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Conversation with a reluctant Australian citizen

VIDEO

Peter Kirkwood

If media headlines were an accurate marker, particularly in the conservative press, you'd conclude that Australians are hostile towards migrants and multiculturalism.

But the recent 2011 [Scanlon Foundation](#) Survey into social cohesion reveals a more complex picture. We hold seemingly contradictory positions on these issues. While most think the size of our migrant intake is about right, there is strong and widespread negativity towards boat people. There is also broad acceptance of Asian migrants, a marked change since the 1990s, with current disquiet focused on migrants from the Middle East.

Only 7 per cent of respondents have negative feelings towards Vietnamese settlers, while Lebanese migrants provoke antipathy in 24 per cent. A scant 3.6 per cent have negative feelings about Christianity, and even less towards Buddhism, but 25 per cent admit to fear of Islam.

The interviewee featured here is a relatively recent migrant, and her life provides a snapshot of the success of contemporary multicultural Australia. She has entered into a cross-cultural marriage, has made her home in one of the new suburbs on the western fringe of Melbourne, and in mid-October became an Australian citizen.

Fatima Measham is one of the up and coming writers in *Eureka Street*. This interview with her concludes a special series with prominent contributors celebrating the 20th anniversary of the journal.

She speaks from a migrant's point of view about living in Australia, and about how she dealt with the ups and downs of settling in a new country. She reflects on her [gradual move towards Australian citizenship](#), which was also the focus of one of her recent articles.

Measham was born in the Philippines and was raised in a devout Catholic household. She gained a BA with a major in communication from the [Ateneo de Manila University](#) run by the Jesuits.

Her contact with the Jesuits has been a major influence on her, fostering an interest in spirituality, social justice and writing. This has continued since she came to Australia.

She met her Australian husband online. The romance led to marriage, and to her move to this country. Soon after arriving she studied for a graduate diploma in education at RMIT, Bundoora in Melbourne. She also worked as a pastoral associate at Marist Young Adult Ministry during this time. After completing this she taught English and media for five years at a high school in Melbourne's western suburbs.

She has done volunteer youth work, and written extensively for *Eureka Street* and *Australian Catholics*. She is also a prodigious [blogger](#) and [tweeter](#) .

Gillard and Obama's mutual exploitation

POLITICS

Tony Kevin

This was the most historically significant visit ever by a US President to Australia. It was serendipitously bookended by a preceding APEC meeting in Hawaii and a subsequent East Asia Summit in Indonesia.



Obama used his [address](#) to Australia's Parliament to set out a comprehensive strategic vision for a reinvigorated US presence in the India-Pacific region, in every sense: politico-military, economic, and on human rights. He spoke from Canberra to the whole region. His carefully nuanced words will be pondered closely in Beijing, Delhi, Tokyo and Jakarta.

His firm messages to China were: *The US will stay a major Pacific power. He can be very tough when challenged (Obama used North Korea as proxy example). Our global military pullback will not affect our great power in the Pacific. We are legitimately involved in issues of freedom of international commerce and navigation in the South China Sea. But we are not trying to contain China's growth as a major world power. We welcome China as a partner and friend, but we insist China must play by international rules — in foreign relations, trade relations, and even (with noteworthy boldness here) in observance of universal human rights.*

All these messages would have broad bipartisan support in Australia, and the President's reception in Parliament House was warm and exuberant.

For Julia Gillard, the visit marks a turning point: she now has a better chance of leading Labor to re-election in 2013. The Obama visit could be a circuit-breaker from some of the infernal dead-weights besetting Labor as a party, and Gillard as leader.

These two somewhat embattled leaders at home were clearly very comfortable with one another. It is electorally good for Gillard to draw strength and dignity from their close contacts over many days. Not good for Tony Abbott, or for Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd (students of political symbolism will have noted Obama's short courtesy greeting with Rudd, followed immediately by his longish chat with Tanya Plibersek.)

Both leaders would have been glad to forget the European sovereign debt imbroglio. The EU is out of either leader's control, as the unproductive G20 meeting showed. The good news is all in the India-Pacific region now.

More important in the longer term is the visit's impact on Australia's search for our correct balance in the crucial US-China relationship, and, indeed, the impact on the region's perception of Australia. The visit locks in Australia and the US as best allies, partners and friends. It inevitably complicates Australia's delicate engagement with China, and even with

Indonesia and India.

The Darwin US basing decision (2500 Marines rotating permanently by 2017), carefully wrapped as it was, will cement regional views of Australia as an utterly accommodating US junior military partner in Asia.

With a large ADF and border protection presence garrisoned there, Darwin had already become Australia's militarised northern frontier outpost, our Pearl Harbor. This permanent US presence will make it more so.

Hillary Clinton, Rudd, and Kim Beazley — hawks all — desired and designed this outcome. A standing US military presence in Darwin and the NT marks a quantum escalation in ANZUS for good or ill. It is not important which government first pressed for this: it suits both governments' present strategic and domestic agendas.

Australia is now indelibly associated with Obama's strong messages to China in Canberra. The US will continue to promote other Asian powers — especially India, also Japan and the ASEAN countries (almost all of which Obama politely referenced by name) — as balancing factors to Chinese power, in an envisioned multilateral concert of powers on the C19 European model.

This will take much finesse if it is not to be seen by China as hostile containment. It is too early to say if Obama's efforts here will succeed.

Was Australia used by the US? Yes, we were, and pushed on uranium sales to India also. But our government wanted this, because it will all be popular with the middle-ground, former Labor voters Gillard is trying to win back from Abbott and the Greens.

Uranium sales to India, and enhanced Australia-India relations, is a third big plus for Labor. Indian pride was rightly outraged by Australia's mishandling of the student security issue. Now, uranium sales to India will be approved by Labor after robust conference debate. They will build slowly in dollar value but, both with India and domestically, the political benefit to Labor is immediate, especially in resources-based electorates.

Both the Darwin and uranium policy announcements dramatically demarcate Labor from the Greens. Labor wants this, now that the carbon tax is in. It is a planned move to the Right. And Gillard hopes Labor's long-running purgatory of minority government might thereby end in 2013.

On the new proposed Trans Pacific Partnership regional free trade initiative, not much will happen soon. Australia will make no headway on beef or sugar access into protected US markets. But we will come under harsh US pharmaceuticals lobby pressure to raise prices of generic national health medicines, to harmonise with US intellectual property rules. I doubt whether any TPP the US could accept would be a good deal for Australia.

For all Obama's inspiring oratory about human rights in Asia — and he truly has a magic way with words — spare a final thought for brave whistle-blowers Bradley Manning and Julian Assange. Finding a way for our two governments to deal justly and humanely with them is part of the job of cleaning up the mess Bush, Blair and Howard left. Protection of their human rights tests the decency of our ANZUS alliance's common values.

Their present abusive treatment ought to have been privately discussed by the leaders — but probably wasn't.

Rescuing JFK

BOOKS

P. S. Cottier

Stephen King, *11.22.63*, Hodder & Stoughton, November 2011

Political murders have been in the news a lot lately. Gaddafi's ugly last moments at the hands of a mob. Osama bin Laden's more planned demise. I doubt either of these will be remembered as long as the shooting that forms the basis of Stephen King's new novel.

The assassination of American President John F. Kennedy nearly 50 years ago continues to fascinate, and King's is the ultimate voyage into the land of 'what if'. He takes the reader through a portal to the 1950s, where the protagonist may or may not be able to use the intervening years to stop Oswald's infamous 1963 bullet.

The world of the 1950s is brilliantly evoked. Alongside the energetic music and the richer flavours of food, the near-universal smoking and the mile-long cars, wife-bashing seems to be up there with baseball as the national sport of the pre-feminist United States.

As the time-voyager, Jake Epping, journeys south towards Texas and Kennedy's murder, the entrenched racism of the 1950s is brought out through a casual stop at a gas station, where he finds three signs for the toilets: one for men, one for women, one for 'colored'. Jake (who is white) follows the 'colored' path to see:

There was no facility. What I found at the end of the path was a narrow stream with a board laid across it on a couple of crumbling concrete posts. A man who had to urinate could just stand on the bank, unzip, and let fly. A woman could hold onto a bush (assuming it wasn't poison ivy ...) and squat. The board was what you sat on if you had to take a shit. Maybe in the pouring rain.

If I ever gave you the idea that 1958's all Andy-n-Opie, remember the path, okay? The one lined with poison ivy. And the board over the stream.

Warped theology is used to back up this racism. Apparently Ham's glancing at his naked father Noah is responsible for the oppressed state of the 'Negro' in the view of some Southern Baptists. There are billboards stating 'THE AMERICAN COMMUNIST PARTY FAVORS INTEGRATION. THINK ABOUT IT.' The narrator from today notes quietly that that message 'had been paid for by something called The Tea Party Society'. *Plus Åsa change* indeed.

King's hero is an English teacher, who muses that in the books of Thomas Hardy 'You know how it's going to end, but instead of spoiling things, that somehow increases your fascination.' We don't really believe Jake will be able to stop Kennedy being killed. But this is not a Thomas Hardy novel; it's Stephen King. I have no intention of spoiling the book for the

reader, but King's narrative skills pull us along where no other writer might dare to tread.

