



SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

the Beacon

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We must not profit from bloodshed!

EDITORIAL

Currently there is a Senate inquiry into unemployment and how this problem is being handled by the Federal Government. Many organisations as well as our church have made submissions to this inquiry, ours setting out the whole sorry saga of 16 applicants for each available job, the punitive nature of so-called 'benefits', and the deliberate way in which governments and the media deliberately 'blame the victim' for policies introduced and supported by the Government.

The previous Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull may well be remembered for how he addressed 'unemployment'. He and his government decided to position Australia as one of the world's largest arms exporters under a new defence export strategy to make Australia one of the world's top weapons exporters within the next decade. Malcolm Turnbull is reported to have said it is an ambitious and positive plan to boost Australian industry, increase investment, and create more jobs for Australian businesses. 'This strategy is about job creation,' Turnbull said in a joint statement with Christopher Pyne Minister for Defence, Marise Payne, and Minister for Trade Steven Ciobo.

Tim Costello from World Vision attacked the plan. 'We will be exporting death and profiting from bloodshed,' he commented. He mentioned the Syrian war, in its eighth year and based on arms profiteering. It is a war in which more than 300,000 have been killed, including many children; 13.5 million in need of humanitarian assistance; and 6.3 million internally displaced. Greens leader, Richard Di Natale, also responded to the proposal by telling the Government to stop acting like warlords and to spread Australian intelligence, innovation, clean energy technology, health technology, and education services rather than guns and killing machines.

Amnesty International, Oxfam and Save the Children are among those NGOs criticising the plan and we are proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with all of them and express our absolute opposition and disgust that Australia should propose solving its unemployment crisis in this way. However it isn't just solving unemployment that is really behind this unacceptable proposal. It also relates to Australia's subservient foreign policies. It is our inability to take an independent position on the world stage but instead follow other nations into wars against those who pose us no threat.

We should not be building weapons of war. We should be ensuring that all national and international companies pay their share of tax. *The Age* article 29 September by Crispin Hull estimates 'that multinationals based in a tax haven but operating in Australia siphon off up to 90% of their Australian-earned operating profits to the tax haven where no tax is levied.' Oxfam says the 'top 1% Australians own more than the bottom 70% and that inequality has been steadily worsening in the past 10 years.'

We will not resolve the economic crisis in this country by investing more and more in armaments, in weapons of war.

What Australians need is a government that provides for and doesn't punish its unemployed and its needy, a government that accepts its national responsibilities, that respects public ownership of its services, that protects the weak and aged and respects democracy and social justice.

We must demand of government that it is inclusive of those that create the wealth instead of marginalising them at the expense of big business. This is what our church stands for. We believe it is what the majority of Australians also stand for. ☺

BY DR TILMAN RUFF

CO-FOUNDER OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO ABOLISH NUCLEAR WEAPONS (ICAN),
A TALK GIVEN AT THE MELBOURNE UNITARIAN CHURCH ON 12 AUGUST 2018



I'm pleased to be with you today and I thank you for inviting me.

I acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation as the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather and express my respects and thanks to their elders past and present.

At the end of the week that saw the 73rd anniversaries of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I pay my deep respects to the hibakusha and survivors of nuclear testing worldwide. They continue courageously and with extraordinary humanity to share their harrowing experience, in order that no one else, anywhere, will ever again suffer as they should never have.

We live in the most dangerous of times. We face not one but twin existential threats, unprecedented in all our long evolution. Accelerating climate disruption, in large part reversible; and nuclear weapons with effects that would be acute and irreversible.

After examining the effects of nuclear war on health and health services, the World Health Organisation concluded that nuclear weapons constitute the greatest immediate threat to human health and welfare. They are the only weapons which loom as an acute existential threat to planetary health. Every day that they exist, launch-ready, they threaten everything we strive for and love, everything that matters, the myriad lifeforms that we share our Earth with, everything that we inherit and pass to the next generations, our very genetic inheritance that makes us who we are.

If armed conflict between the US and China escalated, the nuclear warheads on Chinese missiles that would head for Australia would be up to 5 megatons, 5 million tons, of TNT in explosive power. A single such warhead over a city would ignite hundreds of

thousands of fires that would rapidly coalesce into a massive firestorm 45 kilometres across, releasing many times more energy than the explosion itself.

Such a weapon over Melbourne would engulf Springvale, Wantirna, Warrandyte, past Greenvale and to Point Cook, in which temperatures would exceed 800°C, available oxygen would be consumed, and every living thing would die.

No effective health and humanitarian response is possible for even a single nuclear detonation on a city. The only cure is prevention.

