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SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

SHOW US WHAT'S REALLY ON THE TABLE, MALCOLM!

EDITORIAL

The most sensible suggestion in the so-called 'tax debate' has been from Richard Denniss, chief economist for the Australia Institute. In an article headed 'Econobabble, how the experts set out to fool us' printed in *The Age* 15/2/16, he said in part '... rather than have a democratic debate about our national priorities we have a technocratic debate about the merits of capital gains tax concessions'.

Surely the basic issue is a national debate about our national priorities. What do we want for our society? What are our priorities? What do we the people need for a decent, secure, optimistic future for our families and their families? Denniss goes on to say, 'Like the gods of cultures past, the markets are used to scare the public into accepting the need to cut corporate tax rates just 12 months after we cut spending on health and education'.

Indeed, scaremongering has become the political practice and is used to try to con the people into accepting alien processes and programs that are against our best interests. So far the Government has used terrorism, war, economic disaster and the need for austerity.

In preparation for the budget the first suggestion from the Government was that we must increase the GST or our country is down the proverbial gurgler. When public outcry forced that off the table, they moved on to Medicare. It's too costly they say and must be 'outsourced' (read privatised and think how interested companies must be salivating at the prospect).

Just because the Government says something doesn't make it true. The reality is that Medicare is one of the most fundamentally important and economically sound programs we still have and we need to fight vigorously to stop this federal government from destroying it.

Do we want to go down the US road of health care for the wealthy and none for the economically disadvantaged? This is health care US style. Excellent care is available for those who can pay for it (or who can insure against illness), but many who fall ill cannot afford care or insurance and they and their families suffer enormous physical and

mental hardship as a result. Remember also that the highly privatised US health care system costs far more and delivers far less than systems based on universal insurance such as Medicare.

It appears that with conservative governments, the issue of solving their economic crisis can only occur if we increase taxes and decrease services to the working and middle classes. The economic crisis was not caused by the people but by the speculators who this federal government really represents. There is an alternative to cuts and austerity and that is to examine and tackle government waste, corruption and tax avoidance – the three pillars of the growing gap between the poor and the wealthy.

To quote Richard Denniss again, 'Those pushing for a revenue neutral package of a higher GST and lower corporate and personal income tax rates simply want to redistribute money from one group of citizens to another. It's not "reform", it's just delivering for friends. If, and it's a big if, the Liberals and the business community wanted to change the tax system in ways that would encourage greater workforce participation they would simply close the superannuation rorts and pour the extra money into providing high quality, flexible and affordable childcare.'

So let's look at priorities that meet the people's needs. They are simple. First and foremost is: hands off our Medicare system! We will not tolerate any attempt to outsource our health system. Privatisation has been a failure and we should be demanding re-nationalisation of all essential services previously owned by the people. We should be demanding the re-introduction of the carbon tax, which returns to us some of the value of the natural wealth taken from our country. We should also demand a more equitable tax system which ensures that the more you earn the more you pay, the abolition of such inequities as negative gearing and superannuation rorts, an investigation into the inequities of the private v public education system and of course how much it costs us to be involved in those undeclared wars.

'Everything on the table' ... let's make sure what is on the table is in our interests. †

PART TWO

Twelve years later I did make it to Australia and since 1988 it has been my home. What struck me about Australia in comparison to America is what I called institutional compassion. Social welfare was built into the structure of society and government. It is an ethos of collective caring and support for people who need help. But, as we all know, this ethos has been attacked and eroded over the past 30 years. It has been labelled a nanny state and social welfare recipients have been demonised as 'leaners' not 'lifters'. More and more public services have been outsourced to the underfunded non-government sector or to the profiteering private sector. It is outrageous and unconscionable that public services like health, education, social welfare and particularly prisons and detention centres are taken over by the private sector, making money on the suffering of people.

This is a worldwide phenomenon and political analysis suggests that cutbacks in government services and austerity measures are not only a threat to democracy but are also the basis of authoritarian rule.

Austerity traditionally has been defined as the economic policies surrounding deficit cutting. When public debt runs too high, according to the theory, the accounts must be balanced by cutting spending and raising taxes. It is important to look past the theory to see the results of austerity in practice. To do this one must define austerity from the perspective of its victims. Pablo Iglesias, leader of the Podemos party in Spain, did just that by arguing that austerity is when people are forced out of their homes, when social services do not work, when public schools lack resources, when countries do not have sovereignty and become the colonies of financial powers; that austerity is the end of democracy, because without democratic control of the economy, there is no democracy.³ When all essential social and cultural

services are eliminated or privatised, what is left? The military, the police, the security services. Authoritarian rule.