One narrative line has Maine defecting from the US and joining Canada. So what? At least they'll get proper health care. But even Canada seems to be a very different place in this version of the present. Small changes in the past can have dramatic ones in the future; the butterfly effect is recast in musical terms, as the narrator finds sympathetic vibrations between various presents and futures. 'The past harmonises,' as he puts it.

Reading the novel, I kept having a niggling feeling of being haunted by another book. It occurred to me later that it was Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, where Scrooge is grabbed by ghosts and made to reassess his life. Here, the narrator is no mean-hearted Scrooge, but he seems to be journeying back through America's life in order, perhaps, to produce a kinder America. One that may not throw itself into Vietnam with such lust:

Kennedy was a cold warrior, no doubt about it, but Johnson took it to the next level. He had the same my-balls-are-bigger-than-yours complex that Dubya showed when he stood in front of the cameras and said 'Bring it on.'

Kennedy might have changed his mind. Johnson and Nixon were incapable of that. Thanks to them, we lost almost 60,000 American soldiers in Nam. The Vietnamese, North and South, lost millions. Is the butcher's bill that high if Kennedy doesn't die in Dallas?

Scrooge's ghosts took a whole night to turn him to kindness. Jake's journeys into the past take two minutes in the present, however many years he stays back there. Jake finds love in the past — strangely, with a divorced woman who is also a virgin — and may have to sacrifice that love, and cause pain to his beloved, if he is to produce a better outcome for Kennedy, and perhaps America.

Is killing the assassin of Kennedy in the act of killing justified? Most would say yes; if a murderer is killed while killing, that is acceptable. Is it then justified to journey back in time to kill Oswald before he climbs the steps of the book depository with his Italian rifle? King's hero must be satisfied that there is no other assassin (hidden in a certain grassy knoll, perhaps) before he feels justified in taking Oswald's life.

If he can. The obstacles thrown in his way mount in the best thriller tradition, but King avoids straining credulity (with the possible exception of one convenient bout of amnesia).

People often complain there are no writers of the stature of Dickens anymore. I think that for pure energy and invention mixed with compassion, King stands in that writer's direct line. Dickens' heir is alive and well and living in Maine. Which, so far as I know, is not currently a part of Canada, but of the US. A country which, as always, seems to have very different paths leading into the future.

Panicky in the UK

APPLICATION

Andrew Hamilton



The graphic images of London burning during the August riots have given way to word images of the Euro burning. But the pictures of hooded youths, burning shops, and processions of consumer goods making their way out of shops remain vivid. So do the anguished questions and large theories of what caused the riots. The rise of consumerism, individualism, secularism, social media, inequality and poverty, and the fall of firm policing, discipline in schools and stable families were all blamed.

The responses on the whole were punitive and controlling, leading to a strong police presence and investigation, relatively harsh penalties in summary trials, evictions of families of looters.

In retrospect this echoes the process that led to the Intervention in Australia. The report of widespread sexual and other abuse also led to anxious questioning and to many large theories. The response to it was to introduce extra policing and control of community life through deprivation of income and other means.

This kind of response to antisocial behaviour has been called 'moral panic'. I do not like the phrase because it can suggest that concern and reflection in large terms on the reasons for antisocial behaviour are reprehensible and inappropriate. They are not. But the term does point to common features in the response to many different events: anxiety, broad cultural generalisation and the urge to take decisive action.

A recent [report](#) on the riots provides an opportunity to ask how adequate these kinds of response are. It asked people involved in the riots and those who kept out of them why they acted as they did. Most involved were caught up in the excitement and by the sight of others making off with desirable goodies. Many were drawn in by friends, some by resentment at particular actions by police. Those who did not take part were often influenced by friends or family and by fear of the consequences.

This account suggests that explanations of the riots couched in large cultural, economic or social terms may be helpful in identifying deeper influences on behaviour, but they do not offer causes. They fail to explain riots that have occurred at other times of history. They also fail to explain why one member of a family became involved, but others did not.

Social conditions, cultural attitudes and implicit philosophies influence but do not determine behaviour. So we need to give full weight to contingencies.

All this argues that we do best to reflect on events like those that led to the Intervention and

the riots from a broad humane perspective. We need to focus on human beings in their variety and unpredictability, and not begin from large abstractions into which we fit them. Human beings transcend the necessities of culture and context.

In classical Christian terms this means emphasising freedom and grace over necessity and predictability. It also means placing weight on relationships and on responsibility. Riots are not the inexorable working out of underprivilege or consumerism, of individualism or secularism, but a series of interactions and actions involving many human beings, none of whom are defined by the actions they take, even though they are in different degrees responsible for them. People who take part have other possibilities that depend largely on relationships. They are in play for grace.

It follows that we should not regard people as defined by their social or other context. Nor should we see them as defined by their actions. One who commits an act of looting is not forever or simply a looter.

This view of things should also shape the way in which we respond to riots or widespread antisocial behaviour. It is certainly important to act decisively to quell riots and to address crime. But in general, anxiety and the desire to act decisively to achieve large goals are bad counsellors, particularly when the goals are framed in large theoretical terms.

We do better to take time to reflect on the ways in which people in particular cultural contexts relate in order to understand better why some people behave badly while others behave well. This calls for open minds.

When we understand this we shall be in a better position to strengthen those relationships within communities that build responsibility and freedom. These qualities thrive only where there are freedom and trust, precisely the qualities eroded by anxiety and the desire for a quick, total fix. That kind of fix quickly develops into a fixture that is both costly and counterproductive.

Eurozone trashed

POLITICS

Binoy Kampmark

One does not have to be a fan of Silvio Berlusconi's sordid, and now crumbling, regime in Italy to see the madness of austerity that is stripping away the sovereignty of states through the eurozone.

That comes in light of Italy's own madness that saw debt rise to some of the highest levels in Europe, standing at a staggering 120 per cent of GDP. But to call 12 November, as many Italian protesters have done, a 'liberation day' of sorts is to misunderstand what exactly has happened.

History tells us that states whose sovereign existence is curtailed by economic intrusions collapse, regroup and strike back, all in various forms.

Some of these reactions can have devastating consequences to regional security. When the German economy was made the target of occupation measures by the Allies after the First World War, sovereignty was circumscribed in a manner that provided ready political capital for extremist parties to support. It did not take long for the jackboot to start marching through the Ruhr.

The unravelling of the eurozone suggests the emergence of European states who will either be peripheral to the currency policy in the zone, or outside it. In being placed on the outer in such stark fashion, a new type of 'clipped' sovereignty is emerging. The elected parliamentarian is gradually becoming irrelevant, at the mercy of a new technocratic order inimical to democracy.

What we are seeing is another addition to the armoury of those who wish to see sovereignty further reduced, qualified and circumscribed. With the language of 'human security' comes the language of interference where human rights are deemed to have been abused. If a government abuses its own people, intervention can, and has taken place through the UN Security Council.

While the UN Charter acknowledges the core idea of state borders and sovereignty, it has been pecked away over the years. The financial crisis further handicaps state autonomy, pegging policy to an externally dictated austerity regime.

Writing for the *Guardian*, journalist Giuliano Ferrara made the point graphically and accurately that bond yields were being used 'like armoured cars' to strike at democracy. The League's interior minister Roberto Maroni saw the line from Brussels as being distinctly anti-democratic. 'I don't think there is a precedent for someone going to a sovereign state and telling people what they should do.'

The same points have been made in the Greek context. The spectacular and failed effort on the part of George Papandreou to take the bailout package to a referendum vote, only to have it quashed, shows that dynamic in action. Can rigid austerity exist alongside institutional transparency?

We can get a better sense of where these individuals are coming from if we go back to the various basic assumptions as to how that political concept works. The late Italian political theorist Norberto Bobbio sketched a few salient points on what he saw a working democracy consisting of: participation, liberty, equality, and individual responsibility.

It can be argued that virtually each of these concepts is being directly challenged by the internationalised austerity regime. To put it simply, we are making bankers and technocrats the officials who matter.

Therein lies Moroni's dilemma. Austerity measures and strict financial discipline are part of the baby food diet that poorly performing eurozone states must take to enable them to perform in economic solidarity with their neighbours. To implement them though will have enormous effects, assaulting the very core idea of welfare democracy, let alone sovereignty.

Cultural changes are also bound to take place. The Italian austerity package incorporates increases to the pension age, privatisation measures, and a program to invite more women and the young into the workforce.

There may well also be an argument to make that the Italian example is being misunderstood precisely because its economic performances are being assessed within the framework of the European Monetary Union.

As the economist Costas Lapavistas explains, 'the economics of austerity makes no sense at all. Italian problems have originated in a stagnant economy, not in a profligate state.' One can always complain about emptying the cookie jar — but there has been very little in the jar to begin with.

The central bankers are starting to tighten the purses and push the policies of a politics that is unrepresentative and authoritarian, a state of affairs that should be troubling to policy makers themselves. If participation is deferred to a management class that is remote, not to mention unelected, as much of the Brussels and IMF machinery is, we may see not only sovereignty challenged at its core, but the democratic idea itself.

Muslim at a Catholic school

NON-FICTION

Nadine Rabah

I do not like labelling people as racist. I do not like the use of the word 'racists' at all.