As catastrophic as the effects of blast, flash burns, fires and radiation would be, it is the climate impacts of nuclear war that would exact the greatest toll. A nuclear war between India and Pakistan involving 100 Hiroshima-size bombs, less than half of their current nuclear arsenals, would loft more than 5 million tons of smoke from burning cities high into the stratosphere, where it would rapidly cloak the globe and precipitously cool, darken and dry the climate worldwide for decades. Agriculture would be decimated, putting billions of people's lives at risk from starvation.

One hundred Hiroshima-size weapons are less than 0.5% of the global nuclear arsenal, and less than 0.1% of its explosive yield.

Nuclear weapons are in reality global suicide bombs.

The dangers of nuclear war are growing. Malfunctions and errors that have brought us repeatedly within a hair's breadth of nuclear war inevitably continue. The first use of nuclear weapons has been threatened repeatedly, by the US alone on at least 25 occasions. New dangers loom: cyberwarfare – even the computers of the US National Security Agency were hacked last year. As climate disruption starts to bite,

the number of armed conflicts, including involving nuclear-armed states, is escalating sharply.

Disarmament is stalled. Rather than disarming, as they are legally obligated to do, all the nine nuclear-armed states are investing massively, over US\$105 billion annually, not just in retaining nuclear weapons for the indefinite future, but in modernising their weapons to make them more accurate, more usable. We are seeing a proliferation of brinkmanship and explicit threats to use nuclear weapons, involving North Korea, the United States, Russia, UK, India and Pakistan. These threats have been accompanied by exercises, deployments and policies for early and first use of nuclear weapons.

The hands of the Doomsday Clock stand at 2 minutes to midnight, as close as they have ever been.

We have made **substantial progress in controlling other kinds of indiscriminate and inhumane weapons.**

Treaties which ban biological and chemical weapons, landmines and cluster munitions have dramatically reduced the production, stockpiling, financing, export and use of these weapons. The proven path is to codify the illegitimacy of weapons that can only have indiscriminate, unacceptable consequences in an international treaty that provides the same legal standard for all states. This then provides the basis and motivation for the weapons' progressive elimination. Stigmatise – prohibit – eliminate.

The norms established by these treaties grow stronger over time, affecting even states that haven't joined. For example, in the same breath as US officials angrily can the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as a threat, they boast their virtual compliance with the landmine ban treaty, which they opposed and haven't signed.

In 2005, inspired by the success of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, a few of us in Melbourne took up the challenge of distinguished Malaysian obstetrician Dr Ron McCoy, to build a new International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons – ICAN. ICAN was conceived as a global campaign coalition of diverse organisations, working for a treaty to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons, based on the catastrophic consequences of any use of nuclear weapons. We needed to engage young and old with horror, humour, hope and humanity. We needed to mobilise citizens, and also work with governments.

In 2010, the International Committee of the Red Cross kicked off an energised focus on nuclear disarmament as an urgent humanitarian imperative, in what became known as the Humanitarian Initiative. Through landmark intergovernmental conferences in Norway, Mexico and Austria in 2013 and 2014, the first focused on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, the evidence about nuclear weapons was updated and unchallenged. ICAN established its credibility as the lead civil society partner for each of these conferences.

A clear strategy emerged. While the states that do not own nuclear weapons cannot eliminate them, they could try to break the logjam in disarmament by filling the legal gap that saw nuclear weapons not explicitly prohibited in international law, if they used a forum

which could not be blocked by nuclear-armed and nuclear-dependent states.

In December 2016, the UN General Assembly voted more than 3 to 1 to mandate negotiations for a new treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons, leading towards their elimination. These negotiations in New York culminated in the adoption, on 7 July 2017, by a vote of 122 to 1, of the historic Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This treaty provides a categorical and comprehensive prohibition of everything to do with nuclear weapons. It complements existing treaties, and provides pathways for all states to join, whether they currently possess nuclear weapons, had them in the past, have them deployed on their territory, or assist in military preparations for their use. The treaty thus provides a pathway – the only currently defined pathway – for all states to fulfil their obligation to achieve and sustain a world free of nuclear weapons. All governments should take that path.

This treaty matters. Money is already starting to move. Since its adoption, the world's largest sovereign wealth fund, the Norwegian Pension Fund with over US\$1 trillion; Europe's largest pension fund – Holland-based ABP; Deutsche Bank, Belgian bank KBC, have divested from makers of nuclear weapons. The ferocious opposition of some nuclear-armed and dependent states attests that the treaty matters. These are not fine words they can ignore. It puts them on notice. It has asserted the common interests of humanity. It has brought global democracy to nuclear disarmament. It challenges their claim to a unique right to wield weapons that threaten the birthright of all. The treaty is not going away. Its power will only grow.