The American journalist, David Brinkley, once facetiously suggested that the US government should be run by the Walt Disney Corporation; it ran Disneyland efficiently and effectively and made a profit. Perhaps this is not as facetious as originally intended.

Ursula Le Guin, in her novel *The Dispossessed*, describes how a person from a planet with a simple, cooperative, socialist society is sent as an official visitor to the neighbouring planet that is based on capitalism. The host takes the visitor to the main shopping area of the capital, '... the elegant retail street ...', to be fitted by a tailor and a shoemaker. The whole experience had been so bewildering to him that he put it out of mind as soon as possible, but he had dreams about it for months afterwards, nightmares. [The shopping district] ... was two miles long, and it was a solid mass of people, traffic, and things: things to buy, things for sale. Coats, dresses, gowns, robes, trousers, breeches, blouses, hats, shoes, stockings, scarves, shawls, vests, capes, umbrellas, clothes to wear while sleeping, while swimming, while playing games, while at an afternoon party, while at an evening party, while at a party in the country, while travelling, while at the theatre, while riding horses, gardening, receiving guests, boating, dining, hunting — all different, all in hundreds of different cuts, styles, colours, textures, materials. Perfumes, clocks, lamps, statues, cosmetics, candles, pictures, cameras, games, vases, sofas, kettles, puzzles, pillows, dolls, colanders, hassocks, jewels, carpets, toothpicks, calendars, a baby's teething rattle of platinum with a handle of rock crystal, an electrical machine to sharpen pencils, a wristwatch with diamond numerals; figurines and souvenirs and kickshaws and mementos and gewgaws and bric-a-brac, everything

either useless to begin with or ornamented so as to disguise its use; acres of luxuries, acres of excrement ... And they went on. After one more block the visitor had felt utterly exhausted. He could not look any more. He wanted to hide his eyes.

'And the strangest thing about the nightmare street was that none of the millions of things for sale were made there. They were only sold there. Where were the workshops, the factories, where were the farmers, the craftsmen, the miners, the weavers, the chemists, the carvers, the dyers, the designers, the machinists, where were the hands, the people who made? Out of sight, somewhere else. Behind walls. All the people in all the shops were either buyers or sellers. They had no relation to the things but that of possession.'⁴

Perhaps there is no better description of alienation, and we have lots of nightmare streets. They are called shopping centres.

We are removed from the hard work that goes into making the material objects of our modern world. The same is true of primary production. Unless we grew up on the land we would have no idea of the work that goes into producing our food.

Several months ago Cath and I went to a panel discussion by the *Sydney Morning Herald* on housing prices in Sydney. There were real estate agents and editors and reporters of the real estate section of the paper on the panel. What became obvious from the discussion and the people attending the discussion was that it was all about property investment. Everyone in the room had an interest in high property prices. The discussion was not about the real social use of housing – having a reasonably priced place to live – but rather housing as a source of money making. One thing I learned and which shocked me was the concept of space banking: investors buying properties and not renting them out, just letting the market value of the property rise without anyone living there. Thus in Sydney where we have one of the highest priced property markets in the world, working people and the poor cannot find an affordable place to live and properties are standing vacant just to make money. Jesus wept.

The political scientist Francis Fukuyama wrote an essay in 1989 called, *The End of History*, hailing the triumph of the West in winning the Cold War. He wrote, 'The end of history will be a very sad time ... the worldwide ideological struggle that called forth daring, courage, imagination, and idealism, will be replaced by economic calculation, the endless solving of technical problems ... and the satisfaction of sophisticated consumer demands. In the post historical period there will be neither art nor philosophy ... Perhaps this very prospect of centuries of boredom at the end of history will serve to get history started once again.'⁵

I began this morning with Jesus weeping because he did not get to his sick friend in time before he died, but that was not the end of this story. After having a good cry, Jesus tells Martha and Mary and their friends that he wants to go to the sealed tomb of Lazarus. At the tomb Jesus tells the people to remove the stone from Lazarus' grave and then he brings his friend back to life. Within traditional Christian theology this is a miracle establishing Jesus' bona fides as the Messiah, and foretelling his own physical resurrection. What it can mean to us is that hope is never lost; even ideas that seem to be dead are never so. They rise again. Even in the darkest hour of our despair, there is hope. We have our cry and then we act. We return to the work of building a better, more humane and just society.

Joe Hill was a Swedish immigrant to the US and member of the Industrial Workers of the World. He was framed for the murder of a shopkeeper and his son in Salt Lake City Utah in 1915. Just prior to his execution, Hill had written to Big Bill Haywood, the IWW leader, saying, 'Goodbye Bill. I die like a true blue rebel. Don't waste any time in mourning. Organize ...'

