

SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

Peace is our gift to each other – Elie Wiesel

## The Pretence of Democracy

*Our memory is struggling to rescue the truth that human rights were not handed down as privileges from a parliament, or a boardroom, or an institution, but that peace is only possible with justice and with information that gives us the power to act justly.*

John Pilger

EDITORIAL

Never has information been so doctored, so manipulated, and so contrived as it is today in Australia – and indeed globally. If we can't rely on our media institutions to provide us with the truth, we are left without accuracy, knowledge and empowerment, and we are at the whim of those who control society.

Elections don't really matter much because globalisation has delivered the world a massive 'government' by market forces and not by elected representatives.

We have a dysfunctional parliament that the Prime Minister can close down to suit his own political purposes. We have elections that elevate unsuitable and undesirable politicians whose priorities don't reflect the needs of the mass of the people. Indeed, we have decisions being made that are totally out of sync with the needs of our communities, and quite simply, people are becoming increasingly disillusioned with the options available.

We have a federal government that continues to trash our human rights reputation with the world's people and the United Nations as we persist in allowing vulnerable asylum seekers to languish without food, water or medicine, those whose only crime is to flee wars in which we are complicit.

Homelessness is rising and our governments decide the only way to resolve this human rights crisis is to sell off public housing land to private developers so that Treasury can wash its hands of this responsibility.

We have governments that sell off public property that our forebears fought for so desperately in generations past. It has been well documented around the world that privatisation has been a disaster for the people and the source of a huge reallocation of wealth to the richest.

The dysfunctional, opportunistic politicians we are governed by are insulated from real life by unearned salaries and perks and make decisions that have little to do with our needs. Parliament has become an egotistical circus.

Neoliberalism, the 'free market', and pernicious and savage legislation have all combined to reduce us to a nation of poverty. Our land, rich in minerals, bountiful in produce, and with people willing and wanting to work, has become a nation of 'have-nots' in one corner and an ever-increasing group of exploiters in the other.

Those in power have deliberately set out to destroy the trade union movement; to denigrate and marginalise the Muslim community; have denied justice to Australia's First People; have created a growing army of unhoused, impoverished, unemployed Australians, most of whom can't afford healthcare; have locked up young people in adult, privately run prisons with little chance of rehabilitation; are trashing the environment ... in effect they are governing for market forces and themselves.

We dutifully continue to pretend that we live in a democracy because we are able to vote every four years. If the only people we can choose to vote for are similar to those we have in power, then the future is perilous. †



# HALT THE US DRIVE TO WAR WITH NORTH KOREA!

US television news programs (CNN, MSNBC and Fox) have been pounding the war drums in the last few weeks and days, since North Korea successfully launched a long-range missile. The long drift to war with North Korea<sup>2</sup> has seemingly become, overnight, a US drive to war with North Korea.

With his usual bluster and sabre rattling, President Trump on his recent tour of Europe continued to threaten 'severe action' against North Korea. Trump has made matters worse by devolving authority to battlefield commanders who inflame tensions with their own incendiary statements. Example: the US commander in Korea, General Vincent Brooks, stated publicly 'the only thing which separates armistice from war' with North Korea is 'our self-restraint, which is a choice'.

Anyone in the US could conclude, quite reasonably, that the US is the aggrieved and threatened party; that North Korea obviously wishes to harm the US people; that the US confronts a new danger; that North Korea is the aggressor; that an innocent and remarkably patient US is the intended victim.

Such a conclusion – all of it – would be false. Almost nothing of what the US mainstream media says about North Korea is true. Only a grasp of the history and the broader context can shed light on this Korea crisis.

## **A few key facts:**

The US refusal to accept the legitimacy of the North Korean government (DPRK) is part of its long-term policy that any state in the world that follows an independent course is subject to being overthrown by the United States. Economic independence and sovereignty are considered by the US financial and

corporate elite as an act of aggression. Therefore, the DPRK, Viet Nam, Cuba, the USSR and now Russia, Syria, Venezuela, China and others have all been targeted by the US politically and militarily. US policy insists that it has the right to curb independent states, to determine a country's political leaders and socioeconomic system, and to use whatever means it takes – economic sanctions, sabotage, assassination, war – to achieve those goals.

North Korea acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1985.

In 1994 the DPRK agreed to freeze its nuclear program in return for the US providing energy materials and generating stations. In January of 2002, President George W Bush announced that the DPRK was part of the 'Axis of Evil', and subject to regime change and even nuclear annihilation by the US. By the end of 2002, the DPRK had essentially exited the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and began to develop nuclear weapons as a deterrent.

The notion that North Korea poses a threat to the US is false and absurd. It would be national suicide for the DPRK to start a war with the US or South Korea, which have massively superior military capabilities. The DPRK has never threatened to start such a war, rather it has always asserted that it developed weapons of mass destruction in order to deter the US and its allies from an (often threatened) US attack such as those that decapitated Iraq and Libya. The constant denigration and demonisation of the North Korean leadership (they are portrayed invariably as madmen, or clowns, or both) is a strategy to make the Big Lie of a threat from North Korea believable to an ill-informed and fearful US public.

The DPRK has offered to freeze its nuclear weapons program if the US freezes its war practices targeting that country, actions aimed to precede negotiations. Russia and China have endorsed this approach. The US, however, refuses.

## THE US IS PROVOKING THE CRISIS

North Korea would not have a nuclear weapons program if it were not under increasing threat from the US, which has been trying to force regime change in the North since 1945 by war, subversion, diplomatic isolation, and economic strangulation.

A recent article noted that:

*As University of Chicago history professor Bruce Cumings [a leading US historian of the Korean War], writes, for North Korea the nuclear crisis began in late February 1993, when General Lee Butler, head of the new US 'Strategic Command', announced that he was retargeting strategic nuclear weapons (i.e. hydrogen bombs) meant for the old USSR, on North Korea (among other places.) At the same time, the new CIA chief, James Woolsey, testified that North Korea was 'our most grave current concern.' By mid-March 1993, tens of thousands of [US] soldiers were carrying out war games in Korea ... and in came the B1-B bombers, B-52s from Guam, several naval vessels carrying cruise missiles, and the like: whereupon the North pulled out of the NPT.'*<sup>2</sup>

It is the US that has been provoking the DPRK with its stationing of THAAD missile defence systems ('Terminal High Altitude Area Defence') in South Korea over the last year. By so doing, by providing a shield against any retaliatory strike, THAAD missile defence enables the US and/or South Korea to launch with impunity a first strike against North Korea. The US is now testing the THAAD missiles. US-South Korea practice military manoeuvres, which used to recur several times a year, are now almost incessant.

