



SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

the Beacon

Journal of the Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church

May 2021 • Price \$2

MORRISON'S FORKED TONGUE

EDITORIAL

*Words words words
I'm so sick of words
I get words all day through
First from him, now from you
Is that all you blighters can do*

Remember this song from *My Fair Lady*? It well describes how people feel about Scott Morrison. Words, words, words that are empty of meaning and sincerity and result in nothing positive. In his maiden speech to Parliament in 2008, Scott Morrison had said:

From my faith I derive the values of loving kindness, justice and righteousness ... to fight for a fair go for everyone to fulfil their human potential and to remove whatever unjust obstacles stand in their way, including diminishing their personal responsibility for their own wellbeing; and to do what is right, to respect the rule of law, the sanctity of human life and the moral integrity of marriage and the family.

One of the most popular buzz words from the Morrison government is 'values'. In many speeches, press conferences and international forums, Morrison refers to 'Australian values'. They are used to provide the population with a list of friends and enemies, those who share our 'values' – and those who don't. Many of those that the government consider 'friends' do not practise these values (think Saudi Arabia and the Philippines, to name just two).

In his address to the Aspen Security Forum, Morrison stressed the importance of Australia's alliances with fellow liberal democracies, the Five Eyes partnership, our 'ever-closer' ties with Europe and our 'belief in the values and institutions that the United States

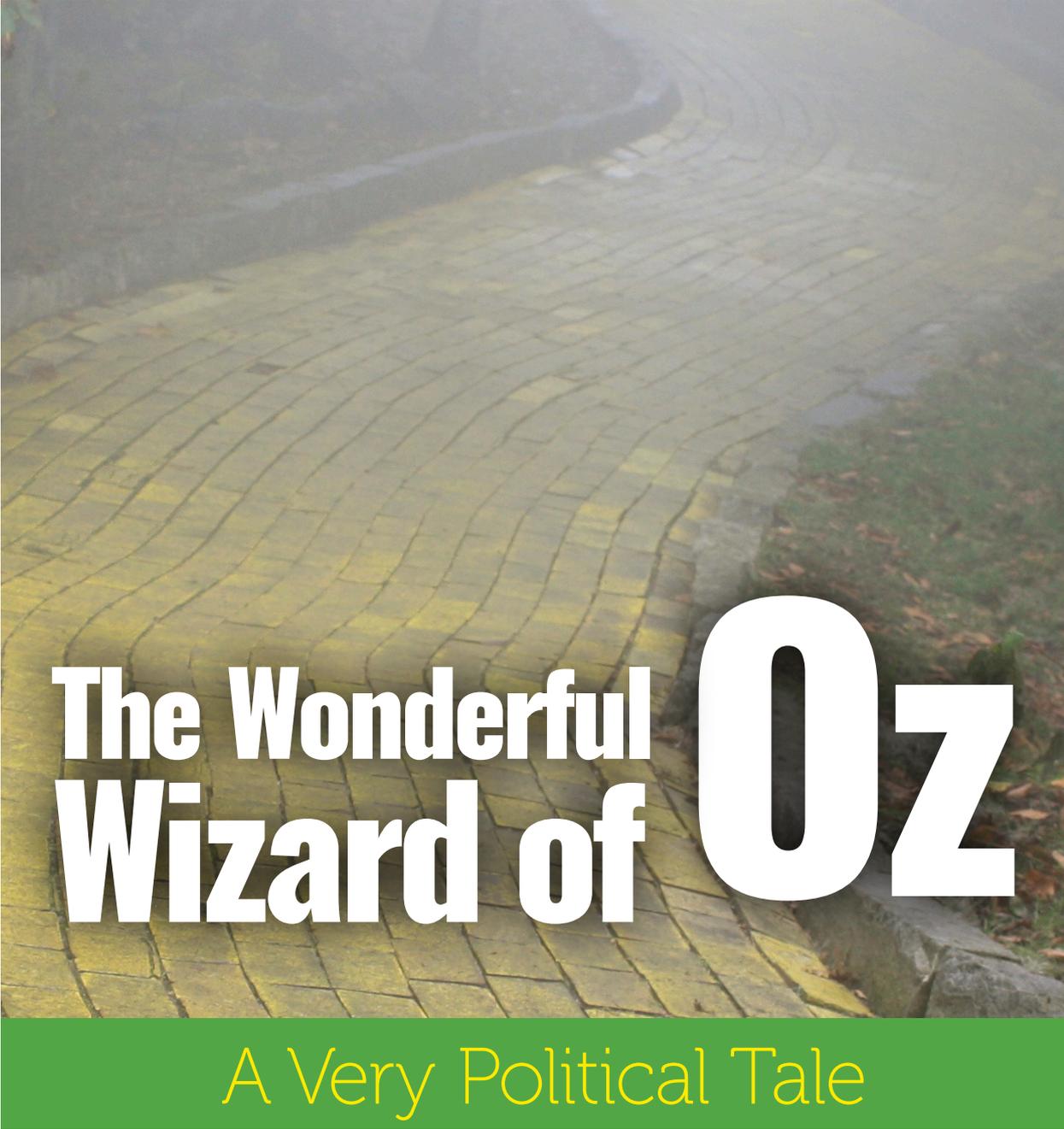
has championed'. In a similar address to the Lowy Institute a year ago, Morrison also praised India and Japan as countries with 'shared values' to Australia: words, words, words that are meaningless, hypocritical and hollow.

