

## 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 2016 edition of Do Justice. This newsletter, prepared by Auckland Diocesan Social Justice Group, looks at various Social Justice Issues.

#### Investing in New Zealand’s Children and Their Families

The report by Paula Rebstock and her colleagues was recently released. If you want to read a useful analysis of the proposals David Kenkel a lecturer in Social Work and Community Development in the Department of Social Practice at Unitec Auckland has written an interesting summary<sup>1</sup>. Part of his summary is an analysis of the words and terms used in the report:

- Investment mentioned 240 times
- Trauma mentioned 50 times
- Love mentioned 36 times
- Deprivation mentioned 4 times
- Inequality mentioned 1 time
- Poverty mentioned 1 time

Kendel goes on to comments

*“Despite the often unspoken reality that the vast majority of return visit CYFS clients are poor, and that people on reasonable incomes seldom have long-term contact with CYFS, it seems that the authors of the report do not see poverty as having any great relevance to the business of CYFS. Given the truly astounding amount of data demonstrating clear links between poverty, deprivation and increased levels of neglect and abuse of children it seems an extraordinary oversight.”*

Paula Rebstock appears to be the Government’s go to person when it wants to appear to be doing something about social problems in New Zealand. She is an American with a Masters Degree in Economics from the London School of Economics. She arrived in New Zealand in 1987 and has worked for the Treasury and as Chair of the Commerce Commission. The Government thought so highly of her expertise they were prepared to spend \$2,000 a day to get her expertise on how CYFS had performed.

The emphases on “investment” in a report on the future of our children is both interesting and worrying. It seems that we can distil everything down to dollars and cents and how much we can expect return if we “invest” in the future of our children compared with, for example how much we can

expect from investing in say a new electric power plant. This takes “neoliberal ideology” to the limit. This approach to human relations appears to treat each human being as a robot. If you spend so much money you can ensure that a child will grow up and do exactly what he or she has been programmed for so that you can calculate your return on investment. Compare this approach with Jesus’s approach to children:

*At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little **children**. Luke 10:21*

Thankfully we still have a choice, do we want the dollars and cents Rebstock way or Jesus’ way?

#### Housing

Last month we highlighted the part of the Housing Crisis that appeared to have been overlooked in the media – housing for the elderly with few resources. Since then at least the plight of the homeless poor has captured at least some of the media attention and even caused the Prime Minister to comment, not surprisingly putting the onus on the victim.

As far as the elderly are concerned the Auckland Council are going through a consultation process about the proposal to transfer responsibility for elderly housing to the Selwyn Foundation. The Social Justice Group believes there are a number of issues with this proposal that need to be understood and addressed. One issue is the apparent risk that access to funding through the Government’s Income Related Rent Subsidies (IRRS) by Selwyn Foundation may not be a certain as suggested; access to IRRS appears to be one of the key financial prerequisites of the proposals. Full details of the Council’s proposals and the public consultation process can be found on the following:

<http://www.shapeauckland.co.nz/consultations/housing-for-older-people>

We believe that because of the close relationship between the Selwyn Foundation and the Diocese it is essential that the theological, ethical, practical and financial aspects of this proposal are fully understood by the Diocese.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.reimaginingocialwork.nz/2016/04/the-absent-elephant-in-the-2016-modernising-child-youth-and-family-expert-panel-report/#more-682>

## American Presidential Election

Over recent months we have looked at the backgrounds of some of the individuals in the running for nomination by each of the major parties. Now it appears that it is down to Hillary Clinton for the Democrats and Donald Trump for the Republicans. Hillary Clinton is well known to most New Zealanders and the amount of NZ media time given to Donald Trump means we know something about him. No surprises here! What is a surprise is that as of June 7, 2016, a total of 1,756 candidates had filed a Statement of Candidacy for the Presidency with the Federal Election Commission.<sup>2</sup> Despite this vast number of hopefuls in reality only the nominees of the two major political parties – Democratic and Republican have a realistic chance of winning the Presidency; although there will probably eventually be only five or six names on the ballot paper.

