

# the BEACON



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SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY



**A**usterity might be the buzzword on the lips of ruling elites around the world, but for the poorest people it is a harsh reality brought about by an unjust economic policy. Austerity only applies to the poorest people: it's reflected in the way governments around the world see themselves and their cohorts as 'lifters' and the rest of us as 'leaners'.

According to the dictionary, austerity refers to 'Difficult economic conditions created by government measures to reduce public expenditure'. A better definition, or at least one that reflects the reality of current economic policy is, 'Difficult economic conditions created by governments and financial institutions resulting in reduced profits that someone, other than themselves, must remedy to ensure profitability and growth continue unimpeded'.

Why should public expenditure be the prime target of austerity? Are there other ways to reduce public expenditure more acceptable to those who pay the taxes and create the wealth? After all, toilers do not create difficult economic conditions: we didn't create the financial crisis; it arose from illegal but accepted dubious financial practices pursued by big financial institutions in their greedy stampede for big profits.

It is banks and other financial institutions that create crises and it is governments that print valueless paper money to cover for them. Oh, the irony of our supposedly civilised, democratised

world: we work and pay taxes that pay for weapons that giant arms conglomerates profit from and that our governments use, in the name of our freedom, to blow up, gas, shoot and burn innocent people around the world.

*They create the crisis: we pay for it. Austerity is not the only solution, yet we have accepted it as if it is. Let's see if there are other ways of dealing with their debt.*

No glorification of past wars: All told, the ANZAC centenary will cost Australian state and federal taxpayers almost \$325 million.

No more illegal incursions into countries that are no threat to us: Australia joined two fully-fledged wars in the name of preventing terrorism (Afghanistan in 2001 costing some \$7.5bn and Iraq in 2003 costing over \$5bn). Both are ongoing and with no end in sight. What terrorism have they prevented? How many more billions will we spend on murder and slaughter? Let us plough these billions into constructive people's programs here – remember this money comes from our taxes!

No subsidies for the mining sector that is destroying our environment and is mainly foreign owned: According to calculations by the Australia Institute, the states gave the mining industry \$3.2 billion in concessions in the last financial year. That is just the states and does not include the federal government.

No more open-ended royal commissions: This includes the political witch-hunt into the trade union movement that has claimed no major scalps after a year and has cost in excess of \$61 million.

Collection of taxes: The total revenue in 2012 for BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto, Woodside Petroleum, Newcrest and Xstrata was A\$167.23 billion. Add to that the revenues of the self-defined 'small' miners. Gina Rinehart's Hancock Prospecting alone made a \$1.2 billion net profit last year. It is projected that in the next decade they will make at least another \$600 billion. And yet the mere mention of any kind of tax results in threats that if they are made to pay more, they will simply pack up and leave.

Adjust politicians' pay and perks: Enough of snouts, we can't afford so many perks and rorts. Bring them into the world they created. Australian MPs are among the best paid in the world. Federal backbenchers take home \$195,130 – almost double that earned by British MPs and nearly three times the national average full-time wage.

**In the time it has taken to draft this editorial we have determined just a few worthy alternatives to austerity that have generated in excess of hundreds of billions. We're sure you could add to them. Time to fight back?**

EDITORIAL



# REV. STEPHEN FRITCHMAN

**B**orn in Cleveland, Ohio, on 12 May 1902 to Addison and Esther Eliza (née Hole) Fritchman, his mother died the following day. Little is known about his early life, but he was presumably raised as a Methodist and his first job after finishing high school was reading gas meters in Cleveland's slums. There he saw at first hand the miserable lives of the underclass, which experience made him a radical for the rest of his life.

Fritchman attended the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Finance in Philadelphia but left after a year for the Ohio Wesleyan University to study for the Methodist ministry. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1924 and remained for another year as a graduate assistant in the English Bible Department. He then moved to New York City, where he obtained a Bachelor of Divinity from the Union Theological School in 1927 and a Master of Arts from New York University in 1929.

During that time, Fritchman had supported himself by teaching English literature at undergraduate level and working as a religious news editor for the *New York Herald Tribune*. He had also married Frances Putnam, a Unitarian, which presumably motivated him to apply for Unitarian fellowship shortly after his ordination as a Methodist minister in 1929. He served at the Petersham Unitarian Church in Massachusetts for two years, during which time he also studied at the Harvard Graduate School. At his next church in Bangor, Maine, he became more outspoken as a pacifist and supporter of Roosevelt's 'New Deal'.

That earned him some criticism and the Fritchmans came to find the youth in the church more open-minded. In 1938 they moved back to Boston, where Fritchman worked for the American Unitarian Association as its Director of Youth Work, coordinating activities for young people of high school and college age. He felt that the Young People's Religious Union was overly controlled by adults and encouraged its leadership to make it more democratic and independent. That body did so and became American Unitarian Youth in 1941.