The treaty provides a moment of truth – are you sincere about nuclear disarmament or not? States that are will join. Those that don't, whatever they say, are not sincere, are stuck on the wrong side of history, and are there for all to see, part of the problem rather than the solution.

Sadly, our own government was the most active in the room in its opposition to and undermining of the process that led to the treaty. Our diplomats privately boasted they did some 'heavy lifting' for the US. Other diplomats called Australia chief among the weasels. When it was adopted, Foreign Minister Julie Bishop quickly stated that Australia would not join the treaty. These were the first multilateral disarmament negotiations ever boycotted by Australia, and this is the first weapons prohibition treaty which Australia has repudiated.

The reason is the fundamental inconsistency between being serious about nuclear disarmament, while claiming that US nuclear weapons are essential to Australia's security and prosperity, and assisting in preparations for their possible use. We have work to do.

On 6 October, the Norwegian Nobel Committee announced its awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize for 2017 to ICAN 'for its work to draw attention to the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and for its ground-breaking efforts to achieve a treaty-based prohibition of such weapons'. This has provided needed attention to this

urgent danger. It gives great encouragement to the many people and governments who work for the end of nuclear weapons; and it opens doors like nothing else. It speaks to the power of what people working together with a vision and a plan can achieve. It is your prize too.

The Treaty will enter into force when 50 states have ratified it. We hope that will be next year. We are currently up to 60 signatures and 14 ratifications. That is faster than the NPT, the CTBT, the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Currently it looks like Australia is most likely to join the Treaty under a future Labor government. Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of federal Labor parliamentarians have signed an ICAN Pledge committing them to work for Australia to join the treaty. However party leaders have remained silent. We want ALP National Conference in December to update its National Party Platform, from calling for the Treaty that we now have, to committing the next Labor government to sign it. ALP members, branches, conference delegates, unions, parliamentarians need our support and encouragement to push for this.

Starting on 1 September, there will be a Nobel Peace Bike Ride from Melbourne, arriving in Canberra on 20

September, the first anniversary of the opening for signature of the Treaty. People can still join for all or part, and help send off the riders.

Like most progressive Australian civil society organisations, ICAN runs on a shoe-string. None of the Nobel Peace Prize funds came here. Becoming a BANefactor, donating to ICAN Australia or becoming a monthly contributor, is a highly effective way to support ICAN's work.

If your organisation isn't already an ICAN partner, please consider becoming one.

If your super is with the Future Fund, or you have an account with ANZ, Macquarie, Westpac or CBA, then your money is part of the \$6.7 billion those institutions invested between January 2014 and October 2017 in companies that build nuclear weapons. Tell them you expect them to lift their game and shed those investments, and move your money if they don't.

Time is not on our side. While our predicament is unprecedented, so is the opportunity to do good.

There can only be one answer to the question: will it be the end of nuclear weapons or the end of us? We all have a part to play to make sure it's the right answer.

Thank you! 🙏

A UNITARIAN DOXOLOGY

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

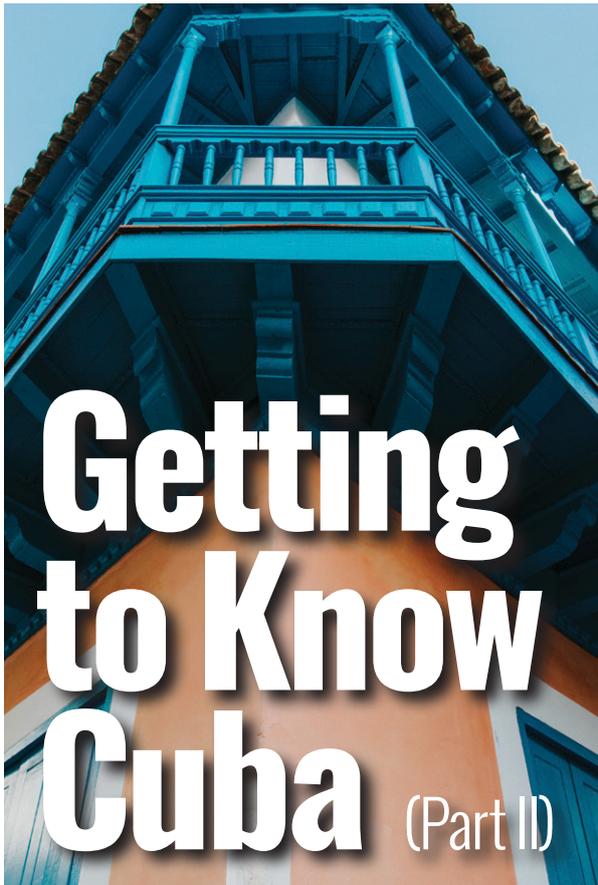
Nothing human is alien to a Unitarian. It includes labour, art, science, philosophy, love, friendship – all that is in its degree expressive of intelligently satisfying human living.