We all have values or principles by which we live our lives, but values need to be judged in practice and not simply as a set of words in print. It is clear that this government simply pays lip service to values.

How does the government practise these 'Australian values'? How do they implement policies based on them? Loving kindness? Justice? Righteousness? Where is the first one in relation to asylum seekers, the First Peoples, the homeless, those without work and those in aged care. 'A fair go for everyone' is not for not those on unemployment benefits, unable to pay their bills or feed their families. It is not for trade unionists fighting to defend their wages and conditions.

We certainly support the values of compassion, tolerance, respect and equality. If these values were genuinely endorsed by governments all over the world there would be no wars because differences would be resolved by negotiation and by compromise.

If we were tolerant and practised compassion, asylum seekers would not be spending years in prison camps. If we practise equality of opportunity for all we would not be introducing anti-union legislation and there would be no unemployment, homelessness and exploitation. Women would receive equal pay for equal work and the First Peoples of this country would not still be fighting for basic justice. Values are important but only if the words that encapsulate them are translated into action, and more importantly, meaningful and just policies.



The Wonderful Wizard of Oz

A Very Political Tale

Before we begin today to explore the politics underpinning *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* children's book, for the sake of clarity, I think we need to look at a few dictionary definitions.

The Wizard book is said to be allegorical (an allegory is an extended metaphor whose vehicle may be an object, character, place, an event, representing real-world issues and occurrences). I'll also be exploring real-world issues that are not of the allegorical variety but important in finding out what is the truest.

The beautiful Indigenous paintings in our church are an allegory: the visual beauty is a vehicle to represent the real-world relationships between people, all living things, and the land on which they reside. Similarly, the 8-hour day monument near the Trades Hall represents the real-life struggles of ordinary men and women for an 8-hour day.

Pablo Picasso's most famous work *Guernica* was painted as a powerful political statement, an immediate reaction to the Nazis' casual bombing of the Basque town of Guernica during the Spanish Civil War. It shows the tragedies of war and the suffering of individuals – particularly innocent civilians. It became an anti-war symbol and a call for peace. Picasso toured the world with the painting to draw attention to the Spanish Civil War and the rise of fascism.

A SOCIAL REFORMER

We turn now to a great social reformer and writer whose literary work was mostly of the allegorical kind. This work highlighted the use of child labour and the plight of the working class. His books included: *A Christmas Carol*, *Great Expectations*, *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, amongst many others. He was a

member of the New Plymouth Unitarian Chapel – I speak, of course, of Charles Dickens.

It was in 1845 that Frederick Engels wrote: *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (he lived in Manchester between 1842–44, then the heart of the Industrial Revolution). Shortly after, his colleague Karl Marx said of Dickens and his fellow novelists: ‘the splendid brotherhood of fiction writers in England, whose graphic and eloquent pages have issued to the world more political and social truths than have been uttered by all the professional politicians, publicists and moralists put together’. High praise indeed and one of many examples of how allegory, in this case in literature, based on real events and issues, can have enormous effect and influence.

Even today, when we see deplorable working conditions, these are often described as ‘Dickensian’ – I’m not sure whether Charles would approve of his name being used to describe poverty and horrible working conditions. Hopefully he would understand the context.

STORIES FROM OUR PAST

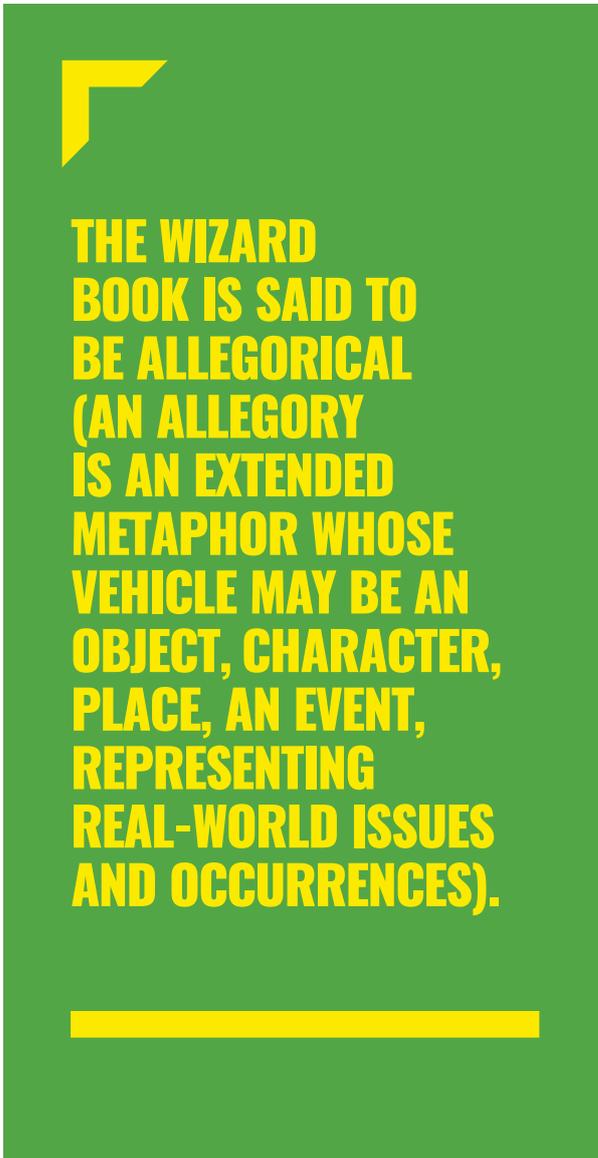
Before we dip our big toe into *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, we will take a short diversion into history via the stories of our ancestors. As an amateur genealogist for many decades, I’ve been able to piece together the stories of my ancestors – their place in the real stories of war, depression and further back into the Irish famine, the Scottish clearances, the enclosure movement in England, and through my mother’s paternal side, the convicts sent to Port Arthur in Tasmania.

