic self-interest, the rise and rise of managerialism which has displaced community engagement in ideas and values, the impact of mass media, with its emphasis on immediacy, the cult of personality, promoting sensation, entertainment and an often vicious and destructive political agenda, in which the truth of a proposition ('The carbon tax forced closure of Ford's manufacturing in Australia'; 'Standard & Poors is reassessing Australia's AAA credit rating') is irrelevant. Greed, drugs, problem gambling, domestic violence, child sexual abuse, covert and overt racism, all distort our moral compass.

Churches, like political parties, are losing numbers, commitment and moral authority and have been shaken by the apparent institutionalisation of sexual abuse of children, where for decades the reaction has been to protect the institution and disregard the victim.

Some political leaders act as if all values have a dollar equivalent, that forests are essentially woodchips on stumps, and that the value of a tree is as lumber, disregarding aesthetic factors or the contribution to clean air. The current obsession is that if projects will make money for somebody, for example, grazing in national parks, or oil drilling or the dumping of mine tailings near the Great Barrier Reef, logging in World Heritage sites, or the export of live animals, often under unspeakable conditions, they should go ahead. The appeal of money and growth in the gross domestic product are irresistible,

with a refusal to contemplate the downside. In the case of duck shooting, state power is entirely behind the shooters, and against the ducks. The need for more cars on more freeways outweighs the values associated with Melbourne's Royal Park. Recreational shooters and four-wheel drives are now welcome in New South Wales national parks.

Much of the mainstream media (especially the Murdoch empire), emphasises advocacy, entertainment, shock factors and reinforcing prejudice, rather than providing information or carrying out investigative reporting.

Moral issues underlie the protection and preservation of the planet, and its biodiversity, for the long term, which we ignore in our pursuit of greed. The relief of poverty is one thing, but consumption is not an end in itself. The decay of formal religion and the long-term decline in church going intensifies the need to stimulate debate and understanding about values, the transcendental and the numinous.

TOXICITY IN POLITICS

In the past decade, political life in Canberra has become toxic, with a breakdown in personal relationships, recourse to incessant personal attack, wild exaggeration and the endless repeating of slogans, having abandoned the practice of debating with ideas, and sentences with verbs. People with long political experience, many on the Coalition side, volunteer that the Abbott government is the most vindictive they can recall. Supporters are rewarded and opponents punished in unprecedented ways.

Kevin Rudd appointed Brendon Nelson and Tim Fischer as Ambassadors, and chose Robert French, once a Liberal Party member, as Chief Justice of the High Court, in preference to Jim Spigelman, who had once worked for Whitlam. It is almost inconceivable that the Abbott government would appoint anybody from the ALP to high office.

Politicians are no longer constrained by a moral obligation to tell the truth.

John Stuart Mill coined the term 'fractional truths'. As a practice, it has caught on alarmingly. Something that was true yesterday, and might well be true tomorrow, is not necessarily true today.

There is a retreat from evidence, rational argument, analysis, and the use of statistics, and in controversial areas such as climate change and asylum seekers, 'opinion' carries more clout than 'evidence.'

'DELIBERATE IGNORANCE; INVENTED NARRATIVE'

The Abbott government endlessly promotes the myth that in 2013 Australia's economy was a burning ruin; that taxation levels are crippling high; and that levels of public debt could simply not be sustained ...

The IMF and Nobel Economics Laureate Joseph Stiglitz praised the Rudd government as having handled the global financial crisis better than any other OECD nation. Australia had lower unemployment than most OECD countries, with low interest rates, a AAA credit rating from all three major international agencies, enjoyed by very few national economies, a low level of international debt, high levels of foreign investment, ranking next to Norway on the Human Development Index (HDI). In the

REDEFINING POLITICS IN AN AGE OF TOXICITY AND MORAL VACUUM



2013 election, The Economist endorsed Kevin Rudd and the ALP government.

However, Labor proved incapable of explaining its success to the electorate – partly because of suicide bombings over leadership. The pink batts program, part fiasco, part achievement, resulting in four deaths, deplorable and all preventable, after failure to follow state health and safety regulations submerged any argument Rudd might have made that the home insulation scheme was a 98 per cent success.

