

Christmas
greetings

BEACON

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SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

WE SAY NO! – TO FOREIGN TROOPS, FOREIGN BASES AND WAR GAMES

EDITORIAL

Our church's peace policy finds many friends and among these is the Australian Anti Bases Campaign Committee whose views we share and whose following aims we support:

- To dismantle our excessive military spending (currently \$80 million per day)
- To develop a peace economy that prioritises people over profits, creates more jobs, funds much-needed health, education, housing and environmental programs.

Who could not agree with such a sensible policy? – clearly our politicians of all shades! Those who watched President Obama in our Federal Parliament will have been disgusted at the sycophantic behaviour by both sides of the House, reminiscent of the days of 'All the Way with LBJ'.

Unfortunately, this 'all the way' attitude still prevails and we are constantly tied to the foreign policy of the United States, whether it serves our interests or not.

It doesn't serve our interests to remain embroiled in an unwinnable war in Afghanistan, which isn't really a war although it kills and maims without respite.

The decision by the Federal Government to increase the number of US troops on our soil will not assist the Australian people in any way, but will continue to serve the interests of monopoly capital and the arms lobby.

Robert Gates, former US Secretary for Defence, summed up his government's position well when he said in June 2011 that NATO has declined into a two-tier alliance: those willing to wage war and those who specialise in softer humanitarian development, peace keeping and talking tasks. Australia should not be 'willing to wage war' at the behest of another country when our country is not under threat.

President Obama said in his speech to Parliament: 'We are two pacific nations and with my visit to this region I am making it clear the US is stepping up its "commitment" to the entire Asia Pacific'. He continued, 'Our alliance is going to be indispensable to our shared future, the security we need and the prosperity we seek not only in the region but around the world'.

Our problem is that we don't believe that the prosperity he seeks will 'trickle down' to those who need it most, that is, the American people who are denied jobs, healthcare, housing, education and dignity, and the Australian people whose government is following along a similar path.

At the end of 2008 the Americans had spent \$900 billion in Iraq and Afghanistan with this amount including ongoing care for the 33,000 seriously wounded US troops.

In 2009, the US military budget accounted for 40% of global arms spending, which is six times the military budget of the People's Republic of China, who we coyly pretend we aren't seeking to contain.

A US Congressman, Barney Frank, Democrat, Massachusetts, called for a cut in defence spending. He said, 'The maths is compelling. If we do not make a reduction of 25% it will be impossible to continue funding an adequate level of domestic activity' (by domestic, read people's needs).

Unitarians around the world are deeply concerned about the path to war that we seem to inevitably be travelling. In the Melbourne Church we are implacably opposed to the succession of wars under the guise of 'exporting democracy', ostensibly against 'terrorism', but which we recognise is simply the search for new spheres of influence and control over the mineral resources belonging to other countries.

We say to our Government, we want an independent Australian foreign policy that recognises and respects the inalienable right of all nations to determine their own future and control over their own resources.



WE SAY: No further foreign troops, no bases and no war games for Australia!

Trans-Pacific Partnership Free Trade Agreement:

DON'T TRADE AWAY HEALTH

The Australian government is negotiating a Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPPA) free trade agreement with the US, New Zealand, Chile, Peru, Brunei, Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam. But the agenda on health issues is being set by giant US pharmaceutical and tobacco corporations. They have made submissions stating that they want to use the negotiations to:

- Impose US intellectual property laws which give pharmaceutical corporations more rights to charge higher prices for longer periods for medicines
- Restrict the ability of governments to provide medicines at affordable prices through schemes like the Australian Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)
- Give corporations like Philip Morris the right to sue governments for millions of dollars when they try to protect public health through regulation like the tobacco plain packaging legislation.

We need to ensure the Australian government stands by its policies and does not agree to these proposals.

US pharmaceutical companies want more intellectual property rights to charge high prices for longer

Intellectual property law already gives the inventor of new medicines the right to a patent, which means they can charge monopoly prices for 20 years before anyone else has the right to produce a cheaper generic form of the same medicine. US pharmaceutical companies want to use the TPPA to get other countries to agree to changes that give more rights to patent holders.¹ This would mean more than 20 years of monopoly prices, and would delay cheaper generic drugs from becoming available. This is not about free trade, but about greater rights for these corporations to charge high prices for a longer time. This would also be a disaster for the developing countries in the TPPA, as it would make many medicines completely unaffordable for them.

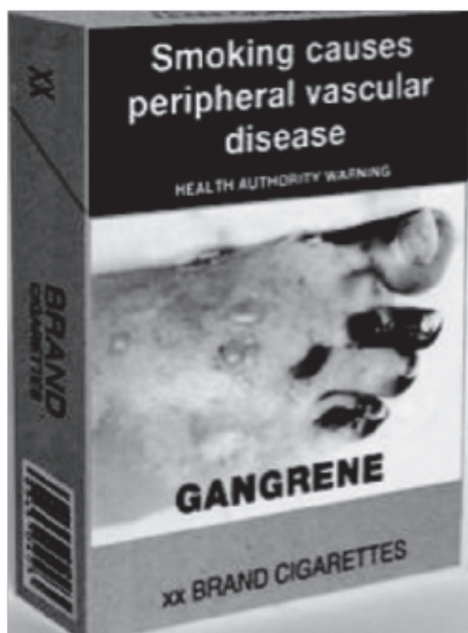


In April 2011 the Australian government responded to public pressure and announced in its new trade policy that it would not agree to increase intellectual property rights in trade agreements.² But US corporations and the US Trade Representative are still pushing for these rights in the TPPA negotiations. The Australian government should stand by its policy not to agree to increase intellectual property rights and should not sign an agreement that is not consistent with this policy.

US companies want to reduce access to affordable medicines through the PBS

In the US, where the government does not have the same control over the price of medicines as the Australian government does, the wholesale prices of medicines are three to ten times the prices paid in Australia, and many people cannot afford to buy medicines.

In contrast to the US, the Australian PBS is based on the principle that everyone should have access to affordable medicines. Under the PBS, the wholesale price of medicines is lower than in the US because health experts compare the price and effectiveness of new medicines with the price of cheaper generic medicines with the same health effects. This results in a lower wholesale price for the pharmaceutical companies, which is why they oppose it. The government then subsidises



the retail price we pay at the chemist, currently \$5.60 for pensioners and \$34.20 for others. As well as keeping the prices of medicines low for consumers, the lower wholesale price reduces the cost to the taxpayer. This makes the PBS more sustainable in the long term.