I was able to get a lot of information from local sources in Tasmania and from the Kent Historical Society in England (they were Cornish/Welsh people living in Kent). My convict ancestors were basically subsistence farmers who were removed from the ‘common’ land to make way for appropriation of the land to the gentry (the so-called enclosure movement, somewhat similar to the highland clearances).

Communities formed on the edges of the enclosed estates and not surprisingly sheep were stolen from the estates in order to survive. If you got caught in police raids it was hard labour for seven years in the colonies – the journey to and the life in Port Arthur was horrific for my great, great grandfather. He got a ‘ticket of leave’ after seven years and brought out his remaining children to the colonies. One son married an Irish servant girl and one of their children was my grandfather. The documentation that I’ve gathered not only includes the treatment of convicts but also the slaughter of the local Indigenous people. In my view it should be compulsory reading for all, particularly those who spout off about the ‘greatness of empire’.

THE PEOPLE’S PARTY

Time to dip our toe into *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* book was published at the turn of the 20th century. Its author was W Frank Baum. He was a political reporter in the 1890s and lived in South Dakota, this during the rise of the



**THE WIZARD
BOOK IS SAID TO
BE ALLEGORICAL
(AN ALLEGORY
IS AN EXTENDED
METAPHOR WHOSE
VEHICLE MAY BE AN
OBJECT, CHARACTER,
PLACE, AN EVENT,
REPRESENTING
REAL-WORLD ISSUES
AND OCCURRENCES).**

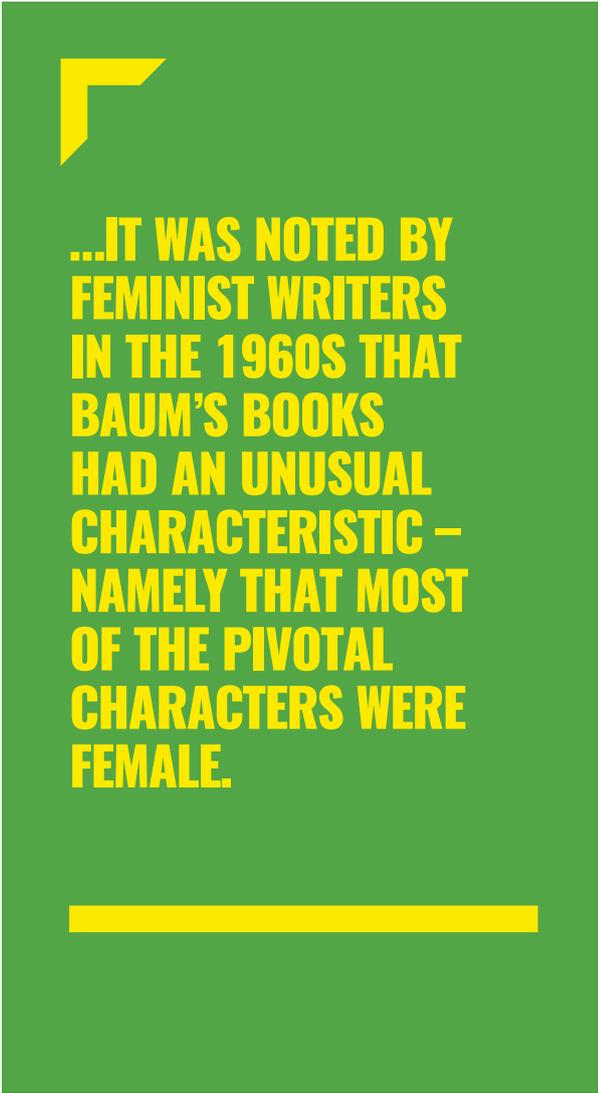
Populist Movement. The support for this movement came mostly from farmers and workers during a period of rapid industrialisation.