Three years later, Eugene V Debs, the leader of the Socialist Party in America gave a speech in Cleveland Ohio opposing military conscription for World War I. He was arrested, charged and convicted of 10 counts of sedition. At the sentencing hearing he was allowed to address the court. In part he said, 'Your Honour, I have stated in this court that I am opposed to the form of our present government; that I am opposed to the social system in which we live; that I believe in the change of both but by perfectly peaceable and orderly means ...'

'I am thinking this morning of the men in the mills and factories; I am thinking of the women who, for a paltry wage, are compelled to work out their lives; of the little children who, in this system, are robbed of their childhood, and in their early, tender years, are seized in the remorseless grasp of Mammon, and forced into the

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industrial dungeons, there to feed the machines while they themselves are being starved body and soul ...

Your Honour, I ask no mercy and I plead for no immunity. I realize that finally the right must prevail. I never so clearly comprehended as now the great struggle between the powers of greed and exploitation on the one hand and upon the other the rising hosts of industrial freedom and social justice.

I can see the dawn of the better day for humanity. The people are awakening. In due time they will and must come to their own.

When the mariner, sailing over tropic seas, looks for relief from his weary watch, he turns his eyes toward the southern cross ... As the midnight approaches, the southern cross begins to bend, the whirling worlds change their places, and with starry finger-points the Almighty marks the passage of time upon the dial of the universe, and though no bell may beat the glad tidings, the lookout knows that the midnight is passing and that relief and rest are close at hand. Let the people everywhere take heart of hope, for the cross is bending, the midnight is passing, and joy cometh with the morning.⁶

On the 10 September 1994 David Noble, a field officer for the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, was hiking in a remote canyon of the Wollemi National Park near Blackheath and came across a stand of trees thought to have been extinct for at least 2 million years. The tree was the Wollemi pine, *Wollemia nobilis*, named in honour of the rugged field officer who discovered it still alive. In science such a find is called a Lazarus taxon, a living organism, whose existence was previously found only in fossils.

Is belief in the principle of the 'progress of humanity onward and upward' a Lazarus taxon, a fossil waiting for the living organism to be found again?

It is said that one gets more conservative with age. I disagree. I have believed in the principles and program of socialism for most of my life, and despite the many setbacks I have noted today, I still believe.

I agree with Markus Wolf, the former head of foreign intelligence for East Germany, when in his autobiography he noted '... I know that there are many of us who cannot accept the idea of being part of a society where the rich get richer by the hour while the poor continue to get poorer ... I am very uneasy at the prospect of a society and civilization based solely on money ... [but] ... I remain both an idealist and an optimist. I am certain that many young people still dream of a better future for everyone, of a world more humane than our present one. I do not believe that utopian ideas are nonsense, but something deeply needed by [humanity]. Indeed, without some utopian faith we would run the risk of relapsing into utter barbarism, into the sort of brutality that could lead to the destruction of not just a nation, but of the planet. I am certain the younger generation, and the generations yet to come, will find a way to realise the ideals I once held and still do hold dear.

'Not far from my apartment in Berlin is a memorial to Marx and Engels. In the fall of 1989, as East Germany drew to an end, some young people spray painted the words NOT GUILTY across the memorial. They were right. I would like to think that they shared my belief in Marxism's potential. The Cold War is over, and my work may be done, but I have not lost my faith. I often take down from my shelves a book by the Swiss scientist Jean Ziegler. The title encapsulates well my feelings at the end of the century, as I draw toward the final act of a life that has been richer in good and bad than I could ever have imagined as a young child: *A demain, Karl*. Until tomorrow, Karl.'⁷ Until tomorrow. †

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- 2 Thomas Sankara – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. 2015 [ONLINE] Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Sankara. [Accessed 27 November 2015].
 - 3 Neoliberalism, Austerity, and Authoritarianism|New Politics. 2015 [ONLINE] Available at: <http://newpol.org/content/neoliberalism-austerity-and-authoritarianism>. [Accessed 27 November 2015].
 - 4 Le Guin, UK, 1974, *The Dispossessed*, Harper & Row, New York NY.
 - 5 Fukuyama, F 1989, 'The End of History', *The National Interest* (Summer).
 - 6 Debs, Statement to the Court. 2015. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://users.wfu.edu/zulick/341/Debs1918.html>. [Accessed 27 November 2015].
 - 7 Wolf, M 1997, *Man Without a Face*, Public Affairs, New York NY.

NEW Unitarian E-Newsletter

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

WILL WE SEE A REPEAT OF THE 1920s–1940s: WITH ONE MAJOR EXCEPTION?

By **BILAL CLELAND**

As we enjoy a more comfortable standard of living than our parents and grandparents, and have a wide choice of consumer goods, exciting new technologies, and better chances of a healthy life as medical knowledge improves, we assume that all is well with the world. That is until we start to think and observe events around us.

