



Do Justice!!

"Do Justice, Love Kindness and Walk Humbly With Your God" Micah 6:8

A Newsletter on Social Justice Issues

Welcome to the first edition of 2016 edition of Do Justice. This newsletter, prepared by Auckland Diocesan Social Justice Group looks at various Social Justice Issues.

Is a Living Wage a Basic Human Right?

World leaders following the end of World War 2 and the establishment of the United Nations believed that it was necessary to draw up a list of Basic Human Rights that could be used as a standard for the world in general. Hence the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in San Francisco in 1948 and ratified by all the then members of the United Nations including New Zealand. Adopting of the Declaration of Human Rights is a prerequisite for all countries wishing to join the UN. The Declaration covers a wide list of Basic Human Rights including in Article 23:

1. *Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.*
2. *Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.*
3. *Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.*
4. *Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.*

It is interesting to compare clause 3 of this article with the definition of a Living Wage:

A living wage is the income necessary to provide workers and their families with the basic necessities of life. A living wage will enable workers to live with dignity and to participate as active citizens in society.

Both the Declaration and the Living Wage definition emphasis the dignity of individuals and the right to earn a "just and favourable" wage. In New Zealand up until the 1980s we could justifiably say that we willingly and consistently met this Right. But not anymore, today approximately a third of the working population are not being paid a Just or Living Wage.

As a Diocese we have consistently endorsed the concept of a Living Wage for all New Zealand workers yet there are still units with in and associated with the Diocese who continue to pay their staff well below the Living Wage.

It is now 68 years since the Declaration of Human Rights was adopted. Is it not about time the Auckland Diocese in total also adopted it?

An American View on the TPPA.

Paul Street, author of the book **They Rule: the 1% v Democracy** writes:

"And what is the TPP? It is, among other things, a fitting capstone to Obama's rich history as a shiny Trojan Horse for the unelected dictatorship of global capital that rules the United States and other nations beneath the ruse of democracy and behind the marionette theater of partisan and parliamentary politics. It is a fitting monument to Karl Marx's observation in 1857 that "Capital must strive to tear down every spatial barrier...to conquer the whole earth for its market."

Street goes on to explain:

The TPP is designed to help big multinational businesses attain special deals they would be unable to get through existing political processes, considered excessively democratic by the global deep state of capital. A foreign corporation could sue and receive damages for anticipated profit losses resulting from an increase in the minimum wage (federal, state, or local) in the United States. A U.S. state or Canadian province (or any other member-state jurisdiction) would have to compensate oil and gas companies for anticipated profits lost to bans on the environmentally disastrous practice of hydraulic fracturing (fracking). Big Pharma and the big corporate media firms would be granted stronger and longer-lasting patent and copyright protections across the "free trade" zone. Big multinational banking and investment firms would have to be paid by TPP governments that wanted to keep their nations' financial systems safe through responsible regulation. Food, chemical, consumer goods, and pesticide industries will be able to limit the ability of TPP governments to impose safety and environmental regulations on the things they sell and how they make them. The giant global and U.S.-based consumer packaged goods firm Procter & Gamble could demand compensation from

any TPP nation (including the U.S.) that dared to subject its products and workplaces to basic social and environmental standards.¹

According to the World Bank our GDP will increase by signing the TPPA by 3% by 2030². Three % in 15 years is an average of less than 0.2% per year. In the September Quarter of 2015 the NZ GDP increased by 0.9% according to Statistics NZ.³ So what actually are the benefits to New Zealand of the TPPA?

The Corporatization of Warfare and everything else.

President Dwight Eisenhower in his final speech on 17 January 1961 as President of the United States gave his famous warning about the dangers of the Military Industrial Complex. Fifty Five years later nothing much seems to have changed, if anything the influence and power of the corporations has become greater.

However, most of us have assumed during “war” that the actual fighting was still done by Armies, Navies and Air Forces under direct the control of the elected Government and by men and women who had been recruited to specifically fight on our behalf. So it was interesting to read Antony Lowenstein’s book Disaster Capitalism: Making a Killing out of Catastrophe.⁴ Early in this very revealing book Lowenstein quotes PW Singer:

*Warfare is no longer an exclusive affair of men in uniform fighting for their state’s political causes. Rather, warfare, as it was often in the past, has become a multi-faceted affair, involving men and women, inside and outside the public military, fighting for a variety of causes – political, economic. Religious, social and cultural – that often have little to do with the state.*⁵

Since 9/11 the use of Private Military Contractors (PMC) to undertake work that had previously been done by the military including supply and logistics work but also including security and intelligence functions. The US Defense Department spends many billions of dollars a year on “outsourcing” in theory to save money, however a Government Accountability Office report in 2009 on Defense Department outsourcing found that \$295 billion of cost overruns – “that’s \$295 billion of wasteful spending” according to President Obama promising to “stop outsourcing services that should be performed by the Government.”⁶ But with little effect, outsourcing still continues.

But it is not just the military that is being “privatized”, a number of countries now outsource prison operations, social housing and other functions. New Zealand has Serco running prison and wants to outsource its social housing operations despite the poor performance of Serco at Mount Eden Prison and similar experience of contractors in other

countries not meeting their contracted obligations and often getting away with it.

So why do governments continue to follow such flawed policies? According to Lowenstein one of the “advantages” of outsourcing contracts is that “commercial confidentiality” is used extensively to restrict Freedom of Information requests. The Australian Government has been particularly adept in using this technique to restrict transparency of what is going on in the migrant detention centers.

The difficulties New Zealand journalists had in uncovering the problems in Mount Eden Prison is another example of this tactic being used by governments to restrict information.

It seems that outsourcing will continue, despite its failure, because this is what the “market” wants and allows governments to restrict access to information. When will we learn?

Up Coming events

- **National Inter-Faith Forum.**

The Auckland Inter-Faith Council is hosting the 11th **National Interfaith Forum**, from **26-28 February 2016**. Events will be held in and around Parnell, with the main session on Saturday at the Quality Hotel, 20 Gladstone Road.

The keynote speaker will be Rev. Victor Kazanjian, Executive Director of United Religions Initiative, and other speakers include Dame Susan DeVoy, Prof. Edwina Pio, and Dr Anwar Ghani. Reports of interfaith initiatives from all regions throughout NZ will be presented..

It is necessary to pre-register. All details, including links to the Registration form and colour poster, are available from <http://www.interfaith.org.nz/>

- **National Housing Summit On 16 April 2016 at the Western Springs Garden Community Hall on Great North Road, Auckland.**

The following key issues have been identified as needing the most urgent action:

- Stopping the sale or transfer of state houses
- Building more state houses
- Controlling rents
- Insisting on a “warrant of fitness” for all rental properties.

The Social justice Group supports this initiative and encourages all who are interested in housing in Auckland to attend if possible. Contact Jean Brooke’s jeanbrookes97@xtra.co.nz for more information. This is an All Day meeting

¹ <http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/01/14/hate-of-the-union-the-tpp-is-an-offense-to-the-people/>

² <http://www.stuff.co.nz/business/75807613/World-Bank-estimates-10-per-cent-boost-to-NZ-exports-by-2030-from-TPPA>

³ http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/economic_indicators/GDP/GrossDomesticProduct_HOTPSep15qtr.aspx

⁴ Verso 2015.

⁵ Id Page 33

⁶ Id page 35