# Tui Motu

## InterIslands

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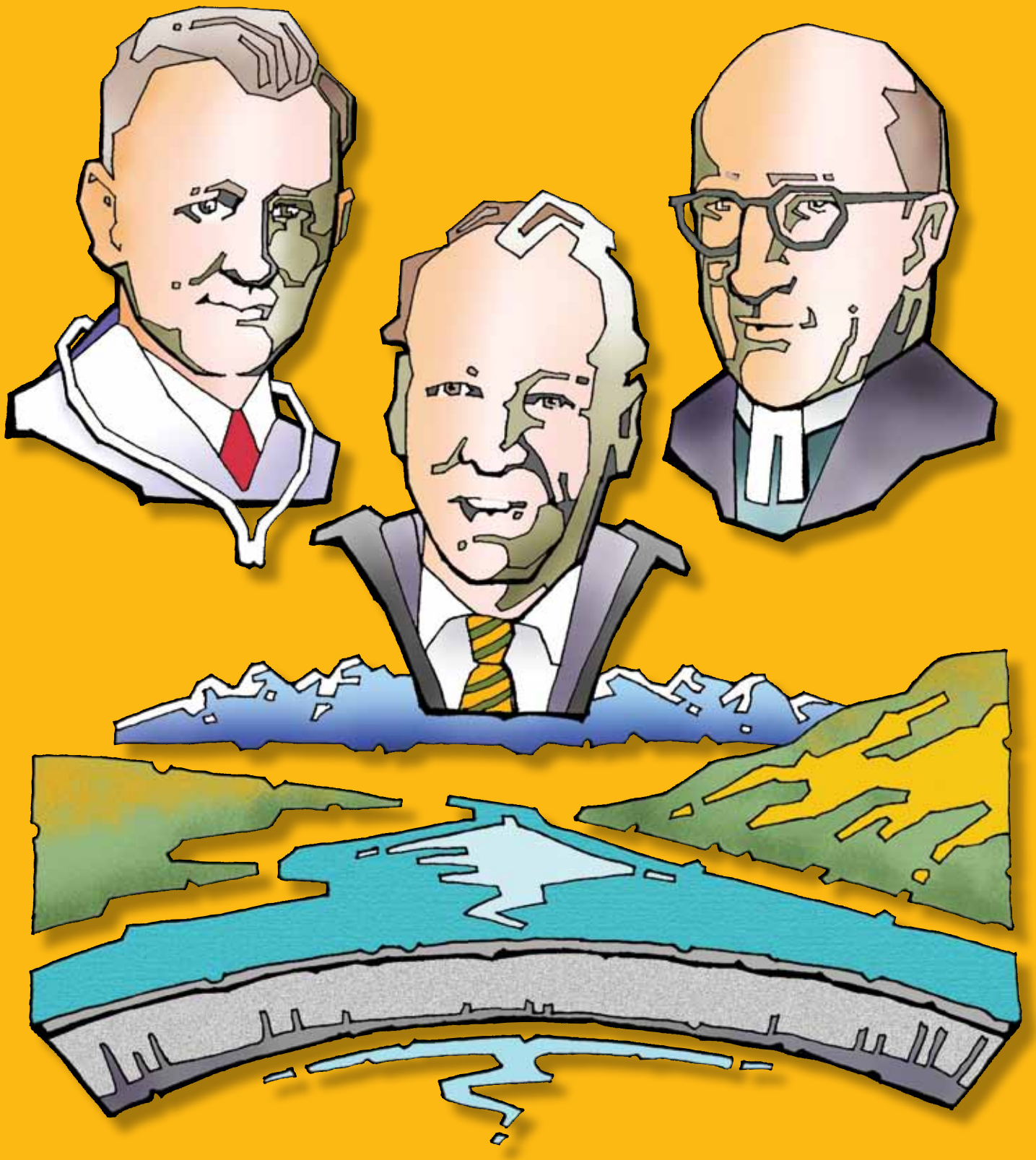

*75th anniversary of the Social Security Act 1938*

# a breath of fresh air

Recently Pope Francis, in talking to the Missionaries of Charity sisters in Rome, has continued his critique of the dominance of capitalism in our world. "Unbridled capitalism has taught the logic of profit at any cost, of giving in order to receive, of exploitation without looking at the person … in the crisis we are now living through." When Bangladesh garment factories recently collapsed killing many, we saw on TV the appalling conditions which the workers suffered, conditions which are at the heart of our current global economic system (the garment market in Bangladesh earns 19 billion US dollars annually for those who control it). Pope Francis called this system "slave labour". On a journey to Lampedusa, the southernmost point of Italy where many migrants arrive, the Pope spoke of the "globalization of indifference" towards immigrants, saying we have become too used to the suffering of others. "It doesn't affect us. It doesn't interest us. It's not our business."

To hear someone talking about the logic of our world in this way is a breath of fresh air. When it is the Pope, we sit up and take notice. It is an opportunity for people of faith, an opportunity which should not be lost here in Aotearoa New Zealand. Because the same problems and indifference to suffering lie at the heart of the economic system which controls this country. Could we not look at Pope Francis' idea when judging our current economic system? He says, "Concern for the fundamental material and spiritual welfare of every human person is the starting-point for every political and economic solution and the ultimate measure of its effectiveness and its ethical validity". The Pope places concern for each human being before questions of efficiency and profit.

This month we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of the passing of the Social Security Act 1938. As Pat Harrison reminds us, this Act was a response to the great depression poverty, heralded the desire for an inclusive society and was concerned with each human being. John Hughes traces carefully the slow dismantling of the Act, moving from a vision of inclusion to one where the poor are now blamed for not taking the 'opportunities' that the free market creates. David Clark gives us the story of Nordmeyer, McMillan and Davidson (minister, doctor and school principal living in Kurow — "Could any good come out of Kurow?"). These Presbyterian gentlemen saw the effects of the depression and believed that faith without works is dead. They followed so clearly in the footsteps of the Reverend Rutherford Waddell, minister of St. Matthew's Church in Dunedin, and father of the anti-sweating legislation of the 1890s. Together these men certainly fulfill the criteria for true leadership of which Mike Riddell speaks when talking about the current lack of such a grace in this country. According to him, leadership requires conviction and courage. Waddell, Davidson, McMillan and Nordmeyer can each claim these virtues. They have left a permanent mark on the history of Aotearoa New Zealand. Who, now, has the courage of their convictions and the vision to follow in their footsteps?

We need that breath of fresh air.

**KT**

## contents



**Front cover L-R:** Dr David Gervan McMillan, Mr Andrew Davidson, and the Rev Arnold Nordmeyer, architects of the principles behind the Social Security Act 1938, in the Waitaki Valley. [Illustration by Donald Moorhead]

# caritas and the constitutional review

In a previous issue (*TM* July 2013, p3) we referred to the current constitutional review and the discussions regarding a written constitution for Aotearoa New Zealand. Caritas has contributed thoughtfully to the debate in an excellent submission to the Constitutional Advisory Panel. We include here the preamble and a brief summary of the key points of that submission.

"An authentic democracy is not merely the result of a formal observation of a set of rules but is the fruit of a convinced acceptance of the values that inspire democratic procedures: the dignity of every human person, the respect of human rights, commitment to the common good as the purpose and guiding criterion for political life. If there is no general consensus on these values, the deepest meaning of democracy is lost and its stability is compromised." *(Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church #407)* ■

## Summary of key points

- Caritas welcomes the Constitution Conversation.
- Catholic social teaching provides fundamental principles about the role of the State and the exercise of political power which are useful in considering the questions raised in the Constitutional Review.
- The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference have proposed a preamble to a written constitution in their submission, and their previous statements on matters such as the place of the Treaty of Waitangi also offer guidance on how Catholic social teaching applies in our context.
- Caritas recognises both positive and negative aspects to our present 'unwritten constitution'. However, on balance we favour a superior-law, written constitution, to ensure that New Zealand law-makers and the public alike are better informed about constitutional matters and more easily able to see where fundamental constitutional matters are being changed.
- The Treaty of Waitangi/*te Tiriti o Waitangi* is the fundamental agreement on which is based our lives together as *tāngata whenua*/ first peoples and all who have subsequently settled and are settling here. Our constitutional arrangements must reflect and honour that agreement.
- New Zealanders need to recognise that while historic injustices under Article 2 of the Treaty/*te Tiriti* may have been addressed to some extent through the settlement process, there are significant Article 1 questions about sovereignty/*tino rangatiratanga* and governorship/*kāwanatanga* which are yet to be addressed.
- The passing of the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 (NZBoRA) was a step forward in recognising human rights. However, NZBoRA has not prevented New Zealand from passing discriminatory legislation, and it does not sufficiently recognise all New Zealand's commitments under international human rights agreements and instruments, particularly the right to life.
- The New Zealand Bill of Rights Act need to be more comprehensive, it needs to be superior law, and the Courts must have the ability to uphold it.
- Caritas believes there continues to be an argument for maintaining Māori seats, but notes that all positive discrimination measures must be monitored and reassessed.
- Better structures than Māori seats are likely to be found through dialogue and discussion about how our constitutional arrangements better reflect the Treaty of Waitangi/*te Tiriti o Waitangi.*
- In the absence of better checks and balances and stronger human rights protections one of the few existing protections against abuse of power in New Zealand is our short three-year electoral term. Caritas does not support extending the term of government under the constitutional status quo.

To see the full submission go to: www.caritas.org.nz/resources/submissions/2013/constitutional-review-2013

Tui Motu InterIslands

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*Tui Motu – InterIslands* is an independent, Catholic, monthly magazine. It invites its readers to question, challenge and contribute to its discussion of spiritual and social issues in the light of gospel values, and in the interests of a more just and peaceful society. Inter-church and inter-faith dialogue is welcomed.

The name *Tui Motu* was given by Pa Henare Tate. It literally means "stitching the islands together...", bringing the different races and peoples and faiths together to create one Pacific people of God. Divergence of opinion is expected and will normally be published, although that does not necessarily imply editorial commitment to the viewpoint expressed.

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## suffering from unsound economics

I have just read Bishop Cullinane's perceptive article (*TM* July 2013, p24) "Human Dignity — the starting point of economic planning" and rejoice in it. But what a challenge it is to accepted values in our current society.

He cites big business lay-offs of workers to maintain profits. The removal of whole enterprises overseas to utilise considerably cheaper workforces, is another example. Both often damage the lives of both the workers involved and their families. And collateral harm is frequently done to their communities. It hurts people; and it is, in the long run, unsound economics. Our whole NZ economy has suffered.

Somehow, we must get human values respected in our capitalism. And that constitutes a real challenge to many of us: Christian businessmen, directors, shareholders, workers, and even the buying public.

**Rev Peter Stead, *Huapai***

## one dad's story

I have just read "One woman's story" by Judith Collins who at 72 has decided to let her active role in the Church wind down. As an 87 year old father of a homosexual son and a lesbian daughter I can empathise with all that you say about the way these people are treated. However, I would disagree with you on one point. You say that they walked away from the Church. They walked away from 'the Institution' but they are the Church, and they are still doing what Jesus told them to do. My son, Pol, is a professor working with all sorts of gay people. He does not attend Mass on a regular basis, but he spends his life in this field, doing what he can to help make their life better. My daughter, Maire, lives in Vietnam where she had set up a small charity which she keeps going by working in Australia for some months and then back to Vietnam. The charity works with deaf children. Again, not a regular Mass-goer. I myself attend Mass daily and am still active in the parish, but when my children and I die, we will all be in the presence of Jesus. Of this I am sure.

**Paddy Mc Cann, *Paraparaumu***

## when the spirit is ready

My admiration for another splendid issue and for once again being unafraid to tackle the hard issues of the day: in this case same-sex marriage (*TM*, August 2013). With sincere respect to the statement so carefully prepared by our bishops, I don't believe the issue can be wrapped up that neatly, logically and finally. I'm in sympathy with Amy and Paul Armstrong. As the parent of roughly the same varieties of contemporary marriage/'marriage' as Paul describes are present in his family, I cannot see any difference in the quality of love and commitment in my children's relationships. Thank God, then, for the reminder that Jesus still has many things to say that we cannot yet bear. Presumably the Spirit of Truth will declare them when we are ready, that is, receptive to her gentle yet ultimately insistent voice.

**Sally Dunford, *Lyttelton***

## seeking human relationships

A heartfelt thank you to *Tui Motu*, and to all who wrote thoughtfully. I have been part of a group, for 14 years, which provides support for gay and lesbian people and their families.

For too long the Church's laws, have caused alienation to many families. Sexuality is the bedrock of human life, and our relationships. Wherever we belong on the continuum of male and female, sexuality is the God-given energy that drives us to love and search for relationship with others.

Each of us needs to gain a healthy self-knowledge and be at ease with ourselves in every aspect of our sexuality to grow towards a fully integrated life. This lifelong task can be impossible for gay and lesbian people within the church.

Self-hatred and a feeling of being somehow a defective part of God's creation is unlikely to produce emotional or spiritual wholeness.

Could long unexamined labels and laws be laying impossible burdens on gay-lesbian people and their families? Does the Church do anything to help them carry the burden?