Australia, to date, has with a few historical exceptions, such as during the Vietnam War and the Great Depression, enjoyed a relatively calm and peaceful existence. Even then it was not subject to the deep divisions that many other societies have experienced.

Factors are accumulating which could change this happy picture.

Winnie Byanyima, executive director of Oxfam International, warned that an explosion in inequality is holding back the fight against global poverty at a time when 1 in 9 people do not have enough to eat and more than a billion people still live on less than \$1.25 a day [18 January, Al Jazeera].

In 2010 just 388 people owned as much wealth as the poorest half of the world's population. That was down to 80 people by 2015 and the 18 January 2016 Report showed that 62 rich individuals own as much wealth as the poorest 3.6 billion people. At this rate, by 2020, only 11 people could own as much wealth as half the world.

Dr Helen Szoke, chief executive of Oxfam Australia, said: 'The actual global checks and balances that might have once achieved the kind of reasonable equality that occurred after the Second World War have broken down ...' Oxfam said it would call for action to tackle rising inequality at the Davos meeting ... including a crackdown on tax dodging by corporations and progress towards a global deal on climate change [21 January, ABC, The World Today].

The concentration of wealth means the concentration of power, so governments will respond to the needs of the most powerful. As Oxfam pointed out: 'At the moment in our domestic context, and in many other contexts [the burden of tax] falls on labour and consumption. We're saying if you have this concentration of wealth, we really need to look at capital and wealth tax.'

Winnie Byanyima warns: 'The consequences of this extreme economic inequality are far-reaching. If inequality is not dealt with, we could see more social unrest across the world, a brake on growth and all the work that has been done in the last quarter-century on poverty halted – potentially reversed. What this means to you and me is a more unstable, unequal world with fewer people able to escape poverty.'

Present wealth imbalance is now similar to what it was in the 1920s. That was the period of the rise of a strong labour movement, as working people felt the pinch of deteriorating standards of living, and it witnessed the rise of the fascist and Nazi right-wing to suppress it. Combined with the Great Depression, which this wealth imbalance did much to create, the 1930s to the 1940s became a nightmare of unemployment, war and starvation. The ILO has revealed that 61 million jobs have been lost since the 2008 GFC and its World Employment and Social Outlook – Trends 2015 report said an extra 280 million jobs would have to be created by 2019 to close the gap created by the financial turmoil. The great difference is that this time around it is the Muslims, rather than the Jews, who will be the scapegoats for the crisis.

Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. †

OXFAM IS CALLING ON GOVERNMENT TO ADOPT A SEVEN-POINT PLAN TO TACKLE INEQUALITY:

1. Clamp down on tax dodging by corporations and rich individuals.
2. Invest in universal, free public services such as health and education.
3. Share the tax burden fairly, shifting taxation from labour and consumption towards capital and wealth.
4. Introduce minimum wages and move towards a living wage for all workers.
5. Introduce equal pay legislation and promote economic policies to give women a fair deal.
6. Ensure adequate safety nets for the poorest, including a minimum income guarantee.
7. Agree a global goal to tackle inequality.



TAKING FROM THE **POOREST TABLES**

By **RICHARD DENNISS**

MALCOLM TURNBULL HAS PUT SO MANY INGREDIENTS ON THE TAX REFORM TABLE THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO FIGURE OUT WHAT WE ARE GOING TO BE SERVED FOR DINNER. INDEED, WHILE EVERYONE AROUND THE TABLE IS HUNGRY FOR CHANGE, IT'S INEVITABLE THAT ONE MAN'S FEAST WILL BE ANOTHER MAN'S FAMINE.

Malcolm Turnbull has put so many ingredients on the tax reform table that it is impossible to figure out what we are going to be served for dinner. Indeed, while everyone around the table is hungry for change, it's inevitable that one man's feast will be another man's famine.

Is an increase in the GST a good way to help the states fund more schools and hospitals or a good way to fund tax cuts for the rich? Wouldn't it make more sense to close the loopholes and concessions than to increase the GST? Mr Turnbull will have to let us know what he thinks soon enough, but in the meantime we will have to settle for watching the Liberals and the business community squabble over the best way to explain that tax cuts for the rich are the best way to help the poor.

Virtually everyone who isn't on a retainer to think otherwise admits that the enormous, and rapidly growing cost of tax concessions for superannuation need to be reined in. Similarly, the idea that someone who makes \$50,000 selling shares should pay half as much tax as someone who works full time for a year to earn the same amount is as inequitable as it is inconceivable. And then there are the billions of dollars worth of subsidies we still give to the fossil fuel industry at a time in which we are allegedly pursuing 'low cost emission abatement'. There is a long list of inefficient loopholes and tax concessions which, if closed, will make the tax system simpler and fairer and collect tens of billions of dollars in extra revenue each year.