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

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

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

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.



Finally, we arrived at the vibrant Santiago de Cuba, the second largest city, on the eastern side of the island. It is also Cuba's most African city, with a history intertwined with that of the colonial-era slave trade. Here we had the privilege of paying homage to the late revolutionary leader Fidel Castro at his humble gravestone. This man inspired millions the world over and was, as many of you will know, instrumental in creating a social system that cares for everyone, regardless of gender, race or social status. In addition, we visited the famous El Moncada barracks, where Fidel and his rebels made their first attack against the Batista regime. It has now been converted into a school, replete with a room to showcase the children's artwork, as well as a small museum to learn about the attack on the barracks and the harrowing treatment of those captured by Batista's forces. Santiago de Cuba was a city where support for the revolution was evidently strong, as could be seen by the words 'Soy Fidel', or 'I am Fidel', written by Cuban people on their homes, on the street, and even in garden beds. It demonstrates the support of the Cuban people for Fidel and a commitment to continue the revolution now that he has gone.

Tourism is also very strong in Santiago de Cuba and here we could see signs of the impact of tourism on the island. Tourism, which was expanded during the presidency of Raul Castro, has become an integral part of the island's economy. New private activities have emerged to accompany this influx of tourism, including casa particulars – where visitors can stay with Cuban

families, and taxi services. However, the expansion of the private sector has, unfortunately, led to new inequalities between these individuals and government workers, who often earn less than their self-employed counterparts, who have access to tourist dollars.

Viñales, a long 12-hour drive from Santiago de Cuba and past Havana to the west, was possibly the most beautiful location I saw in Cuba. Green, rolling hills and rich brown tobacco fields characterised this region of the island. Viñales is absolutely crawling with UNESCO world heritage sites, including the province's national park. The most impressive aspect of Viñales was that it represented the ecological sustainability and self-sufficiency of Cuba. Cuba has been recognised for leading the worldwide transition to sustainable agriculture that produces 'more with less'. The holistic approach to agriculture is highly productive and most importantly sustainable, using an 'ecosystem approach' that draws on nature's contributions to crop productivity and the production of bio-fertilisers rather than agrochemicals. Havana is also a model for sustainable urban and peri-urban agriculture with robust and resilient urban food systems that are fully organic. Indeed, according to the World Wildlife Fund, Cuba is the only nation on the planet to have achieved full self-sufficiency, as well as ecological sustainability. That is a truly impressive achievement.

Finally, we returned to Havana. We toured the Miramar district, famous for the foreign embassies that populate its leafy avenues. The most impressive by far was the Russian embassy, formerly that of the Soviet Union – a nation that did much for Cuba, and indeed Cuba may not have survived its early days had the USSR not agreed to purchase the island's sugar at a raised price. The US and a dearth of conservative Latin American governments failed to strangle the revolution at its birth due precisely to the internationalism of the Soviets, a trait that Cuba would come to replicate time and time again across the globe. Cuba fought and helped defeat the South African Apartheid regime in Angola and Namibia; Cuban medical personnel restored the sight of millions of Bolivians in 'Operation Miracle'; and, currently, the island nation has educational and medical brigades in over 60 developing countries contributing to their growth. These are just some of the many extraordinary internationalist achievements of the Cuban revolution. No other country in existence today can boast of such a proud legacy. We also stood in the imposing Plaza De La Revolucion, where year after year hundreds of thousands of Cubans gather during numerous celebrations, including May Day, to support the socialist revolution. When we left I felt like I was leaving home. Warm people, fascinating history, beautiful surroundings and a system that many would argue is the last of its kind. There is no place like Cuba.