It is interesting that the most passionate workers in social justice for the gay community are young ex-Catholics, who are inspired by this teaching to work for social justice outside the Church.

Is it likely that our church could lead the way by making itself a place of welcome and understanding for its gay members?

Is it possible that a committed same sex relationship might at very least be dignified by a blessing? After all, as I heard someone say, "They will even bless a battle ship!"

The following was written by a talented and compassionate gay man. He had been in a partnership for 44 years. It was found amongst his writings and read at his funeral:

"We are not heterosexual or homosexual beings, when you 'peel it all back.' We are marvelously and wonderfully made creations of the Creator. All of us constantly have to do the hard work of living and 'finding good in everyone, finding God in everyone'."

How does this line up with our church's present teaching?

**Sue Thompson, *Dunedin***

### ☞ letters to the editor

We welcome comment, discussion, argument, debate. But please keep letters under 200 words. The editor reserves the right to abridge, while not changing the meaning.
We do not publish anonymous letters otherwise than in exceptional circumstances.
Response articles (up to a page) are welcome — but please, by negotiation.

# wellington witness

Jim Consedine

The Court of Appeal hearing of an application by the Waihopai Ploughshares trio — Sam Land, Fr Peter Murnane OP and Adi Leason — was held from 8 May over two days in Wellington. The trio sought a full civil trial to enable them to defend their position of needing to disarm the secret Waihopai spybase because of its involvement in terror operations. The Government has claimed $1.2 million in summary damages. The court hearing was preceded by a six day fast held at St Andrew's on The Terrace, Wellington.

The appeal revolves around strictly legal matters. Pro bono lawyers Mike Knowles, Tony Shaw and Tim Cockram, speaking for the trio, argued they wanted a full trial to counter the Crown claim for summary damages issued last year in the High Court. Some would say the argument is a long shot to succeed except that there is 'an elephant in the room' — the Holy Spirit, brought into focus there by a week of prayer and fasting. Naturally, the Crown replied that their arguments were not valid. The judges were left with several volumes of documents to peruse. They reserved their decision.

What the judges made of the vigil kept by peacemakers outside the Court and a lunchtime march and rally is unknown. Outside Parliament, twelve of the marchers took part in a disrobing protest arguing 'if John Key wants their shirts, he can have their trousers as well.'(cf Matt 5:40) They removed their shirts and trousers and handed them into a couple of MPs. Coincidentally that afternoon, less than 400 metres from the Appeal Court, the Government introduced the GCSB Amendment Bill into parliament. It seeks to expand the powers of the GCSB, absorbing into it the SIS and other covert operators. Sadly this Bill now has the force of law. Greater secrecy, not less, is what is on the Government's agenda. It's the very thing the Ploughshares action was trying to highlight.

In another amazing coincidence, while the Appeal Court hearing was proceeding, around the corner and less than 100 metres away, a meeting was underway with the Attorneys-General of Canada, the US, the UK, Australia and New Zealand in attendance. Their agenda was secret but New Zealand's security relationships would have formed part of it. As NZ has cozied up more and more to the US in recent years, our freedoms have been eroded, Government surveillance of people who hold 'different' views expanded, and the penalties for violations extended.

This is important. Under pressure, Western governments are increasing penalties on dissidents and peacemakers attempting to oppose US economic and foreign policies. And as the ex-CIA whistleblower Edward Snowdon's leaks have shown, we don't know the half of it. Secret surveillance appears to be everywhere and on the increase — phones, emails, the whole electronic caboodle. No one seems accountable. It should be of concern to all who love freedom.

The stakes have rarely been higher.

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As a footnote to this Waihopai action, I would like to highlight the latest of a series of more than 100 non-violent Ploughshares protest actions conducted since 1980 at military facilities around the world. These actions are done by concerned people — usually Christian, and more often Catholic — living their Gospel vision, seeking new ways to stem the planet's surge towards self destruction. They argue that since conventional protests are universally ignored, they have been forced to find new dramatic ways of putting their views, confronting the violent with non-violence. They take inspiration from the vision of the biblical prophets Isaiah and Micah, who present the Kingdom of God in terms of a peaceful world in which believers are encouraged "to beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, so there will be no more training for war."

I first met Sister Megan Rice at Jonah House in Baltimore in 1999. She was in her late 60s and had worked with the poor in Africa. She was a friendly, quietly spoken woman. So it was something of a surprise when I heard that Sr Megan, now 83, had been indicted, along with Catholic Workers Greg Boertje-Obed and Michael Walli, for a non-violent disarmament action at the Y–12 National Security Complex in Tennessee. Calling themselves the *Transform Now Ploughshares*, they had been charged with sabotage (a new more punishing tack by prosecutors to try and stem such protest), as well as destruction of property. In early May, the three were found guilty as charged and were remanded in custody. Potentially, they face several years of imprisonment for their action.

Clearly nonplussed, the judge expressed dismay that they had been charged under new anti-terrorism laws recently passed by Congress and aimed at stopping terror, not peaceful protest. The defendants told the court that they were the ones seeking to stop the terror, terror unleashed by nuclear warheads, drones and other weapons of war from the base they had entered.

For the *Transform Now* peacemakers, these penalties could be severe as the US Government cracks down on such actions. ■

# without a vision . . .

*Ki te kahore he whakakitenga ka ngaro te iwi:* **without a vision, the people perish.**

Mike Riddell

During my time at secondary school in Christchurch, Norman Kirk came to speak. It was before he became Prime Minister. He was a big man, a working class grafter from Kaiapoi. I remember that his voice was rather soft and gentle, considering his substantial physical presence.

I wasn't much interested in politics, but 'Big Norm' won my attention. He did it in a non-cynical way by talking about the dream of a nation in which citizens had equal opportunities. Kirk may have been a stationary engine driver, but he spoke with a clear and honest passion about the place of New Zealand in the world, and how we aspired to egalitarianism. I was caught up in it all.

I recall this now because I feel a keen loss; not so much that of Norm Kirk, but of political vision. I long for some form of leadership in which a politician can describe the sort of society they seek to foster; can lure me toward such new possibilities; and who can ignite my passion to support the journey toward it. Instead I find myself increasingly disinterested in the tawdry banality of what passes for debate in Wellington.

## scramble for lcd

"Without a vision, the people perish", scripture suggests (Prov 29:18). If this is so, we in this distant corner of the Pacific must be close to receiving the last rites. Politics, like television, has become a degrading scramble for the lowest common denominator. Policy is determined by polling; pragmatism trumps idealism; and leadership is a popularity game as shallow as *The X Factor*.

> Without leadership, they follow their own self-rewarding schemes. Without a destination, they wander aimlessly. Without companions, they travel alone.

Times have changed, of course. The sound bite has displaced oratory. Artful lies supercede integrity. The photo-shoot prefers surface over depth. Personality is the arbiter of success rather than conviction. But the demise of vision is not due to these developments entirely. There are more fundamental issues at stake.

Political philosophy was once the child of an imagined future. Those who vied to represent us in our democratic society were inspired by some grand notion of how this nation should conduct itself both internally and externally. Political platforms were therefore strategies for moving toward that goal.

The job of the leader was to promote a particular vision of society to the people, and ask their support in attempting to achieve it. The differences between parties in those halcyon days were easily determined by the nature of the vision they promoted. An election was a contest of creeds.

## legislation inspired by vision

When Michael Joseph Savage introduced the Social Security Bill in 1938, it provided for a universal free health system covering general practitioners, public and mental hospitals, and maternity care; a means-tested old-age pension of 30 shillings a week for men and women at age 60; and a universal superannuation payment at age 65.

This was not an ad hoc collection of economic proposals. It was legislation inspired by vision:

"I should think it was the inalienable right of every person to be secured against distress of any form. That is only commonsense. I do not know whether I would call it 'sound economics' or not … I do

not think it is any use talking about national wealth unless we can use it for national purposes … In a word or two, I would say that is applied Christianity."

But in order to operate from such a foundation, it is necessary to begin with the concept of society. If we are to believe, with Margaret Thatcher, that "there is no such thing as society," then we should not be surprised that the poor are despised and the weak steamrolled. The Darwinian concept of human interaction requires no corporate dream.

If we are atomized as a society, then the task of politics is simply to provide a playing field on which competing interests can battle. It would be a world in which the wealthy and powerful triumph; where corporate lobbyists influence government to their own ends; and everyone is driven by their own self-interest. A world, in short, much like the one we live in.

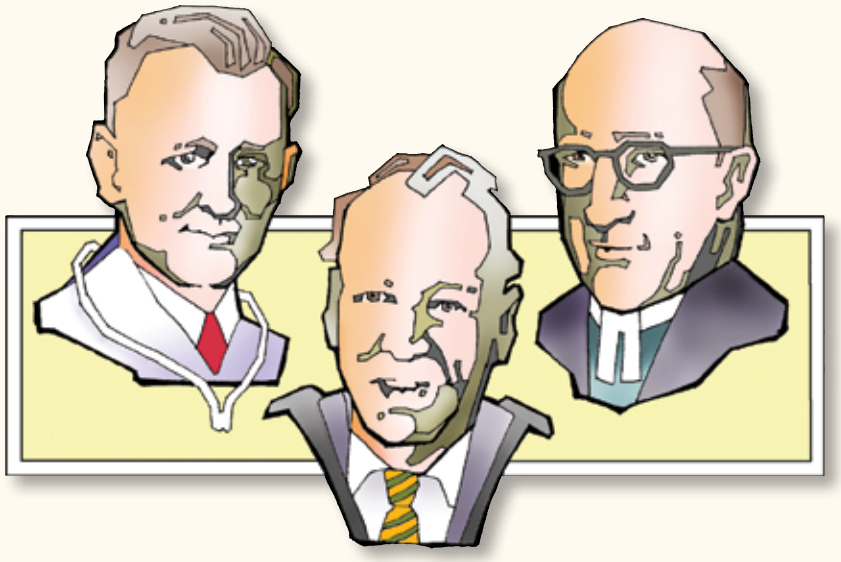
## collapse of social conscience

The current state of politics in New Zealand reflects the collapse of any social conscience. The refrain "what's in it for me?" seems to determine the response to specific issues. Selfishness has become a virtue, fame an achievement, and kindness a flaw.

We need only look at our own Prime Minister to gain insight into the state of politics. John Key is a wealthy man (worth $50 million according to recent reports). He became wealthy by manipulating figures on screens — but is praised and admired for doing so. He's reasonably good looking, affable and presentable.

He's also barely articulate, politically ignorant, and devoid of any direction in which to lead the country. But these peccadilloes are not sufficient to hinder his success. In the rush for the middle ground and victory at the polls, he represents the perfect front man for his party.

What is his political philosophy? Toward what vision of society is he



leading us? We don't know because neither he nor his party feels it important to tell us. And it may be suspected that even if he did have a larger agenda, John Key would be incapable of articulating it or igniting a following for it.

This might not be such a problem if there were a credible alternative. The leader of the Opposition, David Shearer, may be a man of personal principle — but he appears not to have a clue about how to communicate it. A vision is not a vision until it is communicated to the people, and on current form that is about as likely to happen as for John Key to recall inconvenient memories. [NB. This was written before Mr Shearer's resignation as Leader of the Opposition. Ed.]

## a nation adrift

We are a people without vision, and devoid of leadership. It's entirely unsurprising then that we drift as a nation lost at sea, occasionally pulling on economic oars but fundamentally turning in circles. Nobody seems to be capturing our imagination with anything other than the goal of surviving (with the exception of the surprisingly insightful Russel Norman).

Why do we not have a leader who can speak to us of a nation that embraces difference; a place where the earth and her rhythms are valued and respected; a society where everyone has a voice and a place; a culture that promotes exploration and irreverence; a community where the least are included and listened to?

Is it because our blackened hearts are deaf to hear, or is it rather that there are no leaders left among us? Or is it because our potential leaders are confused and demoralized by a splintered society bent on blame and punishment? Are they so measured in their speech for fear of being misunderstood?

## two essential qualities

Political vision requires two essential qualities. The first is that of conviction. To lead people toward a future entails knowing what that imagined realm looks like and being able to sincerely describe it for others. Secondly, and most importantly, it demands courage. No leader ever stood in front of her people without overcoming fear, threat, and doubt.

*Ki te kahore he whakakitenga ka ngaro te iwi:* without a vision, the people perish. Without leadership, they follow their own self-rewarding schemes. Without a destination, they wander aimlessly. Without companions, they travel alone. And so we wait. Is it too much to hope with Alan Curnow that

*"some child, born in a marvellous year*
*Will learn the trick of standing upright here"?* ■

*Mike Riddell is a filmmaker and screenwriter, living in Cambridge.*

# look to the future through the eyes of a child

*The Social Security Act was a response to poverty, and its lens the possibility of an inclusive society. The writer argues that our future lies in focussing on "reconciling material progress with equity and respect for the human condition", towards a state of Social Wellbeing.*

Pat Harrison

Social Security was initially a response to poverty. It heralded the desire for an inclusive society. It was thought of as liberating because what it promised was equal citizenship and shared rights. We could claim that it was an adjustment to the inequities of the market place. But whatever the claim, it was the hallmark of a humanitarian society.