And that is the problem. Whether it's fixing loopholes or increasing the GST, all of the structural changes to the tax system being discussed at the moment will lead to an increase in revenue. While you might think that would be a virtue for a government that once raged against 'budget emergencies', in reality the only thing the modern Liberal Party hates more than deficits is collecting the revenue to fix them.

The Conservative Right always try to hide their ideological and distributional preferences behind a veneer of concern with 'the economy'. Luckily for the rest of us, Cory Bernardi is always willing to give us a hint about what they really think. This week he explained that 'tax reform means lowering taxes and every justification that I've seen for tax reform thus far entails an overall increase in government revenue. That's not reform, that's gouging.'

One man's gouge is another's investment in essential services.

Which brings us back to the GST. Is the point of increasing the GST to provide additional funding for schools, trains and hospitals or is it to fund cuts in the company tax rate? It's a simple question that warrants a simple answer. It needs to be asked again and again until we get one.

Increasing the GST by 50 per cent would raise about \$26 billion a year. That is almost as much as we give away in tax concessions for superannuation, which cost \$35 billion in 2013–14. The state premiers are adamant that they need more money to fund the rapidly growing costs of servicing a rapidly growing population. The 50 million Australians that our premiers and prime ministers aspire to represent will require twice as many schools, hospitals, sewers and police stations as we currently possess. Of course the business community think we should fund new investment by spending less on nurses and

teachers, but they would say that. They don't send their mums to a public hospital or their kids to a public school.

But while the premiers and the public want more investment in essential services, the Liberals and the business community are divided into two factions: those, like Business Council chief Jennifer Westacott, who want any tax changes to be 'revenue neutral' and those, like Peter Costello, who want to use a bigger GST as a cover story to further cut the size of the public sector. As is usually the case, it looks like Peter Costello is on the losing side.

A progressive income tax system is designed to collect a larger proportion of tax from high income earners than it does from low income earners. The redistributive effect of a progressive income tax system is not an 'unintended consequence', it's a design feature. A broad-based consumption tax, on the other hand, is inevitably regressive because low income earners tend to spend 100 per cent of their income while high income earners can afford to save.

Those pushing for a revenue neutral package of a higher GST and lower corporate and personal income tax rates simply want to redistribute money from one group of citizens to another. It's not 'reform', it's just delivering for friends. If, and it's a big if, the Liberals and the business community wanted to change the tax system in ways that would encourage greater workforce participation they would simply close the superannuation rorts and pour the extra money into providing high quality, flexible and affordable childcare. But they don't, so they won't.

The whole debate about the need to increase the GST came about because Joe Hockey introduced \$80 billion worth of long-term cuts to state government funding in his first budget. The fact that potential increases in the GST are now being used as an excuse to reduce overall tax collections shows just how broken Australian public debate really is. Those calling for a 'grown up' debate about economic policy in Australia should call out the bull... currently being spouted by many political and business leaders.

So, let's go back to the beginning. Virtually everyone now accepts that superannuation tax concessions enjoyed by the wealthy are far too generous and do nothing to reduce

the cost of the age pension. The issue of whether we should fix them or not is unrelated to the rate or base of the GST. Modest reforms could easily deliver \$10 billion a year.

Similarly, virtually everyone now accepts that the 50 per cent tax discount for income from capital gain is too generous and delivers the vast majority of its annual \$4 billion largesse to Australia's wealthiest. Again, the benefits of fixing this rort are entirely unrelated to the rate or base of the GST.

And, if 'everything is on the table', virtually everyone accepts that a modest carbon price would be a better way to fund the government's Direct Action policy than the cuts to services announced in the 2014 budget. But, of course, everything isn't on the table. And many of the things that are seem to have a small sticker on them saying 'for display purposes only'.

Closing the loopholes in our tax system would deliver billions of dollars a year while making the tax system fairer and simpler. Doing so would also do much to reduce the budget deficits that the Liberals were once so worried about. But it won't

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happen. We won't make the obvious reforms to the tax system for the simple reason that such reforms would raise additional revenue and improve the distribution of income. Quelle horreur.

The only reason the GST is 'back on the table' is to conceal how simple, fair and lucrative genuine tax reform could be. Rather than ask the public if we should rein in tax rorts to fund better childcare and parental leave and

invest more in the infrastructure for our growing cities, the government has flicked the switch to vaudeville. Prepare for a flood of dodgy modelling and 'econobabble' to conceal the fact that we are about to walk past the low hanging fruit in the gardens of the rich and powerful and take from the tables of those with the least. How do I know? Easy, it's what we have been doing for decades. †

Source: Adelaide Voices Dec 2015/Feb 2016

Presstitutes at Work

By **PAUL CRAIG ROBERTS**

This morning I was stuck in front of a Fox 'News' broadcast for a short period and then with a NPR news program. It was enough to convince me that Nazi propaganda during Hitler's Third Reich was very mild compared to the constant stream of dangerous lies that are pumped out constantly by the American media.