I am a Muslim and I attend a Catholic college. I have never been subject to any form of racism during my time in school although I have been subject to what I call a *lack of understanding*. In my earlier years I would often be asked 'If you're a Muslim why do you come here?'. My reply was always, 'My parents like Catholic education and there is no harm in learning about different races or religions is there?'

Sometimes it is easy to get offended. One thing I do not like is when people make uninformed comments.

Last year, in year ten, we had a subject called 'Religion and Society'. Here, we learnt about different world religions: Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam. During one of our lessons on Islam one of the girls in my class pronounced 'I hate Muslims, the world would be better without them.' Slightly offended I bit my lip, turned around and said 'I'm a Muslim,' to which she replied, with a slightly confused face, 'But you're nice.'

Clearly she didn't have much knowledge of world religions. Her view was that of the uninformed general public: she associated Islam simply with terrorists, bombs and burqas. With so many negative images surrounding Islam, it is important for students to know someone who can prove the stereotypes wrong and change their perception.

I've come across many people who are 'surprised' when they find out I am a Muslim. At school I am always willing to participate in religious activities and many people do not realise I am not Catholic until the subject comes up in a class. I appreciate the Catholic faith for its teaching to love one another and refrain from being self-centered.

I often try to be helpful in explaining aspects of my Islamic culture, including the celebration of Ramadan. To me, it is clear that when people have at least a basic understanding of diverse cultures and religions they tend to be more accepting. Does it really matter what religion you follow or which God you believe in if you are a good person, and treat everyone how you would like to be treated?

In a beautiful, diverse country such as ours it is important that we have fundamental knowledge of world religions in order to be accepting and tolerant towards others. We live in a day and age where we judge too easily.

Many people already have a fixed view on other members of our multicultural society. Their views may have been influenced by many factors: older family members, the media,

even bad experiences. Although I cannot control what is seen on the telly or how the media portrays things I can do that little bit to make a difference, to educate people on their understanding and view of Muslims.

Over the years I have learnt that I am not always going to hear things I will like. I will get offended. I will be disappointed. But sometimes you have to learn to lift your head up high, be proud of who you are as a person and how you treat others. To describe these experiences I have come across in my life as *racism* would be wrong. Rather, I believe it is a lack of understanding.

Girding Job's loins

POETRY

Brian Doyle

Mrs Job

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job;
And he was essentially a blameless dude, and unarrogant,
And he was blessed with seven sons, and three daughters,
Which is a startling number of children, and where is the
Part of the Book of Job where we talk about Job's spouse,
Who is conspicuously not discussed in the back and forth
With his buddies and then suddenly the Big Guy Himself,
Answering out of the whirlwind and commanding old Job
To gird up his loins, which his loins were almighty active
Previous to the Lord interrupting Job, and after the Maker
Finishes one of the greatest eloquent scoldings of all time,
He grants old Job another seven sons and three daughters,
Again without the slightest thanks for the astounding Mrs
Job who suddenly has twenty count them twenty children
With no mention of her humor, or the vast hills of diapers,
Or her wit which survived kids throwing up and the sheep
Wandering off, and plagues of locusts and things like that.
A good editor, I feel, would have asked for just a glancing
Nod to the wry hero of the tale, at least acknowledgement;
Something like a new last line after *So Job died, being old
and full of days*, which might read *And also passed a most
Amazing woman, of whom nothing other than the blessing
Was ever said, her heart being a gift beyond calculation by*

Man, her mind sharp, her tongue gentle, her hands a mercy,
And her very presence full reason to kneel in prayer at that
Which the Lord in His mercy has made and granted briefly.
A line like that would only hint at her, but it's a start, right?

The cross

Probably an olive or acacia, as far as scholars can determine.
Of course there are scholars who have poked into the matter.
The Roman Empire sensibly used the most accessible wood.
Me personally I would bet on the acacia which grows bigger
And broader and quicker than olive. You wonder if someone
Grew them for just this use. A market niche with an imperial
Budget, who could argue with that as a business model? Not
To mention the excellent public relations aspects of assisting
The mills of justice, the civic equilibrium, the battles against
Criminals and radicals. Imagine it: an acacia grows in Judea,
Let's say in Ashkelon, near the sea. It is harvested at twenty,
Planed with its brothers, and trundled to Jerusalem. The load
Is stamped and recorded, bills of sale and receipts are issued,
A few of the timbers are mysteriously lost in transit and filed
As cost of business, and one ends up on Golgotha — the Skull.
Poor creature, remembered only for its last burden. But recall
The birds it housed, the birds it sensed whizzing past — *deror*,
The swallows and swifts, the small gleaming knives in flight,
And *selaw*, the quail in their vast flocks, carpeting the acacias
In October like feathery jackets, and *anafas*, the patient heron,
And *hasidah* the stork and *larus* the gull and *nesher* the eagle,

And certainly *yonah*, the dove. Imagine our acacia held seven
Dove nests in its twenty years. Imagine the gentle burbling of
Chicks is the last music it remembered as the axe bit. Imagine
It never knew or imagined the gaunt being it held at the finish.
Poor thing, remembered for what it never knew it was bent to;
But celebrated quietly this morning, as another young life lost.

The Seven Deadly Sins

Wrath! Lord, what a place to start! Couldn't we start slowly, with sloth?
But no. I was wroth against the Church in which I was raised, yes, I was,
Until I realized that there is no Church, there is only slimy or graceful us.
Greed? Ah, well, yes, but not for money; more for affection and effusive
Praise, maybe. I wanted to be applauded so that I could pretend to duck;
It was always far more comfortable to deflect that which you would have
Been angry not getting the chance to pretend to deflect. Ah, wrath again!
This is hard. And sloth? I suspect I am so afraid of my tendency that way
That I work furiously to not leave myself the chance — and what I call my
Meditative state, dozing in the fat sun, not actually reading at all, is really
Sloth, disguised as the soil for art. You wonder how lazy artists really are.
Pride, not so much. A sigh of euphoria followed by gimlet-eyed certainty
That I am egregiously behind in my appointed rounds and tasks, as usual.
Lust... | let's not go there. Suffice it to say that the balancing act between
Mammalian euphoria and the spicy chess game that is love expressed is a
Project unending. Wipe that grin off your face. If you were scribbling this
Proem you would have to confess that you know all too well what I mean.
Envy... | not so much. When I was young I was envious of folks who had,
Or seemed to have, bigger gifts, but maybe sooner than most I discovered
That most gifts are illusions and that even great gifts have awesome prices,

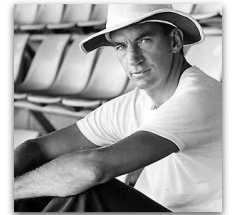
Which made me very thankful for my small gifts and a chance to use them.
And finally, puffing along at the end of the road, complaining vociferously
About being last, good old gluttony. We usually think about this foodishly,
But I have come to think it is really the unwillingness (or perhaps inability)
To stop rolling in the things that give you the most pleasure. And I concede
That properly understood it is a sad and ugly thing — sex, wine, mayonnaise,
Whatever it is that floats your selfish boat; for like all sins its essential bone
Is elevating the self above where selves should be, which is quiet and awed.
But who among us is without sin and can throw that first stone, as the silent
Rabbi draws with his finger in the sand? Not me. Let's not even get into the
Venials, such a motley and lengthy parade. But I will admit, here at the end,
To absolutely unrepentant gluttony in the matter of three children the Rabbi
Handed us some years ago. If relishing every instant with them is any brand
Of sin, then never was there such a thrilled and gleeful sinner as yours truly.

Peter Roebuck's ordered passion for cricket

MEDIA

Andrew Hamilton

Although I never met him, I heard of the death of Peter Roebuck with a sense of shock and loss. I enjoyed his cricket writing, and also appreciated his contribution on other topics to *Eureka Street* through his articles and postings. He seemed to understand and appreciate the moral centre that we try to encourage.



Although speculation about the circumstances of his death inevitably colours reflection on his life, it should not overshadow his gifts and qualities as person and as writer.

As a cricket writer Roebuck was interesting even when he wrote on topics that had no interest for the reader. In that respect he was like Martin Flanagan and Brent Crosswell in their writing on *Australian Rules*. Like them, he clearly appreciated that other things in life matter more than sport. But precisely because sport does not matter ultimately, he was freed to take it very seriously indeed. It was a part of life, and was so invested with the values and the daily choices that reveal a person's character. For him cricket was an image of life, and so to be respected.

Because he had a keen sense of what mattered both ultimately and relatively, Roebuck wrote about cricket lightly and with passion. He had a lightness of touch in the illuminating connections that he made between cricket and other things. In contrast to John Arlott, who revealed the aesthetic charms of cricket by comparison with high culture, he developed its connections with the ordinary experiences of daily life. He showed the unconscious humour in serious games of cricket and the humanity of those who played it.

Peter Roebuck was also passionate. Because cricket was an image of life, he believed that its craft should be taken seriously. It was a discipline and a form of self-control through which people grew. He had no time for sloppiness, and often seemed offended by people with instinctive talent that they left uncultivated.

The passion most frequently expressed in his writing was anger. It was aroused most often when he perceived bullying and submission to it. He frequently attacked the International Cricket Council for its reluctance to condemn the thugs who ran Zimbabwe cricket, and for accepting supinely the power of Indian financial interests on the regulation of cricket. Sometimes his perception of bullying seemed harsh, as when he attacked the Australian team for an aggressive gamesmanship that in his opinion amounted to cheating. Ironically, it now seems that some of the Pakistani cricketers may have out-cheated the Australians to procure this victory.