What is repeatedly described as a Budget crisis, or disaster, compared by the Prime Minister to a bushfire, with a mounting deficit, can be handled in four ways: (i) recognising the changing nature of the population, living far longer but with increasing demands for education, health, employment, disability services, infrastructure development and coping with a series of social and/or environmental problems, (ii) increasing taxation to meet the needs of a changing society, (iii) cutting taxation to satisfy political promises and (iv) cutting services.

Australia has the fifth lowest rate of income tax in the OECD: only Mexico, Chile, the US and South Korea are lower. If the cost of compulsory superannuation and the Medicare levy is added, it takes Australia up to the OECD average. Our GST is currently on the low side at 10 per cent, compared to GST/VAT in most OECD countries. However, it has to be recognised that our taxation rates are higher than our Asian neighbours.

I agree with the maxim, ‘Taxes are the price we pay for a civilised society.’

According to Credit Suisse (admittedly under a cloud at the moment, but they certainly know how to pursue wealth), Australia has the highest per capita income in the world, although this may only mean that including Gina Rinehart and dividing by 23,000,000 will produce a high figure. The IMF says that our debt/income ratio is the second lowest in the OECD: only Luxembourg’s is lower. But you will never hear these international comparisons raised by the Government, nor – oddly – from the Opposition.

Can the Prime Minister and the Treasurer really believe what they say about the Australian economy? I hope not.

There has been a complete failure to explain the significance of population change in increased levels of expenditure and falling revenue. Life expectancy is increasing by 2.5 years in every decade, and the gap between retirement from paid work and death, once calculated as being in the 15–20 year range, is now increasing to 30–35 years. How is the gap to be met? Not, I suggest, by cutting taxation levels. The current Tea Party inspired fantasy is that if tax levels are cut to the bone, the market will work its magic and provide jobs for everyone who needs one. Well, we shall see ...

Paul Keating tackled this problem well in an ABC *Lateline* program with Tony Jones (8 May 2014). The NDIS will inevitably demand more expenditure: Gonski too, even in its crippled form.

But these issues are not being addressed by either side.

It is striking that the four most important economic advisors from outside government, David Murray, Maurice Newman, Dick Warburton and Tony Shepherd have, in addition to gender and skin colour, one thing in common. All are climate change sceptics or deniers. This suggests that denialism may be a precondition for appointment. The question of having prudential policies, of evaluating risk, never comes up over the climate change issue.

Vice President Dick Cheney, who led the ‘dark energy’ faction in the administration of George W Bush, proposed the ‘one per cent doctrine’: that if there is only a one per cent chance that nations are developing nuclear weapons then ‘we have to treat it as a certainty in terms of our response.’

With climate change, supporters of the current carbon economy argue that even a 90 per cent probability is not enough to warrant taking action.

There have been repeated attempts to secure an appointment with the Prime Minister so that our leading climate scientists can put their case and present evidence about climate change. All

attempts have been rebuffed. It is better, it seems, for a prime minister, if he is caught out and has to backtrack in the future to be able to say: ‘Nobody ever put these arguments to me.’

We seem to have a new Beatitude: ‘Blessed are the aspirationalists, for they shall be rewarded, whatever the social cost.’

Several significant factors have contributed to the Coalition’s success, in winning power in the Commonwealth, five states and one territory.

The first has been the appeal to fear and greed in election campaigns – for example, by stigmatising asylum seekers as lawbreakers, and as economic migrants who casually break the rules by jumping the queue in search of economic advantage – and, by implication, threatening the immediate economic advantage of people born here, or already settled.

Second has been the success in appealing to people in the middle income bracket, people in small business, for example, to identify themselves with the people above them in the economic pyramid, as if they had a

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community of interest, and to spurn those below them, to accept compassion fatigue as normal, and that lower income taxes will be a major factor in transforming the economy and that they should feel no concern for cuts in access to education, health service and welfare generally because, after all, 'we all have to share the pain.'

Third is the Government's being in permanent campaign mode, constantly campaigning against the Opposition, who are blamed incessantly so that a grossly exaggerated narrative is presented about Australia's economic position, and this is entirely due to the folly of the previous government.

Fourth is the covert appeal to prejudice in the use of 'dog whistle' language over refugees and Muslims – indeed, multiculturalism generally.