US pharmaceutical companies argue that the PBS is a barrier to trade. They want to be able to charge higher wholesale prices for new medicines, which would increase the cost of the PBS and lead to higher retail prices at the chemist. They want changes that would enable them to appeal against PBS decisions more easily and argue for higher prices for some medicines. They also want to advertise their products direct to consumers. But health experts generally agree that this leads to overprescribing, and it is not an accepted practice except in the US. Australian government policy says that it will not agree to changes that would weaken the PBS, but the companies and the US Trade Representative are pushing for them in the TPPA negotiations. The Australian government should not agree to these changes.

US Tobacco Corporations want special rights to sue governments for damages

US corporations like Philip Morris tobacco company want special rights in the TPPA for individual companies to sue governments for damages if their investments have been harmed by a particular law or policy³. These disputes, known as investor-state disputes, are heard by international investment tribunals, which give priority to the interests of the corporations, not to the public interest. There are no health experts involved in these tribunals.

Using these special rights in the North American Free Trade Agreement, US corporations have sued governments for millions of dollars over health and environmental legislation. International corporations can use their subsidiaries to find a forum which allows them to sue. For example, Philip Morris is an international company based in the United States. However, it recently claimed to be a Swiss company in order to use a Swiss investment agreement with Uruguay to sue the Uruguayan government over restrictions on tobacco advertising. It has also claimed to be a Hong Kong company in order to sue the Australian government for its proposed tobacco plain packaging legislation, using an obscure 1993 Hong Kong–Australia bilateral investment treaty.

Australian trade policy states that Australia will not support these special rights for investors to sue governments and will not seek them from other trading partners. But US companies and the US Trade Representative are still pushing strongly for them in the TPPA. The Australian government should not agree to investor-state dispute processes being included in the TPPA.

What you can do

The TPPA negotiations are continuing through 2011 and a framework agreement is expected in November. The negotiations are held in secret and the danger is that the Australian government could agree to some of these policies in return for access to other US markets. We must hold our government accountable and ensure that this does not happen.

The Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network has a website (www.aftinet.org.au) with resources that you can use to:

- **SEND A MESSAGE TO THE TRADE MINISTER AND THE HEALTH MINISTER, AND GET YOUR ORGANISATION TO DO SO**
- **RAISE THE ISSUES WITH YOUR LOCAL MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT**
- **JOIN OUR MAILING LIST TO GET REGULAR UPDATES ON THE CAMPAIGN**
- **DONATE TO SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN.**

The Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network

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 Email: campaign@aftinet.org.au,
 Website: www.aftinet.org.au
 Phone: 02 9212 7242

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- 1 Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, 10 March 2009, Submission to the Office of the Trade Representative, found at www.regulations.gov/search/regs/home.html#docketDetail?R=0900006480fa6a 1

 Leaked US intellectual property proposals found at <http://keionline.org/sites/default/files/tpp-10feb2011-us-text-ipr-chapter.pdf>
 - 2 Australian Government Trade Policy 12 April 2011 found at <http://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/trade/trading-our-way-to-more-jobs-and-prosperity.html>
 - 3 Submission of Philip Morris International in response to the request for comments concerning the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement, 25 January 2010, www.USTR.gov/tpp

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. No fees are payable, use is by voluntary donation.

The Decalogue for Peace

A Decalogue (Ten Commandments) was written by attendees representing members of 43 different faiths at an interfaith gathering in Christchurch, New Zealand. The gathering was hosted by the Christchurch Interfaith Council and the NZ Catholic Bishops Committee for Interfaith Relations. It reads as follows:

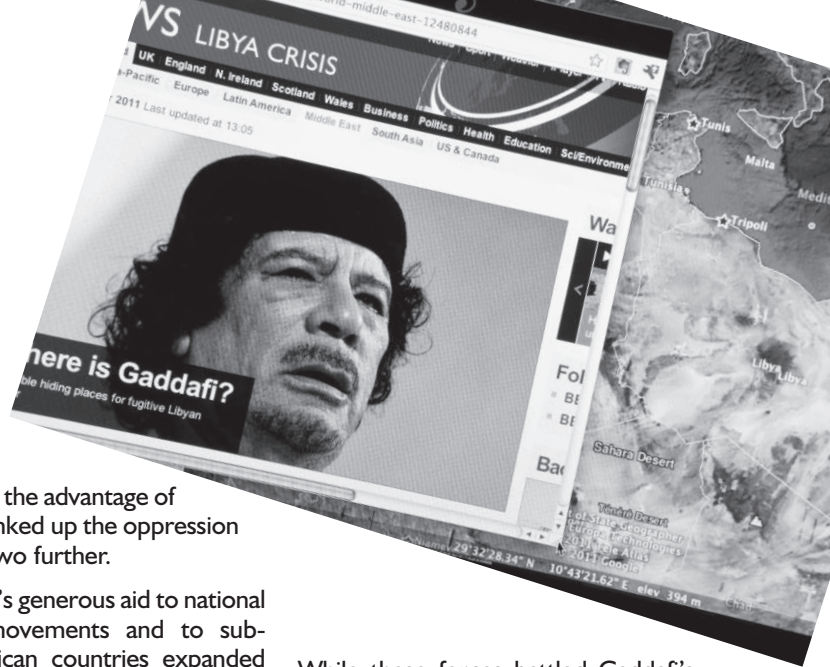
The Decalogue of Assisi for Peace

1. We commit ourselves to proclaiming our firm conviction that violence and terrorism are incompatible with the authentic spirit of religion, and, as we condemn every recourse to violence and war in the name of God or of religion, we commit ourselves to doing everything possible to eliminate the root causes of terrorism.
2. We commit ourselves to educating people to mutual respect and esteem, in order to help bring about a peaceful and fraternal coexistence between people of different ethnic groups, cultures and religions.
3. We commit ourselves to fostering the culture of dialogue, so that there will be an increase of understanding and mutual trust between individuals and among peoples, for these are the premise of authentic peace.
4. We commit ourselves to defending the right of everyone to live a decent life in accordance with their own cultural identity, and to form freely a family of his own.
5. We commit ourselves to frank and patient dialogue, refusing to consider our differences as an insurmountable barrier, but recognising instead that to encounter the diversity of others can become an opportunity for greater reciprocal understanding.
6. We commit ourselves to forgiving one another for past and present errors and prejudices, supporting one another in a common effort both to overcome selfishness and arrogance, hatred and violence, and to learn from the past that peace without justice is no true peace.
7. We commit ourselves to taking the side of the poor and the helpless, to speaking out for those who have no voice and to working effectively to change these situations, out of the conviction that no one can be happy alone.
8. We commit ourselves to taking up the cry of those who refuse to be resigned to violence and evil, and we desire to make every effort possible to offer the men, women and children of our time real hope for justice and peace.
9. We commit ourselves to encouraging all efforts to promote friendship between peoples, for we are convinced that, in the absence of solidarity and understanding between peoples, technological progress exposes the world to a growing risk of destruction and death.
10. We commit ourselves to urging leaders of nations to make every effort to create and consolidate, on the national and international levels, a world of solidarity and peace based on justice.