The next year, Fritchman took on the additional job of editing the *Christian Register*, a Unitarian fortnightly magazine that began in 1821. The Register had suffered financial difficulties in recent years, so he changed it to a monthly publication and sought to raise its profile. His first issue had race relations as its theme, with an article

The upcoming 2015 ANZUUA Conference, hosted by the Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church, is as good an excuse as any to tell the story of a man who has long been almost a 'patron saint' of that congregation. Arguably the most controversial Unitarian minister of the last century, **Stephen Hole Fritchman** had a lengthy career as editor, writer, youth leader and minister of the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles.

by Rev. Ethelred Brown, the only black Unitarian minister at the time.

Under Fritchman's editorship, the magazine became both provocative and profitable. As its writers were unpaid, he was able to solicit articles from speakers he met through various left-wing groups he was involved with, such as Edgar Snow, WEB DuBois and Paul Robeson. (He often spoke at these meetings, which got him the attention of the FBI.) In those years, he wrote two books: *Young People in the Liberal Church* (1941) and *Men of Liberty: Ten Unitarian Pioneers* (1944), and edited two others: *Prayers of the Free Spirit* (1945) and *Together We Advance* (1946).

In 1946, AUA president Frederick Eliot was informed that Fritchman was being monitored by the FBI and thought to be a member of the Communist Party. The Executive Committee held five hearings on the matter but no action was taken against him. Indeed, the AUA Board upheld him in both of his positions by large majorities even after the 'Fritchman Controversy' had become public knowledge. He was then served a subpoena to appear before the House Un-American Activities Committee along with representatives of the Unitarian Service Committee, though he gave his interrogators little satisfaction. He later defended the 'Hollywood Ten' group of actors when their turn came to appear before the HUAC. (They were cited for contempt of Congress when they refused to testify and were subsequently blacklisted by the industry.)

Fritchman resigned as Executive Director of American Unitarian Youth early in 1947 but he remained editor of the Register for a few more months. At the beginning of 1948, he became minister of the First Unitarian Church of Los Angeles and immediately proposed that the church bylaws and publicity state that men and women of all races and national origins were welcome there. (The LA congregation had existed since 1887 and the church was built in 1927.) By this time, radicals were no longer regarded by most people as communists and Fritchman denounced Soviet imperialism from the pulpit as strongly as he had criticised its American counterpart.

Under Fritchman's ministry, the Los Angeles church grew in membership to 1250, with weekly attendance at 443 and the church school at 327. Up to 1000 would gather for church forums on social and religious issues. The congregation operated a little theatre, a writer's group, a women's group, and a senior citizens' community group.

An arts festival flourished, which eventually sponsored appearances by Arthur Miller, Pete Seeger and Paul Robeson. It hosted one of the first exhibits of work done exclusively by black artists.

However, the US authorities were less forgiving than the Unitarians. In 1952, Fritchman had to decline an invitation to address the 100th anniversary service of the Melbourne Unitarian Church when the State Department denied his request for a passport. He was finally allowed to travel in 1958, after which he attended international peace conferences in Stockholm, Tokyo, London and Warsaw over the next five years. In 1967 he visited the Soviet Union and he went to China in 1973.

For ten years, Fritchman hosted a weekly radio program on a succession of stations, drawing ever-larger audiences until he was taken off the air under pressure from the advertisers. He had better success on television, appearing as a critic of life in the United States on the British program, *We Dissent*, and he was interviewed for a CBS network special about the American funeral industry based on Jessica Mitford's book, *The American Way of Death*.

Milford spoke at the LA church, as did Margaret Mead, WEB DuBois, Edgar Snow, Steve Allen, Charles Collingwood, Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, Ashley Montagu, Corliss Lamont, Albert Kahn, Robert Hutchins, Harold Urey, Bishop James Pike, Karl Menninger and Linus Patting. (The last joined the church.)

In 1963, Fritchman delivered the Berry Street lecture to the conference of the UU Ministers Association. He received an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from the Starr King School for the Ministry in 1967 and two awards from the UUA in 1969 and 1976. He retired from the Los Angeles church in 1969 and served the Unitarian Church of Palm Springs from then until 1977. He died in Glendale, California on 30 May 1981.

[This article is largely based on that of Rev. Charles Eddis, Minister Emeritus of the Unitarian Church of Montreal, in the Dictionary of UU Biography ([www.duub.org](http://www.duub.org)). He actually wrote a book entitled *Stephen Fritchman: The American Unitarians and Communism* (2011).] ■

**Source: *The Sun* (The Unitarian Church of NSW)**

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# CUBA ELIMINATES MOTHER- TO-CHILD TRANSMISSION OF HIV

BY **E CATALINOTTO**,  
RN, CERTIFIED NURSE MIDWIFE

Cuba became the first country certified by the World Health Organization as having eliminated mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis.

‘Cuba’s success demonstrates that universal access and universal health coverage ... are the key to success, even against challenges as daunting as HIV’, said Dr Carissa F Etienne, director of the Pan American Health Organization, WHO’s Regional Office for the Americas, in a June 30 news release. ‘This is a celebration for Cuba and a celebration for children and families everywhere.’

