



SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

THIS GOVERNMENT MUST GO!

EDITORIAL

This undemocratic slide is deeply concerning. We need political and community leadership to respond; to create a climate in which the independence of institutions is protected; where the separation of powers and rule of law are understood and respected; where freedom of information, not secrecy is the standard; where NGO's advocacy is valued, even when it is uncomfortable for government.

Hugh De Kretser, Executive Director, Human Rights Law Centre (*The Age* 25/2/2015)

There are historical precedents for direct attacks on democratic rights, for the destruction of NGOs, for the withdrawal of funding from organisations that exist to advise and defend those in need. Such precedents, for example, facilitated the growth of Nazism in Germany, from which tens of millions died and against which thousands of Australians gave their lives.

Today our nation is facing a concerted attack on the democracy we all treasure and that we need to defend with all our strength. Are these claims scaremongering? *Beacon* thinks not.

The Abbott government's campaign began with dire and incorrect figures about the enormous debt we are in and was then linked to the query: Do we care about our children and grandchildren who will inherit such debt? It then proceeded to outline who were the good and who were the bad in Australia when the Abbott government utilised the 'lifters and leaners' catchphrase. The leaners, of course, being the vast majority of taxpayers with the slogan indicating that we were not pulling our weight.

This government then introduced a biased budget overwhelmingly rejected by the vast majority of Australians who quickly recognised the inequality it was promoting and rejected much of its content.

There have been numerous examples of the ineptness of this scandal-ridden government that seems to operate in a parallel universe completely out of touch with the majority of its people.

We can't list them all because there would be no room in this editorial. The following should suffice:

- the environment, where they protect their mining mates and profiteers against all scientific evidence of the impact on global warming

- the emphasis on terror to ensure we will continue to be involved in aggressive wars overseas
- the consistent scapegoating of our Muslim community, making it unsafe for them to go about their normal lives
- their failure to defend the community against bigots and racists, indeed their defence of such by changes to legislation
- their commitment to protecting profit rather than people's needs
- their appalling treatment of those seeking asylum in our country – people fleeing the violence we helped to create.

This government has created an atmosphere of secrecy that denies every Australian their absolute right to participate in their own society.

This government has set out to destroy the trade union movement in order to introduce lower pay and worsening conditions. It has attacked penalty rates and removed the already limited protection that unions offer, not just to members but society generally.

The extent of the attacks on our standard of living, our democratic rights and our future is demonstrated in an extraordinarily blunt editorial in *The Age* (26/2/2015) titled, 'The attack on Triggs is an Abbott stitch-up'. This editorial concludes:

The internationally respected Human Rights Commission provides a level of protection for these people. Its vital work must be allowed to proceed unimpeded by interference or intimidation from a cynical and desperate government.

***Beacon* endorses that statement and says, without obfuscation, that this government must go! ■**

'AS THE ARABS SEE THE JEWS'

By His Majesty **KING ABDULLAH**

The American Magazine, November 1947

SUMMARY

This fascinating essay, written by King Hussein's grandfather King Abdullah, appeared in the United States six months before the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. In the article, King Abdullah disputes the mistaken view that Arab opposition to Zionism (and later the state of Israel) is because of longstanding religious or ethnic hatred. He notes that Jews and Muslims enjoyed a long history of peaceful coexistence in the Middle East, and that Jews have historically suffered far more at the hands of Christian Europe. Pointing to the tragedy of the holocaust that Jews suffered during World War II, the monarch asks why America and Europe are refusing to accept more than a token handful of Jewish immigrants and refugees. It is unfair, he argues, to make Palestine, which is innocent of anti-Semitism, pay for the crimes of Europe. King Abdullah also asks how Jews can claim a historic right to Palestine, when Arabs have been the overwhelming majority there for nearly 1300 uninterrupted years. The essay ends on an ominous note, warning of dire consequences if a peaceful solution cannot be found to protect the rights of the indigenous Arabs of Palestine.

You would think that in so grave a problem, the American, British, and other authorities responsible for the European Jews would have made a very careful survey, probably by vote, to find out where each Jew actually wants to go. Amazingly enough this has never been done! The Jewish Agency has prevented it.

Some time ago the American Military Governor in Germany was asked at a press conference how he was so certain that all Jews there wanted to go to Palestine. His answer was simple: 'My Jewish advisors tell me so.' He admitted no poll had ever been made. Preparations were indeed begun for one, but the Jewish Agency stepped in to stop it.

The truth is that the Jews in German camps are now subjected to a Zionist pressure campaign which learned much from the Nazi terror. It is dangerous for a Jew to say that he would rather go to some other country, not Palestine. Such dissenters have been severely beaten, and worse.

Not long ago, in Palestine, nearly 1,000 Austrian Jews informed the international refugee organisation that they would like to go back to Austria, and plans were made to repatriate them.

The Jewish Agency heard of this, and exerted enough political pressure to stop it. It would be bad propaganda for Zionism if Jews began leaving Palestine. The nearly 1,000 Austrians are still there, against their will.