The New York Times, Washington Post, and a couple of think-tank types were represented on NPR. They delivered the most crude propaganda imaginable and questioned no US government statement.

Did you know that all the trouble in Syria is due to the Russians and Assad? The US has no blame whatsoever. The US is trying to fight ISIS (which the US created, aids and abets), but the evil Russians and Assad are fighting the innocent 'democratic rebels' who are trying to bring democracy to Syria as a replacement for a 'brutal dictator' (elected by a large majority vote). The Russians are also bombing schools and hospitals, 'collateral damage' when the US does it but war crimes when the Russians are accused of doing it. The accusers had no evidence for their accusations against Russia beyond the unverified claims of the US government. Despite nonexistent Iraqi 'weapons of mass destruction,' nonexistent Iranian nukes, and nonexistent use of chemical weapons by Assad 'against his own people,' the talking heads continue to accept without question whatever the US government says. I was especially disappointed in Karen DeYoung. As a young reporter she aggressively covered the neoconservatives' misadventures in Nicaragua. However, to become the Washington Post's senior foreign affairs reporter she had to give up and join the presstitutes.

Did you know that China was militarising the South China Sea by building up atolls to accommodate runways and by placing weapons on the site? It is not militarisation

when the 'exceptional country' allocates 60% of its large fleet to the Pacific, declares the South China Sea, which is thousands of miles from America, to be an area of "American national interest," and sends warships to patrol the sea. That's simply 'countering the Chinese threat.'

Did you know that the clamour by the British people for UK exit from the European Union has nothing to do with preserving UK national sovereignty and the legal protections of British civil liberty? It is all to do with rejecting refugees, a sign of racism.

Fox 'News' informed us that due to his great service to our nation, Justice Antonin Scalia was lying in state in the Supreme Court to be paid homage by both the government representatives and public victims of the police state of which he was an architect. Under Republican leadership the Supreme Court has helped the executive branch elevate its authority above that of the US Constitution, refusing to even hear challenges to indefinite detention. Among Scalia's accomplishments are:

- stopping the Florida vote recount in order to install George W Bush as President
- Kentucky v. King: police should have greater leeway to break into homes without a warrant
- Florence v. Burlington: allowing jail officials freedom of action is more important than protecting American citizens from debasing strip searches.

Like the Supreme Court the presstitutes have aligned themselves with the rich and powerful. Fox 'News' reported that Marco Rubio, a candidate for the Republican presidential nomination, declared that to make the poor rich requires making the rich poor and we shouldn't make the rich poor. Apparently, Fox 'News' believes that aligning Rubio with the One Percent is helpful to his political career. Fox showed Rubio's audience cheering and applauding his defence of the One Percent.

This is 'democratic America' where the people have no representation.

Dr Paul Craig Roberts was Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Economic Policy and associate editor of the Wall Street Journal. He was columnist for Business Week, Scripps Howard News Service, and Creators Syndicate. He has had many university appointments. His internet columns have attracted a worldwide following. Roberts' latest books are The Failure of Laissez Faire Capitalism and Economic Dissolution of the West, How America Was Lost, and The Neoconservative Threat to World Order. †

23 February 2016 'Information Clearing House'

EDITORS' NOTE:

Feedback from our *Beacon* readers has proven very popular to our readership and the Beacon Board and we thank those who have contributed. We encourage all of our readers to contact us and express their views.

DID YOU KNOW...

DID A UNITARIAN BARON EAT HUMBLE PIE?

By **BERT CLOUGH** *THE INQUIRER*

As a Unitarian Socialist Scouser, I was intrigued to learn that the Conservative businessman and politician Lord Woolton had strong Unitarian roots in Liverpool. Woolton was born Frederick Marquis in Manchester and attended the old Upper Brook Street Chapel served by the redoubtable Rev. Charles Peach. His strong Unitarian beliefs were reflected in his voluntary work at the Manchester University Settlement. A businessman to his fingertips, he began working for the famous Liverpool department store, Lewis's, of which he became managing director. He re-established his Unitarian links in his adopted city by being a regular attender of Ullet Road church ministered by the Rev. Lawrence Redfern. He was ennobled in 1939 for his services to industry. The problem was that he wanted to be appointed a marquis but the powers that be felt that having a marquess marquis might be a trifle confusing. So he had to settle for a lowlier barony and became Lord Woolton, named after a Liverpool suburb where John Lennon was to hail from.