Globally, about 1.4 million women living with HIV become pregnant each year. Without treatment, up to 45 per cent of their babies will become infected. Medication for mother and newborn can bring that down to about 1 per cent.

This writer – who provided prenatal care to HIV-positive women and was involved in research to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV during the early 1990s in the United States – was not surprised to see Cuba’s achievement. The Cuban medical system has an excellent record of providing the best care available to everyone by focusing on the population’s needs, with no focus on profits.

AIDS was first identified in 84 Cubans who were among 300,000 military personnel returning from Africa in the 1980s, where they played a crucial role in defeating apartheid forces in Angola. A nationwide screening program began in 1986, when Cuban scientists developed their own HIV test despite the economic and information blockade that hinders scientific exchange (*American Journal of Public Health*, May 1991). Eighty per cent of the sexually active population (about 3.5 million people) were screened.

Testing and tracing of sexual contacts followed standard public health procedures, but more thoroughly than in other countries, according to the *Health and Human Rights Journal*, September 2009. One of those first measures was quarantine (1986–1989), later replaced by outpatient treatment, education and patient peer groups. Since 1988, HIV education has also been part of Cuba’s school curriculum starting in the fifth grade.

The quarantine period was not directed at gay and bisexual men – who were then only 21 per cent of those who tested positive. Women formed the same percentage of the infected. Currently, men who have sex with men are a majority of HIV-positive people in Cuba.

After the development in 1996 of highly active anti-retroviral treatment (HAART), Cuba bought ART drugs for all children with AIDS and their mothers, at a cost of \$14,000 per person per year. The Cuban medical organisations and government prioritised this expense despite Cuba’s deep economic crisis in the mid-1990s after the collapse of the USSR and as the US blockade

deepened under President Bill Clinton. Since 1998, Cuba has been producing its own low-cost generic HIV medications.

In addition to this latest achievement in mother-child health, Cuba has the lowest infant mortality rate in the Americas. It also leads the world in numbers of health care workers sent to respond to the Ebola epidemic.

'After the devastating [2010] earthquake in impoverished Haiti, Cuba sent the largest medical contingent and cared for 40 per cent of the victims. Following the Kashmir earthquake of 2005, Cuba sent 2,400 medical workers to Pakistan and treated more than 70 per cent of those affected' (*Guardian*, 3 December 2014).

While the US and Europe suck health care workers out of poor countries, Cuba established the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) and has graduated more than 20,000 doctors from over 123 countries since 1998.

Cuban immunologists have made several vaccination breakthroughs – for meningitis B, hepatitis B and lung cancer (*Wired Magazine*, 11 May 2015). Cuba also launched a vaccination campaign against malaria, which affects mainly children, in 15 West African countries and restored the sight of 3.5 million people in Latin America (*Huffington Post* 8 August 2014). ■

**Source: Australia-Cuba Friendship Society Melbourne Newsletter August 2015**

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# NUCLEAR FLAWS

by HELEN CALDICOTT

This article was first published in the print edition of 'The Saturday Paper' on 30 May 2015

Something quite extraordinary is happening in South Australia, the state that initiated the national movement against French atmospheric nuclear tests in 1971–72, and where the movement against uranium mining began in 1975, which ultimately led to a five-year ban by the ACTU on the mining, transport and export of uranium.

In 2010, the University College London (UCL) established its School of Energy and Resources, Australia, in Adelaide. The school partnered with pro-nuclear and pro-shale gas corporations, including BHP Billiton and Santos. On the surface this may seem harmless enough, but the school and its well-connected backers have had a profound impact on the nuclear debate in South Australia, particularly as the state begins a royal commission into 'opportunities and risks' in the 'nuclear fuel cycle'.

Professor Stefaan Simons, who is the director of the International Energy Policy Institute and UCL's BHP Billiton chairman of energy policy, has been strongly promoting construction of nuclear powered submarines in South Australia, as well as a repository in the state for radioactive 'waste streams'.

Dr Tim Stone, a businessman and visiting professor to the UCL's Adelaide campus, was expert chair of the British Office for Nuclear Development and sits on the board of British energy company Horizon Nuclear Power.

James Voss, the former managing director of Pangea Resources, the company that originally proposed a nuclear waste dump in Australia in the late 1990s, is also part of the UCL fold, as honorary reader at the International Energy Policy Institute.

Outside of UCL, support has come from the likes of Professor Barry Brook, former professor of climate change at the University of Adelaide, and now professor and chair of environmental sustainability at the University of Tasmania. Brook has vigorously promoted the whole nuclear fuel chain, from uranium mining and enrichment to reactors and storage of radioactive waste in the desert of South Australia. He and Tim Stone have been appointed to the Nuclear Fuel Cycle Royal Commission's Expert Advisory Committee.

The arguments put for nuclear power are many and specious. As South Australia continues to be seduced by them, it is worth pointing out the flaws that too often go uncorrected.

The first argument is environmental: that nuclear power is the best way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and as such combat climate change. But this ignores the huge expulsion of greenhouse gas that goes into producing nuclear power.