The fact is that most of the European Jews are Western in culture and outlook, entirely urban in experience and habits. They cannot really have their hearts set on becoming pioneers in the barren, arid, cramped land which is Palestine.

One thing, however, is undoubtedly true. As matters stand now, most refugee Jews in Europe would, indeed, vote for Palestine, simply because they know no other country will have them.

If you or I were given a choice between a near-prison camp for the rest of our lives – or Palestine – we would both choose Palestine, too.

But open up any other alternative to them – give them any other choice, and see what happens!

No poll, however, will be worth anything unless the nations of the earth are willing to open their doors – just a little – to the Jews. In other words, if in such a poll a Jew says he wants to go to Sweden, Sweden must be willing to accept him. If he votes for America, you must let him come in.

Any other kind of poll would be a farce. For the desperate Jew, this is no idle testing of opinion: this is a grave matter of life or death. Unless he is absolutely sure that his vote means something, he will always vote for Palestine, so as not to risk his bird in the hand for one in the bush.

In any event, Palestine can accept no more. The 65,000 Jews in Palestine in 1918 have jumped to 600,000 today.

We Arabs have increased, too, but not by immigration. The Jews were then a mere 11 per cent of our population. Today they are one third of it.

The rate of increase has been terrifying. In a few more years – unless stopped now – it will overwhelm us, and we shall be an important minority in our own home.

Surely the rest of the wide world is rich enough and generous enough to find a place for 200,000 Jews – about one third the number that tiny, poor Palestine has already sheltered. For the rest of the world, it is hardly a drop in the bucket. For us it means national suicide.

We are sometimes told that since the Jews came to Palestine, the Arab standard of living has improved. This is a most complicated question. But let us even assume, for the argument, that it is true. We would rather be a bit poorer, and masters of our own home. Is this unnatural?

The sorry story of the so-called ‘Balfour Declaration’, which started Zionist immigration into Palestine, is too complicated to repeat here in detail. It is grounded in broken promises to the Arabs – promises made in cold print which admit no denying.

We utterly deny its validity. We utterly deny the right of Great Britain to give away Arab land for a ‘national home’ for an entirely foreign people.

Even the League of Nations sanction does not alter this. At the time, not a single Arab state was a member of the League. We were not allowed to say a word in our own defence.

I must point out, again in friendly frankness, that America was nearly as responsible as Britain for this Balfour Declaration. President Wilson approved it before it was issued, and the American Congress adopted it word for word in a joint resolution on 30 June 1922.

In the 1920s, Arabs were annoyed and insulted by Zionist immigration, but not alarmed by it. It was steady, but fairly small, as even the Zionist founders thought it would remain. Indeed, for some years, more Jews left Palestine than entered it – in 1927 almost twice as many.

But two new factors, entirely unforeseen by Britain or the League or America or the most fervent Zionist, arose in the early thirties to raise the immigration to undreamed heights. One was the World Depression; the second the rise of Hitler.

In 1932, the year before Hitler came to power, only 9,500 Jews came to Palestine. We did not welcome them, but we were not afraid that, at that rate, our solid Arab majority would ever be in danger.

But the next year – the year of Hitler – it jumped to 30,000! In 1934 it was 42,000! In 1935 it reached 61,000!

It was no longer the orderly arrival of idealist Zionists. Rather, all Europe was pouring its frightened Jews upon us. Then, at last, we, too, became frightened. We knew that unless this enormous influx stopped, we were, as Arabs, doomed in our Palestine homeland. And we have not changed our minds.

I have the impression that many Americans believe the trouble in Palestine is very remote from them, that America had little to do with it, and that your only interest now is that of a humane bystander.

I believe that you do not realise how directly you are, as a nation, responsible in general for the whole Zionist move and specifically for the present terrorism. I call this to your attention because I am certain that if you realise your responsibility you will act fairly to admit it and assume it.

Quite aside from official American support for the ‘National Home’ of the Balfour Declaration, the Zionist settlements in Palestine would have been almost impossible, on anything like the current scale, without American money. This was contributed by American Jewry in an idealistic effort to help their fellows.

The motive was worthy: the results were disastrous. The contributions were by private individuals, but they were almost entirely Americans, and, as a nation, only America can answer for it.

The present catastrophe may be laid almost entirely at your door. Your government, almost alone in the world, is insisting on the immediate admission of 100,000 more Jews into Palestine – to be followed by countless additional ones. This will have the most frightful consequences in bloody chaos beyond anything ever hinted at in Palestine before.

It is your press and political leadership, almost alone in the world, who press this demand. It is almost entirely American money which hires or buys the ‘refugee ships’ that steam illegally toward Palestine: American money which pays their crews. The illegal immigration from Europe is arranged by the Jewish Agency, supported almost entirely by American funds. It is American dollars which support the terrorists, which buy the bullets and pistols that kill British soldiers – your allies – and Arab citizens – your friends.