In his *Eureka Street* articles on Zimbabwe Roebuck gave his anger full reign. In 2007 he [wrote](#), ‘Towering rage is the only legitimate reaction to the latest outrage in the benighted, despoiled, corrupted, starving, bankrupt nation known as Zimbabwe’.

Of course the West had it coming. Hardly a harsh word has heard in the mid 80s when Mugabe’s fifth brigade crushed an imagined uprising in Matabeleland, slaughtering tens of thousands of mostly Ndebeles, stuffing their corpses down disused gold mines. At around the same time the Sinhalese were murdering the Tamils in Colombo as the government turned a blind eye. No-one said much about that either.’

Such strong feelings tempered by and equally strong self-control make for a tension that can be explosive if it is kept within. That seems to have been Peter Robuck’s way and his burden. Although we do not know the details of his personal life, all we do know of him invites compassion for a man who fought for justice and admiration for one who translated his anger at what was happening in Zimbabwe into the establishment of an educational foundation for young people there.

Roebuck’s postings for *Eureka Street* show a breadth of interest and sympathy. He responded to articles on Syria, Zimbabwe, asylum seeker and refugee issues in Australia, Indonesia, Afghanistan and pieces of creative writing. In most cases, he addressed issues of fairness and respect for difference.

In his postings he also encouraged the writers of the articles, particularly younger writers, and on occasion *Eureka Street* itself. In his [most recent](#) posting a few weeks ago on Syria, he typically both offered his views and sought more information.

‘As an avowed democrat convinced that the secular path is the way forwards but aware that it takes time and that democracy rarely enjoys an easy birth or growing period (who does?) I am keen to read balanced views of the position in Syria. Till then long live democracy everywhere! It’s the best thing we’ve got, the best check on corruption. The Arab uprising was needed because fearful old men refused to cede power. It happens elsewhere as well, especially further south.’

With Peter Roebuck’s death, we have lost a good supporter, a valued contributor and a human being who gave much through all the hidden struggle with his personal flaws and pressures.

Lone media voices keep government bastards honest

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

Last week the independent online news journal *New Matilda* [revealed](#) that the Department of Immigration has a worryingly loose grip on the running of Australia's immigration detention centres.

New Matilda published an analysis of the contract signed between the Department and the British company Serco. The contract, which *New Matilda* obtained under freedom of information laws, shows that Serco is subject to astonishingly low reporting requirements.

The contract also allows Serco to hire untrained guards to handle culturally and psychologically sensitive tasks in work that includes the protection of newly arrived asylum seekers.

Aside from its content, it is significant that the investigation took place at all.

In common with many publishers of serious journalism, *New Matilda* lacks a reliable funding stream. Last week *Crikey* publisher Eric Beecher [used](#) his submission to the Federal Government's media inquiry to call for an Australia Council-style funding body to support such independent publishing. He wrote:

Without 'quality journalism', a democratic society would lose its greatest source of independent scrutiny. Most of the exposure of institutional corruption, incompetence or maladministration is the work of reporters and editors.

Matters of national importance are often unreported or glossed over by the major media outlets because they are considered insignificant or difficult. Sometimes a piece of news is genuinely disturbing. It contains more questions than answers and does not fit any of the usual formulas that give the average media consumer a 'feel good' experience.

An example is the report of the Christmas Island boat tragedy of 15 December 2010 that killed at least 30 asylum seekers. The coronial enquiry received scant media coverage, and this lack of scrutiny allowed the Federal Government to ignore it.

Tony Kevin [wrote](#) in *Eureka Street* in May that 'evidence is emerging of moral confusion and a propensity to hide embarrassing facts, within Australia's Border Protection Command system, on its obligations to protect lives' of asylum seekers in Australian waters.

He asked why the Australian Government's powerful Jindalee Operational Radar Network detected neither the boat involved in the tragedy, nor another boat that left Indonesia on 14 November 2010 whose passengers have never been heard from since. A lone voice, he wrote: 'Suspicion grows that something quite unpleasant is being hidden from us in respect of the

loss of these two boats.'

The government got off lightly largely because of the scarcity of media coverage of the complex circumstances surrounding the event. There were a lot of unanswered questions that would potentially occupy a significant amount of journalistic time and resources to produce a report that would hardly be a crowd pleaser.

We might further wonder how likely it is that a government might fund activities that are going to increase scrutiny on its performance. But we can also hope that the same government might have the courage to allow such scrutiny that will strengthen the democracy that is the reason for its existence.

Israel's gay rights sleight of hand

POLITICS

Ruby Hamad

When the Greens-led Marrickville council campaigned to introduce the ill-fated Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) scheme against Israel in March, posters popped up all over Sydney's inner west [asking](#), 'Do the Greens hate gays?'

The aim of these posters — ultimately traced, not to a gay rights group but to a member of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies — was to discredit the Greens' stance on human rights. After all, if the Greens really stood for gay rights then they wouldn't be [boycotting](#) the 'only country in the Middle East where homosexuality is not a capital offence or even a crime'.



This, it turns out, was not an isolated incident but rather part of a larger pattern of what many in the gay rights community have dubbed 'pink washing'. That is, a concerted, worldwide effort, often by the Israeli government itself, to [use gay rights](#) as a means of winning public support for Israel.

Shai Bazak, Israel's consul-general to New England, has deemed November 'Out In Israel' month in Boston, and organised gay celebrities to give panel discussions of their (positive) experiences of being openly gay in Israel. And earlier this year, the Israeli foreign ministry set up an exhibition of gay art in London and Manchester, where, again they invited prominent gay Israelis to attend.

One invitee, Gal Uchovsky, [revealed](#) that the brief sent by the ministry insisted speakers inform English audiences 'that Israel is the only country in the Middle East that respects gay rights ... where gay people can live openly and safe'. Uchovsky ultimately declined the invitation.

This is not the first time Israel has seized on global struggles in order to win the public relations war against Palestinians. In 2008, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a speech at Israel's Bar Ilan University, [declared](#) Israel was 'benefiting from one thing, and that is the attack on the Twin Towers and Pentagon', which had 'swung American public opinion in (Israel's) favour'.

Indeed, 9/11 marked the point at which Israel reframed its conflict with the Palestinians, as a fight against terrorism rather than anti-Semitism.

Israel is 'spinning' gay rights in a similar way. Gays do enjoy more rights in Israel than in the Palestinian territories, due primarily to their own tireless and often [dangerous campaigning](#). But Israel is using gay rights to encourage the erroneous perception that it is

locked in an existential battle with Palestinians, thus masking the true nature of the conflict: that of occupier and occupied.

Israel could withdraw from Palestinian territory and still support gay rights. The two are not mutually exclusive.

This hasn't stopped pressure being placed on gay groups the world over to publicly support Israel. Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA) is a Toronto based group, which for many years has marched in Pride Toronto in support of Palestinian rights. But in the last two years, as the 'pink washing' trend gained momentum, the group began to meet opposition.

In 2010, it all came to a head when pro-Israel groups demanded QuAIA be [banned](#) from the parade. With sponsors threatening to withdraw support, organisers did just that.

While it may seem natural for gays to side with Israel, this support epitomises the major failings of so many human rights movements. Namely, that they tend to prioritise their own struggle without considering the ways in which all forms of discrimination are linked.

The concept of intersectionality, first coined by feminist sociologist KimberlÃ© Crenshaw, has recently been adopted by the UN, which [explains](#): 'discrimination is not just one isolated category; it can be many categories all at the same time'.

It is not enough to simply eliminate one form of oppression. Even if homophobia were completely eradicated in Israel, gay Israeli Arabs would still suffer discrimination on account of their race. The question is, do gays deserve human rights because they are gay, or because they are human?

What intersectionality highlights is that these different forms of discrimination are co-dependent since they perpetuate the dominance of the strong over the weak. Israel is using the fact that gays suffer discrimination in order to actively discriminate against another group.

What supporters are overlooking is that some of those currently suffering under Israeli occupation are gay as well as Palestinian. Thus, they are unwittingly participating in the oppression of their own.

The greatest civil rights leaders in history understood intersectionality. Perhaps the greatest of them all, Martin Luther King Jr, famously warned that 'injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere'. Members of the gay community, tempted into supporting Israel unconditionally, would do well to heed these words.

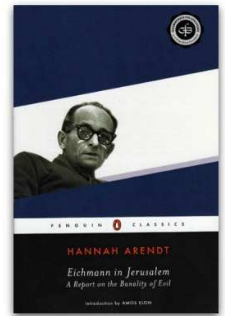
Mainstreaming evil

HISTORY

Michael Loughnane

'Personally, I have nothing against Jews,' claimed Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi 'desk-murderer', responsible for organising the destruction of European Jewry between 1936 and 1945. This is the same Eichmann who said: 'I will jump into my grave laughing, because the fact that I have the death of five million Jews on my conscience gives me extraordinary satisfaction.'

This year marks 50 years since Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem. The trial was reported for the *New Yorker* by political philosopher and journalist Hannah Arendt.