The massive industrial process supporting a nuclear power plant is complex and energy intensive. It involves mining millions of tonnes of

soil and ore. The uranium must then be separated, milled, enriched and converted into ceramic particles to be packed into zirconium fuel rods. Construction of the huge reactor complex adds substantially to global warming as it is largely made of concrete – a CO<sub>2</sub>-intensive product. One hundred tonnes of enriched uranium fuel rods are packed into the reactor core and submerged in water. The fission reaction boils the water, steam turns a turbine and generates electricity. Each 1000-megawatt reactor requires one million gallons of water a minute, for cooling.

In operation, the uranium becomes one billion times more radioactive, and more than 200 new man-made radioactive elements are created. Thirty tonnes of

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radioactive spent fuel rods – nuclear waste – removed from the reactor core annually must be continually cooled for decades. Decommissioning of the intensely radioactive reactor occurs decades hence and long-term storage of radioactive waste for one million years must follow.

This complex process produces massive amounts of global warming gases, including CO<sub>2</sub> and chlorofluorocarbons. Enriching uranium also requires the enormous expense of energy.

As far as mitigation of global warming is concerned, the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research estimates that 2000 to 3000 reactors of 1000 megawatts each would need to be built over the next 50 years to have any impact – one a week – in order to replace half of our present oil and coal capacity as well as meeting globally escalating electricity needs.

Nonetheless, the South Australian Liberal senator Sean Edwards, a real estate agent and winemaker, has parroted the fallacious arguments about climate change mitigation in a recent interview for the Murdoch press.

Ben Heard, an occupational therapist and PhD candidate studying nuclear power, agreed with Edwards and is advocating the reprocessing of radioactive fuel. This involved dissolving intensely radioactive fuel rods in nitric acid and chemically precipitating out plutonium, which would then fuel small, modular, fast-breeder reactors.

Here, another specious argument. Reprocessing is an extremely dangerous process, exposing workers to high levels of radiation and leaving a toxic corrosive brew of more than 100 deadly radioactive elements that must then be isolated from the ecosphere for one million years, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency. It's a scientific impossibility. The proponents argue that fissioning plutonium (the process of nuclear reaction) in a fast reactor converts it to shorter-lived radioactive elements, which reduces the amount of very long-lived waste. Plutonium's radioactive life is 250,000 years, while that of converted elements such as cesium-137 and strontium-90 is 300 years.

But they are wrong. Only 9 per cent of the plutonium successfully fissions, leaving 91 per cent of it with its extensive life, as well as producing deadly fission byproducts.

Next, there is the question of militarisation. Proliferation of nuclear power and weapons is intrinsically linked. Fast reactors make access to plutonium readily available to use as fuel for nuclear weapons for the next 250,000 years.

There are, as mentioned, supporters of the South Australian waste dump proposal. No doubt, countries with some of the 350,000 tonnes of spent fuel in the world would be thrilled with such a scheme. The dump would be constructed on Aboriginal land, near and likely above the Great Artesian Basin. The extremely dangerous elements in this waste include plutonium-239, existing for 250,000 years and so toxic that one-millionth of a gram is carcinogenic. There would also be americium-241, even more deadly than plutonium, as well as strontium-90 and cesium-137, lasting 300 years. Radioactive elements that concentrate in the food chain are odourless, invisible and tasteless. They induce varieties of cancer, including lung, liver, bone, testicular, breast, muscle and brain. They can cause severe congenital deformities and their presence

increases the incidence of inherited genetic diseases.

The South Australian population would be likely to experience epidemics of cancer, leukaemia, congenital anomalies and genetic diseases through future generations as the waste inevitably leaked.

The entire nuclear fuel chain in all countries with nuclear power, including its accident insurance, is heavily subsidised by government. Wall Street will not invest in nuclear power, so in essence it is a socialised industry paid for by the taxpayers. Construction of 1000-megawatt nuclear reactors in the US now costs upwards of \$US12 billion. Many of the nuclear power plants in Britain, Europe, Japan, Canada and the US are reaching the end of their productive lives. But because the private utility companies that run the reactors make over 1 million dollars a day selling electricity, they are persuading governments to allow these dilapidated and dangerous reactors to operate for another 20 years.

Clearly this whole disastrous process is financially beyond the reach of little South Australia. However Premier Jay Weatherill has been persuaded to establish a flawed royal commission to assess the viability of incorporating the entire nuclear fuel chain in the state.

South Australia has vast amounts of geothermal energy available in its northern reaches and it is perfectly suited for solar and wind power, which get cheaper by the day. With a little initiative and wise political leadership, the state could become a world leader in clean, green and sustainable energy, installing solar panels on every building and parking area, building electric solar-powered cars, constructing thousands of turbines and upgrading the grid, which would enormously increase the GDP and welfare of South Australia. But there are no institutes or Liberal senators or well-connected businessmen advocating that.