Courtesy of Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Christchurch, New Zealand

Gaddafi's Oppressions

By Stephen Gowans



My local newspaper informed me this morning that with the killing of Muammar Gaddafi the 'Libyan people can finally turn the page on 42 years of vicious oppression'.

The oppression began with Gaddafi liberating Libya from the tyranny of the puppet ruler King Idris I, whose flag has become the banner of the rebels.

It continued with Gaddafi's expulsion of foreign military bases and his nationalisation of the country's oil.

Further oppression was heaped upon Libyans when, under Gaddafi's rule, living standards rose to surpass those of every other country in Africa.

Certainly Gaddafi's fight to suppress the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group – whose members fought the Americans in Afghanistan and Iraq and struggled alongside Osama bin Laden against the Soviets in Afghanistan – added to the oppression.

The leader of the LIFG, Abdel Hakim Belhaj, once jailed by the Americans for terrorism, is now the military ruler of Tripoli.

Gaddafi's insistence over the objections of US oil company executives and State Department officials that the Libyan economy be 'Libyanized' (that foreign investment

be turned to the advantage of Libyans) cranked up the oppression a notch or two further.

And Gaddafi's generous aid to national liberation movements and to sub-Saharan African countries expanded his oppressions worldwide.

Which pro-democracy forces fought back against these oppressions?

- Qatar, an absolute monarchy, which sent guns and ammunition to Islamist rebels
- Monarchists, still incensed at the overthrow of their king
- Islamists, who for years had struggled to bring an Islamist regime to power in Tripoli
- CIA-connected dissidents, who hold key positions in the National Transitional Council, and promise Western oil companies first dibs on oil concessions
- Nato, whose warplanes and special operation forces proved decisive in toppling Gaddafi.

Over the last few weeks, Nato warplanes occupied themselves with reducing the town of Sirte to rubble – in the name of protecting civilians. It turns out that it's all right for Nato to bomb civilians, but not for the leaders of independent governments to put down insurgencies.

While these forces battled Gaddafi's oppressions, US-provisioned Saudi tanks rolled into Bahrain to crush a popular uprising, the US-backed ruler of Yemen, Ali Abdullah Saleh, turned his guns on his own people, and US-approved Mubarakism continued in Egypt, under Mubarak's henchmen.

These events – all involving US allies – have been little remarked upon. More importantly, none has been met with military intervention or indictments by the International Criminal Court, these attentions being reserved uniquely for Gaddafi.

It's true that the Libyan people can finally turn the page on 42 years, but of independence, not of vicious oppression.

Nato military bases, an economy subservient to Western oil companies, and the oppressive yoke of US imperialism, await them.

Source: Australian Peace Committee (SA Branch) Inc

Newsletter No. 3 Winter Issue 2011

Gaddafi's Murder and International Law

Firoze Manji: Nothing in international law allows regime change and assassination of a leader – The Real News Network

21 October 2011 ... this was extrajudicial killing, and supported by Hillary Clinton. It's very unfortunate. But the issue, I think, in Libya today is not so much about Gaddafi, but that this symbolises the final occupation, the recolonisation of Libya by the US and NATO forces.

It is now a question of the US government and the Europeans taking hold of Libya and doing with it what it wants. It has access to not only its oil and gas reserves, but something that the media doesn't really cover very often, and that is the huge, huge water resources under the Libyan soil.

I think that Gaddafi's principal crime, at least in relation to how from the perspective of empire, his major crime was that he refused to take any loans. He refused to have any debts. And, you know, you can't be a part of the international club if you don't get yourself in hock to the IMF and the

World Bank and to the corporations. And he was very, very agile in preventing any attempt to make Libya take in debts.

The second thing is that he refused to join the club of bankers and set up his own bank. Indeed, he had plans to set up a pan-African bank, which would then provide loans to African countries.

Read the full article/<http://www.uruknet.de/?p=82473>

The Prime Minister's announcement today to release people from detention centres to the community while their claims are processed is LOGICAL.

This year 1500 were released from detention between February and June to suburban houses and church homes all over Australia – AND THE SKY DID NOT FALL IN and no one ran away.

This was done quietly under the table – it worked – it is humane – it is legal and it costs less than detention.

Cost per year in a detention centre is \$137,317. Cost per person per year in community \$11,248.



**DETENTION IS NOT
A DETERRENT!**

Year	Number of boat arrivals (persons)
1991	214
1992	216
1993	81
1994	953
1995	237
1996	660
1997	339
1998	200
1999	3721
2000	2939
2001	5516
2002	1
2003	53
2004	15
2005	11
2006	60
2007	148
2008	161
2009	2849 (includes crew)
2010	6879 (includes crew)
2011 (to 30 June)	1675 (includes crew)

TPVs introduced in 1999 – boat arrivals up.

Mandatory detention introduced in 1992 – did not stop the boats.

Who is in detention?

31 JULY 2011 – LAST PUBLISHED FIGURES

**5,780 people
in immigration
detention**

1,591 are refugees
and are awaiting security checks

600 are stateless
– have no country to call home or place
they can be sent to

872 are children
2,110 have been in detention
for over 12 months

**LET'S FIGHT TO MAKE
THIS WORK!**

Pamela Curr

Campaign Coordinator

Asylum Seeker Resource Centre

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'NO ONE CHOOSES TO BE AN ASYLUM
SEEKER'.

Us Celebrities Ask Obama for the Immediate Return of Rene Gonzalez to Cuba

MEDIA ADVISORY

Edward Asner, Jackson Browne, James Cromwell, Mike Farrell, Danny Glover, Susan Sarandon, Peter Coyote, Bonnie Raitt, Elliott Gould, and others send letter to President Obama for the safety and immediate return of one of the Cuban 5, Rene Gonzalez to Cuba.

(Oakland, CA, October 11, 2011) Several concerned US actors and artists sent a letter today to President Obama asking for Rene Gonzalez's immediate and safe return to his wife and family in Cuba. The letter is part of the *Actors and Artists United for the Freedom of the Cuban 5* campaign.

Gonzalez was arrested in 1998 and sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment on conspiracy to act as a non-registered foreign agent. On Oct 7th, Gonzalez was released after serving his sentence, but a South Florida district judge denied his return to his homeland. 'Not only is the order to serve an additional 3 years of parole in the US extraordinary and punitive, it is the kind of gratuitous insult that further aggravates the unnecessary tension between the US and Cuba. It only adds injury to insult that the separation of this family be extended for another 3 years', states the letter.