We in the Arab world were stunned to hear that you permit open advertisements in newspapers asking for money to finance these terrorists, to arm them openly and deliberately for murder. We could not believe this could really happen in the modern world. Now we must believe it: we have seen the advertisements with our own eyes.

I point out these things because nothing less than complete frankness will be of use. The crisis is too stark for mere polite vagueness which means nothing.

I have the most complete confidence in the fair-mindedness and generosity of the American public. We Arabs ask no favours. We ask only that you know the full truth, not half of it. We ask only that when you judge the Palestine question, you put yourselves in our place.

What would your answer be if some outside agency told you that you must accept in America many millions of utter strangers in your midst – enough to dominate your country – merely because they insisted on going to America, and because their forefathers had once lived there some 2,000 years ago?

Our answer is the same.

And what would be your action if, in spite of your refusal, this outside agency began forcing them on you?

Ours will be the same. ■

http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/kabd_eng.html
Source: Information Clearing House

'ENOUGH.'

TIME FOR A BAN

Article by **JESSICA LAWSON**, ICAN Australia



Indigenous Australian nuclear test survivor, Sue Coleman-Haseldine, spoke to over 150 governments at the Third Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons in Vienna on 8–9 December 2014.

The Kokatha-Mula woman was about three years old when the British nuclear weapons tests took place at Maralinga in the remote west of South Australia.

Coleman-Haseldine told delegations from over 150 governments that the British and Australian governments chose to conduct the tests at Maralinga and Emu Fields because they didn't believe that the land was valuable.

'There are lots of different Aboriginal groups in Australia. For all of us our land is the basis of our culture. It is our supermarket for our food, our pharmacy for our medicine, our school and our church.

'These tests contaminated a huge area and everything in it but people hundreds of kilometres away were also impacted ... I noticed people dying of cancer, something that was new to us,' Coleman-Haseldine told the conference.

While the British and Australian governments did not acknowledge Sue Coleman-Haseldine's testimony at the conference, 44 states called for a prohibition of nuclear weapons due to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences.

The Pope also sent a statement that was delivered at the conference, which declared his position that a ban on nuclear weapons is both necessary and possible.

'I am convinced that the desire for peace and fraternity planted deep in the human heart will bear fruit in concrete ways to ensure that nuclear weapons are banned once and for all, to the benefit of our common home,' Pope Francis said.

The Australian Government continues to rely on the nuclear weapons of the United States in its security doctrine, despite half-hearted statements mentioning the ultimate goal of a nuclear weapons-free world. Prior to the Vienna conference, ICAN Australia wrote an open letter to the Australian Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, on behalf of more than 30 peace, health, humanitarian, union, Aboriginal, and environmental organisations in Australia, including CICD. The letter urged the Australian Government to support the commencement of negotiations for a treaty banning nuclear weapons, to commission research into the impact of a nuclear winter on agriculture in Australia, and to establish a defence posture that does not rely on US extended nuclear deterrence.

At the conclusion of the Vienna conference, the Austrian government delivered the 'Austrian pledge' in which it committed to work to 'fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons' and pledged 'to cooperate with all stakeholders to achieve this goal'.

Vienna carried forward the momentum for negotiations to begin on a binding international instrument to outlaw and eliminate nuclear weapons and South Africa has said that it is considering its role in future meetings.

As Sue Coleman-Haseldine told the Vienna conference, 'If you love your own children and care for the children of the world, you will find the courage to stand up and say "enough".' ■

Source: Peace 2000 December 2014

(Newsletter of the Campaign for International Co-operation and Disarmament)

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He has been called the 'superman pope', and it would be hard to deny that Pope Francis has had a good December. Cited by President Barack Obama as a key player in the thawing relations between the US and Cuba, the Argentinian pontiff followed that by lecturing his cardinals on the need to clean up Vatican politics. But can Francis achieve a feat that has so far eluded secular powers and inspire decisive action on climate change?

Pope Francis's edict on climate change will anger deniers and US churches

Article by **JOHN VIDAL**

It looks as if he will give it a go. In 2015, the pope will issue a lengthy message on the subject to the world's 1.2 billion Catholics, give an address to the UN general assembly and call a summit of the world's main religions.

The reason for such frenetic activity, says Bishop Marcelo Sorondo, chancellor of the Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Sciences, is the pope's wish to directly influence next year's crucial UN climate meeting in Paris, when countries will try to conclude 20 years of fraught negotiations with a universal commitment to reduce emissions.

'Our academics supported the pope's initiative to influence next year's crucial decisions,' Sorondo told Cafod, the Catholic development agency, at a meeting in London. 'The idea is to convene a meeting with leaders of the main religions to make all people aware of the state of our climate and the tragedy of social exclusion.'

Following a visit in March to Tacloban, the Philippine city devastated in 2012 by typhoon Haiyan, the pope will publish a rare encyclical on climate change and human ecology. Urging all Catholics to take action on moral and scientific grounds, the document will be sent to the world's 5,000 Catholic bishops and 400,000 priests, who will distribute it to parishioners.