When her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* was published two years later, it precipitated a veritable 'civil war' among intellectuals across the world. Most of the disapprobation arose from her comments on the lack of resistance on the part of the Jewish leadership, as well as what some saw as the 'sympathetic' portrayal of Eichmann as 'victim'.

The book has its flaws, but Arendt's insights into the nature of evil remain compelling. Her thesis is relatively straightforward: that what made Eichmann truly 'monstrous' was his banality. Far from being an evil, plotting megalomaniac, he was in fact an unthinking, pathetically limited individual; a 'clown' who was full of vacuous clichés with no capacity for real thought or moral judgement.

What is genuinely unsettling about Arendt's character assessment is that the reader can identify with Eichmann. How horrible that a man who committed such crimes was an 'ordinary' human being. Eichmann had simply followed orders and did what he was expected to do — the ultimate obedient servant of the totalitarian regime.

In doing what the regime demanded, he uncoupled himself from his moral compass. This allowed him to commit the most heinous crimes with neither malice nor guilt. It was not that he didn't have a conscience; as Arendt observes, human beings in Nazi Germany did not have to 'close their ears to the voice of conscience', because their conscience spoke with the 'respectable voice' of society.

Eichmann's conscience became so distorted that he was capable of committing deplorable crimes while convincing himself he was acting in a noble and virtuous manner. He said at his trial that he would have shot his own father if he was ordered to.

And 'as for his conscience', writes Arendt, 'he remembered perfectly well that he would have had a bad conscience only if he had not done what he had been ordered to — to ship

millions of men, women, and children to their death with great zeal and the most meticulous care’.

Eichmann was no aberration. There were millions of Germans who thought just like him. Legions of lawyers, engineers, doctors, churchgoers and teachers shared the same mentality. The brutal crimes against Jews and other ‘undesirables’ were committed by some of the most respectable members of society, many of whom lived wholesome family lives, attended church and spent their leisure time reading Goethe and listening to Bach. This, for Arendt was the true horror of the holocaust.

Now it seems incomprehensible that a person could think and act in such a way and not see they were doing wrong. But when a whole society experiences a total and pervasive moral collapse it becomes possible for the individual to rationalise and justify murder. As Arendt observes, in Nazi Germany ‘the practice of self-deception had become so common, almost a moral prerequisite for survival’.

The regime demanded total dedication and total loyalty to the project of the state. That was the social contract: ‘It is thus necessary that the individual should finally come to realise that his own ego is of no importance in comparison with the existence of the nation’ (Adolf Hitler).

At his trial Eichmann said, ‘I regard ... the extermination of the Jews as one of the worst crimes in the history of humankind’. Yet he to participate in this was his ‘duty’. He not only obeyed orders, he also obeyed the law. So the holocaust wasn’t his fault, as far as he was concerned.

His ethical framework did not question the inhumanity of this ‘duty’. His ethics extended only as far as getting the trains to run on time. If a train was late, he considered it ‘a disgrace’. Never mind that those trains were carrying a cargo of starving, terrified human beings destined to be murdered.

If all this is not disturbing enough, Arendt reminds us that during the proceedings, Eichmann was declared sane: ‘half a dozen psychiatrists certified him as normal’; another found his psychological outlook, his attitude toward his wife and children, mother and father as ‘not only normal but most desirable’; a minister who visited him regularly declared him to be ‘a man with very positive ideas’.

There are many lessons to be learnt from Arendt’s controversial analysis. Chief among them is the disturbing truth that just because we believe (or rationalise) that we are doing something good, does not mean that we are in fact doing something good.

When we surrender our own capacity for intelligent, compassionate, reasonable and responsible judgement and rely instead on some ideology or external ‘authority’ for the formation of our moral conscience, we run the grave danger of participating in acts that have evil consequences.

She reminds us too that if we are to live in a just, peaceful and harmonious society, the growth in humanity of each individual is paramount. We need to pay great attention, particularly in our educational institutions, to the moral development of every person, so that each has the capacity to discern and distinguish humane thinking and judgement from destructive and inhumane ones.

Finally, Arendt's observations on Eichmann beg a few confronting questions for us today: in what ways might the 'Eichmann effect' be operative in our own lives right now? To paraphrase the Nazi resister Dietrich Bonhoeffer, could we be 'silent witnesses to evil deeds' in our society?

As the Nobel laureate and holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel reminds us, 'the civilised world kept silent. I remember. And I am afraid.'

Existentialism by the bay

BY THE WAY

Brian Matthews

There's a cliff above the small Victorian coastal township of Point Lonsdale from which you can gaze out across the narrow entrance to Port Phillip Bay — 'The Rip' as it is graphically and accurately called — and watch the big ships glide by in their stately way.



Even huge, chunky container ships seem briefly impressive as they cruise into this famous waterway and begin the tricky process of navigating the shallows and channels of the bay.

In this challenge they have the crucial aid of a pilot, traditionally a retired sea captain, who is delivered by launch from the Pilot Station at nearby Queenscliff and who leaves the vessel he is guiding once it has been safely ushered into or out of the bay. So that at almost any given time you can see a huge cargo ship or an ocean liner or both, along with the bright red pilot launch buzzing ahead or back into the Queenscliff distance.

And, as if all that watery traversing were not enough, you'll most likely see the Queenscliff—Sorrento ferry making its own quiet, regularly timed way across the paths and wakes of the big ships: well, that's how it looks to landlubber eyes watching from afar. No doubt, they don't actually go anywhere near each other.

But the sea, as we all know, is endlessly fascinating no matter what is happening or not happening on its restless features. Somehow you can watch it for hours — the glint and flash of waves, the dark smudge of a school of fish just below the surface, the glistening arc of what you would swear are dolphins but probably aren't

And, in the case of 'Rip View', as this spot is locally known, the ships, queues of them, so close, as I described it to a South Australian friend who quite properly didn't believe me, that you can see the crew on the deck, the pilot and skipper on the bridge and the printed lettering on the containers.

Decades, even centuries, of staring out at the sea give coastal townships a maritime, briny, windswept look, the way some dog owners start to look like their dogs.

Bush towns settle into their landscape. The galvanised-iron roofs and the encircling verandahs squat down solid and immovable, occupying their bit of desert or their clearing in the eucalypt forest with a certainty and a determination that only nature at its worst — fire or flood — might disrupt. Territorial birds sing familiar notes from favourite trees and bushes and embark on their seasonal migrations and returns with clockwork reliability.

Coastal towns, conversely, know all about the uncertain nature of existence: tides large and small, sudden squalls, stunning blue skies, clouds puffing along like sails, sails ballooning like clouds, blown sand stinging, huge swells racketing up the beach and taking most of it back with them, gulls and marauding seabirds querulous and aggressive amid the hissing or roaring seas — that's the way of it on the coast, even if most of us only see its quieter summer face for a few weeks at a time.

That I was speculating on such comparisons explains why, when we first set eyes on our temporary home here, within minutes of 'Rip View', I was not surprised to find that it was a long, relentlessly rectangular structure, staring slit-eyed out to sea, looking as if it had been not so much built as launched down some slipway onto its narrow strip of grass. A shipping container with windows.

It had the container's stern disciplines too. Despite having donated, sold, sacrificed and dumped a vast range of items, furnishings, books and bric-a-brac, we still couldn't fit into this new house. It wouldn't contain us. If only we'd had a pilot to greet us as we approached, check our load and Plimsoll line — maybe a small red ute driven by a retired removalist to track us along the esplanades and seaside roads and fit us expertly into our 'containment', like berthing a ship at the dock.

As I write, a vast vessel loaded with containers and with the letters NYK hugely scripted on its sides is sailing magisterially through the Rip and beginning to make the first of the turns that the pilot prescribes for its trip up the bay. Surrounded by unopened boxes, imprisoned in a motionless container, I long for a pilot ...

Bereaved father's cancer dreaming

FILMS

Tim Kroenert

***Burning Man* (MA). Director: Jonathan Teplitzky. Matthew Goode, Bojana Novakovic, Jack Heanly. 109 minutes**

*How time can move both fast and slow, amazes me.** A year, an age ago we walked in solidarity with the family of a [sick little girl](#). This year we walked in her memory. There's nothing to say to parents who had hoped, *believed* for a miracle, but instead watched their child wilt and die. Only that it sucks. Totally sucks. Or more vulgar words to that effect.

Grief can be changeable and unpredictable. For some it arrives as a geyser of emotion. Others lament a numbness that knows no such catharsis. 'I haven't really cried,' admits one bereaved father. We are circling a sports oval in the hills outside Melbourne, sharing the [charity walk](#) with hundreds of others — friends and families of those who were living with, dying of, or dead from the effects of cancer. He feels he hasn't mourned.

A new Australian film, *Burning Man*, deconstructs the grief of a man who has lost his wife to cancer. It opens with strung-out Bondi Beach chef Tom (Goode) flipping his car amid city traffic. Hung upside down by his seatbelt, he gazes dazedly at the blacktop as fuel leaking from the car begins to flame.

The film unfolds as a shamble of flashbacks of the lead-up to, and aftermath of, Sarah's (Novakovic) illness and death, and its impact upon Tom and their son, Oscar (Heanly). The non-linear structure presents a challenge to the viewer's concentration, but allows the film to consider heavy themes without getting too maudlin, too often; dramatic encounters segue easily with humorous scenes.