During Rene Gonzalez's 13 years in federal prison, the US government denied his wife, Olga Salanueva, entry visas to visit him. The letter to President Obama points out that if Gonzalez remains in the US, his life will be in danger from organisations whose entire mission is premised on the violent overthrow of the Cuban government. The actors and artists ask President Obama: 'How, sir, can Mr Gonzalez's safety be ensured in the middle of an environment that generates so much insecurity?'

President Obama recently made a statement that he is open to new relations with Cuba. In the letter, the actors and artists responded, 'Please know that allowing Rene Gonzalez to be reunited with his wife, daughters and parents in Cuba would be the kind of humane gesture that would set the stage for just such a development'.

Actor Mike Farrell reacting when he heard the news said, *'I pray that President Obama understands the injustice that has been done to Rene Gonzalez and others of the Cuban 5 in the name of political gamesmanship. There is no benefit to the United States in the continued persecution of these men, there is only harm. Mr Gonzalez has served a wrongful sentence and should now be allowed to rejoin his family rather than be subject to continued persecution, harassment and serious danger by being forced to remain, during his period of parole, among those who wish him harm. If political retribution is allowed to pervert the justice system, what hope is there for our society?'*

US actors and artists signed on to the letter include: Edward Asner, Jackson Browne, Peter Coyote, James Cromwell, Hector Elizondo, Mike Farrell, Richard Foos, Max Gail, Danny Glover, Elliott Gould, Si Kahn, Greg Landau, Francisco Letelier, Esai Morales, Michael O'Keefe, Bonnie Raitt, Susan Sarandon, Pete Seeger, Betty and Stanley K Sheinbaum, Andy Spahn and Haskell Wexler.

Formed in September 2010, on the 12th anniversary of the incarceration of Gerardo Hernandez, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando Gonzalez, Rene Gonzalez and Ramon Labañino,

Actors and Artists United for the Freedom of the Cuban 5, sent a letter to President Obama asking for their release. In April 2011, they sent a letter to President Jimmy Carter commending him for his recent visit to the island, calling for improved relations with Cuba and for the release of the Cuban 5. This campaign, co-chaired by actor and activist Danny Glover and Ed Asner, is part of the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban 5's projects, which advocate for the release from US prisons and safe return home for these five men, known in their country as heroes for preventing acts of terrorism against Cuba.

VIEW LETTER TO PRESIDENT OBAMA

For more information on *Actors and Artists United for the Freedom of the Cuban 5* visit the International Committee's website at www.thecuban5.org

The more things change, the more they stay the same

'Surely there never was such fragile china-ware as that of which the millers of Coketown were made ... They were ruined, when they were required to send labouring children to school; they were ruined, when inspectors were appointed to look into their works; they were ruined,

when such inspectors considered it doubtful whether they were quite justified in chopping people up with their machinery; they were utterly undone, when it was hinted that perhaps they need not always make quite so much smoke' ...

'Whenever a Coketowner felt he was ill-used – that is to say, whenever he was not left entirely alone, and it was proposed to hold him accountable for the consequences of any of his acts

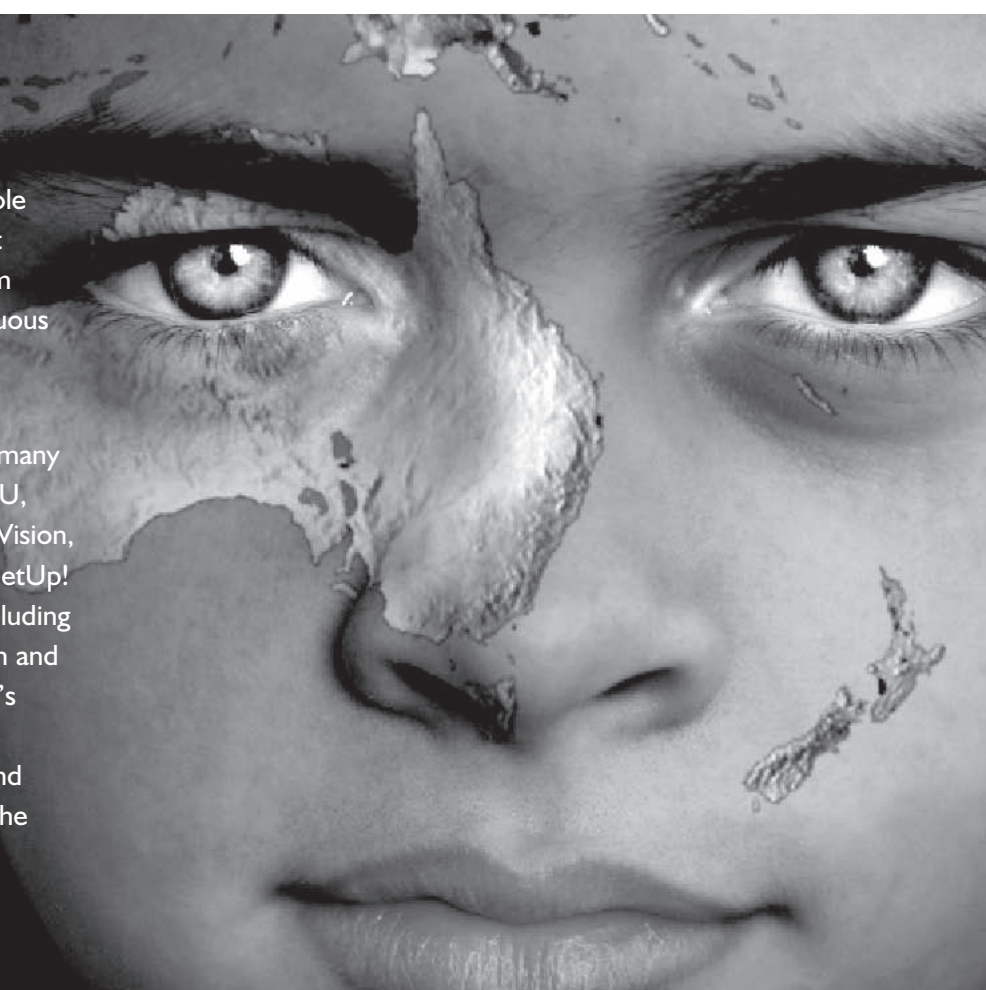
– he was sure to come out with the awful menace, that he would "sooner pitch his property into the Atlantic". This had terrified the Home Secretary within an inch of his life, on several occasions. However, the Coketowners were so patriotic after all, that they never had pitched their property into the Atlantic yet, but, on the contrary, had been kind enough to take mighty good care of it'.

Charles Dickens, 1853, Hard Times

What kind of Australia do we want?

ANDI is an exciting new community-led project to change how we think about progress in Australia and involve the whole community in a 'national conversation'. It aims to move our goals for progress from 'continuous increases in GDP' to 'continuous increases in equitable and sustainable wellbeing'.