According to Vatican insiders, Francis will meet other faith leaders and lobby politicians at the general assembly in New York in September, when countries will sign up to new anti-poverty and environmental goals.

In recent months, the pope has argued for a radical new financial and economic system to avoid human inequality and ecological devastation. In October he told a meeting of Latin American and Asian landless peasants and other social movements: 'An economic system centred on the god of money needs to plunder nature to sustain the frenetic rhythm of consumption that is inherent to it.'

'The system continues unchanged, since what dominates are the dynamics of an economy and a finance that are lacking in ethics. It is no longer man who commands, but money. Cash commands.'

'The monopolising of lands, deforestation, the appropriation of water, inadequate agro-toxics are some of the evils that tear man from the land of his birth. Climate change, the loss of biodiversity and deforestation are already showing their devastating effects in the great cataclysms we witness,' he said.

In Lima last month, bishops from every continent expressed their frustration with the stalled climate talks and, for the first time, urged rich countries to act.

Sorondo, a fellow Argentinian who is known to be close to Pope Francis, said: 'Just as humanity confronted revolutionary change in the 19th century at the time of industrialisation, today we have changed the natural environment so much. If current trends continue, the century will witness unprecedented climate change and destruction of the ecosystem with tragic consequences.'

According to Neil Thorns, head of advocacy at Cafod: 'The anticipation around Pope Francis's forthcoming encyclical is unprecedented. We have seen thousands of our supporters commit to making sure their MPs know climate change is affecting the poorest communities.'

However, Francis's environmental radicalism is likely to attract resistance from Vatican conservatives and in right-wing church circles, particularly in the US – where Catholic climate sceptics also include John Boehner, Republican leader of the House of Representatives and Rick Santorum, the former Republican presidential candidate.

Cardinal George Pell, a former archbishop of Sydney who has been placed in charge of the Vatican's budget, is a climate change sceptic who has been criticised for claiming that global warming has ceased and that if carbon dioxide in the atmosphere were doubled, then 'plants would love it'. ■

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State of the nation

AN ADDRESS GIVEN AT THE MELBOURNE UNITARIAN CHURCH BY **MARION HARPER**, HON. SECRETARY MELBOURNE UNITARIAN CHURCH, 18 JANUARY 2015

Although we give lip service to the notion of freedom, we know that government is no longer the servant of the people but, at last, has become the people's master. We have stood by like timid sheep while the wolf killed – first the weak, then the strays, then those on the outer edges of the flock, until at last the entire flock belonged to the wolf.'

Gerry Spence – Lawyer and author

Source: From Freedom To Slavery



So what are our freedoms? What is the state of our nation? It is a state of extreme corruption, manipulation of information, lies, lack of compassion, excessive greed on a massive scale both in government and without, and all this from the big end of town. Those in power are happy to bomb nations out of existence but can't build a sustainable society. They can find money for destruction but not for construction. They prefer dirty, profitable coal to clean green energy. They worship at the altar of private and belittle anything public. They admire the rich and famous and condemn the impoverished and the homeless. We are a fractured society, of minor wealthy and major poor. In Australia and around the world we have widespread austerity. Austerity is not the product of a deficient grasp of macroeconomics or a failure of 'social dialogue': it is a conscious blueprint for expanding corporate power. The program has been practised and refined for decades in the developing world everywhere, with similarly disastrous results.

In Australia it has led to poverty, huge and growing unemployment and unacceptable levels of homelessness. Universities have become businesses instead of places of free and academic learning. Taxpayer-funded services, such as gas, electricity, telephone and water, essential to our wellbeing, built and owned by the people, have been privatised to benefit mainly foreign companies, thus priced out of the economic reach of many people. Our highly valued health care system, based on the principles of equal access regardless of income, is being slowly but deliberately eroded.

Government spends our money recklessly on wars that we should not be involved in, denies global warming, destroys our environment, signs 'free' trade agreements that are detrimental to our whole community and sells off our birthright, wastes huge amounts of our tax dollars on self-interest and lifestyle while accusing the majority – the creators of all wealth – of being leakers not lifters.

In 2011 the Prime Minister, this good Christian man, a man who aspired to becoming a priest, made a public statement prior to his election:

It is an absolute principle of democracy that governments should not and must not say one thing before an election and do the opposite afterwards. Nothing could be more calculated to bring our democracy into disrepute and alienate the citizenry of Australia from their government than if governments were to establish by precedent that they could say one thing before an election and do the opposite afterwards.

Tony Abbott, 22 August 2011

This is a government of liars, cheats and corrupt individuals who treat the electorate with contempt. You will remember that prior to the election of this discredited government, *Beacon* published a 'wish list' that was compiled at a

prestigious dinner organised by the very right-wing Institute of Public Affairs (IPA). Present at this expensive dinner were the moguls of big business and media. Indeed, guests of honour (or dis-honour) at the dinner, for those of you who don't read *Beacon*, were Rupert Murdoch, Gina Rinehart and, of course, Tony Abbott, prime minister in waiting. It was chaired by media hack Andrew Bolt. I don't recall any other organisation or the media exposing that wish list as fully as this church did, yet it is this wish list that provides the basis for the policies that the Abbott government are committed to.