Lord Woolton became a household name during the Second World War. Although he declined to join any political party, Neville Chamberlain appointed him as Minister of Food. This was no easy task as he was responsible for introducing rationing because of the sharp cut in food imports through enemy action. Although it was an understandably unpopular measure Woolton convinced the public that it was necessary and he became a much-respected figure. He did however show his Unitarian altruism by ensuring that 650,000 children had free school meals and 3,500,000 had free school milk. (Although he did reduce their sweets to save shipping space.) He also introduced recipes for such meagre fare. The most famous was the 'Woolton pie', which consisted of carrots, parsnips, potatoes and turnips in oatmeal, with a pastry or potato crust and served with brown gravy. There is no record however as to whether he ever ate one for his own supper.

Woolton then joined the Wartime Cabinet as Minister of Reconstruction. When Churchill was defeated in the Labour landslide of 1945 he joined the Conservative Party and, as chairman, radically reorganised it in such a way that it won the 1951 general election. After the war he was made honorary member of the General Assembly. Disappointingly, he became an Anglican in his later years when he moved to Arundel. But he continued to subscribe to the Subvention Fund which helped to maintain the existence of *The Inquirer*. Lord Woolton was an active Unitarian for 50 years which must have shaped his unique and remarkable contribution to our nation in its greatest need.

Bert Clough is a member of Godalming Unitarians.

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GARDENER'S TALE

By **Pamela Curr**
Asylum Seeker Resource Centre

At 6 am it is still cool enough to take stock of which plants are in danger of succumbing to the heat and take measures to protect the vulnerable. Watering and transferring those too delicate to survive the day's heat may save some. It is the same with people. Some seem more resilient than others either through natural disposition or lived experience – who knows. The resilient ones appear externally to survive cruelty and harshness, where for others the spirit dies under the onslaught.

Cutting the drooping acanthus leaves away reveals a fern which I did not think would survive and thrive, but hidden in this corner, protected by the floppy acanthus leaves, it has tentatively sent forth the fronds of life. Joy to any gardener's heart is to see a tired unhealthy plant revive.

I think of my friends down the road. If only we had the power to move them from the 'factories producing mental illness'. Psychologists explain that their depression, anxiety and mental deterioration are caused by situational factors. Change the situation and their mental health will improve. I think of my rose that was dying behind the fence without enough sun. Moved to a pot and set against a warm brick wall, it is now thriving and rewarding me with delicate blooms.

In 2015 families with babies born in Australia received the ultimate reprieve. Instead of being sent back to Nauru, they were released to the community in Australia. We saw mothers who had been admitted to mother and baby units suffering deep depression, leave the detention camps and thrive. The babies and children too started sleeping through the night. Bedwetting and nightmares faded. These releases were part of a deal with a minister who crafted the bribe in order to get an omnibus bill of horrors through the Senate. Even this could not sour the joy of seeing these young families released.

I see psychiatrist reports making assessments and recommendations that the patient's condition will not improve until they are released to the community to recover and heal. These doctor's recommendations are not favoured by our political masters. As a result doctors

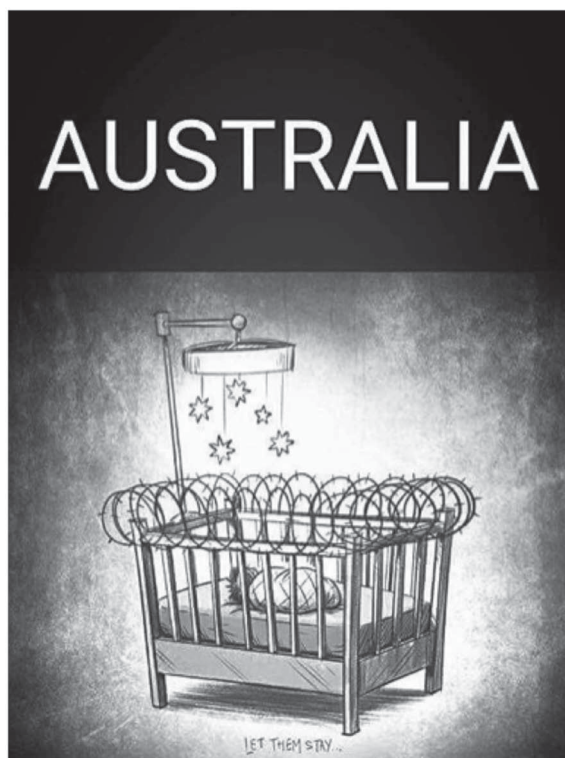
have few options to treat. When permitted, they admit the people to psychiatric hospitals for experimental therapies and drugs in lieu of the treatment which will cure their sickness but which the politicians will not allow.