In contrast, we have now a nation beset by inequality where freedom for far too many has become an illusion rather than reality, where social freedoms have been restricted by lack of money and where hope, the most vital ingredient of human life, has been severely diminished. How do we respond to the 270,000 children living in poverty and to the 60 percent of these in chronic poverty? How do we explain 47,000 children exposed to family violence and the 23,000 with a parent in prison? How do we react to the knowledge that 55,000 young people are not in education, employment or training, and what is our response to having a youth suicide rate of second highest in the OECD countries? For these young people society offers not a whit of social security.

Statistics such as these highlight the effect policies and practice and economic direction have had on our young people and children. Without a doubt a future social security must take account of these unemployed young people, of families of sole parents and families in which both parents are out of work. The State's commitment to the children of these families remains an issue for the future. Not only is there need for freedom from poverty and fear, but most importantly an affirmation of human dignity.

If, in the development of reforms and changed policies, we lose sight of this, then we have distanced ourselves from a sense of community and the very essence of democracy. We cannot diminish the importance of a social contract that stretches a safety net for the weak and offers opportunities for the vulnerable, by adopting punitive measures.

Pat Harrison [Photo: Jim Neilan]

## always keep children in focus

Policies which corrode self-confidence and goodwill, which cultivate guilt and disadvantage children, destroy the chance for productive citizenship. They bite at the strands which connect communities, causing exclusion and weakening the social structure. So it is of utmost importance that when we look into a future 'social security' we examine any action which may adversely affect children and young people and exacerbate their situation. To fine a poor family for a child's truancy or to reduce a benefit for a mother's negligence, disadvantages that child still further. It does nothing to help solve the family's problem or improve parent effectiveness, but worsens its isolation and hardens social attitudes towards it. Since we live in a world obsessed with efficiency, excessive measurement of outcomes, growth and profitability, it is vital we do not

overlay that harsh environment with an equally harsh social agenda. Now, more than at any other time there is a need for community – for human interaction, for shared purposes and shared commitments. There is need for a spirit which demands a culture of trust and where people willingly encourage and support one other. Community cohesion is built when problems are faced and co-operative efforts made to find solutions. Community leadership is therefore paramount but that leadership must arise from the community itself, and not be imposed by national directives and bureaucratic control.

It is all the more important in a society which favours a few in material wealth, widening the gap between rich and the poor, that we seek for ways of reconciling material progress with equity and respect for the human condition. This is the base for a future 'social security'.

It must be the lens through which we see the granting of benefits and the implementation of social policies. Neither can we allow pressures of competition to outweigh the concern for greater equality. This brings the spotlight firmly on to youth unemployment and children in poverty and calls for Social Wellbeing rather than Social Welfare.

## instruments of change

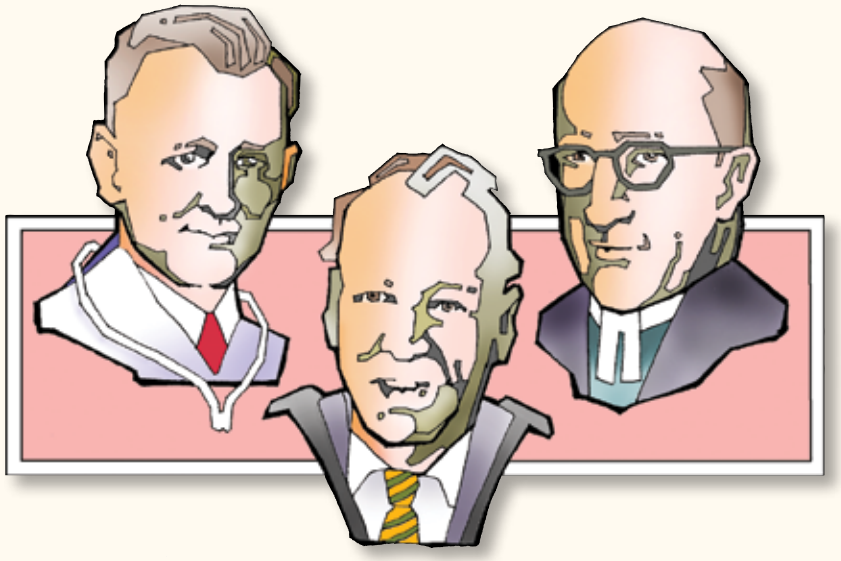
What is the instrument which can best change attitude, foster benevolence and awaken civic spirit? It is found in the heart of education since it assists in fostering equality of opportunity. However, it cannot be asked to do this alone. Education should be seen as an expression of affection for young people and children as part of a family and local community. They must have inalienable rights to the acquisition of knowledge. And in this complex 21st century it should not be ended as compulsory at 16, but should have as its objective the goal of promoting a learning society. With a compulsory age of 18, there should be greater ability to move vertically and horizontally within the system with as wide a range of choice as possible. There should also be opportunities to move freely from one establishment to another, entering and leaving at different points. Identifying the skills necessary for industry's needs, building bridges between different types of education with new pathways opened to acquire a diversity of skills and competence, must be tomorrow's focus.

## encouraging diverse skills

Equally important will be the removal of the distinction between manual and intellectual labour and the type of learning required for each. This demands collaboration between education sectors and the disestablishment of those barriers where competition is encouraged. Too often those who fall out of the system at 16 are ill equipped with the skills necessary for a complex society. For these, high quality alternative education routes with inbuilt skill training to ensure future employability and with appropriate health and social services to address individual needs, must be an integral part of the system. Any cost benefit analysis would recognize that additional costs in education, training, parental support programmes and social services appropriate to need, would offset long term beneficiary costs, justice and prison custodial costs, increased health costs and the economic deficits resulting from decreased productivity. But of greater importance, a more harmonious society with greater equality and strengthened communities would evolve.

A future state of Social Wellbeing will rely on such collaborative approaches with child-centred policies and benefits set at a level to allow their full community participation. As a nation we should tolerate nothing less; we should scan all future political direction from a child's perspective, with a child's eye and a child's state of innocence and vulnerability, and voice a concerned protest at any attempt to diminish their future prospects or damage self-esteem. The talk of 'tougher measures' or greater controls on marginalised groups should not be on the tongues and minds of those in power without a quest for an equal measure of rehabilitation and support. When we hear the language of punishment converted to the language of enlightenment; of cost to investment; of blame to reasoned debate; of condemnation to generosity, then we shall have moved towards greater equality and the state of Social Wellbeing. ■

*Dame Pat Harrison is a former principal of Queens High School, Dunedin. It was at her instigation that the Otago Youth Wellness Trust, that caters for the needs of youth, young adults and their families, was established and flourishes in Dunedin.*



# insight, leadership, compassion

*The member of Parliament for the electorate in which Arnold Nordmeyer was born reflects upon his life, its foundations, and the way in which his beliefs were expressed in a remarkable life.*

David Clark

Nordmeyer's achievements as a parliamentarian led to a better life for people across the country in each subsequent generation. I believe his approach to politics has something to teach us today.

Prime Minister David Lange in a Parliamentary Obituary referred to Nordmeyer as "one of the builders of New Zealand". He reported that Nordmeyer spent his time at theological college thinking about how to change the world instead of waiting for a better one.

The 1938 Social Security Act he chaired through select committee 75 years ago is a benchmark for the extent of change a determined government can bring. It is the kind of change against which subsequent governments have been measured and often found wanting.

Nordmeyer's biographer Mary Logan notes that his religion, like his politics, was concerned with everyone. He was a statesman, not just a politician.

I have long been an Arnold Nordmeyer aficionado. He was born within the bounds of the Dunedin electorate I now represent in Parliament. My Grandfather, a railway worker, was born in the South two weeks earlier.

Nordmeyer studied at the University of Otago as I subsequently did, and then, after training at Knox College, was ordained a Presbyterian Minister some 72 years before I was. Our similar aesthetic and career path has been noted, insofar as it consists in an absence of scalp adornment, dark-rimmed glasses, a time of active Presbyterian ministry, and subsequent choice for politics.

History will tell whether such flattering comparison has any merit. Nordmeyer was an important contributor to New Zealand political history. I am half-way through my first-term as an opposition MP.

Arguably Nordmeyer's greatest political contribution was indeed made during his time as a first-term backbencher. He played an important role in shaping New Zealand's social security system — including the emphasis on guaranteed retirement income and low or no-cost healthcare. This he did chairing caucus and select committees in the first Labour Government and in his subsequent role as Minister of Health. Nordmeyer was subsequently Minister of Industries and Commerce, before assuming the role of Finance Minister in Walter Nash's Government.

Many remember Nordmeyer for his 1958 'black budget' where indirect taxes on alcohol and tobacco had him labelled a wowser and puritan. The taxes were to fund simultaneous increases in social security for families and the elderly, but politics and popular history have ensured that the offsetting public benefits are seldom recalled. In a time of financial crisis, he remained committed to matters of social justice.

After politics, Nordmeyer's intellect and integrity were recognised and rewarded. He was sought after as a disputes arbiter, was appointed to commissions, made the Director of the Reserve Bank, knighted and was made a founding member of the Order of New Zealand.

David Clark

## relevance for today

But what of Nordmeyer's relevance for today? Does his principled, intelligent and gentlemanly approach have a place in the rough and tumble of the contemporary Parliament with populist reporters and a fascination with the novel?

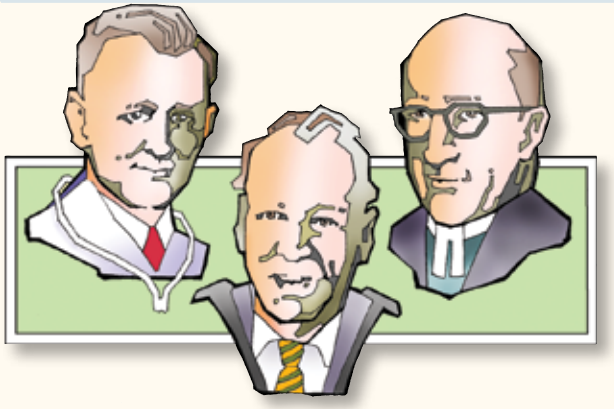
I think it does.

Nordmeyer's humanity is revealed in the anecdotes of his time in parish life in Mary Logan's biography. Anecdotes from his time as Minister of Kurow parish reveal Nordmeyer as someone able to mix with folk from all walks of life (refereeing Saturday sport despite objections from more pious parishioners), principled (providing charity to those in need but unwilling to see hospitality abused where such abuse would restrict the ability to offer hospitality to others), intelligent and compassionate (able to discern a need for change and able to plan for a different and better world), and practical (recognising the need to enter parliament to achieve the better society he sought).

Nordmeyer's story is inspiring. I believe the public continues to hunger for inspiring stories. His political quest for social justice can be traced back to his unrelenting interest in the workers' living conditions as they worked on the Waitaki dam project during the depression. He observed conditions that included men sleeping in canvas tents in harsh winters with preventable accidents and limits on pay.

## the waitaki story

Nordmeyer's Kurow relationship with local school principal, Andrew



Davidson, and doctor, Gervan McMillan (later a parliamentary colleague), showed a model of concern and care in community that in and of itself is reflective of Gospel values. But as a group of professionals in his Kurow parish, their discussions about how government might insure people against the miseries of unemployment, poverty, and illness were to progress further. They shaped the bones of the welfare state as embodied in the Social Security Act a few short years later. Andrew Davidson later wrote, "The ideology of the Christian Socialist is set deeper and more penetrating than that of the conventional church attender … We are fired with a fervent desire to create a new society".

Davidson wrote of Nordmeyer that he "was so deeply affected by the suffering of many diligent citizens with whom he came in contact that he perceived that, as a serving Christian, whose duty is a twofold one embracing spiritual comfort and the relief of suffering, if he were to square his conscience with his actions, he must take political action".

## politics of principle

Such politics of principle are, I believe, as much needed today as ever. No one party in parliament has the monopoly on ideas to address the increasing incidence of poverty amongst the children of our country. Certainly all believe it needs to be addressed. Studies tell us that the gap between rich and poor is wider than at any time it has been measured in New Zealand; surely something of the solution lies in a better allocation of resources from amongst the fruits of society's labour.

Those who are wealthy in our society have often enough become so by dint of hard work. Invariably, however, they have benefited from the institutions that make our society strong: schools, hospitals, infrastructure, a justice system that generates trust. These institutions must be maintained and strengthened to ensure the prosperity of future generations.

Today participatory democracy is under threat as access to justice becomes less affordable to those of limited means. A lack of adequate primary healthcare generates both a social and an economic burden. Joblessness is too high. Unemployment drives much real poverty today and eventually a poverty of spirit that is still harder to address.

Addressing these issues requires the kind of intellectual and political courage Nordmeyer exemplified. While Michael Joseph Savage is often regarded as the father of the welfare state, this is primarily in so far as his political leadership married the public appetite to address hardship with the principled position shaped in large part by Nordmeyer and McMillan. Without the principled thought-leadership of these newer politicians there would have been no 'welfare state' to implement.