Moreover, the US is further militarising South Korea. Residents of the South Korean island of Jeju (an island off the southwest coast of South Korea) have strongly objected to the South Korean military setting up a base on the island, with the possible deployment of the US Navy's newest Zumwalt-class destroyer 'to deter North Korean aggression'. US complicity in repression on Jeju Island is an old story. At the end of World War II, after the Japanese imperialists had been defeated, Jeju Islanders rose up against the US-installed colonial dictatorship of Syngman Rhee. The US responded by violently putting down the protests. The US employed not only the Korean henchmen of Japanese imperialism, but, many believe, even the former Japanese military rulers themselves.<sup>3</sup>

It is the US that, again and again, has refused talks with North Korea's leadership.

*In January [2017], North Korea offered to 'sit with the US anytime' to discuss US war games and its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs. Pyongyang proposed that the United States 'contribute to easing tension on the Korean peninsula by temporarily suspending joint military exercises in South Korea and its vicinity this year,*



**MOREOVER, THE  
US IS FURTHER  
MILITARISING  
SOUTH KOREA.**

*and said that in this case the DPRK is ready to take such responsive steps as temporarily suspending the nuclear test over which the US is concerned'.*

*The North Korean proposal was seconded by China and Russia and recently by South Korea's new president Moon Jae-in. But Washington peremptorily rejected the proposal, refusing to acknowledge any equivalency between US-led war games, which US officials deem 'legitimate' and North Korea's missile and nuclear tests, which they label 'illegitimate' (Stephen Gowans, *ibid.*).*

Having partitioned Korea in 1945, the US permanently stationed about 40,000 of its troops in South Korea after the end of 1950–1953 hostilities and the 1953 armistice. The US still denies Korea a peace treaty, which the DPRK has insisted on. But peace was never the intention of US imperialism. US foreign policy sees Northeast Asia only through the lens of domination.

The permanent occupation of South Korea was aimed at geopolitical control of the region, including elimination of the DPRK and moving US missile and military forces right up to the Chinese and Russian borders. The occupation was symbolised by the giant, yearly provocative military manoeuvres by the US and its regional allies, such as South Korea. Such rehearsals for real war with the DPRK have stepped up dramatically in recent months.

Few Americans grasp the enormity of the trauma suffered by millions of Koreans in the war of 1950–53. The war devastated dozens of Korean cities. The US dropped over 428,000 bombs over the capital Pyongyang alone, and killed 1.2 million people. The US war on Korea included the use of napalm. The US war's brutal and blatant violations of international humanitarian law remain unpunished.

The real nature of US policy to the Korean peninsula is neo-colonial domination, through occupation and partition. This has been so since 1945. The US has stooped to employ the same quislings that had run Korea as a Japanese colony. Professor Cumings wrote in the *London Review of Books*:

*To shore up their [1945] occupation, the Americans employed every last hireling of the*

Japanese they could find, including former officers in the Japanese military like Park Chung Hee and Kim Chae-gyu, both of whom graduated from the American military academy in Seoul in 1946. (After a military takeover in 1961 Park became president of South Korea, lasting a decade and a half until his ex-classmate Kim, by then head of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency, shot him dead over dinner one night.)

After the Americans left in 1948 the border area around the 38th parallel was under the command of Kim Sok-won, another ex-officer of the Imperial Army, and it was no surprise that after a series of South Korean incursions into the North, full-scale civil war broke out on 25 June 1950. Inside the South itself – whose leaders felt insecure and conscious of the threat from what they called ‘the north wind’ – there was an orgy of state violence against anyone who might somehow be associated with the left or with communism.

The historian Hun Joon Kim found that at least 300,000 people were detained and executed or simply disappeared by the South Korean government in the first few months after conventional war began. My own work and that of John Merrill indicates that somewhere between 100,000 and 200,000 people died as a result of political violence before June 1950, at the hands either of the South Korean government or the US occupation forces. In her recent book, *Korea’s Grievous War*, which combines archival research, records of mass graves and interviews with relatives of the dead and escapees who fled to Osaka, Su-kyoung Hwang documents the mass killings in villages around the southern coast. In short, the Republic of Korea was one of the bloodiest dictatorships of the early Cold War period; many of the perpetrators of the massacres had served the Japanese in their dirty work – and were then put back into power by the Americans.

The most important new factor is the destabilising THAAD missiles. According to the US peace organisation, Global Network, an authority on questions of war technology, the US has recently deployed the THAAD missile defence system in Seongju, South Korea despite massive protests by South Koreans. It is claimed by US authorities that THAAD is there to intercept missiles from North Korea. But many experts believe China and Russia are the real targets, given the enormous range of THAAD radar, which counterproductively intensifies unnecessary military tension in the region. The US has also deployed other ‘missile defence’ systems through the Asia-Pacific region, Europe and the Middle East to encircle Russia and China. ‘Missile defence’ is a key element in Pentagon first-strike attack planning.

## DE-ESCALATE TENSIONS NOW!

The US Peace Council joins with other US anti-war organisations in demanding that:

The US must reverse course. De-escalate tension now. No more provocations from the US. The United States and South Korea must immediately cease military manoeuvres in the region, providing North Korea with an opportunity to reciprocate. The THAAD missiles near the North Korea-South Korea border must be deactivated and removed.

The United States must engage in good faith, direct talks with North Korea. Such talks should include the perspective of a peace treaty to end the Korean War. A commitment to denuclearisation should not be a precondition for talks with North Korea.

The United States and all states in the region must stop military actions that could be interpreted as provocative, including such actions as forward deployment of additional military forces by the United States, and the testing or assertion of territorial claims by deploying of military forces in contested areas by any state. Withdrawing US naval forces newly concentrated near the Korean peninsula would be an important confidence-building step.

