



Do Justice!!

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

A Newsletter on Social Justice Issues

Welcome to the December edition of Do Justice for 2014. This newsletter prepared by Auckland Diocesan Social Justice Group looks at various Social Justice Issues.

World War One Remembered

Over the next four years we will be bombarded with a series of commemorations of the various battles and other events that made up World War One. This is not a bad thing in itself even for those who find war repugnant. As George Santayana, the American/Spanish philosopher wrote in 1905 “*Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it*”². But if we are only to remember those terrible events of 1914-18 through rose-tinted glasses then we may well be condemned to repeat them. As well as remembering the sacrifices made by our fellow New Zealanders, and of all the nations involved in the hostilities New Zealand sacrificed the most, we also need to understand the context and underlying influences in both New Zealand and Europe that led to the horrendous waste of lives and the destruction of so much of Europe and the Middle East.

One of the greatest myths of World War One was that it was a war about democracy and freedom. The British, French and Russian empires (democracies) against the Germany, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires (dictatorships). Interestingly each of the combatant nations had some form of elected parliaments at the outbreak of war. We assume that the British and French had the most advanced democracies in 1914, but Germany had the widest electoral franchise and there were many parts of the British and French Empires that had no form of democratic government. Interestingly none of the combatants included women in the electoral franchise except for some parts of the British Empire – New Zealand, South Australia etc.

It is clear that although progress towards representative government was no means equal between the various combatants each was moving towards a democratic form of government, even Imperial Russia, in the years prior to WW1.

So what did cause World War One, was it religion? It is difficult to claim that religion was the cause of the war but Christianity in particular played a vital part in driving the

What should we celebrate on 5th November?

For those who grew up in England the 5th November was a very special day or rather night. To celebrate the failure of a plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament in 1605 we had bonfires and fireworks, and sausages, and when we grew older, beer. In the words of a then current song “remember remember the 5th of November for gunpowder treason and plot.” It also contributes to the anti-Catholic rhetoric of the day as the leader of the plot, Guy Fawkes, was a Catholic and his target was a Protestant King – James 1 (James 6 of Scotland).

The reason why this failed plot became a firm fixture in the British calendar was because of an Act of Parliament passed the following year “making *services and sermons commemorating the event an annual feature of English life*,¹ the act remained in force until 1859. The tradition of marking the day with the ringing of church bells and bonfires started soon after the Plot's discovery, and fireworks were included in some of the earliest celebrations.¹

On 5th November 1881 in the settlement of Parihaka in Taranaki there occurred an event that appears to have been forgotten by most New Zealanders. In the 1870s some Maori, questioning the fighting with the settlers of the previous few years, started to seek a different response to violence. People started to travel regularly to Parihaka to talk through the issues facing them and to develop considered responses to those issues.

Te Whiti o Rangomai and Toku Kakahi were the leaders of this movement and decided that there had to be an alternative to vengeance and violence as they tried to address the injustice of land confiscations. Drawing on Biblical teachings, particularly the stories about slavery in Egypt, they devised a strategy of non-violent resistance to the authorities who wanted to take their land. They decided to plough the land and build fences rather than violently resist the soldiers sent to take over the land. The ploughmen were arrested but offered no resistance. More ploughmen replaced those arrested, and they in turn were arrested. This challenged the authorities to the extent that a special Act of Parliament was passed to hold the ploughmen of Parihaka in prison without trial. On 5th November 1881 troops attached Parihaka and arrested the leaders, burnt the homes and killed the livestock in the settlement. No violent resistance was offered by any of the people of Parihaka.

So why do we continue to celebrate with fireworks and bonfires an act of violence over 400 years ago on the other side of the world but ignore an act of non-violence in our own back yard? Has the time come to ban fireworks and make 5th November Parihaka Day remembered for non-violent resistance against gross injustice?

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gunpowder_Plot

² George Santayana (1905) *Reason in Common Sense*, p. 284, volume 1 of [The Life of Reason](#)

war. Professor Peter Lineman in a talk at the recent Study Day – World War 1. How should we remember them? Pointed out that in the early 20th century Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Christians all saw “the state as the instrument of God.” Each of the combatants was fighting to preserve their version of God. Although the theology of the “Just War” goes back centuries it was extensively used to justify World War One, just as it was to justify the first Gulf war in 1990. As the 20th century progressed the whole concept of a “Just War” has been challenged. How can we justify fighting when Jesus make it clear we were to love our neighbour and our enemies?