What, we might ask, were the conditions that drove this movement? There were many, but the two major components were the drought that faced the western half of the US, and that industry and farming in particular had been economically devastated by deflation (falling prices) in the decades following the civil war. They were demanding an increase in the amount of money in circulation (silver coinage) as well as income tax reform, direct election of senators and other ways of giving farmers and industrial workers a better playing field in the economy while strengthening political democracy. An interesting parallel today is the injection of money into the economy due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The push by government and the media to adopt the gold standard was seen as an attempt by the financiers and government to prevent the flow of money to those in need.

William Jennings Bryan became the main spokesperson for the movement and became the presidential nominee for both the Democrats and the People’s (Populist) Party. At the 1896 Democratic Convention, he delivered his famous ‘Cross of Gold’ speech against the gold standard. He said: ‘You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold – I call for

free silver that the government stamp silver bullion into coins, upon demand, to increase the money supply and end the deflation’.

Both the media, the financiers and government went to work on Bryan and of course the support base. Farmers were portrayed as dumb and unable to grasp the finer points of fiscal policy; industrial workers faced little better, being portrayed as mere robots in an everchanging industrial landscape. It’s not very difficult to see the parallels with today’s political environment. To quote the old adage – ‘The more things change, the more they stay the same’.



...IT WAS NOTED BY FEMINIST WRITERS IN THE 1960S THAT BAUM'S BOOKS HAD AN UNUSUAL CHARACTERISTIC – NAMELY THAT MOST OF THE PIVOTAL CHARACTERS WERE FEMALE.

WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

Before we move on to the detailed allegorical look at *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, it’s necessary to take a closer look at William Jennings Bryan. Bryan is mostly remembered as the religious fundamentalist who opposed Clarence Darrow at the famous ‘Scopes Monkey Trial’ in Dayton, Tennessee. Bryan was in fact a progressive social reformer who worked with Darrow over many decades on a range of important issues. After Bryan’s death, Darrow and others commented on Bryan’s move to religious fundamentalism. They believed this turn occurred with Bryan’s abhorrence at the rise of ‘social Darwinism’, which led to the Eugenics Movement – they suggest

he made the wrong decision for the right reason (he should have criticised the misuse of science). And we all know of course that the American Eugenics Movement formed the basis of Nazi ideology.

Bryan was called the Lion from Nebraska for his oratory skills; it was said that the tent poles shook during his outdoor speeches. As the Populist Movement faced defeat, Bryan was called a coward by some for not continuing the fight to the bitter end.

When *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* book was released, it caused some controversy in the media – keep in mind that the details of the Populist Movement were still fresh in people’s minds. The newspapers dubbed the book ‘overtly political’, ‘totally devoid of subtlety’, to name a few. Baum refused to comment – the book went on to become one of the largest selling children’s books in history. So, what was obvious then is not so obvious now, thanks to our lack of understanding of history, or more succinctly: ‘Those who do not understand history are apt to repeat it.’

THE BASIC ALLEGORY OF THE STORY

Dorothy and her house are picked up by a tornado on her journey from Kansas to see the Wizard of Oz in order to solve the problems her farming family are facing. She represents each of us at our best. She lands on the yellow brick road (gold standard) after her house falls on and kills the wicked witch of the east (JP Morgan and the Rockefellers). Her shoes are silver (the dollar), and she meets companions along the way.

- The Scarecrow is the first. He is convinced he doesn’t have a brain, virtually how farmers have been portrayed by the media as being afflicted with ignorance, irrationality and general muddle-headedness. However, the Scarecrow proves that he isn’t stupid – he shows common sense and resilience on the journey.
- Next companion is the Tin Man who represents the dehumanised worker, who was literally turned into tin by the wicked witch of the east. He represents workers who have lost their heart in the new economy. He is rusted when Dorothy first meets him, paralleling the high unemployment during the Depression of the 1890s, but he is ready to work as Dorothy demonstrates by giving him a few drops of oil.
- Our next companion is the Cowardly Lion. This is very obviously William Jennings Bryan, the Lion from Nebraska. He was unable to win, just as the Cowardly Lion’s claws could make no impression on the Tin Man. To add another quote from Bryan from his ‘Cross of Gold’ speech mentioned earlier – ‘Having behind us the commercial interests and the laboring interests and all the toiling masses, we shall answer their demands for a gold standard by saying to them, you shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind upon the cross of gold.’
- The wicked witches of the east and west have been interpreted two ways. There is little doubt

that the east represents monied interests. The west is less obvious in that it could represent the monied interests of the west, or alternatively, the drought. The water thrown over and killing the west witch could represent liquidity or the drought. Suffice to say that the wicked witches represent powerful interests in American politics.

- The Wizard of Oz, representing politicians and financial interests, is portrayed as a con man. Even the word Oz has been noted as the symbol for ounces, the measurement for gold and silver. Dorothy and her friends discover through the journey that they already possess the traits they are seeking from the Wizard – courage, intellect and heart.

A little side bar in the story of W Frank Baum. He died in 1919 at the age of 62 and always refused to comment on the allegorical nature of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* or anything else about where he drew inspiration for his stories. There are probably a number of more subtle allegorical layers, such as moral and ethical questions in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, this apart from the obvious Populist Movement event.