This cabal of powerful business, media and corporates, like children running wild in a lolly shop, gleefully promoted their personal interests and demands into this wish list that was to be the Liberal Party charter. (Payment for their help in the election: why not? They were the very forces that funded Abbott's campaign, and the Murdoch media propaganda machine conned a large section of the community into voting for him.)

There were some 75 'wishes', some of which have already been implemented, some temporarily or permanently thwarted in the Senate, and some still waiting to be introduced. This list should be mandatory reading for everyone as a clear demonstration of both the power of the corporates to control governments and their disdain for the needs of the majority of Australians.

Of course we have moved on since the publishing of that list, and as you will all know, the list was followed by the Government's so-called 'independent' Audit, again prepared by representatives of the corporates and again to con us into believing that if our country was not to sink financially their agenda must be implemented in full. They insisted on savage cuts to the social program, to a campaign to destroy the trade union movement by falsely claiming it was riddled with corruption and to implement the plunder of every service required for a decent life for the people (services not provided by grateful governments, but fought for by past generations of workers through the trade union movement).

Money was always readily available, of course, to allow government to embark on another abortive costly war in Iraq and Syria and to continue to subsidise their conglomerate mates.

So, it would seem that in fact we are really governed by an extreme right-wing cabal, organised by the IPA.

So who is the IPA?

My investigation found that the IPA is indeed a right wing, corporate-funded think tank based in Melbourne. It has close links to the Liberal Party of Australia, with its executive director John Roskam having run for Liberal Party preselection for a number of elections. Following the 2007 federal election defeat for the Liberal Party, *The Australian* journalist Christian Kerr noted that a new group of federal Liberal politicians were 'receiving support from former Howard government staffer John Roskam' at the IPA.

The IPA key policy positions include: advocacy for privatisation and deregulation; attacks on the positions of unions and non-government organisations; support for assimilationist Indigenous policy (cf. the Bennelong Society), and refutation of the science involved with environmental issues such as climate change. It is a non-profit company. It has a restricted membership of 54 people. It was established in 1943 by GJ Coles and a group of businessmen based in Melbourne who appointed Charles Kemp as its first director. From the outset

it had close ties to the Liberal Party under its leader Robert Menzies. Australian journalist Paul Kelly argues that the IPA's CD Kemp was 'probably the principal architect of the original Menzies platform'. Throughout the 1980s the IPA's primary focus was on issues such as economic policy, privatisation and industrial relations policy. It dabbled in a few broader issues, such as the role of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the role of churches in public policy debates. It wasn't until 1989 that the IPA began to pay any sustained interest to environmental issues. Since then it has campaigned against the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, promoted the use of genetically engineered crops and defended the logging of native forests.

So what is the 'state of our nation' resulting from the biased wish list and the Abbott government's compliance with what is the corporates personal constituency? It would be a foolhardy person who would disagree that this country nationally and internationally is failing its people and their needs in a way never seen before and removing or cutting essential programs and whittling away our democratic processes at a faster rate than has ever happened historically.

Public outrage over the budget has been long and sustained and we can be proud that we played no small role in this. However, the fight is not yet over and these campaigns must be maintained and strengthened because politicians believe they have time on their side.

It is no coincidence that the budget was preceded by a meticulously planned campaign to discredit the union movement – a fundamental ally of working people. Aided by the reactionary Murdoch media, the Abbott government has painted an extremely false picture of 'corruption' in the union movement, suggesting the whole union movement is tainted when, like the Liberal Party, the Labor Party, big business and the banks, there are some varying degrees of corruption that need to be removed like a cancer.

However, there is no plan for a royal commission into corruption in the banks, among many politicians, the housing industry and other sectors of big business. Their practice of contracts for friends worth billions, kickbacks, spending taxpayers' money on a champagne lifestyle, tax evasion, privatisation to enrich their mates, secrecy about how they spend our taxes, refusal to acknowledge the environmental crisis, are all far more pervasive and dangerous to the community than a few alleged crooks in the trade union movement. But these are whitewashed while the trade union issues are highlighted daily in the media. Indeed, as an example if you need one, in *The Age* (25/11/2014) there was a feature article from Peter Reith, former notorious workplace relations minister in the Howard government, accusing the now Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews of being under the thumb of the CFMEU that he referred to in the media as 'a union of thuggery, intimidation and links to unsavoury individuals'. Peter Reith and his mates are an authority on thuggery, intimidation and links to unsavoury individuals. Cast your minds back to the MUA dispute of 1998 where Reith organised thugs with balaclavas and dogs to confront wharfies to 'intimidate' them in their struggle for their jobs and their future. Thuggery and intimidation in full, Reith and his Liberal government had close links with 'unsavoury individuals' from Patricks. The waterside union had a proud record of defending members from appalling exploitation and an even prouder record of supporting the needs of the wider community. This became apparent with the extraordinary display of comradeship and support from the many thousands of ordinary Melbournians who descended

on the wharf to support the wharfies. My lasting memory is of being there with my family and watching with anger as the mounted police rode toward us to remove us, when behind those representatives of the state marched 500 hardhat-wearing CFMEU members, not thugs, to support their fellow unionists whose only crime was struggling to maintain their jobs. The police were forced to retreat. Nobody will ever destroy my faith in the union movement.