Korea – all of it – has a right to its sovereignty and independence. The recently elected South Korean leader, Moon Jae-in, represents a break with the repressive and reactionary leaders of the past. He campaigned on a number of progressive ideas – more independence from the US, more engagement with the North. But he has had to contend with bullying by a US Administration bent on heightening tensions. The US has no right to enforce the partition of the Korean peninsula and to block steps to unity and social progress desired by the people of Korea, North and South.

War can still be prevented, but only if the antiwar movement compels the US to reverse course. †

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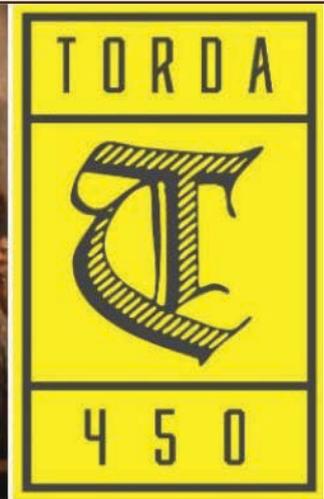
<sup>1</sup> More properly, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the DPRK. Here the terms will be used interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Gowans in *The Real Reason Washington is Worried about North Korea’s ICBM Test (What’s Left, 5 July 2017* <https://gowans.wordpress.com>)

<sup>3</sup> Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War: A History*, 2011, Modern Library Paperback Edition, p. 258.

Source: *Canadian Peace News*

**TUNE INTO THE UNITARIAN HALF HOUR**  
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# Anniversary of Unitarianism

13 January 2018 marks the 450th anniversary of the founding of Unitarianism in 1568. The Declaration of Religious Freedom and Tolerance was entitled the 'Diet of Torda' and was proclaimed by the first and only Unitarian king in history, John Sigismund, in Transylvania (now Hungary).

The above painting shows Ferenc Dávid (Francis David), a Unitarian preacher, the founder of the Unitarian Church of Transylvania, a leading figure of the nontrinitarian movements during the Protestant Reformation era.

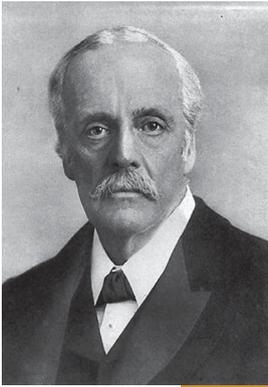
The edict is considered the first legal guarantee of religious freedom in Christian Europe. The edict proclaimed, in part '... reaffirms that in every place the preachers shall preach and explain the Gospel each according to his understanding of it, and if the congregation like it, well. If not, no one shall compel them for their souls would not be satisfied, but they shall be permitted to keep a preacher whose teaching they approve. Therefore none of the superintendents or others shall abuse the preachers, no one shall be reviled for his religion by anyone, according to the previous statutes, and it is not permitted that anyone should threaten anyone else by imprisonment or by removal from his post for his teaching. For faith is the gift of God and this comes from hearing, which hearing is by the word of God.'

The enlightenment, particularly in Britain and the new American colonies, saw the rapid growth and development of Unitarianism, particularly amongst the so-called 'progressives' in both science and social reform.

In Australia and New Zealand, Unitarian churches were established by British Unitarians from the early 1850s. The Melbourne church, established in 1852, marks its 165th anniversary this year and is one of the oldest denominations in Victoria. Our founding chairman was the first chief justice of Victoria, Sir William a'Beckett, and in 1873 the first female minister in the then British Empire, Rev. Martha Turner, was elected.

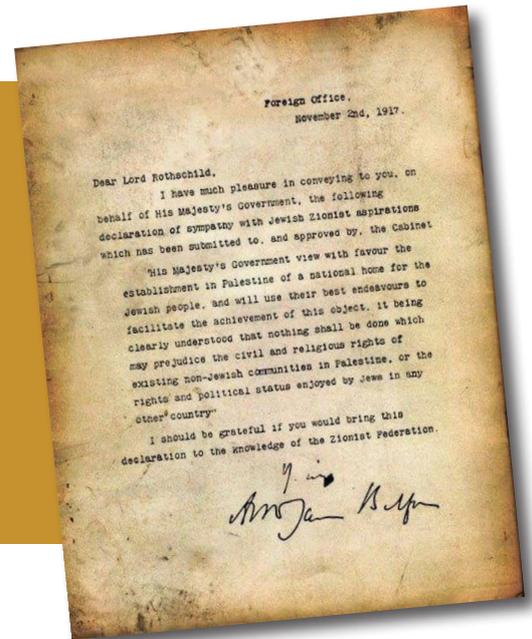
For most of the 20th century, and this century, the Melbourne church has played an important role on issues of war and peace and social justice.

Our motto '*Seek the Truth and Serve Humanity*' is both a statement of principle and a call to action.



# Balfour

and generosity with the  
lands of other peoples



This year, on 2 December, the world commemorates the Centenary of the Balfour Declaration, the granting by the British Government of a homeland for the Zionist movement in a land already occupied by Muslim and Christian Palestinians, in a territory still part of the centuries old Ottoman Empire. It was in the midst of the most terrible slaughter the world had ever witnessed.

Such generosity with the lands of other peoples was a mark of European imperialism. That is how the lands of the First Nations people of Australia became British territory. It was how West Africa, North Africa, Indo-China and several islands in the Caribbean and the Pacific became 'French'.

Baker summarises this culture of violence of Christendom: 'The twentieth century opened with the empires of Britain, France, and Russia using overwhelming force to consolidate their occupation of Islamic lands. Imperial powers came to the Islamic world as the carriers of a racist culture of violence. Murderous European civil wars, fuelled by the blood and soil of nationalism on which the West prided itself, had bred the terrible virus. Imperialism acted as its disseminating agent. European armies, whether from western or eastern Europe, waged wars of casual extermination in their quest for global domination' [RM Baker. *One Islam, Many Muslim Worlds*, 28–29].

Lying to subject peoples was, and is, all part of exercising imperial control. In order to get Arab support against the German Empire and the Khalif of Islam, in October 1915 the British High Commissioner to Egypt sent the Governor of Mecca a note which declared Britain's willingness to recognise the independence of the Arabs, both in the Levant and the Hejaz.

