

organisations such as the Salvation Army, Presbyterian Support etc; but how do these not for profits raise the capital to purchase Housing NZ assets? We are not talking about thousands or even hundreds of thousands of dollars but billions, 20% of the current Housing NZ stock of \$19billion is around \$3.8billion. It seems almost inevitable that for profit organisations will move into the market.

Armstrong sums this situation up well

“Overall, however, the reform gets more and more bizarre. Essentially, a market is being set up and organisations that cannot otherwise afford to enter it are being subsidised so they can enter it. Is this the Treasury's new take on market economics? Whatever, the taxpayer is the loser. State housing was not broken so why did it supposedly need fixing? But then in this case, ideology rules, okay.”

World War 1: How shall we remember them?

On Friday 7 November 2014 at the St Columba Centre, Vermont Street, Ponsonby the Dorothy Brown Memorial Lecture will be given by Dr Richard Falk, formerly UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the Palestine Territories. Starting at 7:30pm. Dr Falk will be discussing how the present problems in the Middle East arise from the peace settlement after World War1. Admission is free.

The next day the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, New Zealand Christian Network, Aotearoa New Zealand Peace and Conflict Studies Centre Trust, Pax Christi, Auckland Labour History Group have arranged a Study Day also at St Columba Centre starting at 9:00am to 5pm. The programme includes:

- Professor Richard Jackson, National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
- Associate Professor Anabel Cooper, Otago University
- Professor Peter Lineham, Massey University.
- Dr Andrew shepherd, formerly Centre for Theology and Public Issues , Otago University
- Associate Professor Peter Wills, Auckland University.

There will also be a panel Discussion “Who chose to resist? Panel with Nanaia Mahuta MP, on Princess Te Puea; historian, Megan Hutching (Auckland Labour History Group) on “New Zealand Women who Opposed the War”; Ryan Bodman on the Passive Resisters Union. Chairperson Keith Locke, former Green MP.

There is a small charge expected to be \$20 for the Study Day that includes lunch and morning and afternoon tea.

More Information: Chris Barfoot <barfoots@xtra.co.nz> ph. 09 575 6142

Remembering Parihaka 7:30 - 9pm Monday 10 November, St Marks Catholic Church, Pakuranga Road ,Pakuranga. All Welcome Join the Justice and Peace Group as we remember the non-violent civil resistance of Maori Christians at Parihaka to government confiscation of their tribal lands in 1880. Theirs is an important example of Christian non-violence as humanity continues to struggle today with violence and war.

www.caritas.org.nz/resources/remembering-parihaka

November 2014



Do Justice!!

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

A Newsletter on Social Justice Issues

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

Ebola or ISIL, will they set the scene for the 21st century?

Over the last few months a number of commentators have looked at the early years of the last few centuries and concluded that what happens in the second decade of the century sets the scene for the rest of the century. In 1615 the Thirty Years War started which was to have a major impact on central Europe. In the second decade of the 18th century the War of the Spanish Succession eventually led to the development of the nation state and the American and French Revolutions. The Treaty of Vienna in 1815 set the scene for a century of relative peace at least in Europe and the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria in Sarajevo on 28 July 1914 led to a century of world wars.

Some would say that we are a decade early in the 21st century as the defining event is 9/11. Certainly the American reaction to 9/11 and the subsequent wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and now Syria can be directly linked to that event. There have been some reports that the core of the ISIL fighters are former members of Saddam Hussein's army disbanded by the Americans in 2003. The sudden appearance, at least to those of us in the West, of ISIL this year has come as a surprise. As has the extreme acts of terror aimed not just at Western captives but any who resist supporting a narrow and radical version of Islam.

If the rise of ISIL in 2014 does turnout to be the defining movement of the 21st century the immediate future looks grim. The possibility of ISIL eventually controlling the Middle East from Morocco to the Persian Gulf .cannot be discounted. If that did eventuate then Europe could well be threatened. So does this mean that intervention by the USA and allies is justified or will such intervention be counterproductive? And should New Zealand join in the American led intervention? Recent history would indicate that intervention will not work – it has not worked in Iraq or Afghanistan and it can be concluded that the Iraq intervention in particular has led to the rise of ISIL.

Some conspirator theorists argue that ISIL is a western media construct, after all more people have been beheaded in Saudi Arabia this year that by ISIL, the difference being that the Saudi beheadings were of their own residents not Americans and British.

Before becoming embroiled in this latest Middle East fight New Zealand, and other nations, need to think long and hard about the possible unforeseen consequences of military action and not ignore what history can teach us.

Now Ebola. This also seems to have taken those of us in the West by surprise. A nasty and deadly virus for which there is not known cure and no vaccine. Some 5,000 people (at time of writing) have died from Ebola and the death rate is estimated to be about 70% of those infected so the control strategy has focused on isolation of those infected or thought to have been infected. Latest estimates are for at least 1000 new cases a week rising to 10,000 per week by the end of the year. This is a potential world disaster.