Our nation state is in the hands of unsavoury individuals – many politicians who do not hesitate when it comes to lies, misinformation and introducing brutal policies that affect the most vulnerable in our community in order to increase the power and profits of their mates. The treatment of people seeking asylum – this is the real thuggery. Corruption among politicians, corporations and individuals has been publicly exposed, but like icebergs, what lies below the surface unexposed is far greater than the little we have become aware of.

I have said before and I say again that Australia is a capitalist society and therefore a class society despite the efforts of both major parties to deny this. The struggle goes on between those who have power and those who don't, and if this struggle didn't occur, if there was no struggle to defend ourselves, we would be pushed back to the slave labour of Third World countries, which is exactly where this government would like to take us. The state of our nation is dire. The gap between the rich and the poor has never been wider and will continue to grow under these policies.

A new Oxfam survey has revealed a great and growing disparity between Australia's rich and poor. According to Oxfam's report 'Still the Lucky Country?' the gap continues to grow as Australia's wealthiest were found to be not paying enough tax. Tax evasion by these conglomerates is rife, and while government gives lip service to the need to tackle it, very little is ever done. There is growing concern about the inequality in Australian society as a result of people who have 'too much influence'. The report said Australia's wealthiest 1 per cent is richer than 60 per cent of the population. The nine richest people in Australia have a net worth equal to the entire bottom 20 per cent of the nation. The state of our nation means that vast numbers of people, particularly young people, are either unemployed or underemployed.

Youth unemployment is particularly acute. The Brotherhood of St Laurence has released a new report on the growing scourge of youth unemployment and underemployment in Australia, which is at the worst level since records began in 1978 with more than 580,000 Australians aged 15 to 24 either underemployed or unemployed.

Today, young people are more likely to be underemployed – to have some work but want more hours – than at any time in the last 36 years ... There is an old saying that a country should be judged on its attitude to the young and the old, and on this basis our country should be judged harshly. Youth are being scrapped by this government and so are the elderly.

We live in a punitive society. We punish without looking at cause. We marginalise Aboriginals, Muslims, youth, the poor, and blame them for their position in our society. If our society provided affordable education, secure work, socially just programs, and if we didn't tie our foreign policy to greedy adventurist US wars, there would be

less chance of our young people becoming antisocial or wanting to be involved in foreign wars.

It is my view that the state of our nation is also the state of many nations of the world. That is because we truly do live in a global world exploited by such organisations as the World Bank and the IMF, manipulated by US imperialist forces in order to serve the interests of world capital. So please note that 'more than half the world, nearly 3 billion people live on less than \$2 per day. The GDP of the poorest 48 nations (a quarter of the world's countries) is less than the wealth of the world's three richest people combined. Nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their name. The poorer the country, the more likely it is that debt repayments are being extracted directly from the people who neither contracted the loans nor received any of the money. The underdeveloped world now spends \$13 on debt repayment for every \$1 it receives in grants. Twenty per cent of the population in the developed nations consume 86% of the world's goods. A few hundred millionaires now own as much wealth as the world's poorest 2.5 billion people. Approximately 790 million people in the developing world are still chronically undernourished, almost two-thirds of who reside in Asia, and they die quietly in some of the poorest villages on earth, far removed from the scrutiny and conscience of the world. That is around 11 million children per year.

The issues of concern about the state of our nation and the world are so many that one talk simply cannot cover them all in one address, but I want to conclude with a statement from a much loved and well-read book, which is at the same time, a source of pride and a warning. That book is *The Unitarian Contribution to Social Progress in England* by Raymond V Holt. Holt concluded his book with the following statement that I believe can still teach us valuable lessons today.

The 19th century almost to its close was a century of hope and those who lived in it found it easy to believe in progress. They knew what immense changes for the better had been made in it. They could point not only to the physical improvements in health and housing and the comforts of life, but to a better education, a higher degree of freedom and a sense of responsibility spread among millions who in previous centuries had no share at all in the shaping of their own lives. They could rejoice in an increasing humanitarianism in all aspects of life and they hoped for still better things to come. They even dreamed of a world in which the satisfaction of men's common needs by trade would lead to co-operation and not antagonism and make an end of war ... these hopes crashed after 1919. Men and women in the 20th century will try to solve their problems in their own way, but if they abandon those ideals of truth, liberty, humanity and democracy which animated the best minds of the 19th century, the time may come when the historians of the future will look back with longing on that century as in some ways a little oasis in the history of man. And as later generations painfully take up again the work of striving to create a society in which the head is held high and the mind is free, they will wonder why those who came before them, lost their nerve and threw away the gains of centuries.