What the naïve Arab leadership did not know was that negotiations commenced in November 1915 between France and Britain for a mutual carve-up of the Ottoman territories. The secret Sykes-Picot Agreement was exposed before the end of the conflict.

It is within this pattern of imperial slaughter and betrayal that the Balfour Declaration was born.

According to Avi Shlaim it was both a betrayal of the Arabs and a betrayal of the French. 'Under the secret Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916, the two countries divided up the Middle East into zones of influence but compromised on an international administration for Palestine. By helping the Zionists to take over Palestine, the British hoped to secure a dominant presence in the area and to exclude the French' [25 August 2017, Middle East Eye].

Balfour himself was an anti-Semite. He was a strong proponent of the Aliens Bill of 1905 which was aimed at reducing the influx of Jews, 100,000 of whom had entered Britain between 1881 and 1905. But PM Lloyd George, the real motivator of the declaration, saw it as a means to rally Jewish support for the British war effort.

The Balfour Declaration, sent to Walter Rothschild, promised British government support for a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine provided nothing was done 'to prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine'. This was obviously predicated upon the defeat and destruction of the Ottoman Empire.

It was not fully implemented. It laid the ground for a centuries long colonial war in Palestine, where 'the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities' were not respected.

That the British Tory government intends to celebrate the centenary of this tragic event says volumes. Its response to a petition calling for it to apologise, began with a clear position: 'The Balfour Declaration is an historic statement for which HMG does not intend to apologise. We are proud of our role in creating the state of Israel' [25 August 2017, Middle East Eye].

The future will reveal how proud it should be, as it has obviously learnt nothing from the past. †



*A response to the federal government's announcement on the Uluru Declaration: Glenn is a Wiradjuri man, Anglican priest and artist and recent finalist in the 2017 Moran Art prize.*

A little over a week ago, I was standing in Juniper Hall, Oxford Street, Sydney as one of 30 finalists in the Doug Moran Portrait Prize, the richest art prize in Australia ... the only Indigenous person to do so. I could not know how prophetic my little painting would prove to be.

Titled 'Exile – The Self Portrait of the Artist As An Indigenous Man' it deals with the experience of being excluded from full participation in the life of your country, both traditional and modern. Excluded by a fence, the disembodied individual is clearly not on country and has no way of being so. It references the idea that no matter what you do you will always be excluded. Experiences such as the closure of remote communities, the Northern Territory Emergency Response, income management, the high rates of incarceration of young Indigenous people, poor health, little or no appropriate education and the lack of respectful dialogue with Indigenous leaders on issues that matter all point to the exile we now live in.

Today I have just read that the federal government has rejected the recommendations coming out of the Uluru Declaration, as prepared by the Referendum Council, a government sponsored body. The sticking point is the idea of a legislated elected Indigenous body to provide input into the government of this nation with particular emphasis on policies relating to Indigenous matters. There is also no interest in the development of a truth and reconciliation process to address the genocide of the past 200 plus years.

In my sermon at the National Reconciliation Week Evensong in the cathedral a week after the

Uluru Declaration, I warned that there was little or no appetite from both political parties' leaders for its recommendations. Their responses to the announcement were underwhelming to say the least.

In that sermon I asked the Anglican Church of Australia and the diocese of Melbourne to fully endorse the statement and to fully implement it within the church structures. This would require the empowerment of National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders Anglican Council in terms of funding and role nationally and the placement of Aboriginal clergy and elders in leadership positions within this diocese. It would also require the implementation of a truth and reconciliation process, a Makarrata, to address the role the church played in the destruction of Indigenous culture and spirit in the genocide of the last 200 years.

In light of the federal government's failure, the need for and opportunity to fully implement the declaration in the church, would allow us to take a gospel leadership role in the life of our country. If ever there was an opportunity to place the church at the centre of our nation's life and to stand for what we say we believe, this is it.

At this time the Reconciliation Action Plan group working party has commenced work on the next stage of the Reconciliation Action Plan. We now have the opportunity to make radical gains and those of us on that group will seek to do so. We will also seek the input of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to guide us as we work to bring about the full implementation of the Uluru Declaration. †

**INCREASE OUR CIRCULATION:**

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In parts of Australia a quiet tragedy is slowly unfolding. Families already beset by adversity are seeing their last shreds of hope and comfort carefully dismantled. And it's happening under the shield of one of the country's most impressive public initiatives.

The tragedy is the privatisation of public disability support care, which is impacting families of the profoundly disabled that have entrusted their relatives to this high quality care system for decades.

The initiative being used by state governments as a distraction to privatise government services is the NDIS, a scheme that greatly benefits many with a disability but removes choice for others – putting an enormous strain on those who need support the most.

How could this be, you ask yourself? Surely if these words were true, you'd have heard about it. But these families are used to adapting to tough circumstances: they've been coping without fuss for a long time. Now they're starting to speak up.

For several months, I've been travelling around Australia as panel chair of the People's Inquiry into Privatisation, hearing from local communities about how the sell-off of public services has affected them and their families. The impact of the submissions is deeply concerning when considered in its entirety. The privatisation of disability care is just one of the stories we've heard – the narrative repeats in electricity, health, education and many other areas.

## DISABILITY SERVICES

Of all submissions made, the decision to privatise disability services in NSW and WA, under the guise of the NDIS rollout, had the greatest impact on the panel. Personal stories abound of a lack of consultation, of waiting three years or more for answers, uncertainty about where a loved one's home will be, of choices being taken away, of being told that if you're not happy, just find another provider and of some for-profit providers being unable to cope with the complexity of care required by people with complex disabilities.

## HEALTH, AGED CARE AND CHILD CARE SERVICES

Nationally, seven privatised public hospitals have failed and been subsequently handed back to the government, sometimes at great cost. At least another four hospitals have had services badly affected because of privatisation. Outbreaks of infections and poor services have been directly attributed to the push for profits over care.

Within aged care, privatisation was linked to plummeting levels of staff, especially qualified staff, and resultant decreases in the levels of care. Childcare costs have risen sharply in the absence of enough affordable government-run services.