The prismatic structure also reflects, perhaps, the fragmentation of memory by grief. Occasionally, the flames from Tom's present-day car crash appear incongruously within episodes that are long past. It's as if Tom is sorting through mental detritus to make sense of the insensible.

Mourning, after all, is a process, not a moment. An obvious truth, but no comfort to my friend at the charity walk. His sleep is filled either with dreams where she's alive, or nightmares where he watches her die. I'm not sure which would be worse: to fear going to sleep, or to regret waking up. 'I feel like I haven't moved on,' he says. 'Everyone expects me to.' But how could you, ever, completely?

'Frankly it's shit,' the ABC's Russell Woolf told actor William McInnes, of the news that McInnes' wife, filmmaker Sarah Watt, had been diagnosed with secondary bone cancer. Watt succumbed to the disease on Friday, just weeks after the interview. 'The fact of the matter is

that some people just get cancer,' McInnes said. 'It just happens ... sometimes it's what life throws up at you.'

For *Burning Man's* Tom, hope eventually emerges in the form of his relationship with Oscar, from whose resilience and emotional honesty he is able to draw strength. It's a point that bears reflection as we, bereaved father and wordless companion, circle that Healesville track: that in the mythical task of 'moving on', strength can be found in the faithful support of family and friends.

It could even be that they are the miracle that seems to have been denied.

**Bright Eyes, 'I Believe in Symmetry'*

'Friendless' Iran loves a fight

POLITICS

Shahram Akbarzadeh

The report by the International Atomic Energy Agency accusing Iran of conducting research that goes beyond the civilian use of nuclear energy, is the most serious charge levelled against Iran by this agency. It states that 'the application of such studies to anything other than a nuclear explosive is unclear to the agency'. In diplomatic parlance, this is as damning as one might get.

Not surprisingly, the Iranian authorities have dismissed the report as 'politically motivated'. But this attitude will not be sufficient to prepare it for the impending international fallout. The United States has already signalled presenting the United Nations Security Council with tougher sanctions.

In anticipation of this report, President Obama even resorted to the language of his predecessor, by saying that all options are on the table. This is a not-so-subtle threat of a military response, even though most analysts don't see such action as realistic or helpful.

Nonetheless, the threat of a military strike against Iran is becoming a staple news item. The Israeli government has even discussed this in its cabinet. This may be brinkmanship diplomacy, but Israel has a track record of targeting nuclear facilities in its neighbourhood (Iraq in 1981, Syria in 2007).

A unilateral Israeli attack on Iran would be disastrous for the region, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has denied any decision on that point. But leaks to the media that keep the threat in the public eye help Israel maintain pressure on Iran, and set the agenda for the United States.

This new development comes at a time when Iran's Islamic regime feels particularly vulnerable. The Arab revolution has shaken its confidence, allowing internal rifts and disputes to come to the fore.

The regime felt reasonably secure in 2010 after it suppressed the Green Movement for reform. Its use of para-military thugs and brute force put an end to street demonstrations and went some way towards rebuilding the image of the regime as united and 'in charge'.

But this image has come under strain during the 2011 revolutions in the Arab world. Despite every effort by the regime to present this popular movement as vindication of its ideology and model of government, the masses have made it clear that they are not following the Iranian model. Even the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt rejected any suggestion that they follow the Iranian model.

For a while prior to the revolution, Iran seemed to be kept in good esteem by the Arab masses. But the fast pace of change has highlighted how isolated Iran really is. The growing pressure on the Bashar al-Assad regime, Iran's only state partner in the region, has brought the message home. The Islamic regime in Iran is friendless in the region and in the country.

The regime has been in denial over these developments. But the pressure is being felt behind the scenes. The most dramatic manifestation of the growing schism in the leadership has been the dispute between the Supreme Leader and the President over their respective jurisdiction.

Astonishingly, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei announced last month that the presidency could be scrapped, removing all pretences at democracy. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, on the other hand, reminded his followers (and indirectly Khamenei) that the Islamic revolution was a product of the people, and it is they who have decided the model of the Islamic system of government.

It is ironic that Ahmadinejad should appeal to popular will in order to justify a system with the Supreme Leader at the top. But the irony appears to be lost on Ahmadinejad.

While the regime is showing signs of fatigue and internal discord, the IAEA report and threats of sanctions and military action could, paradoxically, be a lifesaver. The regime thrives on tension stemming from an identifiable, external enemy. The Iraqi invasion of 1980, for example, provided the political background for the regime to consolidate its hold on power.

The IAEA report and measures taken by the United States are likely to act in a similar way, galvanising the regime's support base and solidifying its ranks. Nothing suits the Islamic regime's ideology and world view better than being challenged by the US and the international community.

The prospects of resolving this tension look bleak.

Aussie priest's theology of the scrub

THE MEDDLING PRIEST

Frank Brennan

After a six-hour drive, I motored into Rockhampton with only 20 minutes to spare. At 7.30pm, there was to be a paraliturgy in St Joseph's Cathedral celebrating the life of Michael Hayes, who had been a priest for 61 years. I headed straight for the drive-through, picked up a burger, and found a bench in the park opposite the cathedral.

I was approached by four young Aboriginal people. They had come in from the Woorabinda community, and were just hanging out in the park. We talked. I told them I had come for a funeral. They immediately expressed sympathy. I said, 'You might have known him, Father Mick Hayes?'

'He, that tall grey one? He knew me when I was a little fella.' Another said, 'He knew my family when I was just a little baby.' This is typical of the pastoral legend of Mick.

In the church a few minutes later, Fr Grove Johnson reflected that Mick was admired by all the priests of the diocese and loved for his fair dinkum integrity.

He blossomed once he started organising the youth dances back in the '60s. Then Bishop Frank Rush asked him to reconcile the Aborigines and those of us who were descendants of migrants. 'It was as if we owned the place and they were the strangers. It is so good to see so many of you the Aboriginal people here tonight to honour him.'

Then came the tribute from Carol Willie, a respected Aboriginal elder.

'Fr Mick gave our parents back their respect and their hope in their land where it had all been taken from them. He gave it to them and then they were able to give it to us. And just look at us now!

'He told our parents they were as good as anyone. He told us we were worthy. He believed in us. We had lots of meetings and decided that better houses, better jobs and better education were the key. We laughed at our parents and said it would never happen. Now we have houses, jobs and education.

'Fr Mick organised the dances and the basketball, telling us we were just like anyone else. He would come to our homes and we were ashamed but he did not care about the state of the house. He just looked at us and asked, "What are you doing? What are your plans?"

'We came to church and he told us this is God's house and we belong. "Come down the front here! You are worthy." We were shaking in our boots, nervous, a big shame job. But he prepared us for all the ministries — distributing the cup and the Eucharist, and reading. He was so proud of all we did.'

There were also tributes from family and the Filipino community to whom Mick ministered faithfully when he encountered (often lonely) Filipino brides in mining towns.

The coffin lay open and I looked upon the serene and emaciated corpse of one whose every sinew and muscle had been spent on love and service of others without a thought for self-aggrandisement or comfort. Mick was the epitome of the Aussie country priest hoping beyond hope that the 'poor little buggers' would get a break in life.

Liturgy and sacraments underpinned and expressed all he thought and believed. He was never hassled by church shortcomings and shortages — no theological doubts, no time for ecclesiastical politics. Just get them to line up with the poor, and do something practical in love and service.

Next morning, the ever gracious Bishop Brian Heenan presided once again at the mass of Christian burial. The cathedral was packed to the rafters. Every imaginable group was there, including the Baha'i community whose homes Mick would visit periodically. The leader of the Baha'i community showed me photos to prove it.

Aborigines enjoyed pride of place in the congregation. There was Phyllis Toby, aged 81, looking so gracious in her hat, and boasting 144 direct descendants. Her late husband Bill had worked alongside Mick for years as an Aboriginal pastoral worker.

John Grace, the Vicar General, preached. He pointed out that the funeral liturgy had commenced with surfacing symbols expressive of the Christian status which belongs to every baptised person. 'All other callings in life build on this solid foundation, neither displacing nor abandoning it.'

He spoke with the love of a brother priest, observing: 'His prophetic nature inclined him towards all who struggled. This trait surfaced at a period in Australian history when it was unfashionable and unacceptable to associate with people unrecognised at the core of civilian life. Mick broke through that distasteful barrier.'

Mick embodied the words of Mary MacKillop, 'Never see a need without doing something about it.' The diversity of the congregation was testament to Mick's outreach. He always had an eye for those on the edges, but especially for the first Australians.

Grace recalled that Mick, when once asked about his involvement with the Aboriginal struggles, replied, 'I love buckjumping and they excelled in it. We formed a friendship on the rough field of life and have been mates ever since'.

Grace surmised that the friendship 'began on a basis of practical, hardly polished theology, which may be termed 'The Theology of the Scrub' — an unsuspecting kind of forebear to 'The Theology of the Pub', the contemporary respectable launching pad for religion into the market place.'

No doubt Mick's no-nonsense, pushy style offended some who thought him not sufficiently attentive to Aboriginal self-determination. But one grateful Aboriginal leader expressed her appreciation by saying, 'We have moved forward to where we are because he pushed us. We are the better for it.'