## DID YOU KNOW...

Sometimes the world is treated to the old, unforgiving IMF, the ideologue of market reform that punishes and rewards, always inspired by the latest orthodoxy among its biggest shareholders. Facts are eloquent: between them, 158 small countries have 23.59 per cent of the votes in the fund; the United States has 16.75 per cent, Germany 5.81 per cent, the United Kingdom 4.29 per cent.

# CHERISH THE DREAM

by **REV. DAVID E BUMBAUGH**



I suppose that every American of my generation has a 'how Dr King shaped my life' story. Here is mine. I had graduated from seminary in 1964 with a clear idea of the focus and shape my ministry would take. I spent my time reading and reflecting, and crafting sermons that shared the result of that effort with my congregation. Inevitably, in those times, much of my reflection focused on the enormous social issues that confronted the nation – racism, war, poverty. I regarded it as my job to enlarge their sense of responsibility and compassion as people experienced deep and disturbing challenges and changes. But in no sense could I have been considered an activist. Indeed, one of my colleagues, only half kidding, suggested that I was running a spiritual filling station – rounding people up once a week, pumping them full of the holy gas and then, tyres and fluid levels checked, sending them out to confront the world, while I stayed home and kept the restrooms clean.

Then came the day that Martin Luther King sent out his invitation to the clergy to come to Selma, Alabama, to help with the drive for voting rights. Now, I knew about the invitation, but I did not for a moment believe he meant me. I had grown up in a community in which we had been carefully taught to avoid attracting attention to ourselves. We had been taught that even when the sign on the door said, 'welcome' or 'enter', it probably did not mean us. It never occurred to me that an invitation to the clergy to come to Selma meant me too. I did not go. Then came the terrible news that James Reeb, one of our Unitarian Universalist ministers who did respond to that call, had been clubbed to death in the streets of Selma. Another call went out – this time from the Unitarian Universalist Association, urging as many ministers as possible to go to Alabama for the last stages of the march from Selma to Montgomery. I read the call, but once more, it never occurred to me that I was included.

The next Sunday, as I was about to enter the sanctuary, two members of my congregation stopped me and asked if I was going to Alabama. I must have looked very confused. I explained that we had a small child and another child on the way, and I really did not have the money to spend on a plane ticket, and ... they

interrupted my ramblings to say, 'We have the plane ticket; will you use it?' And suddenly I knew that all the sermons I had ever preached, and all the sermons I would ever preach would be hollow and empty unless I walked through the door they had just opened for me.

And so I went to Alabama. I had never experienced anything like this – being part of a great tide of people flowing through the streets of that old city, marching from the outskirts, past the shacks and hovels of its African American citizens who greeted us with cheers and smiles, on into the heart of the city, to the very capital of the state, to hear Martin Luther King Jr electrify the crowd. He called for an end to the racist practices which condemned so many of our fellow citizens to lives of poverty, brutality and despair, and asked in his inimitable way, 'How long?' and promised, 'Not long!' It was an exhausting and exhilarating day, made sombre by the news that after the march Unitarian Universalists had suffered another martyrdom: Viola Liuzzo, one of our laywomen from Michigan, had been murdered while driving some young Black men back to Selma.

Flying back to Illinois, musing over this incredible, overwhelming experience, I suddenly realised that my life, my ministry, could never be the same again. I could not march for civil rights in Alabama and then fail to be an active part of the same struggle in Illinois. And so, back in Chicago Heights, I found myself drawn out of my study and away from my books, as I became a regular participant in the struggle for civil rights in my own town and in the communities around. I discovered that preaching could be dangerous when the mayor took offence at one of my sermons and threatened me with a charge of criminal libel. And I discovered that my congregation came alive, not only in its support of me (concerned that the community could recognise the clergy of other churches because of their clerical collars, but might not recognise me, they gave me a sweatshirt with a great red flaming chalice printed on it) but also in its determination to engage in the struggle for justice and peace and equity.

We watched as Dr King's concerns and insights grew and deepened despite setbacks. He began to teach us that racism in the United States and war in Vietnam were, at some deep level, related. He helped us see that racism and poverty were, at some deep level, part of the same problem. He challenged us to enlarge the focus of our concerns, as he developed plans for a 'Poor People's Campaign' which would bring thousands of the nation's impoverished citizens – white and Black, urban and rural – to the nation's capital to confront the rich and the powerful.

No matter how difficult the situation, how intense the hatred he confronted, how subtle the powers raged against him, he seemed always to convey a fundamental faith in the humanity of others, a conviction that, as he said, 'the moral arc of the universe is long, but it bends toward justice'. He strengthened us in our determination, and by his very presence he guarded us against the

temptation to hate and despise those who blocked our dreams and derided our hopes.