Our task as Unitarians is to continue to take up that work in 2015. ■

SUBJECT: CHANGE THE ENTITLEMENTS

Dr Dale Kerwin (School of Education,
MT Gravatt Campus, Griffith University)

absolutely agree: if a pension isn't an entitlement, neither is theirs. They keep telling us that paying us an aged pension isn't sustainable.

Paying politicians all the perks they get is even less sustainable! The politicians themselves, in Canberra, brought it up, that the Age of Entitlements is over.

The author is asking each addressee to forward this email to a minimum of twenty people on their address list; in turn ask each of those to do likewise. In three days, most people in Australia will have this message. This is one idea that really should be passed around because the rot has to stop somewhere.

Proposals to make politicians shoulder their share of the weight now that the Age of Entitlement is over:

1. Scrap political pensions: politicians can purchase their own retirement plan, just as most other working Australians are expected to do.
2. Retired politicians (past, present & future) participate in Centrelink: a politician collects a substantial salary while in office but should receive no salary when they're out of office. Terminated politicians under 70 can go get a job or apply for Centrelink unemployment benefits like ordinary Australians. Terminated politicians under 70 can negotiate with Centrelink like the rest of the Australian people.
3. Funds already allocated to the politicians' retirement fund be returned immediately to Consolidated Revenue: this money is to be used to pay down debt they created which they expect us and our grandchildren to repay for them.
4. Politicians will no longer vote themselves a pay raise: politicians' pay will rise by the lower of either the CPI or 3%.
5. Politicians lose their privileged health care system and participate in the same health care system as ordinary Australian people i.e. politicians either pay for private cover from their own funds or accept ordinary Medicare.
6. Politicians must equally abide by all laws they impose on the Australian people.
7. All contracts with past and present politicians men/women are void, effective 31/12/14.

The Australian people did not agree to provide perks to politicians, that burden was thrust upon them. Politicians devised all these contracts to benefit themselves. Serving in Parliament is an honour not a career. The Founding Fathers envisioned citizen legislators, so our politicians should serve their term(s) then go home and back to work.

THIS IS HOW YOU FIX Parliament and help bring fairness back into this country!

Look at the figures below.

Salaries of statutory offices

	Remuneration – specified statutory offices (Date of effect 1 July 2014)	Specified Statutory Office – base salary (per annum)
Chief of the Defence Force	\$535,100	\$764,420
Commissioner of Taxation	\$518,000	\$740,000
Chief Executive Officer, Australian Customs and Border Protection Service	\$483,840	\$691,200
Auditor-General for Australia	\$469,150	\$670,210
Australian Statistician	\$469,150	\$670,210

Salaries of retired prime minister and politicians

Office	Additional salary (%)	Salary as of 1 July
Prime Minister	160	\$507,338
Deputy Prime Minister	105	\$400,016
Treasurer	87.5	\$365,868
Leader of the Opposition	85.0	\$360,990
House of Reps Speaker	75.0	\$341,477
Leader of the House	75.0	\$341,477
Minister in Cabinet	72.5	\$336,599
Parliamentary secretary	25.0	\$243,912
Other ministers	57.5	\$307,329
Shadow minister	25.0	\$243,912
The TOTAL ANNUAL SALARIES (for 150 seats) = \$41,694,311 PER YEAR!		

Source: Remuneration Tribunal

And that's just the federal politicians, no one else!

For the 'lifetime' payment example (below) I used the scenario that:

1. They are paid 'lifetime' salaries the same as their last working year, and
2. After retiring, the 'average' polli's life expectancy is an additional 20 years (which is not unreasonable).

It's worth remembering that this is EXCLUDING all their other perks!

CONCLUSIONS:

TOTAL 'life time' (20-year) payments, (excluding wages paid while in parliament) = A\$833,886,220 – OVER \$833 MILLION

Julia Gillard, Kevin Rudd, John Howard, Paul Keating, Malcolm Fraser, Bob Hawke, et al, add nauseum, are receiving \$10 MILLION + EXTRA at taxpayer expense.

Should an elected PM serve 4 years and then decide to retire, each year (of the 4 years) will have cost taxpayers an EXTRA two and a half million bucks a year! A\$2,536,690 to be precise.

A 2-year retirement payment cut-off will SAVE our Oz bottom line A\$792,201,909 *** NEARLY \$800 MILLION.

There are 150 seats in House, minus the 8 above = 142 seats, divided equally, for example = 71 each for both shadow and elected ministers.

This example excludes all wages paid while a parliamentarian AND all perks on top of that – travel, hotels, secretarial staff, speechwriters, restaurants, offices, chauffeured limos, security, etc.

150 seats, 20-year payment of A\$833,886,220 less annual salary x 2 years of A\$83,388,622 [A\$41,694,311 x 2]. ■

'Instead of giving a politician the keys to the city, it might be better to change the locks.'