ANDI has over 45 community partners, many of them national bodies such as the ACTU, ACOSS, ACF, Red Cross, YMCA, World Vision, Bendigo Bank, the Uniting Church and GetUp! as well as some government partners including the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Australian Bureau of Statistics. ANDI's national 'champions' are Professor Fiona Stanley (former Australian of the Year) and Rev. Tim Costello ('national treasure'). The Unitarian Church has recently agreed to become a partner.



How do we know if we're making progress?

We all want a better life, for ourselves and our children. We also care about the progress of our communities and our country. We like to think that we will leave a positive legacy for the generations that come after us. But how do we know if we, as a nation, are on the right track?

What does progress really mean? How do we decide what counts as progress? How can we measure how well we are succeeding?

By definition, the progress of a nation or a community is measured by how well it moves towards set goals and values. Until recently, most of the national conversations about our progress have been focused on economic growth as the key goal for Australia.

Now, human progress is increasingly being understood as much more complex than this, including the values that underpin our life together, goals that relate to our wellbeing as individuals and as communities, and the effective and sustainable use of our resources for the wellbeing of future generations.

Deciding what progress means for Australia and how to measure it isn't simply a matter of policy for lawmakers or a technical question for experts. It's a democratic question for all Australians. This is what the ANDI project is about. It is a community initiative to revitalise our democracy and engage all Australians in a national debate about our shared vision for Australia. Based on the idea of an ongoing national conversation about what kind of society we want to be, it will develop clear, ongoing measures of our progress towards that vision: an Australian National Development Index.

Progress is more than economic growth

How do we think about 'progress' today, and how do we measure it?

For the best part of the 20th century, it has been widely assumed that progress was synonymous with economic growth; and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) became the dominant way in which the world measured and understood progress.

As the OECD said recently, 'the world today recognises that it isn't quite as simple as that. This approach has failed to explain many of the factors that impact most on people's lives'.

In recent years, financial instability, increasing inequality, the erosion of supportive community structures and the declining state of our natural environment have given rise to a growing sense of unease about our future as individuals, and as a nation. In a recent national survey almost two-thirds of us felt that 'the future we pass on to our children and grandchildren will not be better than that handed to us'. We are beginning to understand that real progress is much more than economic growth and that beyond a reasonable level of material comfort, wellbeing improvements are negligible.

GDP was never designed to measure the overall progress and wellbeing of the nation. It is the sum total of the goods and services bought and sold in our economy. Certainly, it is an important statistic in its own right for reasons such as national economic planning. But as a measure of the overall progress and wellbeing of the nation, it is not just inadequate but misleading.

GDP doesn't distinguish between those things that add to our wellbeing, and those that diminish it. It doesn't account for the depletion of our natural resources and treats spending on crime, divorce, and massive oil spills as economic gains. It fails to take into account many of the activities that we value – like volunteer, leisure and family time. It counts the total income produced but ignores inequalities in its distribution.

In sum, GDP measures the quantity of our national economic production and not the quality of our society, our lives or our environment. It fails to capture the full story of what is happening in our society and diverts the focus of governments and communities away from other important aspects of wellbeing and from the social and environmental costs that economic activity brings with it.

It is clear we need a new model of progress for Australia, a new way to measure it and a new way to engage citizens in this process.

The global movement to redefine progress

Over the past ten years or so, a new global movement has emerged to produce measures of societal progress that go beyond GDP. This movement is being driven by citizens, policymakers, academics and statisticians working together globally and locally and championed by international organisations like the OECD and the United Nations.

Global Project on 'Measuring the Progress of Societies'

Hosted at the OECD and run in collaboration with numerous international partners, 'The Global Project' is fostering the development of key economic, social and environmental indicators to provide a comprehensive picture of how the wellbeing of a society is evolving. It is also seeking to encourage the use of indicators to inform and promote evidence-based decision-making, within and across the public, private and citizen sectors.

State of the USA

Initiated in 2007, the community-based State of the USA has developed a Key National Indicator system (KNIS) that in 2010 was established by legislation as an independent national reporting system. It has evolved with the support of government at all levels, business, media, not-for-profit and academic sectors and most importantly, the influential US Government Accountability Office.

Europe

In 2008, French President Nicolas Sarkozy sought a detailed investigation into the measurement of quality of life from the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress. This study, led by eminent global economists, concluded that the time was right to go beyond simply measuring economic production to measuring people's wellbeing, with the focus on achieving sustainable wellbeing. The report pushed for measurement of wellbeing across multiple domains. It has led to further development at the national level across Europe, has lent weight to the global wellbeing measurement movement and promoted discussion about wellbeing between governments and citizens across Europe.

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW)

ANDI is based closely on this model: Canada has worked over the past decade to develop a wellbeing index for the nation following several nationwide rounds of consultation. The signature product of CIW (released a few weeks ago) is a single number index (composite index) to represent the nation's wellbeing status – a combination of the results of eight CIW dimensions to demonstrate at a glance whether the overall quality of life of Canadians is getting better or worse.

GDP MEASURES THE QUANTITY OF OUR NATIONAL ECONOMIC PRODUCTION AND NOT THE QUALITY OF OUR SOCIETY, OUR LIVES OR OUR ENVIRONMENT.



ANDI provides an opportunity for people to come together in an ongoing national debate to respond to the question, **‘What is your vision of progress towards greater wellbeing for Australia?’**



CIW periodically releases research reports for various dimensions of wellbeing and prepares special reports into particular findings related to the data collected.

The independent and bi-partisan Institute of Wellbeing now manages six funding partners who support the CIW. These partners are from philanthropic and government sectors. While the CIW monitors and defines the quality of life of Canadians through data measures, it also seeks to promote dialogue with the community on the direction of the country’s progress. The index is rooted in national values and has evolved from the grassroots level. It has drawn together eminent people to contribute to its evolution. The Canadian Index of Wellbeing has developed domains which measure progress in the areas of: arts, culture and recreation, civic engagement, community vitality, education, environment, healthy population, living standards, and time use.

Measures of Australia’s Progress (MAP)

The ABS was the first national statistics office in the world to develop an integrated set of national progress measures and this project itself became one of the main inspirations for the OECD’s global project. Produced regularly since 2002 by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, MAP presents a range of measures capturing the health of individuals, society and the environment, as well as the economy. MAP presents 17 headline indicators across these domains with extensive supplementary indicators and contextual information provided at lower levels of the online product.

ANDI will work closely with the ABS drawing on some of MAP’s key data and measurement frameworks.

What’s different about ANDI?

A national conversation

Building a national measure of wellbeing that reflects the priorities of citizens involves an obligation to begin a new national conversation about what people want for Australia’s future.

Australians have not had this opportunity before. Only through the collection of the many and varied aspirations for progress can we start to build a true national vision for progress in Australia.