And then came the terrible news that Dr King had been murdered in Memphis, Tennessee, where he was supporting a strike by sanitation workers – garbage collectors. I remember being submerged in my private grief when the telephone rang. A voice on the other end of the line asked me please to come to a special meeting in the African American community, and to come at once. I got into the car and with tears dimming my vision I drove across town. The leaders of the meeting hoped that this community gathering might prevent the rioting and bloodshed that were erupting elsewhere across the nation. Together we wept – for ourselves and for the nation and for the world. Together we reminded each other of the dream Dr King had served, and how he sought to draw out of each of us our very best, and how he had sought to bridge the chasm between Black and white, between rich and poor, and how he had sought to remind us of who we were and the values which had made us a people. And the city of Chicago Heights did not burn or erupt in violence that night. Once more, somewhere in my mind, I could hear his voice and I knew again that if ever God had spoken to my generation, it was through this man.

The years have passed, and I have grown older and I have watched what has happened to the image of Martin Luther King, Jr. First, we made him a hero, and we softened his message so that it would not challenge us in any fundamental way. Gone is his concern about the morality of an economic system in which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, in which 'the righteous are sold for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes'. Gone is his challenge to examine our cultural life in the light of enduring values, and in its place are a three-day holiday and an excuse for conspicuous consumption for those who can afford it. And then, having made him a hero, we have proceeded to find his feet of clay. We smile and poke each other in the ribs and suggest that he was really a womaniser. We cluck our tongues and point out that he was less than meticulous in crediting his sources in writing his doctoral thesis and perhaps he was a plagiarist, suggesting that maybe he did not really deserve his degree after all. And then we subject his career to critical analysis and suggest that while he may have been somewhat effective in the South, he was no match for the sophisticated northern cities. After a while, we have demythologised and anaesthetised his legacy so that we need no longer feel or hear the challenge of his life and work.

I tell you, as one who was there on the fringes of this history that all the critiques may well be true. Martin Luther King Jr was, like all human beings, flawed and imperfect. He was a creature of his culture and his times and he was driven by complex needs and fears and hopes and often his reach exceeded his grasp. But despite all of this, or perhaps because of it, he remains one of the few true heroes. He was a man who rose above his limitations, who felt a conviction about the nature of humanity that he was driven to embody in his life and work. He taught me

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*After a while, we have demythologised and anaesthetised his legacy so that we need no longer feel or hear the challenge of his life and work.*

and an entire generation about what it means to live a life of integrity and courage.

From him I learned that the invitation to be engaged in the life of the world, in the issues of the day, in the challenges of the times, is always addressed to me. From him I learned that personal limitations are no excuse for failing to engage the world. From him I learned that we are not required to succeed, or even to be right; we are required to serve the truth, as we understand it. From a distance, Martin Luther King Jr added a depth to my life and my profession that has enriched me beyond any telling.

In many ways the superficial changes he sought have been accomplished. As one who grew up in a rigidly segregated society, I am witness to the fact that the world is now a different place and a better place because of Martin Luther King Jr and the struggle for civil rights. But I also know that the underlying structural changes for which he lived and died, the fundamental values he challenged us to serve and advance, have not been so completely realised. The gap between the rich and the poor grows with every passing day. The gap between the favoured and the desperate

has never been so wide. The dream of a compassionate society no longer guides public policy. Vengeance has replaced justice in our courts and mercy is defined as weakness. And I am saddened beyond measure.

But in the midst of my sadness I see him, as he was that day in Chicago. I see his great, dark eyes and I hear his voice thanking us for being part of the struggle, and I am reminded that we are not required to win, or to live to see the dream become reality. What we are required to do is to cherish the dream, to measure the world by its standard, to live our lives in service of that which is greater than we are, and to trust the unfolding process to bring light and hope where we had no rational reason to expect them. ■

*Source: 'Cherish the Dream' by the Rev. David E Bumbaugh, Professor of Ministry at Meadville Lombard Theological School and Minister Emeritus of the Unitarian Church in Summit, New Jersey, as printed in the January issue of Quest, the newsletter of the Church of the Larger Fellowship.*

# Greece is not the major problem – Europe is

By **Siv O'Neill**

**Yanis Varoufakis says about Europe:**

'A clueless political personnel, in denial of the systemic nature of the crisis, is pursuing policies akin to carpet-bombing the economy of proud European nations in order to save them.' ('Yanis Varoufakis sums up Europe in one sentence', 6 February 2015 – zero hedge)

**T**he Greek crisis is very much the work of the so-called 'free market' where anything goes. Big banks, led by Goldman Sachs and other vicious speculators pounced on unhappy Greece already in crisis situation due to slack governments, tax evasion and a high level of corruption. The unscrupulous vultures had now secretly stored away booties at the expense of the Greek people.

After all this and five years of austerity suffered by the largely innocent Greek people the EU is now firmly

requesting that jobless and hungry Greeks tighten their belts even more. How can you be more jobless than jobless and how can you be hungrier than hungry, unless you are dead. Greece is now a dying nation.