## ELECTRICITY

Submissions made to the inquiry show that despite promises of cheaper power costs in Victoria, prices for consumers in Melbourne alone have increased 85.9% since privatisation. At the same time profits are flowing to private companies, widespread evidence shows that our communities are being damaged.

In 2009, 173 people died during the Black Saturday fires. The inquiry was told that:

'Victoria's Bush Fire Royal Commission made substantive findings about the contributing factors that led to the electrical fires which caused 119 of 173 deaths. The major contributing factors in all of the electrical fires were the age of the assets and the reduction in inspection timeliness and quality.'

This is an industry quoted as making \$2.7bn in profits while reliability and quality have significantly declined.

Recent blackouts in South Australia too were attributed to the decisions of the private operator to withhold supply in the face of high prices rather than a failure of sustainable power generation.

The inquiry also heard that both the Singapore and Chinese governments, as majority owners of distribution companies in Victoria, have stipulated that the purpose of owning Victoria's assets is to use the profits to subsidise their national networks, helping keep the cost of electricity low in China and Singapore.

## THE DEPTH AND BREADTH OF PRIVATISATION

These are some of the areas, but not all. TAFE, cleaning services, prisons, CSIRO, the ATO, land titles registry, housing, home care, jobs services: the list of services being privatised or outsourced is far larger than the community would believe.

Many not-for-profit NGOs that participated in the inquiry raised significant concerns about privatisation and the marketisation of services, arguing that competition and contestability do not work in services that involve caring for people. They talked about targeted services being lost, about race-to-the-bottom tendering and a lack of funding making it difficult to provide the services the communities need, of being

swamped by the for-profits, and that increasingly they are forced to behave like for-profits to survive.

The hearings also brought out the sense of loss that communities feel when vital services are privatised, when institutions that fulfil a deeply human function: teaching, caring for people at their most vulnerable moments, are forced to behave like businesses, whose primary concern is maximising profit, not focusing on performing tasks that rely fundamentally on empathy. We heard that once these services are privatised, it becomes so much harder for communities to hold anyone to account for the standard of services. The people who end up bearing that responsibility of care are primarily women – and it shouldn't be theirs to carry alone.

The lack of planning for a fair transition in the face of plant closures by a privatised electricity sector in the Latrobe Valley is one striking example of this community impact. Evidence from towns such as Traralgon speaks to the impact of privatisation on local jobs, wages and conditions.

Privatisation can be devastating for workers and for the communities they are a part of – and can have a genuine impact on the viability of local economies in rural and regional areas. Unemployment in Latrobe has risen around 3% since July 2015. Decades of privatisation have resulted in services failing, and now the power stations are closing, the community is left to forge its own future in uncertain times, with government once again left to try and pick up the pieces after the companies have left.

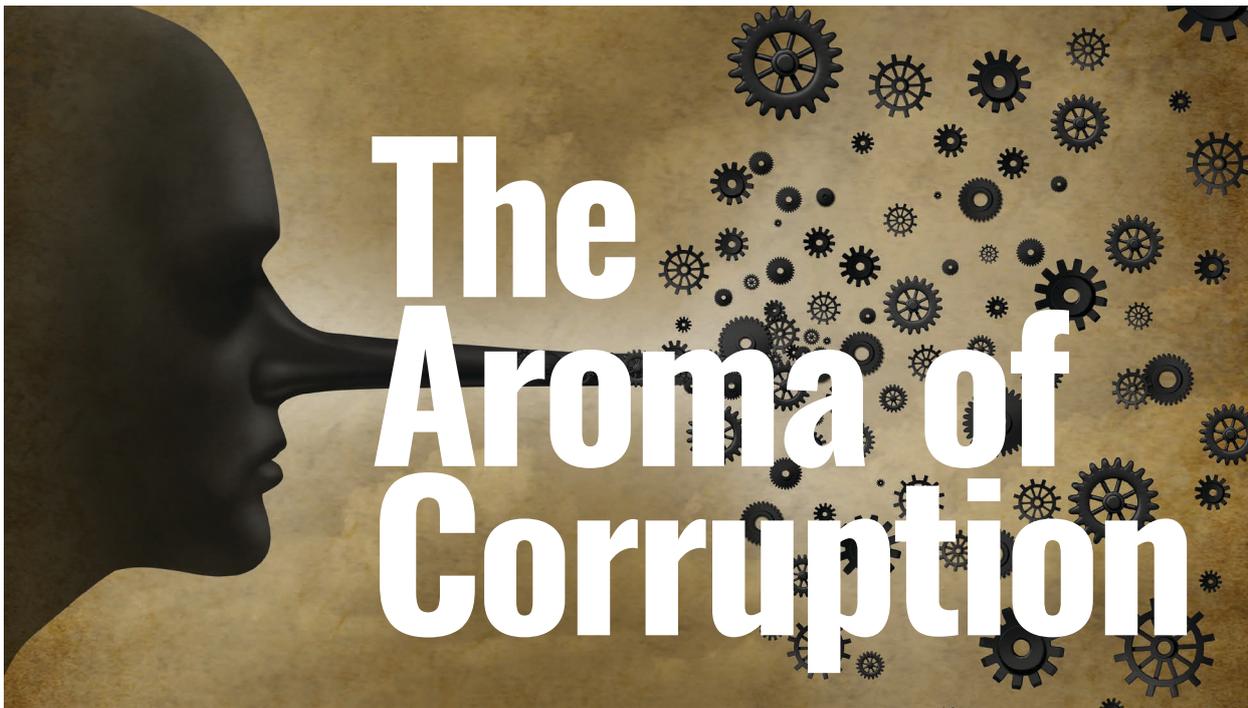
From what we have heard from the community, the privatisation agenda is failing our communities, as citizens, as workers and as users of shared public services.