As a priest, he reversed Jesus' command 'to practise what you preach' to 'preach what you practise'. As Grace said, 'There were no cracks in Mick's convictions. He was indeed a diocesan treasure.'

Many of the congregation had their first encounter with the new translation of the Mass. It was augmented by the Aboriginal Our Father composed for the 1973 Eucharistic Congress in Melbourne where Mick had been involved. After it was sung with great feeling, the bishop observed that Mick would be well pleased.

Mick's passing marks the end of an era — there will never be another like him. But the congregation left St Joseph's Cathedral confident that all God's people can sacramentalise the movements in everyone's lives, if only they are attentive to those on the edges.

It was fitting that the Mass concluded with an ecumenical tribute by Bishop Godfrey Fryer, the Anglican bishop of Rockhampton, who reflected how Mick embodied all that was best in Vatican II.

Mick was no theologian, but he was a priest to all people. Grace had observed: 'For years Mick walked the streets of the city — the mid afternoons, greeting and welcoming all who responded to his priestly outreach. He met everyone with equal ease and on their level. He possessed a hidden capacity to reduce to size anyone who sought to rise above their proper status.'

'To the townspeople, this was Father Mick on patrol, reaching out often where angels feared to tread. He was the angel, the medium of God's loving presence.'

I drove back south inspired by the people of God who are the Church of Central Queensland, grateful for the life and witness of the 'Theodore Grey' who now treads with the angels.

Reinventing Greece's paradise lost

NON-FICTION

Gillian Bouras

Homer, my Greek-American friend, travels from California to Athens once a year in order to stay in his house in Plaka and connect with his roots.

This year, at the end of my visit, which I try never to miss, he instructed me to choose a book, a present, from a crammed shelf. My task was a hard one, but I eventually chose *Inventing Paradise*, written by that great philhellene, American writer Edmund Keeley.

The book covers the period 1937 to 1947 and considers the relationship between Greece and other famous philhellenes such as writers Lawrence Durrell and Henry Miller, both of whom outstripped most other people in their passion for Greece.

Keeley suggests that Durrell and Miller, in their Greek travels, and in their interaction with legendary figures poet George Seferis and the Colossus of Maroussi, George Katsimbalis, were constructing a sort of Paradise for themselves.

Most visitors to, or foreign inhabitants of, Greece, try to do the same. I certainly did. Here I was in an enchanted land of stunning landscape, an area loaded with history, myth and legend, the poet Drosinis's blue beloved homeland.

I was coming to an understanding of the pain involved in emigration, yet this magical place was half of my children's heritage. I embraced customs and a way of life new to me with the enthusiasm of the mature innocent, and all the time Greece was making a serious takeover bid for my romantic spirit and idealistic soul.

But, inevitably, the serpents came wriggling. For example, I found Greek village fatalism hard to bear. *Oti thelie o Theos*, sighed the old women with monotonous regularity: *Whatever God wants*, while I ground my teeth in an effort not to shout God helps those who help themselves.

The mistreatment of animals and the wanton neglect of the environment appalled me, as did the education system to which my children had been sacrificed.

Then there was the implacable routine of village life, so strange to one descended from pioneer stock. The pioneer invents the day, while the peasant repeats an age-old pattern. My mother-in-law would get up, say, on 29 August, the Feast Day of the Beheading of St John, and know exactly what she had to do. And she did it.

The fasting, the rules, and the concomitant lack of self-doubt: all these things wore away at my spirit. As well, I was always on the edge of things, and learning bitterly the truth of the anthropological notion that the outsider is both dangerous and in danger.

And even though I am an economics illiterate, I also worried about the bubble of consumerism that Greeks had begun to inhabit on entry to the European Union.

The bubble burst spectacularly, as we know, and for at least two years Greeks have struggled with the knowledge that the party is over. For good.

This past week has been one of the stormiest, politically speaking, that I can recall. PASOK Prime Minister George Papandreou set Europe on its collective ear by declaring that in a January referendum the Greek people would be consulted about the debt crisis and rescue plan. This huge political gamble earned the ire of Sarkozy and Merkel, and the widespread disgust of the Greek population.

And then, having received the promise of cooperation from the opposition New Democracy party, the PM backed down, and immediately faced the prospect of a parliamentary vote of confidence.

Georgakis, (Little George) as he is often called, proved adept at pulling his own chestnuts out of what could have been a funeral pyre. I propped my eyelids open on Saturday night to listen to his address to Parliament; it was so efficacious that he subdued the rebels in PASOK, and won the vote by the skin of his teeth. But in order to form a 'government of unity', he had to promise to step down as PM.

There was still more tension on Sunday night as both Papandreou and opposition leader Samaras met with President Papoulias. Now the promise of a coalition government is there, with elections to take place in February. Lucas Papademos, expected to step in as interim prime minister, is a former deputy president of the European Central Bank. (Life is shot through with irony.)

Whatever happens, I devoutly hope there is some slight chance of Paradise being regained. But the situation is a desperately fragile one, and I am haunted by the rueful comment of a Greek journalist: *Our worst enemy is ourself, and he is armed.*

Why the Carbon Tax is good for business

POLITICS

Thomas Dreyfus



Economist Milton Friedman said back in the 1970s that all we should ask of corporations is that they make as much money for their shareholders as possible. Forget 'corporate social responsibility' or a 'social license to operate'; the sole objective of the corporation is profit-maximisation.

According to Friedman, corporations shouldn't be required to 'give back', because by pursuing profits at all costs they are already doing their very best for society.

But those were different times. The 'pure' capitalism underpinning America's neoliberal expansionism has since given way to a more nuanced understanding of the interdependent relationship between corporations and the marketplaces in which they operate.

'Sustainability' is the new corporate mantra and directors go to sleep with a well-thumbed copy of *Good Corporate Citizenship* under their pillows. At least that's what they would have us believe.

Peruse the websites of any of the companies that make up the ASX 200 and you will find a seemingly endless stream of 'our commitment to the community' and 'our vision for a sustainable future'. It is clear that savvy corporations and their senior executives and managers understand the reputational value-add that flows from positive exposure.

The problem is that corporate social responsibility has become a moniker for window-dressing and 'greenwashing'. Corporations talk the talk, but when it comes down to it, they aren't walking the walk.

This isn't some lefty conspiracy theory. In a recent survey of Australian senior managers published in the *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 82 per cent of respondents said a commitment to corporate responsibility was outside their corporations' core products or services.

In a similar study by McKinsey Consulting Group, almost nine in ten executives agreed their companies' corporate social responsibility programs were motivated by public relations or profitability.

Where did it all go wrong?

The view that acting in a socially or environmentally responsible way is a 'trade-off' for financial success is based on the idea that private economic goals like profit maximisation can be neatly distinguished from public social goals, like the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. But as any economist will tell you, the simple demarcation of public and private

concerns just doesn't hold up.

The most basic understanding of a healthy marketplace reveals as much. Demand for products and services increases when the social and natural environment in which consumers find themselves is a healthy one. The increase in demand leads corporations to produce more and, of course, to grow.

It stands to reason that if consumers suffer, so too does the relationship between corporations and the societies in which they operate. Approaching responsible corporate conduct and profitability as a zero-sum game threatens this relationship, and therefore the sustainability of the corporation itself.

At a time when our natural environment is feeling the strain, one might expect such logic to hold sway in boardrooms across the country. The endless upwards trajectory of carbon emissions coupled with international environmental catastrophes such as the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico ought to have created a corporate climate open to new ways of engaging in sustainable enterprise.

But nothing could be further from the minds of those trusty Friedmanite executives.

The business community's vitriolic objection to the Carbon Tax is a perfect example. The Tax's goal of reducing carbon pollution will benefit society in a holistic sense. Corporations, consumers, and anyone else for that matter, will be better off if we confront the challenge of climate change.

And if treasury modelling is to be accepted at its word, the scheme is also designed to encourage efficiency outcomes that will enable senior executives to keep profits front and centre.

Unsurprisingly, Australian executives, locked in the old 'CSR as marketing mindset', resist even this well-constructed regulation.

If only they'd take their cues from the international corporate arena, where the idea that corporate responsibility means more than just marketing cloaked as philanthropy has started to catch on.

The International Finance Corporation for example has recognised the importance of a commitment to enhancing 'the sustainability of private sector operations and the markets they work in'. Even the traditionally conservative Harvard Business School is in on the act, with feted economists Michael Porter and Mark Kramer arguing for a new approach to business enterprise they call 'shared value'.

Perhaps hoping for a more enlightened understanding of sustainability is idealistic. Then again, corporations speak the language of money and ultimately money is what is at stake. If corporations were willing to create economic value that also created social and environmental

value, they could ensure the long-term health of the marketplace as well as a healthier natural environment.

Asylum seeker Scrabble

POLITICS

Kerry Murphy

Last week there were three significant events affecting refugees including, tragically, more deaths.

Yet another detainee killed himself after a prolonged period in detention and while awaiting a security check. It has never been satisfactorily explained why these checks take so long. For more than 15 years, mental health professionals have been stating that prolonged detention can cause serious damage to a person's mental health. Yet the mandatory detention policy remains.

The second event was the passing of the Detering People Smuggling Bill. The law [ensures](#) that a person convicted under people smuggling offences introduced in 1999 will not be able to claim that they did not commit an offence if the people they transported were later found to be refugees. The law was introduced into Parliament and passed within a day to defeat ongoing court proceedings.

