



Do Justice!!

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

A Newsletter on Social Justice Issues

Welcome to the July 2017 edition of Do Justice. This newsletter, prepared by Auckland Diocesan Social Justice Group, looks at various Social Justice Issues.

Maybe the media Barons are not as powerful as thought!

One of the interesting apparent lessons from the British General Election last month was that despite nearly two years of claiming the leader of the Opposition Labour Party was the Devil Incarnate by all the right wing and much of the centralist press Jeremy Corban proved that he was not only a very effective campaigner but also is a possible winner for the Labour Party in Britain.

But we should not be surprised, twice in the last two years, Jeremy Corban managed to generate a great deal of support from the rank and file of the Labour Party and attracted many thousands of new members to the party. Many of the new members are young adults. It was this support that won him the Leadership of the Party despite a majority of Labour MPs opposing him. Tony Blair was very successful in changing the ethos of the Labour Party in the 1990s with New Labour by broadly following neoliberal policies as well and getting into bed with George Bush. A large majority of the Labour MPs in Parliament in 2015 had been supporters of “New Labour” and therefore had great difficulty with Jeremy Corban who was perceived as going back to an “old time socialism”. Blair and his successor George Brown were largely supported by the tabloid and right-wing press until 2010 when David Cameron led the Conservative Liberal Democrat coalition government. David Cameron’s success in leading the Conservatives to a majority in the 2015 General election was certainly assisted by the support of the majority of the national media.

Some 70% of the national media is controlled by three large groups – News UK, Daily Mail and General Trust Group and the Trinity Mirror Group.¹

News UK publishes the Sun, the Times and the Sunday Times and was the publisher of the News of the World until its demise during the phone hacking scandals of a few years ago. News UK is a part the Murdoch News International group that includes Fox News in the US. News International

is a large shareholder in BSkyB who, through Sky News provide news for nearly all commercial radio stations in Britain.

Lord Rothermere is the Chair and majority shareholder of the Daily Mail and General Trust Group. Lord Rothermere is a supporter of the Conservative Party and a friend of former Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron. The group publishes the Daily Mail and the Sunday Mail as well as a number of regional newspapers.²

The Trinity Mirror Group publishes the Daily Mirror, Sunday Mirror and People. The Mirror and the People were supporters of the Labour Party in the 1950s and 60s but have become more right wing in recent years.

Two other national newspapers complete the Fleet Street stable – the Daily Telegraph and the Guardian. The Telegraph has been, for many decades, a strong supporter of the Conservative Party.

The Guardian is a British daily newspaper, known from 1821 until 1959 as the Manchester Guardian. Along with its sister papers The Observer and The Guardian Weekly, The Guardian is part of the Guardian Media Group, owned by The Scott Trust Limited. The Trust was created in 1936 “to secure the financial and editorial independence of *The Guardian* in perpetuity and to safeguard the journalistic freedom and liberal values of *The Guardian* free from commercial or political interference.” The Scott Trust became a limited company in 2008, with a constitution to maintain the same protections for *The Guardian*. Profits are reinvested in journalism rather than to the benefit of an owner or shareholders.³

Jeremy Corban has had to put up with a constant barrage of vicious criticism from virtually all the British media since becoming leader to the extent that he was considered “unelectable” and the Conservatives were enjoying a 20% plus lead in the opinion polls in April 2017 when Prime Minister Theresa May called a snap General Election hoping to be returned with a very large majority. However British election law requires media, particularly radio and

¹ <http://www.mediareform.org.uk/media-ownership/the-elephant-in-the-room>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daily_Mail_and_General_Trust

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Guardian

television, to give equal coverage. The public suddenly found out that Jeremy Corban was not “the devil incarnate” but had a message of hope for a people that continued to experience austerity by the Conservative government. The result was that the conservatives lost their majority in the House of Commons and are going to have to rely on a small, right wing party from Northern Ireland to continue in power.