For instance, it was noted by feminist writers in the 1960s that Baum's books had an unusual characteristic – namely that most of the pivotal characters were female. It was generally known that Baum was very close to his mother-in-law Matilda. Who was Matilda? A little digging revealed her full name, Matilda Joslyn Gage – she was a leading suffragist and a colleague of Unitarian Susan B Anthony and Quaker Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Matilda was a radical feminist, and her son-in-law was involved in the suffrage movement both at the local level (women's suffrage club secretary) and as editor of the suffragette newspaper. It's often said that truth can be hidden but often lies in plain sight if we care to look hard enough.

THE MOVIE

I'd like to conclude my little talk today with a quick look at *The Wizard of Oz* movie, the second movie to be shown in colour in 1939 (*Gone with the Wind*) was first? The movie is one of the most viewed in history to an estimated one billion people (the book was similar, as already mentioned). Apart from the fact that Dorothy (Judy Garland) wore crimson shoes in the movie (they were silver in the book), the movie was under scrutiny during the McCarthyism period. Let me explain.

The lyricist for all the music in the movie was Yip Harburg. He was also the lyricist of what was called the patron song of the Depression, namely 'Brother can you spare a dime' (by the way, the tune of 'Brother can you spare a dime' is based on a Russian lullaby).

**THE NEWSPAPERS
DUBBED THE BOOK
'OVERTLY POLITICAL',
'TOTALLY DEVOID OF
SUBTLETY', TO NAME
A FEW.**

Harburg was questioned by the House Un-American Activities Committee over every line of the lyrics in *The Wizard of Oz*, particularly 'Somewhere over the rainbow', such as – What is this world over the rainbow? Where people live in peace and harmony was the response. Definitely a subversive; he spent 11 years on the blacklist. In an interview post blacklist, Harburg revealed that he had been working almost as normal under various pseudonyms with the full knowledge of many leading directors. He added that he was more fortunate than most who were blacklisted because of the nature of his work. He added, a little mischievously, that while every line of his songs was minutely examined, they completely missed his name. Ypsl or Yip for short was his nickname, his actual name was Edgar. Ypsl was given to him as he was very active in an organisation of that name – Ypsl stands for Young People's Socialist League. Perhaps they thought it was Yiddish, he smiled.

I'll end on that note with what could be described as an allegory of an allegory:

We have the ability to make our world a better place for all humankind. Within ourselves and collectively we have both the resilience and talents ... only the will is required to do so. 

**INCREASE OUR
CIRCULATION:**

Nominate potential subscribers for three free monthly copies without ongoing obligation! (Try before you buy.)

Commemorating



amid lockdown in Palestine

Israel is taking advantage of the COVID-19 crisis to take more Palestinian land, but the Palestinians will resist.

Yara Hawari is the Palestine Policy Fellow of Al-Shabaka, the Palestinian Policy Network.

As Palestinians protest illegal Israeli settlements near the town of Beita in the Israeli-occupied West Bank on 11 March 2020 [Reuters/Mohamad Torokman]

Forty-four years ago today, the Israeli police shot six Palestinian citizens of Israel dead as they were protesting against the Israeli government's expropriation of thousands of acres of Palestinian land in the Galilee. Since then, March 30 has been known as Land Day and is an important date in the Palestinian political calendar.

This year, Palestinians will be marking Land Day at home amid the COVID-19 pandemic, which has left much of the world's populations under lockdown and curfew. Being confined to their homes or their villages and towns is not a new experience for Palestinians, which is perhaps why so many have taken it in their stride.

Indeed, Palestinians in the West Bank are confined to what amounts to bantustans connected to each other only by roads controlled by the Israeli regime, while their brothers and sisters in Gaza live in an open-air prison deemed 'unliveable' by the United Nations. Most Palestinians living across the 'Green Line' have Israeli citizenship, they nevertheless live in urban and rural ghettos.

Palestinians are also disconnected from their Arab brothers and sisters, with many of them prevented

from travelling around the Arab world, either because their documents do not permit them to do so (in the case of Palestinians with Israeli citizenship) or because they are under travel bans.

As part of the COVID-19 response, the Israeli regime has imposed even more measures restricting Palestinian movement. The city of Bethlehem has been put under lockdown, while crossings into Gaza and the West Bank have been shut down. Palestinian labourers working in Israel have also been told to either stay for an unknown period of time in shoddy and unsanitary accommodation or give up work and stay in the West Bank.

The Palestinian Authority has imposed a curfew and set up checkpoints between villages and towns to limit the movement of people. Businesses have been shut down, except for supermarkets and pharmacies.

Meanwhile, Israel is continuing its practices of removing Palestinians from their land, even exploiting the lockdown amid the pandemic to do so. In Jerusalem, where there is a concerted effort to Judaise neighbourhoods and reduce the number of Palestinian inhabitants, the demolitions of Palestinian homes continue, despite the outbreak. The Israeli regime claims these buildings are illegal in order to justify demolishing them, yet Palestinians are consistently denied building permits.

Demolitions are also used as a method of collective punishment of the families of Palestinian political prisoners, particularly in the West Bank. In the midst of this pandemic, this continuing cruel practice renders calls by Israeli authorities to 'stay at home' absurd.