*The People's Inquiry into Privatisation was chaired by Per Capita's David Hetherington, with independent panellists, including Yvonne Henderson (former Equal Opportunity Commissioner WA) and Action Aid's Archie Law. The inquiry visited 12 cities and regional centres including Perth, Darwin, Adelaide, Hobart, The Latrobe Valley, Melbourne, Canberra, Wollongong, Sydney, Newcastle, Brisbane and Cairns.* †

Source: percapita – *Fighting Inequality in Australia*

What the woman who labours wants is the right to live, not simply exist – the right to life as the rich woman has the right to life, and the sun and music and art...The woman worker needs bread, but she needs roses too. – *Rose Schneiderman*

Source: *The Inquirer (The voice of British and Irish Unitarians and Free Christians)* – September 2017



# The Aroma of Corruption

**Corruption: 'dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power, typically involving bribery'**

A few specific examples of corruption, detailed by the Australian Independent Media (AIM) network, would include the Liberal National Party ('LNP') Welfare Card program. It has been set up to the benefit of the Liberal and National parties and their members, donors and supporters. Indue Pty Ltd, the corporation awarded the contract to manage the LNP Welfare Card program and to operate its underlying systems, is a corporation owned by LNP members and donates to various Liberal and National Party branches around Australia. The former chairman of Indue is former LNP MP Larry Anthony, who is the son of former Liberal Country Party Deputy Prime Minister Doug Anthony. Anthony now holds his shares in Indue in his corporate family trust managed by Illalangi Pty Ltd. Other companies now owned by Larry Anthony, or by the corporate trustee of his family trust, Illalangi Pty Ltd, work under 'sub' contracts for Indue itself and make their profits from dealings with Indue in the course of Indue performing its contracts with the LNP government. These corporations are SAS Consulting Group Pty Ltd – a political lobbying group that counts Indue as a client – and Unidap Solutions Pty Ltd – a digital IT services corporation that provides Indue as well as the current LNP government directly with various IT services. Larry Anthony is also current president of the National Party of Australia, the 'N' in 'LNP'.

*Setting up networks of corporations and trusts is standard practice for those wishing to conceal their involvement in an enterprise or operation and is often engaged to shield the identity of those involved in that enterprise. For every person compelled to use the card, the Government will also pay Indue upward of \$4,000 each.*

Wait! There's more, from *The Daily Telegraph* (23 July 2015):

*Mr Anthony is one of a swag of former Nationals MPs now employed or engaged by mining companies, including former deputy prime minister Mark Vaile, as chairman of Whitehaven Coal, and former NSW deputy premier Ian Armstrong, who is the chair of the Shenhua community consultative committee. Former deputy prime minister John Anderson was chairman of coal seam gas frontrunner Eastern Star Gas, which was bought out by Santos in 2011, and former Nationals MP and energy minister Garry West is chair of the BHP Coroono Coal project, adjacent to Shenhua Watermark's land.*

The Panama papers revealed that Wilson Security, who ran the detention centres on Manus and Nauru, is owned by Hong Kong billionaire Raymond Kwok and his brother Thomas.

Thomas Kwok is in jail in Hong Kong, serving a five-year sentence for bribery handed down in December 2014 over his role in the former British colony's biggest-ever corruption scandal. Raymond Kwok was also charged but found not guilty. And we haven't even started on Transfield and Serco.

Last year a report by Save the Children and UNICEF found taxpayers had spent as much as \$9.6 billion on offshore immigration enforcement since 2013, while a Parliamentary Library report released in 2016 found Manus Island had cost taxpayers about \$2 billion since it was reopened – more than \$1 million for each of the 2000 people who have been imprisoned there (Canberra Times, 18 July 2017).

In a word, billions of dollars have been spent on detention centres to line the pockets of corrupt officials and businessmen who couldn't care less about the wellbeing of the people they are being paid to protect.



**...BILLIONS OF DOLLARS HAVE BEEN SPENT ON DETENTION CENTRES TO LINE THE POCKETS OF CORRUPT OFFICIALS AND BUSINESSMEN WHO COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT THE WELLBEING OF THE PEOPLE THEY ARE BEING PAID TO PROTECT.**

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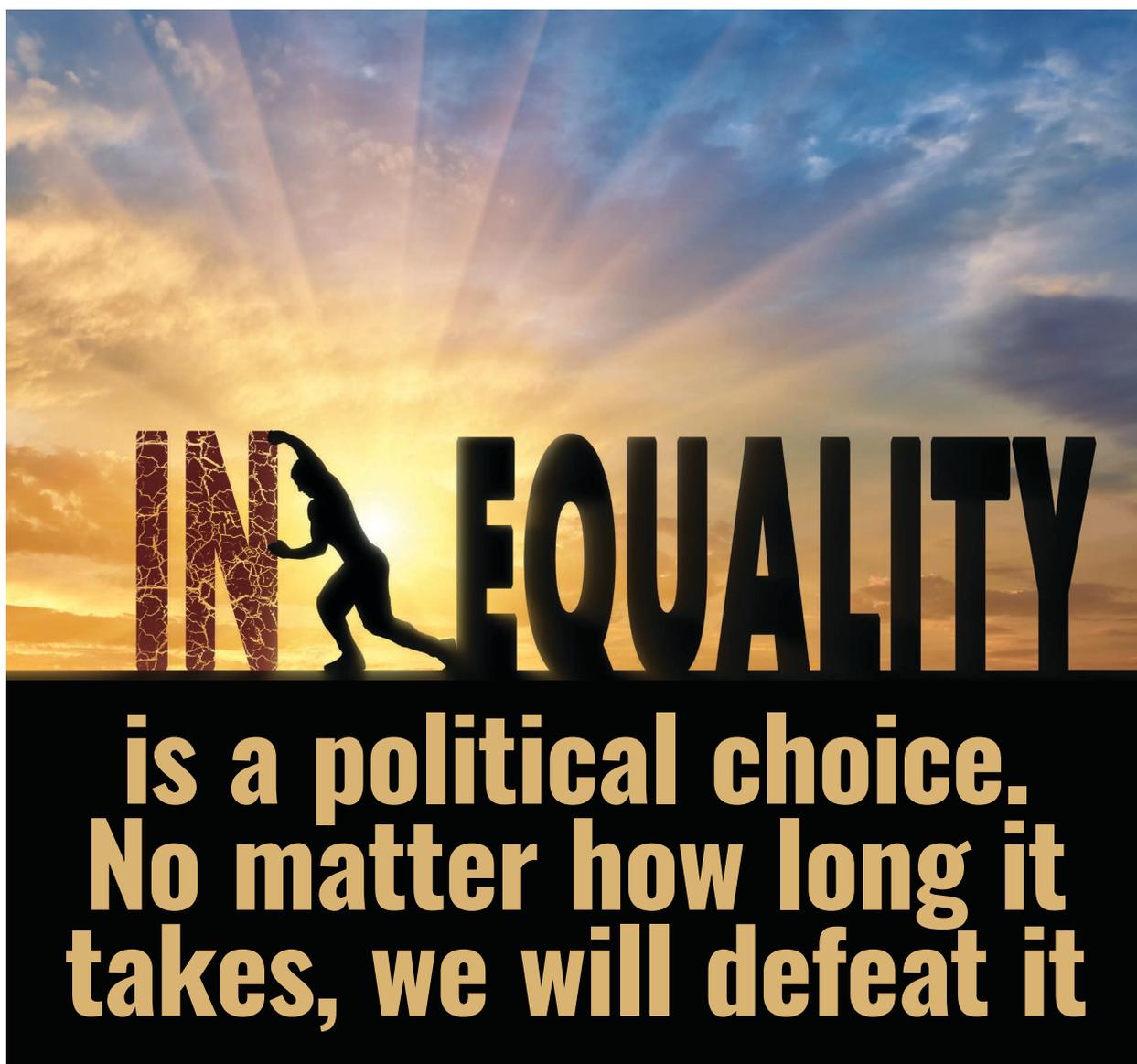
There are many other curious aromas around such as:

- the diminution of the ABC that is apparent to all. Who stands to benefit by reduced funding and restructuring that undermines the ability of the public broadcaster to vigorously inquire into the issues of the day or, as one commentator put it, 'The ABC could lose its spine'.
- in Queensland around the ability of mining companies to use the greater share of underground water resources. Who most stands to benefit when political legislators and favoured industries collude? Does the name Adani spring to mind?
- the national submarine building program that includes our shipbuilding industry, our workers, our ability to retain important technological and engineering skill sets. Who benefits when a veil of secrecy descends around important ADF procurement tenders?
- the federally funded 'unemployment industry'. Our job network system, apparently tasked with placing unemployed Australians into sustainable work, gouges billions of dollars out of the federal government budget and consistently delivers nothing more than a damning level of under-performance that is not questioned at the highest political level. Which individuals and organisations most stand to benefit from this funding largesse?

Corruption is listed as one of the 14 characteristics of fascism (Dr Lawrence Britt). Whilst we are not suggesting we live in a fascist state, we are saying that the symptoms are very apparent and require urgent attention. Such identifying characteristics of fascism make for sober reading.

**As Mark Twain said, 'History doesn't repeat itself, but it does rhyme'. †**

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.



Under a neoliberal agenda, governments are effectively arming bullies with sticks and instructing their victims to stand still for the tormentors.

Inequality is not new to Australia. Our history is laden with the long and violent act of dispossession, of forcefully taking members of the First Nations from their homes, introducing massive inequalities in rights, in life expectancy, in happiness, in hope. Sacred places were trampled, lives destroyed, cultures and languages crushed, families scattered.

The violence of patriarchy has cut the same dismal highway through our history as that of colonisation. As First Nations peoples continue to be subjected to the ongoing violence of colonisation, women continue to be subjected to the ongoing violence of patriarchy.

Thus was the historical reality into which the white masculinist myth of Australian egalitarianism was born.

Class inequality is not a recent phenomenon either. It certainly wasn't invented by those who bear its brunt, no matter how zealously it is denied or papered over by its historical beneficiaries.

The **recent report of a 9% jump in the number of people forced to work a second job**, for example, will no doubt be celebrated by the inequality apologists. 'A triumph of the rule of *choice*', they will cry. 'The market working its magic when government gets out of the way.'

What this, and indicators in income, wealth, housing, education resources, health and wellbeing point to, is a trend towards worsening inequality in the post-war period.

Everyone deserves a fair crack at happiness. In prosperous Australia, however, instead of judiciously ensuring that no one is left out, we are witnessing a growing sense of inequality, not only in incomes but in all the elements that go towards enjoying a decent quality of life, what used to be called, without any mischievous negativity, *welfare*.

In the neoliberal frame, government might talk a lot about getting out of the way, to justify the abrogation of its responsibility to ensure the *welfare* of all of the people it is meant to govern for. In reality though, the neoliberal agenda means government isn't simply abandoning the schoolyard; it's arming the bullies with sticks and instructing their victims to stand still for the tormentors.

The prime minister is fond of reframing rising inequality with his courageous embrace of 'volatility and change'. It is, of course, easy to embrace this if you have a significant financial buffer, but if you are unemployed or precariously employed and precariously housed, it is easy neither to be gung-ho about insecurity or dismissive of inequality, as it would seem the treasurer, Scott Morrison, is.

Alan Tudge, the human services minister, is currently providing excellent backing vocals to this song by crooning that we don't even really have a poverty problem and that social expenditure would only make it worse if we did. This is fondly reminiscent of when the then health minister Tony Abbott in 2007 dismissed poverty as a bad choice:

*... it doesn't matter how fair our society is, in terms of its political arrangements or its economic arrangements, there are always going to be some people that do it tough because of unfortunate personal choices, or because of what might be described as acts of God.*

Later, as prime minister, Abbott intoned the scripture that 'the poor will always be with us' and therefore everything from homelessness to dispossession caused by colonisation was a 'lifestyle choice'.

We can learn a lot from history, unless of course we wish to be condemned to repeating it. Given the current debate about inequality, it is useful to track the repetitions of old narratives.

After the 2014 budget, which made an art form out of both inequality and viciousness to the young unemployed, then treasurer Joe Hockey dismissed the criticism by alleging that it was 'political in nature and has drifted to 1970s class warfare lines, claiming the budget is "unfair" or that the "rich don't contribute enough". He continued: 'I would argue that the comments about inequality in Australia are largely misguided, both from an historical perspective, and from the perspective of the budget.'

His narrative, which the current government has been reverentially faithful to, tells us a lot about the current debate on inequality. Hockey was right that the criticism of inequality is political. It is. Because inequality itself is political. It is a political choice, not an economic inevitability.