In its development phase and once established, ANDI will facilitate local forums, state and national surveys, and information sharing through its broad community network and partner membership, and a dynamic interactive website. It will foster a more informed debate about

what we value as a nation, whether we are achieving our goals, and what policies and programs will help or hinder our goals.

ANDI provides an opportunity for people to come together in an ongoing national debate to respond to the question, ‘What is your vision of progress towards greater wellbeing for Australia?’

Evolving from the ground up

ANDI’s uniqueness comes in part from its existing partnerships with a diverse collection of Australia’s leading community organisations and institutions whose networks span the nation. These networks provide opportunities for ANDI to seek views from across the community.

Better measures and better debate on true progress for Australia

ANDI will produce an annual index of progress, with linked sub-measures based around particular dimensions of wellbeing. The index will be based on new and existing expert research and data, and shaped by the priorities of Australians identified through consultation. In much the same way as economic indicators are regularly reported and discussed at a national level, a progress index is a tool to improve public discourse on the direction our nation is headed.

ANDI will measure progress in around 12 key ‘domains’ such as:

- Children and young people
- Communities and regions
- Culture, recreation and leisure
- Democracy and governance
- Economic life and prosperity
- Education and creativity
- Environment and sustainability
- Health
- Indigenous wellbeing
- Justice and fairness
- Subjective wellbeing
- Work and life

.....
 ***Mike Salvaris** is Adjunct Professor in RMIT University Melbourne in Applied Human Rights and Community Wellbeing. This article is based on the ANDI booklet authored by Mike and colleagues in ANDI.

KIVA MICROFINANCE

posted by Fay Waddington

KIVA MICROFINANCE WAS ONE OF THE IDEAS CHAMPIONED BY BRISBANE UNITARIAN JAMES HILLS AT THE RECENT UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONFERENCE HELD IN BRISBANE IN AUGUST.



Kiva empowers people like me with as little as \$25 to spare to help a low-income individual or group living anywhere from Azerbaijan to Vietnam. My little loan could go with other little loans towards a group housing or agricultural project loan that would ultimately improve the life of an entire community. It's my decision. I decide whether I want to help the 66-year-old Iraqi carpenter buy an electric power generator for his workshop or the young Ukrainian woman to expand the quality and variety of the inventory at her market stall. It is the old 'hand up' instead of a 'hand out' dynamic at work on a worldwide scale.

Kiva lenders like me have the peace of mind of knowing that the profitability of all plans has been pre-assessed by Kiva and that my entire \$25 will go towards my chosen loan. Kiva does not keep a zack of it! Kiva is primarily funded through the support of lenders making optional donations as well as raising funds through grants, corporate sponsors, and foundations. I can take my \$25 back once it is repaid or re lend to someone else.

I reckon Kiva is one of the greatest ideas since sliced bread. The last time I checked the Kiva website there were close to 625,000 people like me lending around \$243 billion dollars to people in 60 countries. Four hundred and fifty

volunteers were out there collecting and translating into English stories and plans by hopeful borrowers wanting to improve their circumstances. It is amazing to see that the repayment rate is 98.8% of all money loaned.

If you don't have the time or the wherewithal to go to the Kiva website yourself and donate directly you could consider contributing as part of a group. That is what some Brisbane Unitarians are doing. You just need to appoint one person to do the cyberspace legwork (or that would be handwork, wouldn't it) on behalf of your group. Your walking group, or Book Club or Social Club could be Kiva lenders, via either a one-off donation or by making a regular contribution. You could take it back once it is repaid and give to another worthy cause (there are so many) or keep it in the Kiva cycle. It is just so flexible.

Why not form a family Kiva Christmas group and contribute what you intended to spend on 'soap on a rope' or high-cholesterol chocolates towards a one-off donation to Kiva and get together on Christmas Day to decide to whom you will lend it. That's the true Christmas spirit.

Editor's Note: The Melbourne Unitarian Church committee has endorsed the Church as a sponsor.

news

PAYPAL ACCOUNT

The church has now opened a PayPal account. If you have access to PayPal – all you need do is log on and the church's PayPal address is **Unitarian@bigpond.com** You will be able to pay your subscription and make donations. The service will be available from our website in due course.

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THE 'WAR ON TERROR' IS 10 YEARS OLD THIS MONTH –
AND SHOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN BORN.

Not in Our Name

As the world looks back at the events of 11 September 2001 and their influence on the decade that followed, Mark Engler argues that patriotism does not equate to revenge.

I lived in New York City in 2001, during the attacks of 9/11. That Tuesday morning, I stood with a crowd of my Brooklyn neighbours in a park across the river from the World Trade Center. We watched, stunned and confused, as the towers burned.

In the weeks after the attacks, the response I saw emerge from New York City was very different from that offered by Washington DC.

In Manhattan, city residents poured into Union Square for night-time vigils. People mourned together, remembering friends, co-workers and loved ones. They shared their experiences of that week. They honoured the selfless service of firefighters, police and other public employees who risked and lost their lives.

In such gatherings, we asserted that the diversity and tolerance embodied by the city were sources of strength, and that terrorists could not diminish this. Even conservative Mayor Rudolph Giuliani made this point, reminding us that New York was a city of immigrants, and America a nation of them, and that scapegoating was unacceptable.

What came from Washington DC was another response. 'My blood was boiling,' George W Bush would later write in his memoirs. 'We were going to find out who did this, and kick their ass'.

In the end, the question of responsibility was less important than the retribution – the ass-kicking. The administration's neoconservatives were invigorated by the idea that many of their long-desired assaults might now be launched, all under the banner of a 'war on terror'. They began planning not only for an invasion of Afghanistan, but also for the conquest of Iraq. They dreamed of war, too, in places like Syria and Iran.

Yet many New Yorkers, including some who lost family in the attacks, refused to let Washington use their pain as a justification. They rejected the equation of patriotism with revenge. At rallies they carried signs that were among the most simple and, I think, among the best. The signs read: 'Not In Our Name.'

The tension between the two responses escalated in 2004, when the Republican National Convention attempted to exploit Ground Zero as a backdrop for Bush's re-election. Some 5,000 rightwing delegates – promoting an agenda disdainful of urban centres – attempted to lay claim to New York City's grief.

Huddled inside Madison Square Garden, the Republicans steadfastly maintained that Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction would materialise. They criticised dissent as un-American. And they rose to applaud when Bush vowed that, under his command, the US military would 'stay on the offensive'.

Outside, more than 400,000 people rallied against them.

Unexpectedly, on the eve of the convention, when President Bush was asked in an interview whether one could actually win a 'war on terror', he said, 'I don't think you can'. He speculated that terrorism could only be diminished. Nervous advisors spent days trying to make the comment disappear.