MEANWHILE, ISRAEL IS CONTINUING ITS PRACTICES OF REMOVING PALESTINIANS FROM THEIR LAND, EVEN EXPLOITING THE LOCKDOWN AMID THE PANDEMIC TO DO SO.

AS PART OF THE COVID-19 RESPONSE, THE ISRAELI REGIME HAS IMPOSED EVEN MORE MEASURES RESTRICTING PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT.

Similarly, the construction of illegal settlements across the West Bank has not halted and there are fears that de jure annexation of many areas will be expedited under these circumstances, particularly as Benjamin Netanyahu is once again set to lead the next government.

Already, last week there were three cases in which illegal Israeli settlements razed Palestinian land and there has been an overall rise in attacks against Palestinian properties.

Earlier this month, Palestinians from Beita village near Nablus held a sit-in to try and protect land from being stolen by settlers. The Israeli security forces came out in full force to give cover to the settlers and in the process shot 15-year-old Mohammed Hammayel in the head killing him instantly.

Many in historic Palestine are worried that Israel will use the COVID-19 outbreak as an excuse to leave in place new restrictive measures even after the pandemic is over and will also prevent Palestinians from resisting its land grabs. At a time when the world is focused solely on the pandemic and the Israeli regime has the full support of the US administration to do as it pleases, Israeli aggressive expansionism seems inevitable.

Yet over the decades, Palestinians have shown incredible strength, courage and sumud (steadfastness) in the face of great adversity. While Israeli settler colonial expansionism does not rest, neither does Palestinian perseverance. As the Palestinian poet Tawfiq Ziyad wrote:

*In Lidda, in Ramla, in the Galilee,
we shall remain
like a wall upon your chest,
and in your throat
like a shard of glass,
a cactus thorn,
and in your eyes
a sandstorm.*

The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera's editorial stance.



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.

Land to the Tillers for Genuine Food System Change



The Asian Peasant Coalition (APC)'s observance of 29 March as 'Land of the Landless: Land to the Tillers', reminds us of the words of Mahatma Gandhi: 'In reality, the toiler is the owner of what he produces. If the toilers intelligently combine, they will become an irresistible power.'

Socialist leader Dr Ram Manohar Lohia had also echoed in the last century that 'the most exploited element in Indian society was the landless village labourers and farmers'. Dr Ram Manohar Lohia had said that the freedom struggle in India could not be completed until the prosperity of a humble kisan (farmer) became a reality. When Dr Lohia was elected President of Hind Kisan Panchayat in 1949, he said in his address that the reconstruction of India was primarily a question of the reconstruction of her five and a half lakhs (550,000) villages. Like Mahatma Gandhi, he wanted a village-based democracy in India. Each village should be a zone of peace where proprietary rights of land should be given to the impoverished and actual tillers of the soil and even landless labourers would be able to secure rehabilitation and social justice. Dr Lohia had put

the spotlight on the bitter truth of so-called 'urban development' when he said that our villages were neglected by the government for the benefit of urban areas. Village dwellers were exploited economically and culturally. Land must belong to the tiller, was Dr Lohia's priority, in his scheme of agrarian revolution.

REALITY IS GRIM: MOST LAND DOES NOT BELONG TO THOSE WHO TILL IT

So many decades after our independence, words of Gandhi and Lohia have only gained relevance manifold – because most land still does not belong to the tiller. The kind of 'development' model we are chasing, is not resulting in 'tillers should own the land' but even those who have land are at risk of losing it. After the policies of globalisation, privatisation and liberalisation that were implemented in India since the early 1990s, even landholder farmers are becoming landless, said Harinder Singh Manshahia, farmer and farmers' leader, and Punjab State President of Socialist Party (India).

According to National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) data, 60% of the country's population have rights over only 5% of land; whereas 10% of the population have control over 55% of the land. The 2011 Socio Economic and Caste Census shows that 56% of households in rural India do not own any agricultural land. The NSSO 2013 revealed that the top 7.18% of households own more than 46.71% of the land.

Asian Peasant Coalition (APC)'s KR Manga, who is part of Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP – farmers association in Philippines), and Raja Mujeeb, who is part of Pakistan Kisan Mazdoor Tahreek, called for ending corporate control in food and agriculture in Satyagraha discussions held in the lead-up to the Day of the Landless 2021. They called for strengthening the fight for genuine land reform and rural development to truly transform the world's food systems.

Raja Mujeeb said: 'On the Day of the Landless, we – farmers and peasants, poor farmhands, agricultural workers, contract farmers, Dalits, rural women and youth, and land reform advocates across Asia – vow to further our resolve in fighting against landlessness. Landlessness breeds social injustice, hunger, and impoverishment. Landlessness is a bane to farmers and all the people of the world.'

Dr Sandeep Pandey, Ramon Magsaysay Awardee and national Vice President of Socialist Party (India) said that 'It is unacceptable that farmers and food producers who feed our nations do not have access to land and are food insecure because of land and resource grabs, and of corporate capture of agricultural production and trade.'