That is the Cuba I know. Despite all of Cuba's successes, there have been and still are individuals and groups who would like nothing more than to see the Cuban

Revolution destroyed, and a return to the 'good old days' of the Batista era and US domination. Opposition groups such as the Association to Free Cuban Prisoners and the Ladies in White have openly acknowledged, on numerous occasions, that they have received funding directly from Washington, and the latter group expressly stated, 'They would accept money from any group, even if they were from the far-right'. Others, including Miami-based thug Luis Posada Carrilles, who thankfully died not too long ago, were nothing less than terrorists. Some were responsible for blowing up a hotel foyer in Havana in the 1990s, whilst Carrilles himself bombed a plane en route from Caracas to Havana, killing over 70 people on board. Another notorious enemy of the revolution is Yoani Sanchez, a blogger who has for years denounced the Cuban revolution and spread toxic lies. She has received money from the US and EU that studies estimate would allow her to live over 1,000 years in Cuba without a single day's work. Sanchez is quite literally a propaganda mouthpiece funded by the United States. One of her more outrageous claims is being constantly on the verge of starvation despite having written a review of the 'best 50 restaurants in Havana'. It is little wonder that individuals such as these, who have received money from a foreign and hostile nation, or are actual terrorists, are held or denounced by the Cuban authorities. Indeed, Amnesty International, in a recent report, claimed that there were no political prisoners in Cuba, contrary to the claims of dissident groups and the United States. An entirely false narrative has been created by the revolution's enemies to demonise it.

In April this year, Miguel Diaz-Canel was elected the new president of Cuba, with former president Raul Castro now occupying the role of leader of the Cuban Communist Party. Enemies of the revolution have labelled this 'the end of the Castro era', a time to "bring democracy to Cuba". Firstly, Cuba has a democracy that is far more participatory and representative than any other on the planet – as we know, Cubans directly elect their representatives from within the community, and so anyone can become active in politics if he or she has served the community well. There are no campaigns or vote buying as in western Western nations, where who you know and your cheque book dictate your chances of success in an election. And secondly, the so-called 'Castro era' is a term used to malign Cuba's leaders, rather than give them credit for maintaining the people's trust and support for so many decades. The Cuban revolution is the Cuban people's revolution, and Fidel, Raul, and now Miguel have merely enacted the will of the people since 1959.

Contrary to popular belief, there is no turn to neoliberal capitalism on the horizon. The basis of the economy is still centralised, inalienable rights of the Cuban people still stand strong – the rights to essential social services, housing, employment, medical treatment, the arts and culture, and an equal society free from discrimination. Cuba is changing and change is important as part of the ongoing revolution to avoid stagnation. Cubans



**AND AS LONG AS
THESE PEOPLES'
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HOPE.**

do not preach that their society is perfect, and are committed to working actively to make change for the better. Already, the new government under Miguel Diaz-Canel has revealed new policies, to be implemented this December, placing restrictions on the private sector. Economic activity in the private sector is going to be reorganised and more heavily regulated, as will tax on this area of the economy. Hopefully this will reduce the inequalities that emerged from the earlier changes to Cuba's socialist model.

And Cuba is not alone. Latin America is once again on the march, and Cuba now has several allies that it is working with to challenge US hegemony in the region. Evo Morales in Bolivia, Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela and Ortega in Nicaragua are all progressive, leftist leaders that have broken Cuba's isolation. Yes, the US is working hard to destabilise both Venezuela and Nicaragua as we speak, but they have not yet succeeded. And as long as these peoples' governments stand, there is hope.

Cuba's leaders, and the people they represent, are moral bastions in an increasingly dark world. I know that they will work in the best interests of humanity and in the best interests of socialism. I, personally, am optimistic regarding the future of Cuba and its socialist system. These are uncertain times, but Cuba has survived far worse with far less in the past, and they have learnt from their history. Miguel Diaz-Canel has vowed to defend the 'irrevocable pillars' of Cuba's socialist revolution, and from what I've seen so far, he is absolutely keeping his promise.

I know Cuba, and I hope you all know Cuba a bit better now. Looking forward to the future, I believe that the Cuban Revolution will safeguard the people's gains, and will continue to prove its enemies wrong.

Thank you. 🙏

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The agenda behind the normalisation of racism and bigotry



The normalisation of racism and religious bigotry in the Australian community is proceeding apace, despite the many voices being raised against it.

There seems to be a sustained attempt to push the 'acceptable' political spectrum far to the right.

Minister for Practically Everything, since December 2017, Peter Dutton has responsibility for national security, federal law enforcement, border protection, emergency management, immigration, citizenship, refugees and multicultural affairs.

His refusal to be present at the national apology to the Indigenous people by PM Kevin Rudd, and his dealing with offshore detention and the deaths involved were once considered the limits to which an Australian politician from a mainstream party could go.

His comments in January, about how Melburnians were too afraid to go out to restaurants because of Sudanese gangs, went that little bit further.

He might be desperate for the redneck vote, but even his stance has been exceeded by the Prime Minister and the former Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister went on Neil Mitchell's 3AW program denouncing 'Sudanese gangs' when in the past he has left that sort of thing to Peter Dutton [17 July SMH].