Democrats sensed an opportunity. But rather than questioning the faulty premises of the war, they insisted that they would be the ones to win it. They accused Bush of weakness. They sought to become the new owners of the Washington response.

In the years since then, the Democrats have taken over. A vision from them for a different US role in the world remains elusive. In May, after Osama bin Laden was killed in his Pakistani encampment, some progressive legislators suggested this should be the time to declare the 'war on terror' over, to give up on a counterproductive metaphor that ensured perpetual militarism. Even some conservatives, citing 'current fiscal restraints', proposed bringing the troops home.

But such talk remained marginal. And military spending is now at an all-time high.

It has been a few years since I have seen it on a protest sign or heard it chanted in the street. Yet on this anniversary, I believe it should be said once more: Not In Our Name.

Mark Engler is a senior analyst with Foreign Policy In Focus and author of *How to Rule the World: The Coming Battle Over the Global Economy* (Nation Books). He can be reached via the website DemocracyUprising.com

Source: New Internationalist September 2011



We all share the duty to eliminate nuclear weapons

By Malcolm Fraser, Former Prime Minister of Australia

If international law as an institution is to have any relevance, it must apply to critical issues. Nuclear weapons do not fall beyond its scope – indeed they pose its most critical test.

These instruments of terror, through their ordinary use, cause indiscriminate human suffering on an unimaginable scale. They violate fundamental principles of international humanitarian law, as well as treaties protecting human rights and the environment.

Their continued existence in the thousands undermines the very notion of the rule of law, reinforcing instead a system of rule by force, whereby a small number of nations threaten to inflict mass destruction on others – and themselves to boot – to achieve political objectives.

Fifteen years ago today, the International Court of Justice – the highest legal authority in the world – declared it illegal to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons, and ruled that all nations have a duty to eliminate their nuclear forces, whether or not they are parties to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Today there are more than 20,000 nuclear weapons across the globe with an average explosive yield 20 to 30 times greater than that of the Hiroshima bomb. Roughly 2000 are maintained on high-alert status – ready to wreak havoc at any moment by accident or design.

A single nuclear bomb, if detonated on a large city, could kill millions of people. No effective humanitarian response would be possible, with most medical infrastructure in the city destroyed and any outside relief efforts severely hampered by high levels of radioactivity – a silent, scentless, invisible and persistent killer.

The only sane path is to eliminate these monstrous weapons from all national arsenals without delay. Nuclear disarmament is not just an option; it is mandated by international law. But nuclear powers and their allies, including Australia, are resisting progress towards abolition.

A comprehensive convention banning the nuclear bomb is long overdue. Australia should drive the international push for negotiations – just as the Labor Party promised it would do prior to winning government in 2007.

Similar agreements have been concluded to outlaw and eliminate other categories of weapons deemed by the international community to cause unacceptable humanitarian harm – from biological and chemical weapons to land mines and cluster bombs. All of these treaties have changed state practice and resulted in meaningful disarmament.

The New START agreement recently concluded by Russia and the United States is a move in the right direction, but it will only result in modest cuts to the two nations' sizeable arsenals. The three other NPT nuclear weapon states – Britain, France and China – have little to show in terms of actual disarmament, and nothing much has been done to bring Israel, India and Pakistan into a multilateral disarmament process.

In spite of the support declared by some nuclear-armed states for 'a world free of nuclear weapons', all are investing heavily in the modernisation of their nuclear forces – which is incompatible with the requirements of international law.

In 2011 they will spend an estimated \$100 billion between them bolstering their nuclear arsenals. This sum is equal to the UN regular budget for 50 years. According to the World Bank, an annual investment of just half that amount – between \$40 and \$60 billion – would be enough to meet the Millennium Development Goals to end extreme poverty worldwide.

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons revealed this May through FOI laws that the Future Fund – which invests Australian taxpayers' money – has holdings worth \$135 million in 15 companies that manufacture nuclear weapons for the US, Britain, France and India.

These investments hamper disarmament efforts and go against the Future Fund's own stated policy not to invest in companies involved in economic activities that are illegal in Australia or contravene conventions to which we are a party. The Fund should divest from these companies, just as it has, commendably, divested from companies that produce land mines and cluster munitions.

So long as Australia continues to claim the protection of US nuclear weapons, its credibility as a disarmament advocate will be greatly diminished. With a US president sympathetic to the cause of disarmament, the time is ideal for Australia to adopt a nuclear-weapon-free defence posture and begin contributing meaningfully towards nuclear abolition.

Source: Sydney Morning Herald, 8 July 2011

Malcolm Fraser is a former prime minister and supporter of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

VANESSA BAIRD on the real 'clash of civilisations'

HERE'S A CONFRONTATION THAT
RARELY HITS THE NEWS HEADLINES
— YET IT HAS PROFOUND
RAMIFICATIONS FOR ALL OF US.

On one side are people who live in the wild places in the world, the forests, the highlands, the plains. They are indigenous people who, according to Western standards and norms, are the poorest and most isolated but who see themselves as the guardians of nature.

On the other are people who occupy the wild places of capitalism, the boardrooms of major corporations and the governments that support them. Foremost among them are the big industries — energy, mining, banking which see themselves as the guardians of growth and consumerism.

The fight is over nothing less than the natural world we inhabit and our capacity to survive global warming. With each day this clash is becoming more pertinent and intense.

Consumer demand — today coming equally from China and Brazil as well as the more traditional places — is spurring companies to penetrate the most remote regions of the world in their quest for more and yet more minerals, timber, oil and other energy sources. The current rise in commodity prices is cream on their profit cake.

Indigenous people know what happens when their land is invaded, when their forests and waterways become denuded or polluted. They are organising and fighting back. This is happening on all continents, but in Peru the conflict is especially intense and volatile — hence the special focus of this edition.

Unlikely as it may seem, indigenous people are at the forefront of the struggle to save the planet. Their courage and their worldview can inspire those of us who don't think life on earth should be determined by the boardroom bottom line. We, in our turn, have a role to play in defending the defenders.

**ASHININKA PEOPLE OF THE RIVER
ENE ARE DETERMINED TO KEEP DAM
BUILDERS AND OIL EXPLORERS OUT.**

New Internationalist October 2011

from our readers



Dear Beacon

Readers will be sad to hear of the death of 'Madam' Pat Thompson, who died in Canberra on 26 July, aged 88.

Pat was born in Melbourne on 29 April 1923 to Hugh and Kitty Brand. Her father was a successful chef at a leading restaurant, but lost his job and the family home during the 1930 economic depression. The only item of value they managed to hide from the debt collector was a treasured piano, which was concealed under cover in the backyard, and wheeled out each weekend for the family sing-a-long.

Pat was chosen to play the childhood part of Alice, the daughter of Rip van Winkle, in a comic opera at The Tivoli. Her salary greatly assisted the family finances at a time of great need.