One point is important to mention in the context of the Greek disaster. I doubt if the IMF should even be included any more in this now so popular term 'Troika'. Very recently, before and after the July 5 referendum, Christine Lagarde, the managing director of the IMF, has been saying more and more openly that Greece must get significant debt relief. What is this – the IMF with a human face? It has actually come to an open war between Lagarde and the German chancellor Angela Merkel, the new iron lady. Welcome to the Thatcher club, dear Angela. It may have taken us a long time to recognise your true colours, but it does seem that here is the new fascist who wants to rule Europe single-handedly.

There is one voice in this tragedy that is worth listening to at this time. His name is Yanis Varoufakis and he is the former Greek minister of finance for the Syriza government.

Yanis Varoufakis, the brilliant Greek-Australian economist, left his post as visiting professor at the University of Texas



in Austin to become the new finance minister of the Syriza government in Greece.

'In November 2010, he and Stuart Holland, a former British Labour Party MP and economics professor at the University of Coimbra (Portugal), published Modest Proposal, a set of economic policies aimed at overcoming the euro crisis.'

Varoufakis knows who to blame for the fiasco that made all the hopes collapse that we had tied to the Syriza government. After the sunny Sunday's Greek referendum on July 5, just hours after the Greek people's resounding NO victory and their jubilant dancing in the streets, their joy fell apart.

The Troika (the European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund) sweated walrus grease from their brows and they 'knew' immediately (cheered by the German chancellor) that Yanis Varoufakis had to go. He had already gone. He resigned under pressure from his government (pressured by the EU). It was clear then that Tsipras and Syriza had already capitulated. The seemingly so brave and well-intentioned Alexis Tsipras fell apart. Juncker, Merkel and Co. could breathe again. Syriza had been as powerful a threat to Big Business as it has been a source of hope for democracy to the people.

Varoufakis asks us all: Why are the members of Eurogroup all saying that no other viable basis exists for a solution to the Greek crisis? Austerity, more austerity is all the EU can come up with. The billions in the past two bailouts went to the lenders, the banks, and the Greek government got a nickel to throw to its hungry people (*The Guardian*).

'It did not have to be this way', says Yanis Varoufakis. 'On June 19, I communicated to the German government and to the troika an alternative proposal, as part of a document entitled "Ending the Greek Crisis"'"[1]

Here is Varoufakis' own proposal:

Greece's proposals to end the crisis: My intervention at today's Eurogroup

'Five months ago, in my very first Eurogroup intervention, I put it to you that the new Greek government faced a dual task: we had to earn a precious currency without depleting an important capital good.'

In a discussion with Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz on invitation of US economic think tank Institute for New Economic Thinking, Varoufakis stated on 9 April 2015 that 'the Greek state does not have the capacity to develop public assets.' Therefore, he announced that his government was 'restarting the privatisation process.' However, unlike the former governments they would insist on establishing public-private partnerships with the state retaining a minority stake to generate state revenues.' (Wikipedia)

'Europe', the Troika, does not like him. Why? Simple. Because he does not like them. He sees them for what they are – a power-hungry limited group of people who are all set on doing away with any form of sovereignty and independence of European individual nations in order to make the EU a hegemonic bloc alongside the US, working with the US and the Corporatocracy and totally disregarding democracy. There are no more sovereign countries in Europe of today. For any form of decision-

making, there is only 'Europe', the EU, that is Angela Merkel and Jean-Claude Juncker, the Yes-sayers and the like-minded and power-hungry stooges.

Hear the Troika screaming and the media picking it up and repeating: 'Blame the Greeks' (some of them were indeed to blame and slack governments were also guilty) – but above all don't blame the banks and speculators who were responsible for the shenanigans that took place before 2010. Hide it all under the rug and let's just go on pretending we believe in what we are screaming so loud – so say the leading members of the EU, with Angela Merkel and Jean-Claude Juncker screaming the loudest.

The *Financial Times* reports:

'Something is rotten with the eurozone's hideous restrictions on sovereignty.'

The European Commission (the EC, the EU, or call it the Troika if you like) is completely set on removing all sovereign power from the individual European countries. I am not saying that the national governments have clean hands, but at least we voted for them and we have to take part of the blame if there is something rotten in our nation.

We, the real left in France and all over Europe, have known from the beginning that Europe was as undemocratic as the US wanted it to be. It was a US dream to make Europe a united vassal. Their dream came true. With a bang. Only the unelected officers of the European Commission have any say whatsoever. The only elected body in the EU is the Parliament, which has no power at all, a symbolic right to utter a word here and there is all. The Parliament is the carnation in the buttonhole.

Merkel and all the dictator-presidents of the European Commission didn't think we would ever discover the hidden truth about this Europe of the very, very few. Be they Barroso or Juncker, they melt into one as far as taking all power away from the individual countries and from the people.

If by any chance it has still until today eluded you that EU equals fascism, Yanis Varoufakis is here to open your eyes.

Notes:

[1] 'The Greek government proposes to bundle public assets (excluding those pertinent to the country's security, public amenities, and cultural heritage) into a central holding company to be separated from the government administration and to be managed as a private entity, under the aegis of the Greek Parliament, with the goal of maximising the value of its underlying assets and creating a home-grown investment stream. The Greek state will be the sole shareholder, but will not guarantee its liabilities or debt.