The Scanlon Foundation's annual surveys of social cohesion indicate a core of 10 per cent who are strongly opposed to cultural diversity in Australia and perhaps 20 per cent more who are ambivalent. Capturing the votes of citizens who are driven by ethnicity and culture is critical to winning elections.

REDEFINING POLITICS

We must redefine politics – and grasp its importance, not just at election times. Here is my attempt: it doesn't exactly roll off the tongue but I think it captures the essence.

Politics is the fault line between tectonic plates in society and the electoral struggle is an expression of, or a metaphor for, unresolved, often unspoken, divisions within society – race, class, gender, religion, region, language, education, sexuality, consumption patterns and time use, self-definition and the expression of individual differences/aspirations (both positive and negative), offering a choice between different moral universes.

It is amazing that the climate change debate has been so badly informed because large numbers of Australians are skilled observers in relevant areas. There is still some confusion between 'climate' and 'weather' but farmers are acute observers of changes in the seasons. Gardeners, millions of them, can report that flowers are blooming earlier in the season. Bird watchers keep detailed records. So do bush walkers. There was no attempt to enlist them in an information campaign, nor did they volunteer.

Tackling complex problems demands complex solutions (notably refugees and climate change) that cannot be reduced to parroting a few simple slogans ('stop the boats', 'stop this toxic tax'). 'Retail politics', sometimes called 'transactional politics', where policies are adopted not because they are right but because they can be sold, is a dangerous development and should be rejected. We must maintain confidence that major problems can be addressed – and act accordingly. This involves reviving the process of dialogue: explain! explain! explain! – rejecting mere sloganeering and populism. We need evidence-based policies but often evidence lacks the psychological carrying power generated by appeals to prejudice or fear of disadvantage ('They are robbing you ...').

Most of all we need a higher level of citizen involvement in the whole process of public debate, not leaving it all to the political professionals. ■

Bernard O'Dowd (1866–1953),

LEADING AUSTRALIAN POET, PARLIAMENTARY DRAFTSMAN AND MEMBER OF THE UNITARIAN CHURCH, 1929 TO 1953.

From The Liberator (Melbourne), 4 April 1886: 302

REVOLUTION

RING loud the joy bells, for the morning is breaking,
The world from its night of black darkness is waking;
Its limbs are now filling with life and volition,
Escaping for ever from cold superstition;
For truth has sprung forth as the light of the morning,
And all the fair hilltops of earth is adorning.
Full long the bright earth through the deep mire hath waded,
But now the cold glamor for ever hath faded;
With haste from the face of the earth it has hurried,
And now in the depths of oblivion, is buried.
The terrors of hell long poor mortals have frightened,
Whose burdens the hope of a heaven has lightened;
So racking their minds, and their spirits so tearing,
That starting in hope they have ended despairing.
The priests to keep up their effete institution,
Say prayers for the dead, give the quick absolution;
Endowed with the firm faith that moveth the mountains,
And washed in the blood of the deity's fountain;
Then to the poor sinner, permission is given
To enter the gates of the orthodox heaven.
Nor e'er will you now from the trinity sever,
But sing holy! holy! for ever and ever;
And deep down below your ethereal station
May see the lost tortured in writhing damnation;
And there you behold, in fierce brimstone, your brother,
Your sister, your daughter, your father, your mother,
And turning with joy, when the fires have entombed them,
Give praises and thanks to the god that has doomed them.
For such is the creed, and in truth is this story
The orthodox representation of glory.
Hark! now the joy bells all around us are pealing;
The wounds of this dark superstition are healing;
The armies of reason their flags are unfurling,
And idols of falsehood to darkness are hurling;
And swift to the vanguard Truth's white steeds are bounding;
While Equity's trumpets loud charges are sounding;
And o'er the great host, there, with golden light streaming
The sunform of hope in the heavens is beaming;
All mankind is cheering with new life returning,
As false gods and demons in bonfires are burning;
And when the last embers their flickers have ended,
Men's voices in paeans of triumph are blended.

from our readers



Dear Editor

Don't blame the trees when they burn, don't blame the rivers and creeks when they run dry. Don't blame the rain for not coming, for the dried-up water sources and the bushland and grassland for burning. So we reap what we have sown. Blame our leaders, local, state and federal for their disgraceful neglect of climate change for the past four decades. And those politicians before them for allowing the massive land clearing of eastern Australia that made this fire prone region more susceptible to drought and fires. And also blame ourselves, for not speaking and rising up to make those in power listen to the warnings and make them act locally, nationally and internationally to stop the tragedy that is climate change from happening. Now time is short. We must get organised and active to reverse the great damage we have done.