So far Ebola has dramatically affected only three countries in West Africa with smaller contained outbreaks in some others. But health experts both in WHO and the American Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta talk about a disease that is out of control. There is the potential for Ebola to spread beyond the three West African countries to impact on most of Sub Sahara Africa. The Black Death in the 14th century spread in seven years from modern day Turkey to cover all of Europe and killing up to 60% of the population. And that was when transport was difficult between population centres. Populations was reduced by up to 50% in many European countries.

The long term impact of Ebola has the potential to be as dramatic today as the Black Death was in the 14th century unless sufficient resources are mobilized to contain the outbreak. Ebola could spread to countries outside Africa. In a recent article in the Sojourners Magazine Jim Wallis quotes Dr. Jim Yong Kim, the head of the World Bank:

"The knowledge and infrastructure to treat the sick and contain the virus exists in high- and middle-income countries. However, over many years, we have failed to make these things accessible to low-income people in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. So now thousands of people in these countries are dying because, in the lottery of birth, they were born in the wrong place."

Jim Wallis then writes "*— the current Ebola outbreak is much more than a public health crisis — it is an inequality crisis. People dying of Ebola in West Africa did not choose to be born in West Africa, any more than I chose to be born in the United States or my wife chose to be born in England. The Scriptures remind us time and again of our obligation to care for the widow, the orphan, and the sick. Accordingly, it is clearly our duty as Christians to do everything we can for the people suffering from this epidemic. Combatting the current outbreak is important beyond saving lives in the short term; the World Bank estimates that the economic cost in terms of lost growth that Ebola could cause in West Africa could rise into the tens of billions of dollars. Such a scenario would make inequality between this region and the developed world even worse — making it that much more difficult for nations like Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone to experience the economic development that will be needed to reduce the likelihood and severity of future epidemics.*

New Zealand is a small country with limited resources. Do we have the resources to help destroy ISIL or help fight the Ebola virus and which should have priority? As a nation we have made significant contribution to world health in many ways, maybe the time has come when we make a choice — we chose to help save lives rather than destroy lives.

Both ISIL and Ebola raise important justice issues, both disasters have their origins in injustice and inequality. But so far the response of western nations including New Zealand appears to be to address the symptoms rather than the cause. Symptoms have to be addressed as both

have the potential to spread throughout the world but so must the root causes of both be addressed — inequality and injustice.

Selling State Asset when you are not selling State Assets.

One of the major parts of the National Party's 2011 electoral platform was the selling of the Electric Power Generators. In this year's election Nation made much of their plans not to sell any more State assets. But as soon as the dust had settled and the National Party effectively re-elected to Government we heard Bill English, in his additional role as a Housing Minister, that up to 20% of the state housing stock managed by The Housing NZ should be sold apparently to housing charities.

So it would seem that it is selling state assets to charities and NGOs is not selling state assets. John Armstrong in his column in the NZ Herald¹ on 25 October 2014 explored this sleight of hand. Armstrong starts his article with a devastating statement:

Bill English's masterplan to radically "reform" the Labour-initiated, octogenarian state housing scheme has all the hallmarks of being ideological for ideology's sake.

The power combo of English and the Treasury is a pretty unstoppable force at any time. Implementing a policy in tune with its world view, the Treasury has been let off the leash, albeit briefly. It is just like the good old days before MMP and the advent of prime ministers obsessed with opinion polls and little else.

That the policy may yet be a complete dud does not seem to have penetrated the minds of those responsible for writing the relevant Cabinet papers. It is enough that the winner from the restructuring of "social housing" - the more anodyne term that National prefers to use - is the private sector.

At the same time the Prime Minister said immediately after the election that a high priority for his new government was to address Child Poverty. There is overwhelming evidence that poor housing is one of the major causes of Child Poverty. Poorly insulated, cold and damp houses led to poor health and time off school for kids. So how does Bill English's "masterplan" address Child Poverty? How can the State getting out of "social housing" actually benefit low income families dependent upon Housing NZ for their homes. As Armstrong comments "*As it is, this revamp of social housing could easily cut right across the Prime Minister's efforts to demonstrate National is serious about tackling child poverty.*" So what are we seeing here, the Finance Minister and the Prime Minister appear to be on opposite courses unless, of course, one or the other is "talking with their Ministerial Hat off!"

What we appear to be seeing is the establishment of a social housing market that will respond to market signals. But to have a market there must be "players" in the market with the resources to provide the products or services that make up the market. Normally these players are private companies or in some cases state owned corporations. In the "social housing market" the major player is Housing NZ, a state owned corporation that is expect to, and does return a dividend to the Treasury. When "customers" do not have sufficient income to afford the "market" rent then Work and Income provide an accommodation allowance. Housing NZ is certainly the dominant competitor in the social housing market. What Bill English and the Treasury appear to be wanting to do is to increase competition in the market by selling some of Housing NZ assets to the private sector. The "private sector" does include not for profit

¹ http://www.nzherald.co.nz/opinion/news/article.cfm?c_id=466&objectid=11347878