



Do Justice!!

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

A Newsletter on Social Justice Issues

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

Are you serious?

*“The United States of America is the exceptional nation, the nation other countries aspire to be like. We should stand as a shining beacon of what free people enjoying a free market and system of government can achieve.” And if the “free people” of other nations should decide that they don’t want to live in a free market under a US-style liberal democratic government then we will just have to force them to because they simply don’t know what’s best for them.*¹

The above quote was not from Donald Trump but from the person who beat Trump in Iowa, Ted Cruz. Few people, at least in New Zealand, appear to take Donald Trump seriously; the political Republican establishment appear to be running scared, “anyone but Trump”, anyone even Cruz?

Who is elected as President of the United States matters to New Zealand and has mattered for many years. We know what happens when we upset the US political establishment – the nuclear ships ban and ANZUS. Our present government wants to get on with the US, and that is fine as long as we can maintain our integrity as a nation. Should the TPPA actually be ratified by the US and Japan and the other 10 nations including New Zealand then our relationship with the US will be even more significant and who becomes the President important. Because of this **Do justice** over the next few months will be commenting on the Presidential campaign and what it could mean for our country.

So who is this Ted Cruz? He was born in Alberta, Canada in December 1970 of a Cuban father and an American mother with Irish and Italian ancestor. His parents were working in the oil industry in Alberta and moved to Houston, Texas in 1974. He attended two private high schools: Faith West Academy in Katy, Texas and Second Baptist High school in Houston. During high school, he was an active member of in a Houston-based group known at the time as the Free Market Education Foundation program that taught high

school students the philosophies of economists such as Milton Freidman and Frédéric Bastiat, leading proponents of the free market neoliberal school of economics.

Cruz then went to Princeton University and Harvard Law School and after legal experience in Federal Government and as the Texas Solicitor General he went into private practice in Houston. In 2012 he was elected a US Senator from Texas. Wikipedia has an interesting biography on Ted Cruz.²

It appears that Ted Cruz is conservative in politics and theology. His apparent approach to other countries appears to be “do what we want or else”.

Sixty Two people have 50% of the World’s Wealth.

The vast and growing gap between rich and poor has been laid bare in a new Oxfam report showing that the 62 richest billionaires own as much wealth as the poorer half of the world’s population.³

And the gap appears to be destined to continue to grow unless governments around the world are prepared to take action. But what can be done? Oxfam suggests three initial actions:

- Crackdown on tax dodging
- Higher investment in Public Services
- Higher wages for the low paid.

All good suggestions but without a willingness to not just enforce existing tax law but to actually introduce a truly progressive taxation system it is unlikely that present trends will be reversed.. From the 1940s to the late 1970s income tax rates in most developed countries were progressive and inequality narrowed.

One of the reasons why there are so many low paid workers is the way in which the organisations that benefit from the workers labour are no longer employed by the organisation. Contractors are used to insulate the benefiting organisation from the worker and to use “competition” to ratchet down wages. The current action by some Auckland bus drivers is an example. The awarding of routes is controlled by

¹ <http://www.counterpunch.org/2016/02/05/terrifying-ted-and-his-ultra-conservative-vision-for-america/>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ted_Cruz#cite_note-32

³<http://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/jan/18/richest-62-billionaires-wealthy-half-world-population-combined>

Auckland Transport – a Council Controlled Organisation - and routes are put out to tender so bus companies fear that if they actually pay their drivers a fair wage they will lose their routes. All productivity gains over the last 30 years have been kept by employers and this has been a major contributor to growing inequality. The result - 62 people owning half the world's wealth.

TPPA now it is signed.

Two days before Waitangi Day the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement was formally signed in Auckland. On the same day Auckland saw one of the largest protest marches down Queen Street since the Springbok Tour protests of 1981. Some 25,000 people enjoyed a violence free stroll down Queen Street and according to various Government Ministers, including the Prime Minister, they did not know what they were protesting about. Some of the media tried to support this view by interviewing some of the marchers and picking out a few who could not answer specific questions about TPPA.

The interesting thing is that few of the supporters of TPPA appear to understand that this is not a Trade Agreement but an agreement designed to enshrine the free market neoliberal ideology that has dominated politics for the last three decades. That is really what the Investment Chapter of the Agreement (Chapter 9) means. The template for the investment negotiations was the model bilateral investment treaty (BIT) of the United States, the basic aim of which is the protection of United States investment abroad. Although there are a number of amplifications and modifications to the American model the BIT is basically pro-investor.

The Law Foundation analysis of the TPPA commenting on this chapter concludes:

The commitments in the investment chapter are directly enforceable by TPPA investors through investor state arbitration. Investors can also take claims to arbitration on the basis of alleged breaches of certain types of government contracts, something that New Zealand has never agreed to before. There is a carve out for disputes relating to consent decisions under the Overseas Investment Act 2005. For other disputes, there is no requirement that investors to seek remedies in New Zealand courts first, before initiating a claim under the TPPA.⁴

We are assured by the Government that we have nothing to worry about as we (New Zealand) has agreed to such provisions in previous Trade Agreements and no company has taken us to Arbitration. However the actual wording of the TPPA is not identical to previous agreements and previous agreements did not open up New Zealand domestic policy making to action by many American corporations known for their litigious behaviour.

But questions must be asked about, for example, could Pharmac be sued by American Pharmaceutical corporations if Pharmac imports drugs for China or India.? Similarly if the

NZ Government decided that fracking was not in the National Interest and decided to ban it would American Oil Corporations be able to sue the NZ Government? Interestingly, the Quebec Government (a Canadian province) banned fracking and has been sued by oil corporations under the terms of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

If you want more information on the issues surrounding the TPPA contact **It's Our future – Kiwis against the TPPA.** Or send an e-mail to itsourfuturenz@gmail.com or visit TPP Legal at <https://tpplegal.wordpress.com/>

Up Coming events

- **TPPA Roadshow organised by MFAT**
MFAT says: "The roadshows will present the outcomes of the TPP negotiations.. The morning session of each roadshow will provide an overview of TPP, and afternoon workshop sessions will have a more technical focus.
Auckland, 7 March, Rendezvous Hotel, corner Mayoral Drive and Vincent St, Auckland Central.
Registration:
<https://planmyevent.eventsair.com/trans-pacific-partnership---march-2016/registration-site/Site/Register>
- **"Are Labourers worthy of their Hire" The Church and the Living Wage.** The Auckland Living Wage Faith Group are presenting this workshop on Saturday 9th April 2016. 9:30am to 12:30pm at **Trinity Kingsland Methodist Church 400 New North Road, Kingsland. All welcome. Please RSVP:**
cissy.rock@livingwage.org.nz
for catering purposes.
- **New Zealand Housing Summit On 16 April 2016 at the Western Springs Garden Community Hall on Great North Road, Auckland. Starts at 10:00am finish about 4:30pm**

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.

Individuals and groups concerned about the issues on the poster, especially the sale or transfer of state housing, are warmly invited. Lunch will be provided (gold coin).

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.

⁴ <https://tpplegal.files.wordpress.com/2015/12/ep2-amokura-kawharu.pdf>