## an assesment of nordmeyer's work

Nordmeyer may have achieved more if Savage had lived longer. Certainly Nordmeyer's later career may have been more successful if accompanied by the political charisma of a Savage or Lange. His failure to bring the public with him as Finance Minister and then as Party leader was exemplified in the 'Black Budget'. While he was accustomed to implementing dramatic change, history hints strongly that he was not able politically to manage public sentiment to the extent necessary to implement such change at the top of the political ladder.

Significantly, the achievements of the first Labour Government continue to underpin contemporary New Zealanders' belief that 'fairness' can be realised in our society.

Nordmeyer believed that faith without works was dead. His contribution is amongst the most important in New Zealand parliamentary history, and reflected a conviction that real and positive change could be achieved in politics. ■

*David Clark is a Presbyterian minister, former Master of Selwyn College, and Member of the New Zealand Parliament for Dunedin North.*

# the politics of exclusion

*The author traces the gradual way in which government policy has changed from seeing social security as a community responsibility to one in which individual is blamed for not taking the 'opportunities' that the free market creates.*
*He shows how the latter model is at odds with Catholic social teaching.*

John Hughes

In 1972, the Royal Commission on Social Security summarised the principles on which the social security benefit scheme was then based. Prominent amongst them, social security was described as a community responsibility, with the state having a legitimate function in redistributing income to ensure that everyone can live with dignity, and with benefits paid at a level which enabled people to participate in and belong to the community. The Royal Commission on Social Policy in 1988 also stressed the right to a sufficient share of resources to allow "full participation in society".

These principles governed income support during the upbringing of those Cabinet Ministers who regularly use their 'back story' of moving from relative poverty to financial success as a public relations tool. Not for them, as children, reliance on the food bank or the harsh deprivation when family income is slashed by 50 percent to punish perceived default by one parent. Rather, a system which, for all of its faults, aimed for the social inclusion of the most vulnerable.

## current 'quasi-religious' faith

In 2013, the idea that income should be redistributed to ensure that everyone can live with dignity, or that benefits should enable participation in the community, are as foreign to policy-making as the current neo-liberal faith in the invisible hand of the market place would have been in 1972. Paul Dalziel's description of this dominant faith in policy circles as being 'quasi-religious' (*Tui Motu*, April 2013) is entirely apt. How did we reach this point?

Essentially, the right to 'full participation' was discarded by the National Government elected in 1990. In place of the broad political consensus on social security that had been in place for decades, neo-classical economic theory was applied to social security entitlement for the first time. Three basic themes emerged in relation to social security benefits, repeated over recent years by the National-led coalition government.

First, it was argued that the availability of social security benefits leads to so-called 'welfare dependency'. 'Dependency' is a loaded word in the context of social security. Otherwise neutral, the term has negative connotations in the hands of neo-liberal thinkers (as a counter-point try, for example, the phrases 'mortgage dependency', 'business loan dependency', 'salary dependency', and so on). The concept has also tended not to be defined in any detail in official accounts and sustained empirical research based on this country's conditions is lacking.

## use of a mantra

Nevertheless, the mantra was uncritically advanced in 1990 and, twenty years on, it was the foundation stone for the report of the Welfare Working Group, on whose polemical and carefully guaranteed 'findings' the current government has relied.

Here, social security benefits are claimed to rob beneficiaries of the will to help themselves, effectively discouraging self-reliance. A significant motivating factor for the cuts in benefit rates in 1991, which no subsequent government has restored, was a perception that benefit rates were high enough to persuade many beneficiaries that paid employment was not worthwhile. Against this, where benefits are not accessible, the risk of poverty is seen as a spur to effort. (In 2013, as a further goad to remove themselves from so-called 'dependency', beneficiaries' families are discriminated against by denial of the Working for Families tax credit of at least $60 a week, a sum which would make an enormous difference to the lives of the poorest families in this country.)

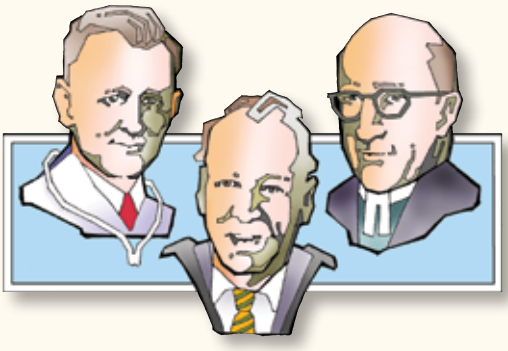
## benefits of a dose of poverty

In passing, the idea that a dose of poverty acts as a stimulating spur to effort seems invariably to be advanced by those who enjoy a personal position of considerable economic comfort and security. And if the lack of motivation or absence of strong penalty incentives is the real issue, benefit numbers would remain unchanged when employment opportunities are plentiful. In fact, as is well-documented, when an economy is managed in a way that encourages adequately rewarded and safe work, benefit numbers plummet.

In place of participation, then, we now have exclusion as the focus, justified to the wider public by the 'dog whistle' political signals that those excluded are shiftless, more likely to be poor parents, and often drug-dependent.

There was, and remains, a wider agenda. Reduction in the level of benefits was seen to make low-paid work more compelling. The benefit cuts were imposed as part of a package with the Employment Contracts Act 1991 and the Government's 'blueprint' Welfare that Works indicated that the two measures had been aligned so as to make wages more 'realistic'. Again, fast-forwarding to 2013, the current Government's unrelenting attacks on minimum employment standards, extending even to the removal of fixed rest and meal breaks, go hand in hand with new social security laws imposing a mandatory 13 week cancellation of benefit for refusal to accept a 'suitable' job offer. A 'suitable' job offer will steadily require acceptance of worse paid work with poorer working conditions, particularly affecting vulnerable Maori and Pasifika workers and the young.

In this way, the overall tightening of access to benefits is used as a policy tool to reinforce the encouragement of precarious low-waged employment, forcing beneficiaries faced with harsh sanctions to compete with others for available work and enabling employers so minded to reduce existing wages and conditions.



## alleviating poverty?

The second theme underpinning the 1991 benefit 'reforms' was that poverty is best alleviated by reducing government expenditure, including social security benefits, and reducing taxes, thereby supposedly promoting growth which will ultimately, amongst other things, benefit the poor. This is the 'trickle down' theory well described by Jacqui Ryan as an "abrupt sickly dribble" (*Tui Motu*, April 2013).

To move to 2013, the result is a gap between rich and poor that has widened more in Aotearoa New Zealand in the past twenty years than in any other developed country. Publishing this finding, the OECD warned of the consequent "unravelling of the social contract". This country now ranks seventh among advanced economies for inequality. The main reason lies on the benefits side of the divide, as eligibility rules are progressively tightened and certain benefits and allowances abolished, reducing spending on social protection. Transfers to the poorest have failed to keep pace with earnings growth whilst high earners have been given tax cuts.

The third theme in 1991 was that on grounds of humanity (and presumably electability), a 'modest' safety net should exist for the very worst off. Under neo-liberal analysis, this should be no more than minimal support, in case it discourages kin support, private charity and 'independence'. Effectively, as Susan St John writes, "accepting the charity model that our forebears fought so hard to escape" (*Tui Motu,* July 2013).

## "the trouble with normal ..."

As a society, we have become conditioned to such themes as a normal aspect of the prevailing neo-liberal model, rather than the aberrations that they would once have seemed in a social democracy priding itself on fairness. Faced with undeniable evidence of poor outcomes, as Paul Dalziel points out, the neo-liberal theorists then either blame insufficient vigour in pursuing the model or blame individuals for not taking up the 'opportunities' the free market creates. Illustrating, as the songwriter wrote, that the trouble with normal is it always gets worse.

Yet, as implemented in the social security 'reforms', it is a model at odds with Catholic social teaching. As Caritas has observed in submissions on the new social security framework, that teaching provides an ethical and moral basis for testing public policy against fundamental principles such as the preferential protection due to the poor and vulnerable, respect for family life (in particular the raising and the wellbeing of children), the solidarity we have as members of one human family and, returning to our theme and touching on all of these, the right and responsibility to participate. ■

*John Hughes is a trustee with the Christchurch Peoples Resource Centre ("CPRC") of which the Beneficiary Advisory Service is a project.*

John Hughes

# egalitarianism revisited

*The great crisis among us is the crisis of 'the common good', the sense of community solidarity that binds us all in a common destiny – haves and have-nots, the rich and the poor. We face a crisis about the common good because there are powerful forces at work among us to resist the common good, to violate community solidarity, and to deny a common destiny. Mature people, at their best, are people who are committed to the common good that reaches before private interest, transcends sectarian commitments, and offers human solidarity.*
(*Walter Brueggemann*, **Journey to the Common Good**)

Jenny Te Paa Daniel

Since the 2013 Holy Trinity Cathedral Lenten series focusing public conversations on *The Common Good* was concluded, I have found myself in regular and always challenging conversation with family, colleagues and friends about just what exactly is the 'common good' in today's Aotearoa New Zealand society; about whether or not the common good is a desirable and or achievable shared societal ideal, and about what if any dangers lurk in the pursuit of such a radically leveling societal organizing principle.

Among my conversation partners have been Christians, agnostics, and self-confessed either lapsed or cynical 'uncertain believers'. Regardless of their religious positioning, all were agreed that the frustratingly under-interrogated concept of the common good is nonetheless an irrefutably 'good' aspirational and achievable goal for all in the polis.

Jenny Te Paa Daniel
[Photo: courtesy of ODT]

All believe it is perfectly good and right that all citizens in Aotearoa New Zealand society should enjoy a freedom consisting in sufficient shelter, food, work and wellbeing and freedom from fear.

Most however also commented astutely that given the current disturbing socio-economic fact of gross inequality among and between too many of our nation's citizens it has become seriously problematic even to imagine just how the common good could ever become a political reality for all. Critical questions readily emerged with passionate energy and often delightfully self-righteous indignation. Who would set the agenda? Who would decide what is indeed commonly good? Who gets to prescribe what 'good' means? Who would determine the boundaries, if any, to commonality? Are there ever grounds for exclusion? What are the pitfalls of pluralism for the common good?

## whose responsibility is it?

By way of provocation I asked my conversation partners to consider that notwithstanding the multifarious outstanding queries attaching to 'the common good', if it remains broadly speaking an agreed noble goal worth pursuing for all in our society, then whose responsibility might it be to make necessary provision for it? I was endeavouring to get at the motivational basis for the pursuit of the common good. Was it purely philosophical and thus politically pragmatic, was it theological and thus pastorally preoccupied or was it a mixture of both?

The responses I received to my enquiry about primary responsibility for provisioning for the common good soon revealed very sharp divisions of opinion.

## the non-religious believer side

Those who tend toward the conditional to non-religious believer side, considered practical provisioning for the common good to be primarily the duty of all charitable organisations, including all churches. By practical provisioning, most meant the responsibility to undertake both (a) political advocacy (i.e. to name, to confront and to transform the political obstacles to the good life for all) and (b) to undertake to ensure political empowerment for those currently socially disadvantaged or marginalized (i.e. to educate and to enable those currently denied goods common to human lives free of need or fear to overcome their disadvantage in ways that are neither patronizing nor insincere).

This group sees that the state's primary responsibility through its government is to ensure the fundamental provisions of freedom, protection of human rights, health, education, work and production for all the citizens. Even so, they concede the inevitability that the state will fail in large part on account of its inability to keep pace with the demands of an increasingly pluralistic society. Therefore they argue the churches and other charitable

groups are needed to 'fill the gap' in the absence of adequate or appropriate state provisioning.

### the christian side

To the contrary, most of the Christians with whom I spoke believe that it is the state's responsibility to ensure its political leaders pay particular attention to ensuring legislative provision is always in place to protect and uphold the human rights of all the citizens, including the right to live lives of 'common' decency alongside all others in the society.

In addition most Christians saw their personal faith-based responsibility as being that of activists advocating on behalf of the poor and the vulnerable and as agitators determined to hold elected officials (as representatives of the state), to account for the continuous and authentic well-being of all in society. Interestingly, I found that most do not however seem to see the same prior need to press for similarly focussed theologically justified accountabilities from those who are leaders within their respective church organisations.

Admittedly while my provisioning findings are skewed by my limited and somewhat non-representative sampling, it does seem at first glance that my 'non' and 'uncertainly' Christian friends, family and colleagues consider that primary responsibility for provisioning the common good for all in the society is most appropriately that of the churches and other charitable organisations, with significant backup (secular) state support. Conversely my Christian friends, family and colleagues see the same common good provisioning as being primarily the responsibility of the secular state (being held to account by the churches and other charitable organisations).

### none disadvantaged

When I pressed them a little further, I learned that none of my interlocutors (drawn from across virtually the entire spectrum of humanly constructed differences – age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, class and physical disability), considered themselves to be, or to have ever been, significantly systemically socially, economically or politically disadvantaged in ways that they had been unable to overcome even after some considerable time.

In spite however of the self-perceived relative privilege of my friends, colleagues and family, I was impressed at the extent to which all remain powerfully committed to ensuring that those now most vulnerable within sizeable and deeply troubled portions of our society are also able to enjoy freedom of access to the common goods necessary for living in Aotearoa New Zealand with an abundance of decency and dignity.