A few days later former PM Abbott blamed 'the Victorian socialist government' for 'the African gang problem'. He questioned the immigration policy that 'let in people who are going to be difficult to integrate' [25 July SMH].

Andrew Bolt's inflammatory *Herald Sun* article 'There is no us, as migrants form colonies', followed a few days later [2 August].

This was topped by the appearance on 5 August of a well-known 'Patriots Front' individual on *Sky News* in the Adam Giles program, which has since been suspended (probably temporarily).

Craig Emerson, a former Labor Party minister, in his resignation letter as a commentator for Sky News issued the next day, stated: 'That Seven and Sky could present a neo-Nazi as a regular kind of guy and, in Seven's case, a pillar of the community as a sort of neighbourhood watch coordinator, is frightening. Seven and Sky have sought to normalise racism and bigotry to boost their ratings and advertising revenue' [6 August AFR].

As *The Saturday Paper* pointed out in 'Who Is Making Money out of Racism?' this kerfuffle about racism being stirred up by the LNP and its media allies could have a sinister political intent.

'... the elevation of race as an issue also serves as a valuable distraction for conservative forces whose real agenda is economic.'

The conclusion is stunning, but has the ring of truth:

'[While Trump's electoral base – disproportionately older, white, ill-educated, underpaid and male – was diverted by Muslim travel bans, walls to keep out Mexican "rapists", outrage at black footballers "taking a knee" and sundry other race-oriented distractions, Trump and his party made like bandits, pushing through tax cuts that gave 80 per cent of the benefit to 1 per cent of the population.

Perhaps the true agenda here is more akin to class warfare: the manipulation of the base instincts of the mob to the benefit of one racial group, in particular, rich white folks.

That's how you monetise racism, big time' [11 August].

Now that the Final Solution and the ending of Muslim immigration have been mentioned in a speech by a new version of Oswald Mosley in the Senate, we need to take real action to stem the use of this dangerous political tool by reactionary political forces.

This racist diversionary technique has been used before in our history and it did not end well. ☹️

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Palestine has Australian friends

For how many years will we be gathering on the steps of Parliament House to remember the victims of Israel's violent occupation of the Palestinian Territories? For how many years will the international community (and Australia in particular) allow Israel to get away with murder, subjugation and using chemical weapons on innocent people? For how long do we expect those people deprived of their homes, their land, their olive trees and their freedom of movement to live with this situation?

And yet they continue to resist, to stand, to throw a stone. Thirty thousand people in the Gaza Strip organised the largest civil protest in recent history in Palestine: the Great Return March. On the very first day, Israeli snipers shot to kill 18 Palestinians and injured 1,400 others across a militarised border against unarmed demonstrators who were within the Gaza Strip's buffer zone and posed no threat to the soldiers. The demonstration began on 30 March and continued until the Al Nakba anniversary on 15 May.

To add insult to injury, the YUSA moved its embassy from Tel Aviv in order to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, which was a cruel affront to the Palestinians. Fifty-five civilians were killed on 14 May as they protested this action.

The Australian Friends of Palestine Association (AFOPA) organised a commemoration of Al Nakba 'The Catastrophe' when two-thirds of Palestinian villages were destroyed and people evicted, leading to the occupation of the land and resulting in over 5 million Palestinian refugees in the world today.

The 15 May 2018 was the 70th anniversary of this event and about 200 people – Palestinians and their supporters – gathered in Adelaide to recall the suffering, to voice outrage at the injustice and to inspire courage to keep resisting the continuing, ongoing catastrophe that Palestinians face every day under a state that bulldozes or hijacks their houses, imprisons their children, fills their water wells with concrete and frustrates them with roadblocks, checkpoints, and an apartheid wall.

After the speakers and singers finished at Parliament House, many of those gathered walked together to the Migration Museum where several Palestinians spoke of their personal experience of being evicted and exiled.

As Bassam Dally from AFOPA said at the end of his speech, 'while even one Palestinian can keep standing and resisting, how can we ever think of giving up the struggle for a just peace in that land?' 🕊

Source: Adelaide Voices June-August 2018

WE ACKNOWLEDGE

Traditional owners of the Kulin Nation, past Warriors, Elders past and present



Thank you for this important opportunity to talk today about Treaty.

I'm sure some of you must be wondering – why are these people still talking about Treaty after so long? It's been 30 years since the Barunga Statement and there has not been much progress. In fact many things seem to be going backwards.