WHY HUNGER? WHEN FARMERS GROW MORE THAN NEEDED TO FEED ALL

The COVID-19 pandemic that ravaged the world in 2020 further exposed the profit-oriented nature of global food systems as it drove millions of people into chronic hunger. By the end of 2019, at least 690 million people went hungry. By the start of 2020, hundreds of millions of people continue to suffer acute food insecurity as they face conflict, climate change, and economic crises of epic proportions.

As of October 2020, a staggering seven million people have died of hunger. Pandemic-related hunger also led to the deaths of 10,000 more children each month over the first year of the health crisis. Forecasts even warned about multiple famines in the coming months as the lowest-income households are most likely to face increased hunger. Strict lockdown

policies and quarantines have affected all stages of food supply, resulting in a steep rise in food prices and widespread food insecurity.

APC leaders said that hunger and poverty of Asian peasants and sectors in agriculture are among the direct results of centuries-old landlessness. Large-scale land deals and acquisitions – land grabs led by corporations have dispossessed and displaced farmers from the land they till. Millions of hectares of land planted with staples, grains, and other food crops, as well as indigenous lands, and public lands were land grabbed and converted into plantations, extractive mining projects, and farms devoted to export cash crops. Governments have become willing accomplices in these land grabs through public-private partnerships that take away land, water, and other natural resources from the people. Profits keep pouring into the pockets of the few as the majority of peasants and their families endure worsening landlessness and land grabs amid a pandemic. Farmers who assert land rights are faced with attacks either from local landlords, big corporations, and even government agencies. Peasant killings and other forms of brutalities against farmers happen on a daily basis.

In Asia, the largest mobilisations we have seen in recent months are of India's farmers, taking to the streets in hundreds of millions, to oppose and protest neoliberal agricultural laws that will make them more vulnerable to a few powerful corporations.

APC statement alarms that 'ongoing efforts to address the rising global hunger and poverty through the upcoming UN Food Systems Summit will only end up in legitimizing and further advancing tighter imperialist control over food and agriculture.'

APC called for just, equitable, healthy, and sustainable food systems that would bring to the fore the peasants aspirations and struggles for land and genuine agrarian reform.

Cathy Estavillo, Chairperson of Amihan National Federation of Peasant Women, Philippines, and Vice Chair of APC; Ravindra, landless person from Hardoi in UP, India; and Anil Mishra, a farmer from Unnao, UP, India and President of Socialist Kisan Sabha also addressed the Satyagraha, which gave a unified call for Land Must Belong To The Tillers. 

Bobby Ramakant is part of CNS (Citizen News Service), Asha Parivar, APCAT Media, and Socialist Party (India). Follow him on Twitter @bobbyramakant or read www.bit.ly/BobbyRamakant

<https://pakistanchristianpost.com/opinion-details/3796>

WE ACKNOWLEDGE

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

Condemn Australian Military Aid to Philippines

The Melbourne Peace Memorial Church is deeply concerned that our government continues to provide military aid to the Philippines government whose appalling human rights record has been condemned by many countries around the world. Below is a proposed letter to government expressing this concern. If you share this view, please write to your own MP and use this letter as a template. We would welcome you advising the church if you do so.

We raise our concerns with the appalling human rights situation in the Philippines under President Duterte's government and cooperation and military aid being provided by the Australian Government to the Philippines.

Recent human rights violations:

1. On 30 December, the Philippine military raided the 'Tumandok' – an indigenous community in the Philippines central islands, massacred 9 indigenous leaders and arrested 16 others.
2. On the 14 January, a lawyer defending the poor and oppressed was murdered by unknown assailants, believed to be orchestrated by the Philippine police force. To date, more than sixty lawyers have already been murdered under the Duterte regime.
3. On the 5 February, a farmer and member of a farmers' association was killed in Rizal.
4. On the 15 February, the Philippine National Police raided University of San Carlos in Cebu, a refuge school set up for indigenous student evacuees from Mindanao. The police arrested 2 volunteer teachers and 2 indigenous elders and forced the students out of their school.
5. On the 7 March, in the early hours of the morning, coordinated police and military attacks on community leaders took place in Cavite, Batangas, Laguna and Rizal in Southern Luzon, which included arrests and executions. This operation, known as Bloody Sunday, was a state-sanctioned massacre that left 9 dead.

In a speech on the 5 March, President Duterte directed the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) to 'kill them, and finish them off if they are alive ... forget about human rights'. Two days later, the bloodbath in Southern Tagalog.

The NTF-ELCAC is targeting unarmed critics of the Duterte government. Politicians, artists, lawyers, bishops, priests, nuns, human rights and environmental defenders, trade unionists, farmers' organisers and indigenous leaders struggling for their ancestral lands are labelled 'terrorists'. This is a signal to the Armed Forces and the paramilitaries they recruit, arm and train that these defenders of rights and justice are targets.

It is a terrorist act under laws in the Philippines and Australia to use or threaten acts of violence towards a section of the population to intimidate the population in favour of your ideology, be it political, religious or otherwise. The fundamental principles of democracy, the system of justice and human rights are threatened when state agencies are the perpetrators of such acts.