My sense is that this is not an atypical attitudinal sampling of what most New Zealanders feel toward those who are the least in our society. Most, especially those who have themselves suffered in any way for any length of time, care deeply about those who now experience deprivation and poverty, or who struggle to survive against the oppressive burden of unjust economic policies. Most of those I encountered over the age of 35 years yearn to see a return to the popularly perceived egalitarianism which characterized mid to late 20th century Aotearoa New Zealand.

### idealism easily set aside

Notwithstanding the undoubted sincerity of those with whom I spoke I was completely unsurprised at the relative ease with which their well-meaning idealism was then so readily set aside when it came to identifying just exactly how to establish an equality of opportunity to flourish and to succeed for all in our society. What are the practical considerations to be taken account of? One of the first challenges was to identify who exactly are the needy in our society.

At this point the conversations became much more difficult. The focus upon "all in our society" led almost immediately to consideration of human 'differences'. Inevitably, virtually any humanly created identity marker of 'difference' was cited as a potential precursor to eligibility and deservedness for the common goods of our society.

It is for this reason that I contend that uncritiqued claims of pluralism, so often disguised in the elusive counterpoise of identity politics, is indeed the greatest danger to the pursuit and implementation of the common good in any contemporary society, particularly those struggling with the complex legacies of both religious and political colonialism.

### identity politicking

Even in the past five years here in Aotearoa New Zealand, numerous examples of dangerous identity politicking abound in popular media stories. These are usually either fomented or at least aided and abetted by scurrilous political opportunism. Thus in ethnic terms we have witnessed spurious and often unchallenged public allegations about; the 'Chinese takeover' (of businesses and expensive real estate in upper middle class Auckland suburbs); the burgeoning brown (i.e. Maori and Pacific Island) 'ghettoes' of South Auckland; the potentially 'dangerous' immigrants from Sudan, Afghanistan and Iraq; the purported 'scandal' of Pacific Island and Asian women 'using' the national health system to give birth and thus gaining 'easy' access to globally coveted New Zealand citizenship; public outrage about New Zealand accepting the 'refugee boat people' rejected by Australia. Migrants are thus from time to time variously feared, vilified, targeted, suspected. As the examples I have quoted indicate, too often certain migrants are regarded as less worthy of the benefits of citizenship than those born in New Zealand. Here we see clearly indicated a selective hierarchy of deservedness for inclusion in the common good of citizenship.

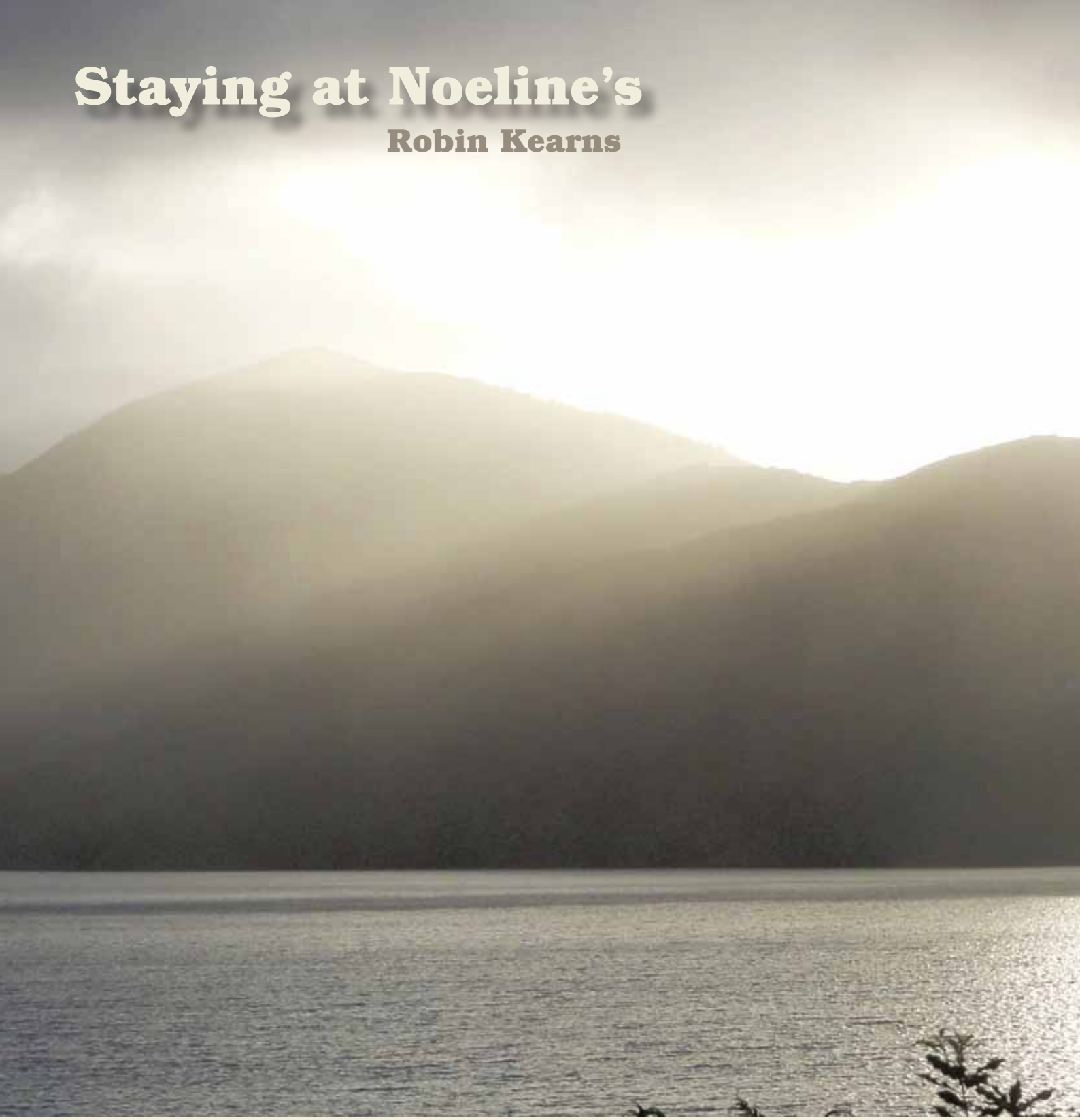
### LGBT debates

More recently the extraordinarily capricious public debates on the Marriage Equality Bill highlight the frighteningly punitive attitude of some New Zealanders toward those who are blessed to be born gay or lesbian. Identity politics, which turn on the issue of human sexuality, are among the most divisive in our society and at their heart

*continued on page 25 . . .*

# Staying at Noeline's

## Robin Kearns



A group of us had decided to take an autumn hike on the Queen Charlotte Track, along the edge of the Marlborough Sounds. I was booking the accommodation, and had a hunch that somewhere called 'Noeline's Homestay' might be more interesting than other options that included words like 'lodge' and 'resort'.

Following pink triangle signs on the south side of Endeavour Inlet, we found ourselves branching onto a narrow and obscure track that eventually led steeply through a gate and up to a classic 70s coastal dwelling. Set amid a tangle of banana passion fruit vines and kanuka trees, Noeline's place commands a view out over the inlet.

As I removed my boots I could already hear her recounting local history to Pat, the first of our party through the door. When all had arrived, there was tea in china cups with warm scones—not your usual fare on arrival after a day's walk on a kiwi track.

We learned that Noeline's husband had died suddenly 17 years ago. Sometime later, when the track was being developed, a Department of Conservation staffer suggested she open her house to walkers. Accommodation options were in short supply around Endeavour Inlet then.

Since that time, a series of visitor books detail the walkers who have enjoyed her tea and scones and a bed for the night at modest charge. "I keep the cost right for the pockets of backpackers," she says. The night our party of five stayed she slept on the living room floor with Tuppence her dog, though not before we were offered hot water bottles. Little wonder *Lonely Planet* called

[Photo: Robin Kearns]

her the ‘universal grandmother’.

This much would make for a unique experience in itself, but her stories are enough to make you drop your teacup. Before her husband died Noeline had never travelled; Tom had a fear of flying. Since then, however, she has travelled overseas every year. I expected mention of destinations like the Gold Coast or Norfolk Island, but no such tameness for Noeline. Stories of Ecuador, Mongolia and Madagascar rolled off her tongue. Her tally is now in excess of 60 countries and fridge magnet souvenirs speak of the places she doesn’t have time to describe. Breathlessly, she described having been robbed only twice—once in Madrid, then another time in Vancouver. It didn’t put her off. “These things happen”, she says. Now at 82, another trip is planned for when she closes her doors over winter.

Outside, curtains of rain drifted across the Sound as she spoke of living in this isolated spot. Her difficulties walking unaided appear to be no impediment to international travel. In fact her six-weekly stock-up of groceries in Blenheim seems to be more of an undertaking than going overseas. The trip involves being rowed from her jetty to a neighbour’s place, then being carted up the steep hill to her car on a tractor-pulled trailer, before the drive to Blenheim. Back problems and deafness present no obstacle to an indomitable spirit.

Research overwhelmingly demonstrates that older people are most resilient when they remain living in their homes. Noeline seems to epitomise such resilience. Her world is rooted in the routines of making beds for the visitors she greets one morning only to farewell with a hug the next. “They mostly speak English, and when they don’t we figure things out”, she says. In enjoying her hospitality, they support their host’s travels to far corners of the world.

In so doing, one small house overlooking the Sounds has become a prism, refracting colourful possibilities: older people’s worlds expanded through encounters with travellers; younger people reminded that elders’ lives can be more expansive than they expect.

The next day, as I walked along the ridge between Kenepuru and Queen Charlotte Sounds, I pondered the previous night’s stay. We’d experienced something exquisite: a home not a house, and a place where global and local converged.

For Noeline, life is lived with immediacy. Her affirmative response to that DOC worker’s urging to take in guests had profoundly changed her life. It had also enriched the lives of hundreds of visitors. How many Noelines sit slumped and sad in rest homes, cut off from the world beyond? What power lies in saying yes to a new challenge and chapter in life? ■

*Robin Kearns is the Professor of Geography at the University of Auckland.*

# faith and light celebrated 25 years on

*The author has had a long association with Faith and Light, an association begun by the legendary Jean Vanier. She tells how her life has been enriched by people with intellectual disabilities, and how she cherishes the spirituality that has grown from the mutual support that undergirds deep relationships and friendships.*

Anne-Marie Pike


Joeline Davies and Martha Norgate (Nelson) bring in the Living Waters community banner.

On 26th May 2013 about 200 people gathered in Christchurch to celebrate 25 years of Faith & Light in New Zealand. They came from all over New Zealand and a few made the journey from Australia. I have been part of Faith & Light in New Zealand from the beginning, and this significant birthday caused me to pause and ask myself, "What are we celebrating? What impact has this organisation had on my life?"

As I reflected I was overwhelmed with a sense of deep gratitude … gratitude for the wonderful life-changing gift that Faith & Light has been for me. Central to the vocation of Faith & Light is a call to build community … a community which has at its heart people with intellectual disability, their families and friends. We build this community by gathering each month to pray together, reflect on Scripture, share the struggles and joys in our lives, and to sing, dance and celebrate together, and thus relationships and friendships blossom.

As a parent, I have found other parents who understand when the going gets tough, without any need for explanations. I also find friends who will support me, cry and laugh with me. But the biggest joy of all has been to uncover a secret that seems hidden from most of society … the gift of the person with intellectual disability. What are some of these gifts?

***Trust***: I have been moved by the example of unquestioning trust in others that I see in my friends with intellectual disability. Experiencing this complete trust has often led me to the question, "Do I trust God the way my friends with intellectual disability trust me?"

***Unconditional Love***: All of us crave to be loved … just as we are, warts and all.

Our magazines are full of those rich and famous, who seem to have everything, still earnestly seeking for the one person who will love them for who they really are, not for their famous image or wealth. And our friends with intellectual disability are no different. They too seek this deepest of human needs.

Their question is, "Will you be my friend … ? What is in your heart … ? Is there a place for me?" Unlike many others, they are not too interested in how you look or what you own … they seem to have caught the message of Jesus … blessed are the pure in heart. They have taught me to look inwards to my heart, my true motives and my priorities, sometimes a humbling experience to realise how impure my heart can be.

***Celebration***: Our 25th birthday was a wonderful celebration because our friends with intellectual disability have the spontaneity and lack of inhibition to enter fully into celebration. They don't have to imbibe alcohol before they enter into the spirit of an occasion … if there's music on they will dance and often they will

give others the freedom to join them. And this again brings me back to Jesus … he loved a party, describing heaven as a banquet. When I celebrate with my 'Faith & Light' friends I believe I experience a taste of that heavenly banquet in their simple joy of celebration.

***No Masks***: So many of us wear masks in our lives, often different ones for different occasions. For me, one of the most refreshing things about my friends with intellectual disability is that they are real … What you see is what you get! This can be a bit confronting in our world of pretence and spin, but I believe it is what Jesus was on about. Maybe this is why he was more comfortable with the marginalised, who did not wear masks, they were already on the bottom of the heap.