Doug Larson

(English middle-distance runner who won gold medals at the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris, 1902–1981)

VALE

Jacob Bilander

JACOB (JACK) BILANDER was a veteran socialist who was active in the workers' and peace movements for decades, both in Europe and after immigrating to Australia in 1959 as a survivor of the Holocaust.

Jack joined the Jewish Progressive Centre in Australia, which was critical of the 1967 Israeli war, and was always outspoken about the injustices perpetrated against the Palestinian people. Indeed, he stood up against imperialism, racism and all forms of injustice.

Besides joining the Jewish Progressive Centre not long after his arrival in Australia, Jack was active in many other progressive organisations. He was an active member of CICD, especially during the Vietnam Moratorium years and beyond. He was a member of the Caulfield Peace Group in the 1970s, which was a branch of CICD.

Jack was one of the founders of the Iciek Witenberg Study Group that had close ties with CICD and often invited CICD to speak at their study group meetings that were nearly always at Jack's house.

He was a committee member of the Soviet Friendship Society for a number of years, a member of the GDR Friendship Society, the

Polish Friendship Club and the Cuba Friendship Society too.

Jack was a voracious reader of newspapers and journals in the Yiddish, English, Russian and Polish languages. Largely self-educated, he had a sharp intellect and was a good singer.

Jack's beliefs in equality, self-determination and a world free of war and exploitation align exactly with CICD's and we give thanks that he has left the CICD a donation to carry on our important work for a peaceful and just future.

All CICD and ACFS members will greatly miss Jacob.

NEW
Unitarian
E-Newsletter

The Melbourne Unitarian Church has decided to move into the digital world by launching an **E-Newsletter** every two to three months that will bring you up-to-date information and comment from home and around the world. If you would like to be part of our exciting E-Newsletter, please send an email to us at admin@melbourneunitarian.org.au and we will add you to our growing database. If, on receipt or at any point you decide you no longer wish to receive the newsletter, you can easily unsubscribe.

from our readers



Dear Editor

International donors have pledged \$5.4 billion to rebuild Gaza after Israel's 50-day assault last summer that killed 2,254 Palestinians, including 538 children, and caused widespread destruction. But studies show that at least 45% of the aid pledged by international donors will go to the Israeli economy.

The companies that are set to rake in profits providing materials for the reconstruction of Gaza are corporate criminals. Companies like Nesher and ReadyMix pillage Palestinian natural resources and participate in the construction of illegal settlements.

It is time the UN feels the extent of public outcry as details emerge of the UN's complicity in keeping Gaza under siege and the ways in which Israeli companies will profit from the reconstruction of Gaza.

Take action now and send a message to key UN officials urging them to stop Israel from profiting from Gaza's destruction and to adopt a procurement policy that excludes corporate criminals from tenders for Gaza reconstruction.

Please take action: Tell the UN: Don't reward Israel for Gaza massacre.

Take action: <http://www.bdsmovement.net/dont-reward-israel>

Thanks, in solidarity.

Steven Katsineris, Vic

Dear All

A few words about taxes:

We see people who can (and do) avoid paying tax, denying essential tax-funded services to those who do (and did) pay for them from their weekly pay envelopes.

This doesn't look like a fair go and Aussie battlers can (and will) see that.

If Medicare needs more funding, raising the Medicare levy is (and should be) more acceptable than using 'price signals' to restrict essential health care for those whose life and

work has fully entitled them to receive support from our society when they need it.

Alf Liebhold

Dear Editors

Enclosed please find my subscription renewal and new reader subscription and a small donation. As a pensioner, I cannot afford to donate a great amount, but I will always be willing to give you whatever help and support I can. Your paper is well titled as it certainly throws a 'beacon' of light onto the many injustices in this world of ours.

Keep up the good work and may your readers keep growing in number.

Best wishes and peace forever.

S Bains, NSW

Dear Sir

Enclosed please find a cheque for \$100 being for a further twelve-month subscription to the *Beacon*.

Our members enjoyed reading your magazines last year and would like to continue doing it this year.

We will be resuming our monthly meetings from the 24 February 2015.

R Breese

Retired Members Association of the CFMEU, NSW

Dear Editor

Enclosed is my subscription renewal for 2015, and a further amount to cover a gift subscription; the balance is a small donation.

Keep up the good work – Seek the Truth and Serve Humanity – something that the *Beacon* does well.

T Chandler, NSW

Dear Editor

Thank you for spreading the truth.

A Jarman, Qld

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If *Beacon* readers would like to pay their subs via a bank, details are below. (You will need to go to an ANZ bank if you do not want to incur fees.)

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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.



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‘Enough.’ Time for a ban

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Beacon Editorial Board

Peter Abrehart

Marion Harper

Donna Sensi

Julie Stafford

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MELBOURNE UNITARIAN PEACE MEMORIAL CHURCH

110 Grey Street, East Melbourne 3002
Email: admin@melbourneunitarian.org.au
Website: www.melbourneunitarian.org.au

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