A further General Election within the next 12-18 months appears to be likely. Watch this space.

The President, the Pope and Christian unity.

Christians have lived with disagreements since the earliest days of the faith, so it should be no surprise that Christians in the USA are divided over support for the new President. What is surprising is that the part of the Christian community that supports a strong “moral” agenda with opposition to abortion, infidelity and same-sex marriage supports a man who is on his third marriage and is reported to have had many affairs.

The USA is one of the few countries in the world where some form of adherence to Christianity is a prerequisite to becoming President. Americans appear to expect that their President goes to church on Sunday although it seems President Trump prefers to visit one of his country clubs.

So, it was no surprise that one of the stops on President Trumps first overseas tour was Rome, admittedly after he had payed homage to the King of Saudi Arabia. Donald Trump met Pop Francis In Rome, and Pope Francis explained that Christian teaching was all about the poor and oppressed and concern for the environment.

On the same day, according to a Sojourners report “*Last month’s historic gathering in Geneva made no headlines. Meetings, especially those involving church leaders and without conflict, are rarely stories in the media. Yet history was being made far more important than President Trump’s meeting in the Vatican, which dominated the headlines. When Christian traditions long separated by hostility and judgment come together in mutual trust and respect, fresh possibilities emerge for how the power of the gospel can break through barriers of suffering and injustice and heal pain and division in the world.*”⁴

This meeting gathered together leaders from the World Council of Churches, the World Evangelical Alliance, the Pentecostal World Fellowship, and the Vatican’s Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

According to Sojourners this meeting was the result of significant changes in many parts of Christendom as follows

First, the world evangelical community has gone south — literally, to the global South. A century ago, 90 percent of the world’s evangelicals were found in the U.S. and Europe. Today that figure is no higher than 25 percent. Evangelicals are now centered and growing the fastest in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Freed from the dominance of American

evangelicalism, they now resonate with concerns around economic justice, peace, and care of creation as well as religious freedom, evangelism, and mission. Old generations of hostility between ecumenical and evangelical leadership in the global North feel different in regions now shaping the future of global Christianity.

Second, Pentecostalism has emerged on the world stage with confidence and surging growth, also driven by churches in the global South (and reflected in patterns of immigration back to the U.S. and Europe). Today, one out of four Christians is a Pentecostal or is charismatic. While historically deeply suspicious of other Christian traditions who often marginalized them, today the growing strength of the Pentecostal community makes them more confident to be equal players in the changing landscape of world Christianity.

Third, the Catholic Church’s ecumenical commitments, rooted in Vatican II, have made steady, though often cautious, progress. Official dialogues have been held through the years with most every part and tradition of Christianity, including with evangelicals and Pentecostals. While there are vast regional differences, half of the global Christian community is now far more open to relationships with those previously severed and separated from fellowship. Pope Francis has remarkably accelerated this process.

When history looks back on 2017 maybe the Geneva meeting will be seen as more significant than the antics of an American President.

The Free Market and Regulation.

One of the key arguments of those who support free markets is that not only does the “market” set the price of all goods and services but that any controls or regulations are unnecessary because free market actors will always act in the public good.

As free market philosophies took hold in the 1980s there started a steady watering down or demolishing of government regulations covering a wide variety of activities. In parallel, where regulations remained, resources necessary to enforce the regulations were significantly lessened. Two examples in New Zealand were the so-called reform of Building Regulations that resulted in the Leaky Building crisis we are still living with and the dramatic reduction in staff in the old Ministry of Labour responsible for the enforcement of regulations around mining. This second change was a major contributor to the deaths of 29 miners at Pike River.

Now we have a 26-story apartment building in London with over 100 flats, many of which were occupied by immigrants, being burnt down. The British Government has promised a full enquiry but the building had no sprinkler system and questionable cladding. One can only hope that the enquiry will ask questions about the regulations and their enforcement.

⁴ <https://sojo.net/articles/ecumenical-history-under-radar>