'The holding company would play an active role readying the assets for sale. It would "issue a fully collateralised bond on the international capital markets" to raise €30–40 billion (\$32–43 billion), which, "taking into account the present value of assets," would "be invested in modernising and restructuring the assets under its management."'

Siv O'Neill is an Axis of Logic columnist, based in France. Her insightful essays are republished and read worldwide. She can be reached at [siv@axisoflogic.com](mailto:siv@axisoflogic.com). ■

# from our readers

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## Dear Editor

Wouldn't the name Reclaim Australia be a more appropriate name for an Aboriginal movement rather than a group of later arrivals to this country who think that immigration should have ceased just after they or their forebears came here?

**Steven Katsineris, Vic**

## Greek tragedy

Despite harsh austerity and two financial rescue packages totalling \$A353.5 billion paid to Greece since 2010 by the European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund and taxpayers of the Eurozone nations (principally Germany and France), it appears that the Greek government and the banks are broke once again. A third bailout equating to \$A126.7 billion was recently approved by the above creditors to avoid a total collapse of the Greek state and its ability to serve its people.

How can a modern Western democracy of only 10.8 million people (about half of Australia's population) accumulate within a decade such crippling debts that have caused unprecedented hardship, frustration, confusion and anger among its citizens? The factors outlined below may have contributed.

- (1) Grossly incompetent management over several years of the essentially free-market capitalist economy, as evidenced by massive deficit budgets annually, excessive borrowings to cover fiscal shortfalls and shameless defaults on agreed loan repayments.
- (2) A poorly structured taxation system favouring the wealthy (e.g. shipping oligarchs) plus extensive tax evasion through cash payments and other dubious schemes depriving the government of vital revenue.
- (3) Largely unpunished widespread corruption and bribery in the bureaucracy with negative outcomes for taxpayers.
- (4) Unaffordable public spending on the 2004 Athens Olympics which has so far cost taxpayers an estimated \$A8.4 billion, but whose venues have since fallen into disrepair, generate no revenue and are still in arrears.
- (5) An over-reliance on low-value products for earning essential euros from exports (although this is partially offset by the thriving tourist industry).
- (6) The prohibitive expense of maintaining and equipping the 109,000-strong Greek defence force (about twice that of Australia's) despite Greece being under NATO protection and facing no enemies.

The dubious 2015 'Yes or No' referendum on austerity has also been wasteful, as its outcome was predictable (Who would vote for austerity?) and cost taxpayers

millions of euros. It also infuriated the creditors and thus worsened the terms for the third financial rescue package.

To break the toxic debt spiral and kick-start the hapless economy, it would seem imperative to cancel the \$A480 billion total debt up to 25% and restructure the remainder through lowering interest rates and longer grace periods for repayments. For the sake of solidarity, EU states outside the euro zone should also make appropriate contributions. Moreover, reforming current tax collection policies, with punitive action for non-compliance, needs to be addressed without delay.

In the long term, it may be desirable for the European Parliament to appoint a commission of eminent economists and business leaders to precisely audit the Greek economy in order to identify past mistakes and malpractices and then recommend to the Greek government practical steps for suitable investments and realistic targets for rehabilitation and economic growth. Greek society should also consider adopting the Roman alphabet for streamlining communications with Greece's partners in Western democracies, including Australia.

The world greatly respects the glorious ancient heritage of the Greek people and wishes them well. Let's hope that through wisdom, determination and hard work they can once again sit tall among their peers.

**Fred Neumann, Vic**

## Dear Editor/Secretary

Attached is my cheque for continuing subscription for the *Beacon* and donation to the church.

I very much enjoy reading the articles in the *Beacon* and look forward to the next edition.

Yours sincerely

**R Matthews, Vic**

## The Editor

The editorial in this issue of the *Beacon* was outstanding. The Unitarians in Europe have struggled for justice and human rights since the Middle Ages. Since the Enlightenment, they have been at the forefront of progress in all fields. The Constitution of the USA and the Declaration of Independence were strongly influenced by Jefferson and John Quincy Adams, both Unitarians. Theodore Parker, the great Boston Unitarian preacher who was close to Abraham Lincoln, hid escaped slaves in his church and led the abolitionists of his city. Here, in Australia, the Unitarians have long defended democracy and human rights and were very important in the 1970s movement to expose the terrorism of the Ustasha in our

streets. It is heart warming to see that the East Melbourne church keeps up the struggle into the 21st century. Racism and fascism should be smashed whenever they raise their head.

Regards

**Bilal Cleland**

### **The Editor**

Please find enclosed a cheque for the purpose of renewing my subscription for one year, plus a gift subscription for a friend.

Thank you sending to me your ever-informative journal.

Yours sincerely

**K McEwan, ACT**

### **Dear Editors**

I am a pensioner. Enclosed is a cheque for 2015, 2016 and a small donation.

You do our community a great service by tackling the real issues.

Thank you.

**J Haslem, Tasmania**

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