***Presence***: If I take the time to be with my friends with intellectual disability I must learn to be still, sometimes even to be silent. When I go out with other friends we chat, talk and discuss all manner of things. It can be difficult to spend time with someone who doesn't speak very well (or at all) … and yet there is a gift in growing into a place where one is comfortable just 'being' with another, learning to communicate in a different way. Just saying by my presence "I want to be with you, you are important to me." And I have discovered that as I have slowed down I have learned to take more time to smell the roses, enjoy the little things of life and to be still and discover my God in the stillness.

***Source of Grace***: Because of their disability my friends need various degrees of support in their lives. In this, they are a source of grace as they allow me and others to be their servants … and isn't that what Jesus called us to … being servants to each other.

But I have disabilities too … mine are not as obvious to an outsider, but they are real, and if I wish I can cover them up. I realise as I reflect that my friends with intellectual disability become my servants. They have taught me trust, unconditional love, presence and acceptance of myself in my abilities and disabilities.

So there was much to celebrate on 26 May and we did that so joyously with Banners, Ecumenical Service, Dinner and a Fiesta of fun in the afternoon. And as I gazed around me at the smiles and sheer simple beauty of the faces that surrounded me I thought "Our society would allow each of these lives to be aborted in the womb without question if they were detected." And I pondered about how much society still has to learn about what the 'little ones' have to teach us and how bereft our society would be without them. ■

*Anne-Marie Pike is a member of the International coordinating Council of Faith & Light, one of whose roles is to accompany the communities in Australasia.*

# myths to debunk

Brian Turner and Murray Horton

In religious and philosophical circles, we are well used to the power of myth. As Rudolf Bultmann and NZ's Lloyd Geering have shown, myths can be powerful vehicles for religious and philosophical truth, but they can also be dead ends for truth and enlightenment and need, as Bultmann put it, to be 'demythologised' or debunked.

And as in religion and philosophy, so in economics and business. There are myths that need debunking.

Here in Aotearoa-NZ, CAFCA (Campaign Against Foreign Control of Aotearoa) has addressed a number of 'key' myths pertaining to foreign companies operating in New Zealand.

**One key myth is that "we need their money"**

Actually transnational corporations make massive profits out of New Zealand ($15.5 billion gross left NZ in the year to March 2013), so they need our money more than we need theirs. These profits are NZ's biggest invisible export and are the main cause of NZ's very high current account deficit (which is not caused by "us" spending more than we save).

**A related myth is "they pay tax here"**

Don't assume that at all. In 2009 the four big Australian owned banks settled out of court with IRD for $2.2 billion of taxes they had avoided (that settlement was for less than the sum sought

*continued on page 27 . . .*

# glimpses in the vastness

*How do we teach our children about the mystery of God, and the promises and risks that belief brings? The writer looks at these questions, and reflects also on the nature of the divine and how we relate to God — two Himalayan takes on God.*

Jeph Mathias

I had two glimpses of God last week. Both involved a climbing rope, harnesses, karabiners, gravity and magic.

First at Sunday school. We do a little house church: Perhaps a recorded sermon, perhaps not, sometimes discussion, always chai and cake. We're all different — some take everything in the Bible as true, others can't see God glorying in killing Philistines and Egyptians — but we're united in the journey. We find our own footholds but sometimes a belay is nice. While we take our tentative steps churches reverberate around us with triumphant hymns and shouting to powerful saviour God. Maybe we should be with Indian Christians, but for me this is a safe harbour on a Sunday.

We take turns with the kids. Some do a bible reading and discuss. Others tell stories. Some do crafts. None of that's me so when my turn came I anchored a climbing rope to a tree and threw it down on a slab of rock studded with wild raspberries.

"OK, crew. Sunday school outside. Put on harnesses. We'll take turns climbing for raspberries. Anna first; Shar, you belay. The rest — let's talk."

"Rock climbing for Sunday school! Cool!"

Given that positive start I opened, "What d'jya reckon? Does God promise safety?"

From long years of practice Christian kids spot stereotyped metaphors a mile off. They told me what they knew I wanted to hear, "God's our top-rope. He promises sweet fruit and no falls."

"Ya reckon? What about Christians who get cancer or get robbed or die of poverty? Where's their top-rope?"

Still trying to tie God up in the rope Joshua explained sin is a false knot — we lose our protection and fall.

"Ok, what about babies? Christian babies. No sin but some die, others are born deformed"

"Hmmm." The top-rope metaphor was the wrong shape for this jigsaw puzzle.

"And while we're there what about non-Christians? Some have good lives, some don't. Is God belaying them?"

Not sure any more that she knew what I wanted to hear, Shanti said, "Hey, this is really confusing".

"What's your answer?" asked Anna.

"Haven't got one. I'll tell you what I think later. Let's get more berries first and talk some more," I said.

We kept climbing, kept picking, kept talking, kept eating. Honest discussion in warm sun. It was good.

"Hey, team! Time to pack up. Harnesses off, coil the rope."

"OK, now what do you think?"

I had no plan, no pre-packed answer. This just came. "Look at those berries," — pointing up seven metres of chossy rock — "Better 'n any we got yet, eh? Let's climb up'n'get 'em. No ropes, no harnesses. Let's go!"

Silence. We all imagined gorging luscious berries in golden sun … and all imagined falling.

"Ummm …" "but …" "er … what if … ?"

"Nah. I don't really want us climbing that," I said. "But I reckon God would." Pointing out the juiciest berries, she says, 'Wanna free climb with me. No ropes, no promises. You could fall, could be hard, we might get amazing fruit, might get stuck. But it's more fun than fishing. Coming?"

We finished, all eating berries. Except me. I was chewing on this: God's inviting me to an unroped life: risk, magic ... and a promise of relationship.

"Thanks, kids. Great Sunday school."

Just 36 hours later, in my own little pool of head-torch light, I was alone in an immense night. Hanging in the heart of a tree, seven metres off the ground, I was making a tree house, my birthday surprise for Rohan. Our own house was just a hulking shape in the oceanic darkness but I sensed the children asleep in the loft. I screwed and chiselled, totally aware of my body adrift in space, profoundly alive to my hand-drill's uneven cadence and the fragrance of fresh wood released by my rasping saw. Intermittently in the moonless darkness, monkeys moaned plaintively or the canopy riffled under skiffs of summer-warm wind. Even nascent blisters in my soft palms enriched my sensually exquisite

solitude. A watchman shuffled along the path under me like a lobster across the seafloor, but I flicked my head-torch off. Lying back in my harness, I listened to rustling leaves whispering their secrets and the night slowly swallowed his irregular footstep. Absorbed into velvet blackness this was an introvert's heaven.

I was driving my last screw home when, like water from a distant source, "Allah akbhar …" drifted through the liquid night. The far-off mosque's dawn call to prayer signalled stirrings on the human shore and told me I'd sailed alone across the night. Hanging in my harness I surveyed what I'd made. It was good. I thought about working with my hands for seven hours on a gift for my son. That was good too. A single star bobbed on rippling clouds above and the rocky path was barely discernible below. Suspended between sky and earth I was afloat in holy isolation, ecstatically aware of the azaan curling around me.

Then, softer than silence a voice, "Nice job, son. Loved spending a night swimming beside ya."

I can't catch and hold leviathan God! Playfully flicking massive flukes God breaks my childish net and swims away, leaving my stereotyped metaphors spinning off in a trail of eddies. A climbing life, unroped and free, worked. Now God had given me its opposite, hanging warm and weightless in an infinite ocean. In life's big and mysterious spaces I'm not chasing answers. I'll just settle for adventure, open-eyed, in the mountains and oceans — and treasure these glimpses in the vastness. ■

*Jeph Mathias is a medical practitioner living and working in North India, with his wife Kaaren and their four children.*

# nakba and memoricide

*"The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history."*
**– George Orwell**

*"Part of the main plan of imperialism … is that we will give you your history, we will write it for you, we will re-order the past … What's more truly frightening is the defacement, the mutilation, and ultimately the eradication of history …"*
**– Edward Said**

*"Not one refugee will return. The old will die. The young will forget"*
**– David Ben Gurion 1948 (later Prime Minister of Israel)**

Lois Griffiths

When researching for his thesis about the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, Israeli historian Ilan Pappé was able to get access to military archives. These proved to him that the events leading up to and following Israel's becoming established were not what he and other Israelis were taught in school. The events that Israelis celebrate as heroic are remembered by the indigenous population as catastrophic — what they call the Nakba. In his book, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine,* Pappé details massacres in several villages including Deir Yassin and Tantura; the forced expulsions of about three-quarters of a million people and the destruction of over 500 villages by well-equipped, well-trained Zionist militia.

Dr Pappé's writings made him so unpopular that he eventually fled to England where he is now a professor at Exeter University. Dr Pappé has said that unless Israelis at least acknowledge the truth of the Nakba (the 1948 suffering) inflicted on the Palestinians, there can be no just peace between the two peoples. Yet the current Knesset, the most right-wing Israel has ever known, has made the teaching of the Palestinian view of what happened not so long ago illegal. Furthermore, the book *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* has not been published in Hebrew.

For the 1948 catastrophe and its after-effects, Ilan Pappé has coined the phrase 'memoricide'. My husband Martin and I have visited Israel and the West bank several times. We've been fortunate to be shown several examples of 'memoricide'.

## some personal memories

We went for a walk with a UN guide through Begin Park (named after Menachem Begin, another Israeli Prime Minister) near Jerusalem. This forest park (as well as Canada Park and others) has been built over villages deliberately destroyed by the victorious Zionists. Jews from all over the world have been encouraged to make donations for tree-planting but they haven't been told that the trees — fast-growing pines — are planted to hide evidence that the spot was ever inhabited. Our guide was able to take us off the main paths to see evidence of terraces, cisterns, olive, almond and carob trees, evidence that people lived here before the Nakba.

Not all Palestinian villages expropriated by the militias were destroyed. Some were 'Judaized'. Often Old Testament names were chosen. What was pre-1948 named in Arabic Al Majdal is now the Hebrew Askelon (Zechariah 9:5).

Some friends took us to Ein Hod, a Jewish artists' village not far from Haifa. Ein Hod used to be a Palestinian village Ayn Hawd. The village mosque is now a restaurant, serving alcohol by the way.

The same friends took us to what was Al-Bassah, in the Galilee. Al-Bassah, destroyed in 1948, is now a town of Jewish-only immigrants, with the ironic name of Shlomi (My Peace.) The only evidence of its past are the ruins of a Christian Church and a nearby Mosque.

We've visited Saladin's Mosque, or what remains of it, hidden away in overgrown bushes, near Tiberias. This Mosque (built in 1184) would make a fascinating historical monument. It was Saladin who defeated the Crusaders.

We've also seen the ancient Arab cemetery, Mamilla in Jerusalem, which Zionists hope to destroy and replace with a "Museum of Tolerance".

## personal reflection

Israel itself, excluding Gaza and the West Bank, has a minority Palestinian or as the Israelis prefer to say Arab population. They attend Arab schools where the curriculum is vetted by the Shin Bet (in English, the Israeli Security Agency). They determined to erase any knowledge of Palestinian history or culture. Even the works of the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish are not taught.

The indigenous people of the

Holy Land have a rich history and a culture, and a strong tradition of welcoming visitors, as Martin and I have discovered every time we've been to the West Bank. Perhaps what is needed is something similar to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It might make some Israelis uncomfortable, but acknowledging the cruelties of the past can lead to healing and to an ending of the cruelties of the present.

Israel and the Occupied Territories constitute a very small area. Many commentators observe that "facts on the ground" make a two-state solution impossible. Palestinians and Israelis could live together. But this must be on a basis of justice, equality, dignity and mutual respect. 'Memoricide' must be replaced with 'truth-telling', and soul-searching. ■

*Lois Griffiths with her husband Martin have been consistent advocates for the rights of the Palestinian people. They live in Christchurch.*



*Top:* Mahmoud Darwish quote, Aida Refugee Camp.

*Right:* The Nakba

*Below:* Nakba Day commemoration. Nablus, West Bank, 2011

# st hilda of whitby

*In the third part of this series on church history, we look at the period of 600-800 AD. We focus on the English Church when elements of Celtic and Roman tradition clashed. These were resolved at the important Synod of Whitby. The Abbess Hilda was thickly intertwined in the history of this time and the Synod.*

Susan Brebner

The Hitchhiker's Guide to CHURCH HISTORY

When I first heard the idea of this column my mind leapt to all the possibilities that I could write about, Hidegard von Bingen, Jeanne Marie Chavoin, St John Vianney, Bishop Pompallier, Dame Whina Cooper to name but a few. But no, I got the time period of 600-800 AD, I teach about many stages in Church history but this is one that I am not so familiar with, so Kevin Toomey (thanks) gave me some ideas. And I have found this wonderful woman, acknowledged by both Catholic and Anglican traditions, St Hilda of Whitby. Her feast day is generally acknowledged as being on November 17th (my mother's birthday) and for some people it is June 23rd (my sister's birthday) and she is recognised as a teacher (my occupation). I had to learn more about this woman.

A stained glass window by Christopher Whall, depicting St Hilda, in Gloucester Cathedral.