In the last 30 years Yolŋu have felt the full force of oppression. Government policies like the intervention, super shires, English-only schools have impacted greatly on our wellbeing. We are being pushed to suicide and we suffer from ill health, low education levels and high incarceration rates. Whoever it was that invented the intervention, and then even worse, whoever it was that invented Stronger Futures – those people tried to kill our culture; they really wanted it dead. But we are still here. We are nursing wounds but we are still here fighting until we are heard. Balanda ways/Njapaki ways are failing us, strangling our spirit. Balanda governance is failing us. It is time for self-governance.

Those things we have been fighting for, for 30 years, they haven't gone away and they will not go away. So, what is it then? What is this thing we keep fighting for? What is Treaty? Well, let me start at the beginning. You can't understand Treaty until you first understand sovereignty. This is right at the start. If you can't understand sovereignty, then you will never understand Treaty.

To be clear, Yolŋu were never conquered. Our culture, our language, our law remains intact. We are a sovereign people. For some people, sovereignty is a scary word. What they hear is that we want to get rid of you, to make you go away. Well, that's not right, that's not what Yolŋu mean when they are talking about sovereignty. We are not looking to send anyone away – we know you live here too – we know this is your home and our home.

Let me give you an example that might help you to understand what Yolŋu mean when they talk about sovereignty. You see, we Yolŋu have had treaties before. This is not our first time. For many years, for a long, long time we had a treaty with the Macassans. We worked in partnership and trade with them. It

was a good relationship. This relationship started with recognition. It started with an understanding of each other's sovereignty as separate nations. The Macassans came here and they started fishing. But then, not long after they realised there were already people here and they knew they couldn't continue without talking to those people first. Straight away they recognised the sovereignty of the Yolŋu people that were already living here.

It is the same today. We were here at the start and we haven't gone anywhere. The right way is to come and talk to us, to negotiate with us as equals and to work out an agreement for the future, so that our authority is clearly understood. Sovereignty is about control; it is about power. It is about recognising that we are a real nation, with real governance, real laws and real authority.

Right now, this federal government does not recognise our sovereignty at all. It does not see what we have to say as important, let alone recognise Aboriginal people as sovereign nations. Look at what happened with that Uluru Statement. Now, I wasn't there at Uluru but I participated in the discussions when they were happening in Darwin. But those people that were there at Uluru, they came from across Australia, they sat down and they talked and all agreed on that one statement to give to the Prime Minister. It is a good pathway and the Prime Minister should think again and change his mind. The point of truth telling is that it is time for everyone to tell the truth about our history. Where the governments fail to tell the truth about invasion, massacre and sovereignty – they are unlawful. The Uluru Statement creates a path to right these wrongs. It is time for all of us to recognise the law of this land and abide by it. It's time for us to be truthful and employ Yolŋu Rom Njurrŋu.

I acknowledge that the Northern Territory government is bringing serious conversation to the table. But so far they are yet to include the people. Governments must negotiate with Nations and allow for traditional decision-making processes and this will require resources. Ultimately we want the big one – a treaty with the federal government that is long overdue. But treaties of different types at all levels of government that recognise sovereignty will bring vast improvement.

Our success as a sovereign nation is well documented. For thousands of years we lived with good health, strong in our identity, strong in our language, strong in our law. We nurtured the land, the creatures and the people with knowledge and wisdom that had been passed from our elders, ancestors, and the creator spirits. We did not know suicide, depression, drug addiction, family violence.

We hold onto this past knowledge now, and we fight for Treaty. We fight for Treaty to create a space to maintain our culture: to become modern Yolŋu people with the wisdom of our ancestors and the traditions of our law.

When I say 'space', I am talking about a space to create modern Yolŋu society:

- Space to determine our education aspirations.
- Space to create Yolŋu models of employment.
- Space to resolve land tenure disagreements.
- Space for Yolŋu elders and leaders to maintain law and order and use our programs to resolve family violence, rehabilitate offenders of all crimes and provide healing for victims of drug abuse and depression.
- We need space to prioritise resource distribution based on our determination: such as alleviating overcrowded housing and supporting homeland development.

- We can work in partnership to further develop programs that prevent kidney disease, heart disease and other illness through education founded on two-way knowledge.
- The resources of our country should be available for our economic benefit through locally owned fisheries, croc farms, tourism, etc. Support for the development of sustainable Yolŋu businesses creates a pathway for our success.

This is the space that we need to begin to determine our future. It is a space for genuine partnership between sovereign nations. And it has to start with returning power to the Yolŋu elders and leaders where it belongs without manipulation and intervention. We have a system of governance and this system of governance will determine our future under Yolŋu control. Men and women, elders and leaders, standing strong and protecting our people and our culture.