Australia must now speak out against the ongoing human rights atrocities in the Philippines. The Duterte regime, the AFP, and the NTF-ELCAC have seen the Australian Government's current calibration in expressing Australia's commitment to human rights as a signal to continue spreading terror in their attacks on democratic actors within civil society.

Continued cooperation with the Duterte government and the AFP is no longer possible.

We appeal to you to raise these issues with the Parliament and call for the Australian Government to:

1. **publicly condemn** state-sponsored terror against the Filipino people
2. **end all support and cooperation** with the Philippine military and police, including the withdrawal and ending of financial assistance for anti-terrorism and training provided directly to the Philippine government or through other entities such as ASEAN and Interpol
3. **support a resolution** for an international and independent investigation of the human rights abuses in the Philippines through the United Nations Human Rights Council, in line with the recommendation of the Human Rights Commissioner Ms Michelle Bachelet.

from our readers



HELLO

It's that time again to renew our *Beacon* subscription for Cheryl and I for the next two years. The *Beacon* is always eagerly read from cover to cover, the information within is certainly not found in the corporate media, including, sad to say, on our(?) hamstrung ABC.

Cheryl and I quite often tune in and listen to the social justice and human rights topics being discussed on 3CR's Unitarian 1/2 hour on Saturday mornings, for which we thank the MUPM church also.

The times we have listened I am sad to say no acknowledgement of country has been given; has any thought been given to do this? If we believe in justice, which obviously we do after having been to a few various events at the church, we would be delighted if this could be done.

Looking forward to your reply.

K & C Kaulfuss, Vic

Editor's Note: Thank you to K & C Kaulfuss. An acknowledgement of country is now a regular part of our 3CR program.

ATTENTION DONNA

Greetings!

Please find enclosed cheque for \$50 being payment for last year and this year (at concession rate) and a donation as well.

Sorry I was late. Just love the *Beacon*.

M Head, NSW

DEAR FRIENDS

Many thanks for the *Beacon*, which we greatly appreciate!

A & D McDonald, NSW

DEAR MARION

Please find enclosed \$20 cash for renewal of my subscription.

I appreciate the *Beacon*.

J Jagerhofer, Vic

DEAR BEACON READER

This is a letter from Beacon Board ... we need your help.

This year, due to the enormous impact of the worldwide pandemic, and because of the growth of corruption and repressive legislation that will impact us all, Beacon Board has decided to mount a campaign to grow the number of *Beacon* readers across our nation – seeking the truth has never been more urgent.

As a committed *Beacon* supporter, you can assist in this campaign. Do you know a friend, neighbour, workmate or relation who may be interested in *Beacon*, which as you know, is based on 'Seek the truth and serve humanity'. If so, you could contribute to our *Beacon* reader family by giving us their contact details and in return we will send them the next three issues free of charge.

Please help to increase *Beacon* readership.

MELBOURNE UNITARIAN PEACE MEMORIAL CHURCH

'SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY'

Tel: 03 9417 4178 (9.30 am – 4.00 pm weekdays)

Fax and Answering machine: 03 9417 4178

110 Grey Street, East Melbourne (opposite the Mercy Hospital)

Services, Sunday 11.00 am

In this issue:

Editorial: Morrison's forked tongue

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz – A very political fairy tale

Commemorating Land Day amid lockdown in Palestine

Land to the tillers for genuine food system change

Condemn Australian military aid to Philippines

Letters to the editor

Beacon Editorial Board

Peter Abrehart

Marion Harper

Donna Sensi

Julie Stafford

The Editorial opinions expressed are those of the Editorial Board.

Opinions expressed in the editorial, articles, letters, etc., in the *Beacon* are those of the writers themselves and do not necessarily reflect the policy of the Melbourne Unitarian Church or any other organisation to which a particular writer is affiliated.

Titles and affiliations are used for individual identification purposes only.

MELBOURNE UNITARIAN PEACE MEMORIAL CHURCH

110 Grey Street, East Melbourne 3002

Email: admin@melbourneunitarian.org.au

Website: www.melbourneunitarian.org.au

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

Registered by Australia Post

Post Print Approved

100003043

SURFACE
MAIL

POSTAGE
PAID
E. Melbourne
Victoria
Australia
3002

SUBSCRIBE TO or GIFT 'THE BEACON'

Annual subscription to 'The Beacon' is only \$20.00 (A\$20 Overseas and \$10 concession)

Name: _____

Address: _____ Postcode: _____

I would like to purchase a 12-month subscription to 'The Beacon'

I would like to purchase a Gift Subscription to 'The Beacon'

Gift Nominee: _____

Address: _____

_____ Postcode: _____

PLEASE RETURN WITH YOUR SUBSCRIPTION PAYMENT TO:

The Editor, The Beacon, Melbourne Unitarian Church
110 Grey Street, East Melbourne, Victoria 3002 Australia

INTERESTED IN JOINING US?

The *Beacon* is the monthly journal of the Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church.

If you are interested in finding out more about our organisation and its values, please feel free to contact us on:

(03) 9417 4178 (Mon–Thurs)

or email us at:
admin@melbourneunitarian.org.au



'Seek the truth and serve humanity'