It could be argued that the American system is no longer democratic but rather a duopoly controlled by the 1% who have the resources to select and support a candidate. On the other hand the length of the Presidential campaign from initial primary elections in individual states to the final vote in November, some 18 months of campaigning, can be a strength. Candidates are in the public eye for far longer than is the case in our 4-6 week election campaigns and their strengths and, more important, weaknesses are exposed. Bernie Sanders has focused on some of Hillary Clinton's weaknesses particularly her connections to Wall Street.

Hillary Clinton has been around politics for some decades subject to almost continuous examination by media, particularly the right wing media. Donald Trump on the other hand is a businessman and a former television personality in the Apprentice. Although he has a public profile it is not been a carefully examined as Hillary Clinton. This means that his statements on Mexico, Muslims, Judges etc are more significant and potentially dangerous. We have previously quoted Jim Wallis, the head of Sojourners, on Trump, his most recent comments following Donald Trump's comments about the Judge hearing a claim against Trump University are particularly relevant.

*Racism is still deeply rooted in American society and in white culture. Donald Trump has repeatedly taken the racism that is often covert and made it overt, what is usually implicit and made it explicit. Trump has regularly turned racial "dog whistles" into bullhorns. I just watched the leader of a white nationalist organization gleefully report how Donald Trump has helped their cause. Visiting and preaching in black churches over the last several months, I have never seen African Americans, especially older black Christians, feeling so afraid. I Corinthians 12:26 (as opposed to the "2 Corinthians" Donald Trump once tried to quote) says this about the church — the body of Christ — "If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honoured, all the parts are glad."*<sup>3</sup>

We like to think that we, in New Zealand, are not racist and that we all live in harmony although in practice we are probably closer to the "covert" situation Wallis describes.

We do need to be very careful that we do not encourage political leaders who want to take us from covert to overt.

TPPA News.

Probably to the Government's relief TPPA is no longer in the headlines as it was earlier in the year. But the process of ratification still continues. The Government has introduced the legislation needed to ensure that New Zealand will comply with the Agreement when and if it is formally ratified by all the 12 countries that signed it. The National minority with the help of ACT and United Future, who only have MPs thanks to electoral stitch ups, just have a majority in House of Representatives. This one vote majority has the potential to change our whole constitutional arrangements; thankfully other countries processes may not be complete before our election next year.

But this is not the end of it, the Government is deeply involved in yet another "secret" set of negotiations, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). This potential agreement involves seven of the TPPA countries (excluding the US, Canada and the other American countries) plus nine Asian countries including China and India. Once again the only information that we are getting about these negotiations are leaks from other countries despite "open" forums run by MFAT. The next round of the RCEP negotiations were held at SKY city in June.

One way of keeping up to date with what is going on with TPPA and RCEP is to get the Its Our Future e-mail. Send an e-mail to

[itsourfuturenz@gmail.com](mailto:itsourfuturenz@gmail.com)

to receive it and keep up to date on what is happening.

### Upcoming events:

**The Justice Conference.** 28-29 October 2016 Salvation Army, 18 Allright Place, Mount Wellington, Auckland. The conference theme is:

**Live Justice Together.** Our vision is to serve the discovery of ideas, celebrate the beauty of justice, and foster a community of people who live justice together. Now, more than ever, people of faith need to come together to wrestle with the injustice in our world. This is the time. This is the place.

For more information go to:

<http://www.thejusticeconference.org.nz/about/venues>

**Peoples Assembly – Election Special 1<sup>st</sup> September 2016 St Matthews-in-the City 6:00pm. Please not change of Date**

Your chance to engage with the candidates for Mayor and Waitemata Councilors on

- The Living Wage
- Housing
- Transport
- Employment

Candidates will be asked to pledge to support or reject positions on each of these issues that have been developed at community meetings around the city.

<sup>2</sup> [https://ballotpedia.org/Presidential\\_candidates,\\_2016](https://ballotpedia.org/Presidential_candidates,_2016)

<sup>3</sup> <https://sojo.net/articles/textbook-racism-and-office-president>