Young women in particular have suffered severely in detention. Many came from the most appalling political, physical and sexual violence with hopes of protection in Australia. Here they are subjected to a loss of freedom and hope that is destroying their minds. They are being subjected to treatments such as TMS (Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation) where a magnetic coil that emits electric stimulation is placed on the head for forty minutes daily for thirty days. The patients tell me that they sleep for

days on end. They return to the detention centre in a zombie-like state struggling to remember the details of their lives. This is a treatment usually recommended as a last resort for Australian patients who have supportive and caring home environments, but who have not responded to the usual therapies. For the people in detention it is a therapy of first resort with heavy doses of drugs because removal from the damaging environment is refused.

Gardeners know that moving a plant to a place more suited to its needs will see it grow and thrive. Again so it is with people: freedom is a more powerful therapy than any drug or experimental

treatment. Yesterday a young boy told me that his destiny was to get out of detention. Such strange words from a child but said in such a heartfelt way. Now another year is ending. The longest refugee in detention faces his eighth Christmas behind the gates. Many others are now waiting years in this limbo hell with no reprieve in sight. There are babies born in detention who are now starting to walk and who have never known any other life than this institutional existence. Our Prime Minister says that it is an exciting time to be in Australia. For the people in the maw of the refugee regime, and the people witnessing their pain, the PM's words ring hollow. †



from our readers



Dear Editor

Great articles – what a pity they're not published in the mainstream media. I try to be a voice for truth – but get rubbished by the non-thinkers. What's new!

Please send me the address by Dr Helen Szoke.

K Porter

MUA veteran, NSW

Dear Beacon

Enclosed is my renewal subscription/donation for 2016.

I always appreciate reading articles in the *Beacon* and stories of the real world situation.

Australia is really turning to the right these days, pushed on by corporate capitalism.

Best wishes for 2016.

Yours sincerely

(Ms) H Williams, Qld

PS. I would appreciate receiving a copy of Dr Helen Szoke's address referred to on page 1 of the Dec/Jan *Beacon*.

Dear Editorial Team

Congratulations on an excellent publication – the aptly titled *Beacon*.

Rick Simpson has been giving me recent copies and I now look forward to each edition. It is always a great read and I admire your willingness to address difficult and contentious issues.

Enclosed is my cheque for subscription for 2016.

Thank you very much for a quality journal.

Sincerely

J Endacott, Vic

To the Editor

Sorry to be so late.

Could you please give us an article explaining the religion of the Unitarian Church?

Yours sincerely

R Cox, Vic

EDITOR'S NOTE

In response to the request for an article on the religion of Unitarianism – one will appear in the next issue.

Alan Rickman (21 February 1946 - 14 January 2016)

Alan Rickman was born in London and grew up on a working class council estate in west London. He died of cancer in London this week, aged 69, surrounded by his family and friends. He was a talented and adaptable actor, a decent and kind human being, but he also had a keen social conscience and was politically active. He gave his time, energy and money campaigning for human rights, refugees and many other worthy causes.

In December 2015 Alan Rickman lent his famous voice to a video of a tortoise eating a strawberry. He was working with Save the Children and the Refugee Council to create a viral video that would help raise money for the two charities. By watching the video, viewers can help raise money for children and refugees.

'It works like this,' Alan Rickman says in the video. 'The more views the video gets, the more advertising revenue YouTube will give us. Together, you and this tortoise can make a difference.'

Alan Rickman was also an ardent supporter of the Palestinian people's rights and their struggle for justice. In 2005 he edited and directed the award winning play *My name is Rachel Corrie* with the help of journalist Katharine Viner. The play is based on the diaries and emails of Rachel Corrie. The focus of the play is around the events leading up to Corrie's death, which her family members and eye witnesses say was an intentional killing and Israel claims was 'accidental'.

Rachel Corrie (10 April 1979 – 16 March 2003) was a young American student, peace activist and member of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) who travelled to Palestine during the Second Intifada (uprising). She was killed by a Caterpillar D9R armoured bulldozer operated by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) while protesting against the destruction of a Palestinian house by the IDF in the Gaza Strip. An Israeli military investigation ruled the death to be an accident, but the ISM maintains that Corrie was run over deliberately. In 2012 the Haifa District Court ruled in a lawsuit filed by Corrie's parents that her death was an accident.

Alan Rickman's political involvement throughout his life meant he did make a difference. He left behind a legacy of a life well lived. Through his wonderful film roles, caring efforts and projects he lives on. Alan Rickman and Rachel Corrie were both compassionate and righteous people who stood up for just causes. For these reasons, Alan Rickman's important contributions to the liberation of Palestine and work to help other deprived people will never be forgotten. He will be remembered and will live on in our hearts. Thanks and RIP Alan Rickman.

Steven Katsineris, Vic

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