It is a political choice that successive governments from both sides have made that has seen a failure to lift the unemployment payment in real terms since 1994.

It is political choice, through subsidies and tax concessions, to allow housing to become a speculative sport instead of a human right.

It is a political choice to fight for tax cuts for corporations and high wealth individuals while pretending the economic inevitability of penalty rate cuts, effective pay cuts through heightened workplace insecurity, and cuts to social security and social supports.

The feminist movement teaches us that the personal is political. It is therefore also a deeply personal, while political, choice to take a collective stand against inequality.



**WE CAN LEARN A LOT FROM HISTORY, UNLESS OF COURSE WE WISH TO BE CONDEMNED TO REPEATING IT.**



While the inequality deniers are falling over themselves in a rush to stamp out any serious reflection on why inequality has grown over the post-war period, and what measures were actually successful in arresting this growth, perhaps we should spare a moment to reflect on what we are failing to learn from history if we silence this discussion, and, even more urgently, what we stand to lose as a society while measures are rolled out to boost inequality in this present moment of history.

Warren Buffett once said: 'There's class warfare alright, but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war, and we're winning.' He was right about the war on ordinary people. We at the St Vincent de Paul Society see the results of this every day in the lives of the people who are forced to carry the burden of inequality as wages and social security payments are undermined and social expenditure is cut to make way for generous 'welfare' handouts to those who already have much.

But for those of us in the movement for social justice and social change, we who are driven by hope and who cannot afford to indulge in the luxury of despair, we take issue with Buffett's description of who is winning. When ordinary people are under attack, whether they are struggling to make ends meet with inadequate wages or with inadequate income support, the whole of society suffers. Inequality is bad for all of us. It grinds us down, denudes us our common humanity. But no matter how long it takes to defeat it, we will win. †

Source: *Adelaide Voices*

# from our readers

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## DEAR EDITOR

Thank you for this superb journal.

**M Morrison, NSW**

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## DEAR MARION

Many thanks for my copy of the *Beacon*.

I listen to your interesting & informative program on 3CR every Saturday morning and now I am looking forward to receiving a copy of the *Beacon*.

Enclosing a cheque for \$25 (\$10 concession payment and \$15 donation).

All the best,

**J McColl Vic**

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## DEAR MARION

Thank you for responding.

First, I would like to congratulate you on behalf of the CICD committee for all your commitment and the work you do, in particular on the housing issue and as one of the *Beacon* Editorial Board members. We enjoy reading very interesting and illuminating articles on housing, homelessness, social justice issues and much more. It is a great monthly journal.

With best wishes

**Romina  
Secretary CICD**

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## AUSTRALIAN REPUBLIC

Lt General David Morrison (Rt), our '2016 Australian of the Year', encouraged Australians in his acceptance speech, and on the popular TV program *Q&A*, to seriously consider Australia changing from a federal constitutional monarchy to a federal parliamentary republic under the democratic British Westminster model. Since federation of the Anglo-Australian colonies under the national jurisdiction of the Commonwealth of Australia 116 years ago, we have matured sufficiently to assume full sovereignty over our political and international affairs, with an Australian elected as 'president' or 'head of state' (HS), to replace the hereditary British monarch and the governor general – the monarch's unelected representative. Australia could continue to be designated 'The Commonwealth of Australia', representing our six states and two territories.

Australia is already functioning in the spirit of an independent republic. Thus our passports are now not embossed with a crown symbolic of monarchy and our anthem and oath of new citizens exclude any allegiance to the monarch. We are no longer 'Australian citizens and British subjects' but simply Australian nationals, thereby relegating us to the foreigners' queues at British passport checks. Australians with dual British and Australian citizenships are barred from serving in our federal parliament.

The Australia Act (1986) has extinguished the British Privy Council in London as a 'Final Court of Appeal' for Australians, and Australian honours replaced British awards in 1975. Many citizens in our multicultural society feel emotionally detached from the British crown. Since World War II, we have been inextricably aligned to the foreign policies of the United States of America (a federal non-parliamentary democratic republic) on which we now rely for overall security and protection through the 1951 ANZUS treaty.

Ideally, our new HS is a distinguished Australian man or woman who is domiciled in this country, pays taxes here, respects and values Australian laws and customs, sets high moral standards and is fully committed to Australia's future development and prosperity. To avoid bias, the HS must not be an executive of any political or religious organisation, nor hold allegiance to any foreign power. An ability to competently project a favourable image of our nation abroad is another important attribute.

The duties of an Australian HS, clearly encoded in a new written constitution, are likely to be ceremonial, supervisory, arbitral and diplomatic in nature. Examples: (1) opening federal parliament with an exposé of the Government's program; (2) swearing-in ministers and parliamentary secretaries; (3) signing into law (without powers of veto) federal legislation after validating the procedures used; (4) arbitrating in cases of constitutional crises and, on prime ministerial advice, issuing writs for half-senate elections or dissolution of parliament and follow-up new elections; (5) hosting foreign dignitaries and accrediting envoys and (6) leading Australian delegations abroad and formally ratifying treaties with foreign countries. Our new HS could be elected by the people or the federal parliament (either acting alone or conjointly with the states/territories).

Australia's transition into a parliamentary republic ought in no way diminish the close friendship and cooperation we have enjoyed with Britain over the many years since federation.

**Fred Neumann, Victoria**

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## A UNITARIAN DOXOLOGY

Our philosophy consists of those actions,  
purposes and experiences that are humanly significant.

Nothing human is alien to a Unitarian. It includes labour, art, science,  
philosophy, love, friendship – all that is in its degree expressive of  
intelligently satisfying human living.

We seek the fulfilment of life in the here and now –  
this is the explanation of our social passion.

We do not deny the possibility of realities as yet undiscovered, but rather  
we insist that the way to determine the existence and value of any and all  
realities is by means of intelligent inquiry and by the assessment of their  
relevance to human needs.

Our religious emotions are therefore expressed in a heightened sense of  
personal life and in a cooperative effort to promote social wellbeing.

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Did you know?

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Standing up for the Aboriginal community

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How privatisation is failing our communities

The aroma of corruption

Inequality is a political choice

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