St Hilda was born in Northumbria in 614. Her name was actually Hild which means battle (really? Had they had one, were they anticipating one?) Hilda comes from a period in time where I struggle with some of the language, her father was called Hereric and her mother Breguswith, her sister Hereswith was married to Æthelric whose brother was King Anna of East Anglia, try saying some of those names! And do you know any man called Anna?

Most of what we know about Hilda comes from the Venerable Bede, he writes very positively about her. She became a nun at the age of 33, quite an age in 647, her faith was Celtic and she was strongly influenced by St Aiden of Lindesfarne. Within two years of joining the convent she was asked to be the Abbess of a double monastery in Hartlepool. Double monasteries were not uncommon at this time, women and men lived in separate accommodation but came together for worship. Later Hilda was asked to lead the congregation at Whitby, at this time it was known as Streoneshalh (another interesting word to say!) She stayed here until she died in 680.

Hilda regarded the study of scripture as very important and she was influential in the solid training of priests. She also established the study of the arts and science in the seminary. She held to the ideals of monasticism, all possessions were held in common and peace and charity, specifically love in action *(caritas)* were practiced. So good was the academic and pastoral training that five of the priests that trained at Whitby became bishops.

Hilda was held in high regard by all and people often came to her for advice. She was influential with kings and princes, members of her congregation and people from the local community. She welcomed all people and was commonly referred to as 'mother'. Hilda always encouraged people to find their true vocation; one well know story is about one of her herdsmen named Caedmon, she encouraged his musical talent and he is believed to have composed one of the first hymns in English. Hilda saw him as being as important in God's eyes as any member of the nobility.

In 663 a synod was held at Whitby due to conflict between elements of Celtic tradition and Roman tradition. Issues ranged from what was the proper haircut and dress for a monk, to how to calculate the date for Easter. This was a big issue and the source of great conflict within some communities. It was seen as desirable that all people in the same area celebrate Easter at the same time, Hilda wanted to follow the Celtic tradition but when the decision was made to go with the Roman practice Hilda used her influence to bring about a peaceful acceptance. This was incredibly

important in creating unity within the English Church at this time. Prudence is one the gifts recognised in Hilda, not a word many of us use today. This situation at the synod was an excellent example of her prudence: Hilda showed great insight into this situation and used her knowledge and wisdom to work towards a peaceful outcome.

Today Hilda is the patron of learning and culture, many schools are named after her including St Hilda's Collegiate School in Dunedin.

What can we learn from Hilda today? For me as a teacher it is the idea of being a mother to those I teach, to encourage all people to find out what God is calling them to be and do, and especially the concept of *caritas* 'love in action', that we put into practice what we learn about our faith. Hilda can also remind us that all people are loved by God ... not just those we like or help us achieve our goals.

And how about a potentially controversial idea of considering the value of a wise woman? We have many wise women in our Church whose voices need to be heard, eg, Sister Loyola Galvin DOLC who recently starred in the movie "Gardening with Soul".

It has been truly interesting to read about a woman, St. Hilda, whose value was acknowledged and treasured. ■

*Susan Brebner is the Director of Religious Studies at Marist College, Moutn Albert, Auckland.*

# egalitarianism revisited

*. . . continued from page 15*

is the insistence by those opposed to equal rights for gay and lesbian people that somehow their eligibility for the common societal good of marriage is to be denied simply on the basis of their God given gay identity.

### those least able to cope

Single parents, the elderly, the poor and the very young have all been rendered increasingly vulnerable in recent years by government policies, which ultimately disadvantage those least able to leverage the 'common' social goods needed for lives of decency and dignity — economic sufficiency, safe and affordable housing, secure and meaningful employment, access to adequate health care. It is in this way that the widely held aspiration for the common good found among so many New Zealanders is being fundamentally undermined by our political leaders.

### 'mature people'

We have a little way to go before we can lay claim to being those whom Brueggemann describes as 'mature people'. While we are in general a nation reasonably committed to the ideal of the 'common good' we have yet to become sufficiently practised at the art of "reaching before private interest and of transcending sectarian commitments".

It is timely therefore that the question of the Common Good is being raised afresh in the public square. Again, Brueggemann is instructive in his identification of the crisis at stake. Even here in Aotearoa New Zealand there are 'powerful forces at work resisting the common good' — unjust political policies, deep seated personal prejudices, all the old yet still frighteningly potent 'ism's (racism, sexism, ageism). All of these things function to ensure community solidarity is impossible to establish let alone to sustain and thus our progress toward a common destiny is consistently thwarted.

### commodity politics and worth

We live in a globalized society where everything and everyone is reduced to a commodity and where all human worth is now measured by productivity, gain and control. What we now need instead are brave new imaginings of neighbourhoods, towns and cities where the enduring concepts of justice and righteousness, indeed, of neighbourliness, of compassion, kindness and generosity characterize our human interactions. What we now need is a radical change of heart, where our deepest held sense of how we want to be as citizens together is exemplified in the ways in which we commit to sharing more freely, receiving more graciously and living far more modestly and always with respectful deference to the planet earth entrusted into our care.

### hopes for conversation

My fervent hope is that public conversations on the common good might yet ripple out to the far-flung reaches of our communities, beyond those with faith and those without. That school children might participate, that neighbours will begin to mobilise, that our nation's elders might be invited to contribute, that our local government agencies might take seriously their responsibilities to consider their role in ensuring the common good of all their constituents, similarly so for national government.

What is needed is the courage to consider ways of evoking an abiding sense of our moral interdependence and solidarity with and for one another. For as Hollenbach reminds us, "the common good can only be the good that exists in a community of solidarity among active equal human beings". ■

*Dr Jenny Te Paa Daniel is a former principal of St. John the Evangelist Theological College Auckland, and visiting fellow of the National Peace and Conflict Studies Centre at the University of Otago.*

# lazarus outside the door

## The Parable of Lazarus and the Rich man
## 26th Sunday Ordinary Time – 29 September 2013

Kathleen Rushton

How would Jesus have told this parable today? Who is Lazarus and who is the rich person? Millions sit like Lazarus not outside the actual gate of the house of a particular rich person, for security guards would move them on or prevent them even from entering gated communities. The "at the gate lay a poor man Lazarus" is the one who in the rhetoric that now clothes our once valued and pioneering social welfare system is stigmatized as dependency. Lazarus "lies at the gate" of the house of job security and a living wage. Lazarus "lies at the gate" of rising rentals for sub-standard housing and of never owning a house.

Lazarus "lies at the gate," yet enters our house on the TV screen in millions, but is nevertheless outside because of poverty and starvation. The Lazarus of millions of refugees, the Lazarus of the boat people navigating perilous seas "lies at the gate" of Australia and of the shores of Aotearoa New Zealand because of our collusion with the former's policy. In this parable, St Augustine even understands that Lazarus outside the gates is the figure of Jesus in his suffering and death while Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham is Jesus united with God after his resurrection.

### the parable

This parable of two parts which comprises the story (16:19-26) and of a kind of epilogue on conversion (vv.27-31) concerns the rich and the poor which are two prominent concerns in Luke. This story acts out the first beatitude and the first woe: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God" (6:20) and "But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation" (v 24) and resistance to conversion.

Souls in the Bosom of Abraham (Souvigny Bible about 1100 AD)

The rich man has hardened his heart to the basic requirement of faithfulness to the covenant as demanded by Moses and the prophets (v 29). The unmistakeable teaching of the Torah is that the poor be cared for and goods be shared with the poor. The rich man's choice and rejection are presented in the person at the gate. Yet again, Luke presents the great reversal which is at the heart the reign of God. The rich man is inside and Lazarus is outside. Then regardless of status, death comes to both. The rich man is outside and Lazarus inside. Lazarus is very much inside. He has been "carried away by the angel to the bosom of Abraham."

### the bosom of abraham

This term "the bosom of Abraham" (16:22) is nowhere else in Scripture yet visually it is found again and again in medieval Christian art. Reflecting their times and expanding our imagination are sculptures on highly decorated triple Romanesque capitals (top of a pillar), in wall paintings, in miniatures, in the glorious West Rose window of Chartres Cathedral and in the restored West frieze of Lincoln Cathedral or Abbey Church of Saint Pierre, Moissac, France c 1115-30.

The noun for 'bosom' (*kolpos*) evokes intimacy. It is used to describe the beloved disciple in John's gospel lying on the breast of Jesus at the last supper (Jn 13:23). The image of "to be in Abraham's bosom" comes from the custom of reclining on couches at table which prevailed at the time of Jesus and which I have described previously (*TM*, August 13). The head of one man

The restored West frieze of Lincoln Cathedral.

was near the breast of the man who lay behind, and he was therefore said "to lie in the bosom" of the other. The visual images of Abraham do not depict that posture but rather of a father holding or cradling a child or children in his lap or in the fold of a kind of veil. Thus, the sense of this word which can suggest a lap is evoked. This suggests the close relationship of a maternal/paternal and life living figure and a child or children.

Hildegard of Bingen, who left 58 homilies on lectionary readings, sometimes names characters in parables as virtues or vices. Throughout her second homily on this parable, she gives the rich man two names, Pleasure and Moaning for God. Lazarus she calls Sighing for God and Sighing. Abraham she calls Hope. She seems to me to be expressing the self-absorption and poor-me attitude of the rich one and spiritual longing and physical need of the poor one.

This parable has so many levels of meaning; yet for those of us whose lives and circumstances tend to match those of the rich one, we have the choice to be moved with compassion rather than to harden our hearts. We have the choice to cross the chasm to the other side both to touch through the ever-encompassing and inter-related spiritual and corporal works of mercy the Lazarus within our reach and more widely by our participation in collective vision of the common good to reach the Lazaruses. ■

*Kathleen Rushton is a Sister of Mercy working in adult education in the Diocese of Christchurch.*

# myths to debunk

*. . . continued from page 19*

and avoided penalties which would have been imposed by the court). It was the biggest tax avoidance case in NZ's history. Right now IRD is pursuing a number of big Australian owned companies through the courts for tax avoidance. CAFCA has also investigated another foreign company which paid no NZ tax for five years and basically injected no money into the NZ economy, operating almost entirely on borrowed money. It was a liability not an asset to the NZ economy.

**But "we need them for our jobs"**

No we don't. Transnationals are not big employers. Five out of six Kiwis work for NZ owned companies which transnationals need in order to operate in NZ. Once again, they need us more than we need them. Not only are they not big employers but, in many cases, they have actively contributed to mass unemployment and/or a serious downgrading of NZ workers' conditions (eg Telecom).

**Another key myth is that "selling things to foreign owners helps NZ's foreign debt problem"**

No it doesn't. Despite a quarter of a century of systematic public asset sales, NZ's foreign debt has continued to balloon. Roger Douglas himself said "I am not sure we were right to use the argument that we should privatise to quit debt. We knew it was a poor argument but we probably felt it was the easiest to use politically." Nothing has changed since his commendable honesty.

**Yet another myth is that "they can't take the land or the phones with them"**

True — and why would they want to when they can own them here and milk them for all their worth. The company which now owns the Crafar farms is called "Milk NZ"!

**Land sales to foreigners are only part of a much bigger picture**

Who owns and profits from our banks, supermarkets, media companies, telecommunication companies, airlines, transport companies, insurance companies etc etc is a matter of national significance which affects everyone in the country; one which is rapidly becoming a branch office economy dominated by transnational corporations.

**Finally, it's not that CAFCA is anti-global**

We live in a globalised world and are challenged to be responsible global citizens, not narrow nationalists. But there's a huge difference between being real partners in global justice and development instead of passive pawns endorsing the false myths of multinationals. ■

For more about CAFCA go online to www.converge.org.nz, or write to "Campaign Against Foreign Control of Aotearoa", PO Box 2258, Christchurch.

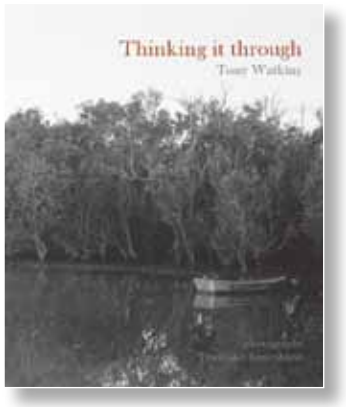
# the fundamental connectedness of things

## Book: Thinking It Through

**by Tony Watkins, with photographs by Haruhiko Sameshima**

**Karaka Bay Press/Rim, $30**

**Reviewed by Gregory O'Brien**




At one point in this thought-provoking and often inspiring collection of essays, architect Tony Watkins describes how the shell-laden path down to his home at Karaka Bay, Auckland, came to be replaced by a heavy-duty, concrete thoroughfare. This was back in the 1990s. Whereas 'the old path hugged the landscape, emphasising the landform and encouraging people to relate more closely to the earth. Now the straight lines of the new path became a symbol of power, and the alienation of people from place.' He then itemises the environmental damage stemming from the new walkway: erosion, damage to the pohutukawa trees, heavy metals deposited in the bay, lowering of the water table and contamination of the shellfish beds.

*Thinking it Through* reminds us, time and again, of the connectedness and interdependence of Humanity and Nature. First published in *Home and Building* magazine between 1988 and 1996, the essays propose a holistic approach to architecture, town-planning, conservation and just about every other aspect of life. While never pushy, Watkins is a man with a mission, extolling the virtues of sustainability, the ritual element of human life, aesthetic and ethical values, the need for community and, again and again, this fundamental connectedness of things.