I want to finish with something positive. I want to take you back to the Macassans before I finish, to remind you all that we have done it before. We have been fighting for a long time now, but Treaty will happen again. There is hope.

Thank you. 🙏

from our readers



DEAR BEACON

Re 'From our Readers Sept 2018'

I write to advise that I intend to renew my subscription to the *Beacon* when it comes due. The reason is that in its editorial material it has consistently shone a ray of light into corners that the government, the mainstream media and other powerful vested interests would much prefer never saw the light of day. Clearly the truth is not always popular.

Re 'From the Editors' (Sept 2018)

As stated, during the dark days of the cold war, the *Beacon* editors were stigmatised as unpatriotic, thus demonstrating that it is never popular to oppose the policies and opinions of the powerful.

Obviously then, as now, they were following the example set by Hermann Goering who stated ...

'The people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country. It works the same way in any country.'

Yours faithfully

J Evans, Vic

Thanks for the August edition; I'm heading to WA for 3 weeks volunteering, so I've popped some of my editions in my pack to share with others.

I loved your NAIDOC display of artwork from the Warlukurlangu artists. I volunteered with this organisation 8 years ago and was fascinated with the stories and styles used by the artists.

Regards

J Coupe, Vic

DEAR DONNA

I have recently returned from my third trip to Russia and it was the most memorable.

I went with a group of 20 Australians on the 'Volgadream' cruise from Astrakhan [Caspian Sea] to Moscow. We visited the ancient city of Volgograd, known as Stalingrad [Old Serepta is the old name for the largest part of the city which was settled by Germans in 1765], possibly the root cause of the battle, which was one of the fiercest and worst of WW II: huge loss of life on all sides. We then visited Saratov, Samara, Kazan, Yaroslavl and Uglich before arriving in Moscow.

As it was an English and German speaking cruise it carried people from all over the world. Now, can you believe this? The most enlightened people I met came from America! Yes, America. And they are on the same page as us. Not one of them believes in their media, press or TV and they were the most open-minded passengers about Russia.

We had a most entertaining and enlightened professor of history and politics on board whose 8 x 2-hour lectures were so enthralling. We learnt about Russia's history from the beginning. Her last 2 lectures were on the culture and art of the country, something we could see when we visited the Tretyakov Gallery in Moscow and the Russian Museum in St Petersburg.

Professor Ludmilla Selezneva has written a few books but her autobiography is the most interesting. She states that she is a product of the Soviet system. She would never have received the education she had or the chance to attend university if she had not been born during that time. Her parents were poor and she would have had to leave school early in order to support them as people prior to the revolution had to. Her grandmother was arrested and jailed for 6 months for, I believe, saying something out of turn. Anyway, she considered those 6 months the best in her life, as she had 3 meals a day! Something she and her family had never been able to afford!

It would be great to get her to come to Australia as she has given lectures in the US, UK and Europe. I think she would be an interesting guest at all our major universities, especially those studying Russian history.

That's all for today.

Ann Jurrjens

HI DONNA

Postal address is South Hobart Tassie and I've been receiving your wonderful *Beacon* newsletter since I moved about 3 years ago from Sydney so I would have notified you at the time. Keep up the good work and articles.

Cheers, Jo

Tasmania

DEAR FRIENDS

Congratulations – the *Beacon* is essential reading – an important conversation to the truth.

Yours sincerely

T & A McDonald, NSW

Dear Editor

When Israel declared itself as a nation, all those years ago, I was overjoyed. At last there would be a place where everyone – Jew, Arab, Druse, Christian, Bedouin and any others – would have a place to live in harmony; a place that appreciated and celebrated differences and similarities, a place of fair laws and equal rights. The government of Benjamin Netanyahu has destroyed that. He and his coalition have learned nothing from the bad behaviour of the British when the UK had the mandate over Palestine. They have learned nothing from the brutalities and eventual destruction of Czarist Russia. They have not even learned from the absolute and tolerable horrors of Nazi-ism. Alas – I feel like that biblical phrase – 'By the waters of Babylon, I sat down and wept ...'

S Rogers, NSW

DEAR EDITOR

Please find enclosed a cheque for \$50 for another year's subscription to your excellent magazine.

Many thanks

M Steilberg, NSW

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In this issue:

Editorial

Feature: The race of our lives

Getting to know Cuba (Part II)

The agenda behind the normalisation of racism and bigotry

Palestine has Australian friends

Garma – Treaty

Letters to the editor

Beacon Editorial Board

Peter Abrehart

Marion Harper

Donna Sensi

Julie Stafford

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