Steven Katsineris, Vic

Dear Editor

Sorry to be so late with subs. Got a good excuse: I've been very ill with stress fractures. Extreme pain. But after five weeks in hospital and lots of pill and tests, I woke up one morning without pain. Can't believe it. However, I won't be able to come to Sunday services as am very weak and it's hard to walk. Got to get better soon.

All the best to everyone.

See you in the not too distant future. Wow, the April *Beacon* is frightening news.

K Butler, Vic

Dear Beacon Editor

Please remove me from your *Beacon* mailing list. I am now 90, disabled and a pensioner. Keeping me informed of the world of wicked and selfish people no longer serves any useful purpose.

I enclose \$10 towards the cost of issues mailed to me since my subscription payments ceased.

R Rye, Vic

Ukraine needs help

The 45 million people of the former Soviet Republic of Ukraine are facing massive shortfalls in revenue and costly standoffs between those of indigenous origin living predominantly in the country's western provinces (77% of the population) and Russian-Ukrainians in eastern provinces. A bloody civil war is looming. This could destroy the nation's infrastructure, kill or maim untold thousands and cut off energy supplies from the Russian Federation to Western Europe.

A way out of this gloomy prospect is to allow the Ukrainian people (not Mr Putin or any Western leader) to decide their own destiny through a United Nations (UN) – authorised and supervised referendum in each of the 24 provinces, plus the Crimea. This ought to address whether the people of any province wish to break away from Ukraine and form an independent state with the option for eventual integration into the Russian Federation.

Provinces that veto separation from Ukraine should then legislate to establish borders for a new Ukrainian state, free to join the European Union once its criteria for entry have been met. Involvement of the UN would ensure a fair referendum and that any adjustments in borders agreed upon by the Ukrainian people are accepted and legitimised by the majority of UN member states.

Fred Neumann, Vic

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from our readers



Dear Beacon writers

The May 2014 issue was breathtakingly comprehensive with pieces by Julian Burnside and Scott Ludlam and articles about the ABC and drones and the wonderful editorial 'We do not support the glorification of war!'

Thank you.

Ms Marty Morrison, NSW

Dear People

Here's my *Beacon* sub for twelve months and thank you very much for all you do.

Cheers

A Franz, Vic

Dear Beacon Editor

Thank you for a wonderful magazine.

WA Belling, NSW

Dear Editor

Racial discrimination ...

As we celebrate National Reconciliation Week (27 May to 3 June) we should demand that the Abbott government does not repeal Section 18c of the Racial Discrimination Act which, for over 19 years, has offered protection against Acts that are likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate people, on the basis of race.

Australia has a shameful history of racial discrimination against Aboriginal people in particular, as well as against Chinese, Jews, Italians, Greeks, Asians, Middle Eastern and other ethnic people who arrived here when the White Australia policy reigned supreme.

Now, in more enlightened times, especially after the falsehood of terra nullius was exposed by the High Court, our 'fair go' nation has embraced multiculturalism and recognised Aboriginal people as being our Nation's First Peoples.

But racism still needs combating as it perpetuates inequalities, destroys self-esteem and confidence as well as the health of those targeted, as they are driven out of the mainstream of life and denied opportunities for self-improvement.

Spirited free speech is not restricted by the RDA that has provided a necessary safeguard for our democratic way of life while we await the removal of racial discrimination components in our outdated Constitution.

**Keith McEwan
Canberra**

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Editorial

Death from the sky with drones

The Normandy landing and World War II:
the lies grow more audacious

Australia may be complicit in killing its own
citizens and many others

Redefining politics in an age of toxicity and
moral vacuum

Beacon Editorial Board

Peter Abrehart

Marion Harper

Donna Sensi

Julie Stafford

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

Registered by Australia Post

Post Print Approved
100003043

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