WW1 and the following decades had a major impact on the world’s economy. Thomas Piketty, the French Economist, in his book “Capital in the 21st Century identifies a dramatic change in the relationship between capital and income and the rich and poor in the second decade of the 20th century. In the previous two centuries there had been a steady increase in the difference between the rich and the poor, the rich became richer and the poor poorer. This was mainly because of the wealth created from the Industrial Revolution and Colonisation mainly by Britain and France. The impact of WW1, the Great Depression and WW2 saw a very significant change in this as the financial costs of War were generally paid by the very rich. The wealth gap continued to close through the Cold War, which was, in some ways, a battle over capital, and only started to widen again as the Cold War came to a close in the 1980s. One has to hope and pray that addressing gross inequality in the world will not require more war.

New Zealanders, Australians and to a lesser extend Canadians often claim that their involvement in World War One in particular was a major contributory factor in their respective nation building. If World War One had not happened would these countries be any less strong independent countries? This is a question that is worth reflecting on as we appear to be slowly sliding into yet another war in the Middle East, as war that has its deep roots in the post-World War One settlement imposed on the region by Britain and France.

An honest living - More companies find paying a living wage makes sense.

The following article appeared in the London Economist on 8 November 2014

WAGES have been falling in Britain since 2007, once inflation is taken into account, making it harder and harder for workers to make ends meet. A legally enforced minimum wage, designed to prevent workers from being exploited, has been in existence since 1999. The current rate is £6.50 (\$10.40) an hour.

But anti-poverty campaigners have been lobbying for something more ambitious—a “living wage”, which they calculate is the minimum necessary to meet housing, food and other basic needs. On November 3rd they announced that this rate (which firms are not obliged to pay) had increased from £7.65 to £7.85 an hour, and from £8.80 to £9.15 an hour in London.

Just 35,000 workers will benefit from the change, but campaigners are lobbying hard for more companies to adopt the concept. Royal Bank of Scotland has become the

latest to do so, making it the 18th company in the FTSE 100 index to sign up, compared with just two in 2011.

Some of this change is the result of shareholder pressure. Barrie Stead, a retired solicitor, became concerned about the way companies were behaving back in 2011, and started to attend annual general meetings to ask whether they would adopt the living wage. “I’ve always had a chance to ask my question and been listened to respectfully,” he says. “I always say I’ll be back next year to see what progress has been made.” Sometimes he finds he has allies at the top. One director thanked him for raising the issue, as he had been arguing the case at his firm for three years but the board had not listened.

Mr Stead claims success at Legal & General, an insurance group, which adopted the idea in 2013 after his questioning; now he wants the group, one of Britain’s biggest shareholders, to lobby for the wage to be adopted by the companies it invests in. Hermes is an investment manager with rather more clout than Mr Stead. It manages £27.4 billion of assets and lobbies for companies to adopt the living wage. Saker Nuseibeh, its chief executive, says businesses need to have a purpose on top of simply making money. And, he says, treating the workers well can be good for the company. “Paternalistic companies like the Quaker groups of Cadbury and Fry survived and prospered in the 19th century by treating their workers well.”

This is a key part of the campaigners’ argument. They say workers who are paid the living wage have better morale, making them more loyal and more productive. Barclays, a bank, found that its catering-staff retention increased from 54% to 77% following the introduction of the living wage, and its retention rate for cleaning staff rose from 35% to 92%.

KPMG, an accountancy firm, first adopted the concept in 2006 for its catering, cleaning and postroom staff; it says the annual costs of providing such services are £1m a year below the level when the project started. Higher wages were offset by reductions in recruitment costs, increased skills and productivity. Just paying higher wages is not enough, though; the nature of the job needs to change as well. “It is ...good job design that brings dignity and meaning to work” says Zeynep Ton, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. “When you design the work to ensure employees can be truly productive, customer service is better.”

Clearly, it is reasonably easy for companies to adopt the living wage if they have high margins and a low headcount; it will be more difficult for businesses with low margins and a large numbers of workers, such as supermarkets. Still, the idea is gaining ground. *In New Zealand it is the small companies so far that recognise the benefits of having a workforce that is paid a Living Wage. Larger organisations including some New Zealand associates of the company’s names in the Economist article, appear reluctant to take the step, maybe we need a Boris Johnson in New Zealand to champion the Living wage?*