An ex-lecturer in the architecture department at the University of Auckland, Watkins is most at home in the field of design. He reminds us that design is also, fundamentally, 'the art of making connections… Designers are sensitive and feel pain in a way that totally escapes the isolated specialist.' He certainly feels pain when confronted with the rampant monetarism, bereft values and impaired thinking that are often extolled as virtues in contemporary New Zealand. Yet far from being a hard pill to swallow, this is a curiously joyful and optimistic book. Haru Sameshima's lively photographic montages transform the book into a colourful, animated and informal conversation between a writer and a visual artist. After these early 'collaborations' for *Home and Building*, Sameshima went on to become one of New Zealand's leading contemporary photographers.

For Watkins, the Karaka Bay path embodies the contact we all have with the earth. In the broadest possible sense, he asks us to consider what path we are on. Humanity needs to consider itself a part of the cosmos rather than to persist with the self-annihilating delusion that we are masters of it. We need to build sensitive and sympathetic pathways, in harmony with the physical and metaphysical world. And when they are washed away — as is Nature's right — we need to rebuild them.

I remember walking along the old path at Karaka Bay before it was 'upgraded' — the brittle crunch of shells underfoot, the '*pfff*' sound of jandals on sand, the gritty soles-of-your-feet feel of the place, and the sandy, salty breeze meandering among the pohutukawas. Something of that too is enshrined in Watkins' prose. *Thinking it Through* is as light-footed and beguiling as it is wise, soulful and indispensable. ■

# seasons of faith

## Film: Gardening with Soul

**Directed by Jess Feast**

**Reviewed by Judy Bennett**

Aptly titled, this film tells the story of the life and work of Sister Loyola Galvin, now over 90 years old and Sister of Compassion, an order founded by Mother Aubert. Film-maker Jess Feast skillfully draws out from this wise yet humble woman the story of gardens well-made and of a life well-lived.

Feast seems unburdened by the familiarity that an older Catholic has of the aims and ways of the religious life, a plus for any general audience as she asks questions common to non-Catholics and, I dare say, younger Catholics including: "Why did you become a nun?" This takes us to the Sister's early life and her nursing days during World War Two. To all Feast's off-camera comments, Sister Loyola responds both feelingly but also with truth peppered by quick and sparkling humour. Her first piece of practicality comes in her beloved shed, full of plants, seeds and all the paraphernalia of the gardener, to the effect that every family home should have a shed, as: "It would reduce family violence!"

We see her love of children as she takes visitors to walls of photographs of the children the Sisters cared for in the 1950s and 1960s: the abandoned, the disabled and thalidomide victims. This gardener reminds us that like a small seed a child has to have a good start in life to flourish. Sister was also instrumental in the creation of other gardens — the park-like settings of a cemetery for the bodies of stillborn children that were once discarded or even hidden so mothers would "get over" the extraordinary loss of the child they had carried. And then the community garden, mainly for young couples, flourished under Sister Loyola's firm care, so much so that she left them to it and it still thrives. Her joy is that these young parents will now teach their children and so it goes on.

Beginning with winter, the film takes us though the cycle of gardening in the convent grounds with all the preparation for each season. Running parallel we see Sister cultivating her soul not only in working with nature in the garden but also in the exquisite chapel, in quiet prayer in her room, in socializing with the other sisters. These threads are tightly woven into a whole, bathed in the changing light of the seasons and of this Sister's life, so well reflected in the sensitive filming of the land and sea near the Home of Compassion at Island Bay.

Sister talks of her aging body and mind but understands the meaning of "growing old". A major loss of independence, she had to cease driving because she realized she was becoming a little forgetful. Yet, she sees each age and each crisis as offering a challenge and reminds us that by meeting such challenges we grow, so old age is not simply loss but, above all, a way to further growth.

The film concludes in the season of autumn. In the garden it is time of harvest but also a time of dying off, yet the seeds of the next season are forming and flourishing. The good gardener collects them in readiness and in faith. Sister Loyola looks forward to another spring and new growth. ■

# Crosscurrents

Jim Elliston

## make haste slowly indeed

Pope Francis has given several concrete indications that he intends to implement the Vatican II decision on the collegiality of the bishops. The re-assertion of what was the original relationship between the papacy and the rest of the bishops was the cause of great anguish and dissension at the Council, with a fight back from the conservatives.

A reflection of this was summed up in several limericks penned by Council members, such as the following:

*There are some who affirm collegiality*
*Will give the Church much greater vitality.*
*But Ruffini of Palermo*
*In a powerful* sermo
*Denied it had any reality.*

## earthquake faultlines

"The sun never sets on the British Empire" was a truism in my youth. In maps all parts were coloured red. I remember being impressed that several countries in Africa had borders so regular they appeared drawn with a ruler. I later discovered that they were — by European powers safeguarding their own economic interests.

In a recent *Tablet* article, BBC journalist Edward Stourton gives a background to the current situation in the Middle East. In 1916 Sir Mark Sykes (UK) and François Georges-Picot (France) produced the Sykes-Picot report which formed the basis for the national borders of much of that area agreed to after the Great War. The report set out the rights and responsibilities of those important countries (that is, France and Britain); the borders cut across ethnic and religious groupings.

One example of this imposition by European powers on the lives of ordinary people living in lands regarded as fair game for European economic interests: the Kurds had their homeland divided between what is today Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey.

Another outcome of the Sykes-Picot report was the Balfour Declaration in 1917, which decreed a large part of Palestine should become a Jewish homeland.

Stourton explains that the current unrest in the region results from the reassertion of their original bonds by the religious and ethnic groups artificially dismembered. The Sykes-Picot restructuring of the region is beginning to break down. Israel is desperately trying to ensure the status quo remains intact.

## marriage of convenience?

In *Capitalism as if the World Matters* (2005) Jonathon Porritt described the three kinds of reaction to environmental pollution:

- "Capitalism is fundamentally evil so must be replaced";
- "it brings many more benefits than disadvantages and must not be tampered with";
- "its worst effects can be mitigated by various forms of intervention".

After examining the various factors involved he concluded: "Capitalism is the only economic system that is credibly on offer at the moment. Thus the only chance for economic and environmental sustainability in the foreseeable future is to make that growth consistent with sustainability, rather than conjuring up fanciful visions of how to do without it."

In his *Otago Daily Times* piece for 16 July, Colin James analysed aspects of the 'Valuing Nature' conference held the previous week, including three messages from international speakers:

- "the value of maintaining natural capital in enabling and underpinning economic activity and development;
- business's need (and opportunity) to take this on board for their own long-term viability;
- the superior power of bottom-up initiatives, local and private, over top-down ones."

James described how "a global coalition of regulators, investors, companies, standards setters, the accounting profession and non-government organisations" has developed a framework for companies to account for their use and modification of six types of capital: financial, manufacturing, intellectual, human, social-and-relationship, and natural. He points out that "widening of the word 'sustainability' from an environmental concept to an economic one takes the myth out of the environment debate and also makes it clear that businesses cannot hammer nature indefinitely if they are to stay in business."

## preaching christ

Ever since he appeared for the first time on the balcony at St Peter's, Pope Francis has issued a stream of pithy comments that sum up various aspects of Christ's teaching applicable in the real world of ordinary people. His trip to Brazil brought forth several brilliant encapsulations of post-Vatican II teaching; simple constructions using common examples easily understood by the least educated. His basic theme has been that the primary role of the Church is to preach the Gospel, particularly to the dispossessed (vastly out-numbering the comfortable middle classes). The effect has been astonishing.

A report from John Allen (National Catholic Reporter) sums up for me the 'Francis effect'. He describes how Francis spoke to a crowd in a muddy soccer field on the edge of which was the largest Assembly of God church complex in Brazil. The windows and doors were crowded with AOG members and the building sported a large banner with the words "Welcome Pope Francis".

John Allen spoke to a young woman member of the Assembly of God, asking why she expressed such a welcome to Francis. He summarised her reply as "I live in a slum … he is my pope too!" ■

# a model of kindness and humility

Peter Norris

A friend of mine wrote to me from my old University. It was a lovely letter but had news that a very good friend of mine was sick. I am trying to find his email address but while I was engaged in this activity I thought about another person.

While studying, I worked in a University of Notre Dame (South Bend, Indiana) Hall of Residence, with over 500 students. It was a bit of a zoo at times but we had great students. Each year I invited the University President to celebrate Sunday Mass for us. Mass began at 10.30 pm and had a great attendance. The Eucharist was always full with students taking all the available floor space. Colleagues in other Halls were jealous that I managed to get the University President each year. I never told them that I called around midnight when his light was the only light on in the administration building. I did not have to deal with secretaries, just with the President entering it in his diary.

Whenever I started talking with him he mentioned Bishop John Mackey who had also studied at Notre Dame. He liked Bishop John and always enjoyed hearing any news of him.

I knew that the President had been on the Fulbright Foundation, had been considered as a Vice-Presidential candidate for the US Presidential elections in 1972, served on the Board of Directors of the Chase Manhattan Bank, led the first US mission to China, was one of the Commission of three who oversaw the El Salvador elections, and did many other things as well.

He often travelled to University and other meetings. Another priest who often went with him said that he would be in Chicago airport with the University President when all of a sudden he would be passed the President's bag, and told: "I will meet you at the gate." This other priest, who was unusually kind, said he then realised that the University President had seen a single parent with a lot of children or had seen a blind person. Chicago airport is horrificly overcrowded, but no matter how late he was, the University President always saw the people in need and always stopped to help them. I was told that he always caught his flight. Most of us just try to cope but he was always looking for others in need.

When he preached it was a bit like a "who's who", but we loved it. He was a good man. When other priests refused a request from Fr Hans Kung to celebrate Mass in their hall chapels, the University President, Fr Ted Hesburgh, was livid and said that no priest with faculties should be turned away. I was lucky enough to have Fr Kung celebrate Mass at our Hall and the Mass was attended by Bishop Brian Ashby, from Christchurch.

The University President, Fr Ted Hesburgh, was a good man who was President at the University of Notre Dame for about forty years. He could use an arsenal of words, could relate to different people, and had achieved much. What I remember most about him was his self-sacrificing kindness. He had achieved so much, had the world record for the number of honorary doctorates awarded, but was exceptionally kind. With all his achievements he was the best model for kindness and humility. ■

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# a Mother's Journal

by Kaaren Mathias

*"I just sat in my son's small flat in Amritsar, and it is piled on top of someone else's house and he doesn't even know those people who live downstairs. Every morning I went up on the roof and looked out. I could not see even one field. Just concrete, concrete and the tops of the mosques."*

How good to be sitting back with my dear friend Sonam Butti, in our old home and village in Madgram, Lahul. We had escaped from the heavy monsoon rains for the kids' summer holidays and come north to Himachal Pradesh. Now I sat sipping Sonam Butti's sweet gingery brew of chai and catching up on news from the last two years including this first ever sojourn away from the mountains to visit her son in a hot and noisy North Indian city on the plains.

*"And then I walked around the whole city of Amritsar. I did not find one person dressed in a chola (long traditional maroon dress with a waist coat worn by Lahuli tribal women) like me. Not one! And the thing that I thought was worst of all was that there were no mountains. It was just flat, flat, flat and it made my eyes tired looking for even just a hill! I was so happy to get home to this village again."*

Homecoming weaved its way through our monsoony summer.

I was reading and thinking about The Parable of the Two Sons — with the thoughts of Henri Nouwen and the Rembrandt picture of the Prodigal Son to guide my ponderings. The image that has stayed with me most days this month, is the "going-out-to-bring-back" actions of this most gentle and patient of fathers. Perhaps for years, he waits and looks out the window and down the road. When he sees the prodigal son from far off, he collects up his long robe, forgets about being a dignified Jewish patriarch, and runs out of the house and down the road to meet his ragged son.

Later on, he notices his elder son is not joining in the hoopla and fun of the Welcome Home party, and again, goes out of the house. Crossing the thresold into the dark night, he meets and seeks to bring back this elder son also. This father doesn't sit and calculate whose turn it is to take initiative in the relationship. He doesn't stay inside, tallying reasons why he should sit and wait for the two sons to come to him. He loves. He wants relationship. He goes out the door and seeks his sons. This example gives me such a big invitation in how I could go about my parenting, my marriage, my work interactions and my friendships.

Homecoming, or lack thereof, has also been a theme for our family as our Christchurch house, which we had hoped could be our family's tūrangawaewae, was officially taken over by EQC. Another of the Red Zone casualties. We had said a sad 'Goodbye' prayer when we left New Zealand in February, but with our frequent house moves, our belongings to India and New Zealand and current residence in Uttarakhand, I know now that our "place we stand tall"/*tūrangawaewae* will probably always be more about being among people we belong to rather than a particular piece of dirt.

Sonam Butti gets up to brew another round of chai. I look out her window and realise all I can see are green fields and muscular high hills. No concrete. Deep peace. And actually, Madgram village is a place I can call home too. ■

*Kaaren Mathias lives with her husband Jeph and four children in North India, where she works in community health and development.*