After the war, Pat met and married Jimmy Thompson, and had two children, Jim and Cate. For a number of years Pat and Jimmy managed a number of farms and pubs in Victoria and Tasmania. Her marriage tragically ended when Jimmy was killed in a car accident. Pat eventually moved to Bermagui to start a new life. One day her friend, Honor, and Pat, went to the Narooma Bowling Club to hear jazz played by a couple of retired musicians. It transpired that there had been a connection with the past, and after much reminiscing, Pat was almost dragged on stage to sing 'Frankie and Johnny'. Pat was inspired, and at the age of 59, began performing locally as a jazz singer. Eventually this led to forming a band and performing at the Edinburgh Festival, as well as in Paris, Prague, Vienna, Frankfurt, London, and at the 'Speigeltent' in Melbourne.

Pat lived most of her twilight years in Bermagui and spent the last two years in Canberra to be close to her daughter Cate. She died peacefully at home on 26 July, aged 88, with her beloved family around her.

Footnote: I first saw Pat perform with her band in 1985 at the Tilba Easter Festival. I was 'knocked over' by her performance! It was not until 2002, however, that I met her in person. We immediately hit it off, and I looked forward to the regular Friday 'office meetings' with Pat and friends, to enjoy a drink or two (Pat had one whisky, and I had two!).

Pat was an idealist 'political animal' with a passionate love of life and humanity. She was always sticking up for the underprivileged, either on talkback radio, or by writing to newspapers and politicians. She even got a personal reply from Bill Clinton and the GG Quentin Bryce. She often said that bad things happen when good people do nothing.

Pat was an inspiration and a mentor to me, as well as a good mate. She gave me a subscription to the *Beacon* and we both could not wait to receive it each month to compare notes.

Pat wrote an autobiography entitled *She's a fat tart, ain't she?* I have donated a copy to our library for anyone interested. If anyone who knew Pat would like to contact me, I should like this very much.

**Rob Wilson
Bermagui NSW**

Dear Beacon

I should have sent this previously! Your publication is thoughtful and different! Appreciate UU!

Thanks from the Belly of the Beast (but not San Francisco) USA!

D Priem, USA

Dear Beacon Board

I enclose herewith my cheque for \$20, hoping to extend my subscription to the *Beacon* for a further 12 months. I continue to be inspired, for it is my belief that truth is all there is and that all the rest is just illusion.

Thank you for 'The Ten Commandments', in the current issue of the *Beacon* – the product of a fearless mind in pursuit of a similar goal despite all opposition. A profound influence on my life for the past 70 years or more.

Yours sincerely

T Kennedy, Vic

Dear Donna

Please renew my subscription to your newsletter, which I enjoy. Prof. Mike Salvaris' question, 'What kind of Australia do we want?' is timely – and I hope one free of fracking in the Dandenongs is one place to start.

Thank you for caring

S Angus, Vic

Greetings, friends at Unitarian Church

I hope all goes well. Thank you for your excellent *Beacon* magazine that I look forward to reading every month.

I wish you all well, and great success in the future: 'seeking the truth and serving humanity', a most worthy cause.

Warm regards from Bruce, Vietnam

Dear Editors

Thanks needs to be given to the *Beacon* for having the courage to print the addresses delivered by Marion Harper at the Unitarian Church in Melbourne on the controversial topic of Russia and socialism. I personally feel it is important that the world confronts our fear and loathing (in some cases bordering on hysteria) about socialism. A state of mind rightly based on knowledge of the genocide perpetrated in that philosophy's name by the likes of deranged individuals in USSR, Cambodia, China, and North Korea. However, it is not nearly anywhere as well documented as the devastation wrought by the alternative of capitalism. The latter hardly has a history of enlightenment and social justice. That in modern times especially being the extreme form of capitalism practised by the US of A which has had deadly and devastating consequences for many in Central and Southern America during the last century and continuing.

The thousands coming onto the streets in global actions against the greed exemplified by Wall Street are the hopeful vanguard for those who are realising that the trickle-down effect touted as the answer by capitalism, does not work: a fact verifiable as we see the bulk of the wealth being contained in the hands of fewer throughout the world. That not only includes developed nations such as USA, Britain and Australia, but also developing ones such as India. Here it is documented that a minority can afford to spend hundreds of thousands on a lavish themed wedding for a daughter whilst an alarming number of

struggling farmers are committing suicide because of debt they have accumulated at the hands of multinational seed providers, which debt they realise they will never be able to repay.

Isn't it time we addressed the demon and revisited socialism. Learn from the mistakes made in previous attempts and take the best of its ideals to be reworked into a new system that is more equitable to all in this globalised society in the 21st century.

F Waddington, Qld

Dear Ed

I note by the blue highlight on my address that I am six months late with my subscription. Sorry about that and thanks for not giving up on me. So I include \$20 for the balance of this year plus next year's subscription (at concession rate), plus another \$30 toward the 3CR program.

I got a shock a few weeks back when the Unitarian Half-Hour didn't go to air 'OMG' (or whatever), I thought, 'They didn't get their quota in the radiothon' ... thankfully it was only a glitch.

I heard the program where Marion Harper used the quote: 'Beware of an Episcopalian just off his knees'. I am guessing that there is a bunch of religio-recidivists who desire to revamp the 'church' more to their liking.

I've never been to a church service, though I have been to a couple of meetings there, but ever since the first time I heard Victor James on 3K2 (?), I 'belonged'.

Way back then there were only 3 clergymen out in front in the peace movement: Hartley, Dickie and James. It must have been pretty lonely standing up for the wretched victims of the warmongers. I knew that Frank Hartley was despised in his (Mt Erica-Windsor) parish.

The Methodist, Presbyterian, Unitarian and lay Catholic workers advocates – it doesn't matter what their genesis – it was their HUMANITY that counted.

Keep on keeping on.

B McLure, Vic

Dear Editors

The decision by the USA to cut funding to the United Nations, (The Age 2/11/11) because UNESCO has voted to admit Palestine as a member state is an absolutely disgraceful act. This will deprive UNESCO of \$60 million of vital financial support for its human rights, literacy and preservation work. While the US professes to support the establishment of an independent Palestinian state it blocks any genuine moves in that direction and punishes those who pursue this aim.

And whilst asserting its adherence to helping mediate a resolution of the conflict, the US continues to fund the building of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories and supply the weapons used to impose the occupation. This action only further exposes the USA's sham commitment to a just and viable solution to the Palestinian problem, as well as its hypocrisy and bullying policies in world affairs. I hope the international community has the courage to stand up to this blackmail attempt and is able to raise the finance to back the important efforts of UNESCO. It is appalling that Australia sided with the US and also voted against Palestine's membership of UNESCO.

Steven Katsineris, Vic

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