Then there were more deaths at sea when another unseaworthy boat sank. The tragedy refuelled the debate about whether a Nauru or a Malaysia based 'solution' would more effectively 'stop the boats'.

The Government and Opposition will tighten the system when challenged, but refuse to accept that the flawed system of mandatory detention is in need of major reform.

The use of language in the debate is always striking. It has evolved and adapted over the years.

Previously, governments spoke of 'border protection' as a reason for mandatory detention and methods of deterring applicants who arrive by boat. Now the tactic is to speak about 'preventing deaths at sea'. However, the politics is still driven by a philosophy of border control. The human rights of asylum seekers and international obligations are secondary considerations.

In 2001 we had the 'Pacific Solution', which was a misnomer: it was not 'pacific', and warehoused refugees rather than providing a solution. We saw, too, the creation of 'excision', whereby islands formerly considered to be part of Australia were no longer so for the purposes of Migration Law.

The prize for legalese must go to 'offshore entry person', which is defined as a 'person who arrives at an excised place after the excision time and becomes an unlawful non-citizen'. Everyone who has arrived at Christmas Island since late September 2001 has been designated

as such.

We now have ‘offshore processing’. This, too, is a misnomer, when it is used for people held in Christmas Island or in detention in Australia itself — which is definitely ‘onshore’.

The term ‘offshore processing’ was used in an attempt to pretend such cases were not subject to the same judicial scrutiny as ‘onshore’ cases. This fiction was destroyed in November 2010 when the High Court handed down its judgment in [M61 & M69](#). All of the ‘offshore processing’ of ‘offshore entry persons’ was subject to judicial oversight, in a similar manner to onshore cases.

Then, in August 2011 the High Court scuttled the misnamed ‘Malaysian solution’. Again, it was not a solution, but a system of refugee ‘warehousing’. No ‘processing’ of cases by Australia is involved at all, so again it is wrong for this to be called ‘offshore processing’.

Since this decision and the political impasse over Nauru or Malaysia, we now have the ‘Australian solution’ — the processing of applications in Australia.

Sometimes language is used to demonise refugees, such as the term ‘queue jumper’ which persists despite the fact there are no queues (acceptance into Australia’s offshore system is more like a lucky dip). In other instances, the language has adapted to avoid pejorative or inaccurate terms; for example, the term ‘illegals’ is less common now (it is not an offence to arrive without a visa).

Whatever the language used, it does not change the fact that the arrival of small numbers of people claiming asylum from some of the most dangerous countries on the planet continues to prompt both major parties to turn community fear to political advantage, rather than acknowledge our duty as a global citizen to contribute to refugee resettlement without moving our responsibilities offshore.

Meanwhile, people will continue to be damaged by this flawed system.

Agnostic's deathbed

POETRY

Lorraine McGuigan

Late Afternoon

To please me, my son tries on this coat
out of the wardrobe dark after five long
years. It rests awkwardly on unfamiliar
shoulders and I imagine he's feeling the
weight, deciding if this is gift or burden.
Adopting the body builder's stance he
tests length of sleeve, strength of seam.
The stitches hold. He grins. Something
of dad's. As he strides to his car from
a distance it could well be you, absurdly
alive, always with so much to do, places
to be. Energy is still in the winter air as I
lean on my gate until the light has gone.

What you tried to tell me

Your breath fogging up the mask,
skin stretched over cheek bones,
what you tried to say I did not know.
I could only play games, run through
the alphabet, guess words as we did
in the car with small children, those
ridiculous pleasures of long ago.
But this was quite different. You
wanted, needed something and I

couldn't crack the code. Grabbing
my hand you drew a line on your
chest, moving on to make the sign
of the cross. Or so it seemed.

Priest! You want a priest? I said,
puzzled yet pleased to read your mind.
You rolled your eyes, looked up to
the ceiling, slowly shook your head.
I never learned what you tried to say
as we reached out to each other,
and words deserted us.

One day

Not tired, not lazy
wanting no more
than the warmth
of familiar flesh
a closeness nobody
else can give.
A sign on their door
siesta: do not disturb.
All that's needed
is in this room.
Late afternoon
a struggle to remain
awake; they cling
one to the other

as if to stay
the moment

Reflections

For forty years I saw myself through John's eyes ...

Joan Didion, 'The Year of Magical Thinking'

I too saw myself through a lover's eyes.

To him I was the girl of fifty summers ago

although he, my mirror, at times reflected
a woman I did not want to recognize or

even be. This December morning I bend

to a mirror to face what five years exactly

have written on my skin. As I speak

to him of grief, its persistence,

my breath on glass blurs my image

and that appears to be as it will be.

Thoughts of death in a bookshop

So many titles bearing this word

and I recall that we seldom spoke

of death, passing on, ceasing to be.

Believers no more we kept God

at arm's length. You were in ICU

when a poet offered to pray for us,

speak in tongues. Then a cascade

of syllables falling over each other

like excited children wanting to be

heard, if not understood.

Your colleague brought a rosary

blessed by Pope John Paul only
months before he died. Closing
my palms on crystal beads,
chains of silver, Brian pressed
marks into my skin.

His gift I put away in a drawer.
The top one.

This the best

I could do.

Economics as if people mattered

ECONOMICS

Chris Middleton

The Occupy Wall Street protests have swept around the globe. While it is hard to identify a coherent program in these protests, it is clear that they have touched a nerve in Western society in regard to how the socio-economic system functions in the aftermath of the great financial crisis of 2008.

More extreme reactions can be identified in the Greek riots. The one clear note appears to be resentment at perceived corporate greed.

The Tea Party movement in the US, and its spin-offs around the world, such as the Convoy of No Confidence Rally in Canberra, express a similar anger at the status quo, though for them the growing debt crisis and a perceived culture of entitlement are the targets.

Both give expression to a crisis of confidence in the economic system and in the ability of our political processes to manage it.

Whatever the merits of such protests and the associated issues of free speech and democratic processes, it must be said that the capitalist system has shown itself over the last century as one that has been remarkably flexible and resilient.

It has seen off rival economic and political challenges from the extremes of right and left, and it is far too early to speak of any substantial challenge to its dominance today.

But perhaps there is a real taste for exploring alternatives.

In 1973 economist and philosopher E. F. Schumacher coined the phrase 'small is beautiful' – this was, in fact, the title of his seminal book on economics. In an age that had produced many great 'isms' (communism, fascism, capitalism) Schumacher advocated a more human-scale, decentralised approach to society. The subtitle to *Small Is Beautiful* was 'economics as if people mattered'.

In more recent times Schumacher has been described as the 'soul of the Green movement'. Satish Kumar, editor of *Resurgence*, sees in the Greens community and economic policies the influence of Schumacher's belief that 'the environment is not just an empirical, technical, policy matter; it is related to human values, which are a part of natural values.'

It is perhaps ironic that the Greens and other community-focused groups that are critical of the modern capitalist state draw on the ideas of a world-renowned economist, who in turn found inspiration from the social doctrine of the Church.

There is no single Catholic economic theory. The Church, however, can bring to the analysis

of economics its understanding of the human condition, the importance it attaches to community, and values that inform the nature of the society we are trying to build. There will of course be substantial disagreements and debates in applying principles to economic practice.

Throughout this last century there have been numerous attempts to apply Catholic social teaching to the social realities of the time, though few today are really aware of them.

On the left, the idea of the social gospel played a significant part in shaping the rise of the labour movement and trade unions. In Australia, Cardinal Moran exercised much influence in this, along with unionists such as William Spence.

Christian Socialism has a long and proud history and has produced a wide range of thinkers and politicians up to contemporary times. Liberation theology has been deeply influential in many Third World countries. The emphasis across most of these groups was the primacy of the common good and a concern for the poor in the modern industrial world.

On the right there have been Christian capitalists and thinkers such as Michael Novak (*The Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*), as well as right wing critics of capitalism such as the corporatists, who have some influence on expressions of fascism.

The emphasis in these was on the fundamental importance of the family unit, the role of creativity in wealth creation and seeing socialism as detracting from human freedom.

Perhaps the most influential of the faith-based approaches to economic theory is that of distributism. Schumacher was influenced by distributist ideas that tried to explore a middle road between capitalist and socialist economic theory. In the English speaking world Catholic writers such as G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc popularised its early forms.

Schumacher was especially influenced by the principle of subsidiarity that was outlined in Catholic thinking and lay at the core of distributist thought.

Subsidiarity states that power and responsibility should be located as far as possible at the lowest, most local level of a society (though the Church doesn't always reflect this principle!). Thus it is uncomfortable with big government and big business, with aspects of both socialism and capitalism.

It is worth noting too, that often the principles of Catholic social teaching are largely unknown or ignored, even within the Church, and the fruits of sustained reflection on experience across many cultures and times are not explored.

Sometimes too, that treasure is brought to our attention from surprising sources. Andrew Brown, an editor with Britain's *Guardian* newspaper and an atheist, wrote recently that:

Catholic social teaching, and the attempts to produce an economics centred around the needs of humans, rather than of money, look like the only thought-through alternatives to

unbridled market capitalism — and certainly the only ones which have a chance of widespread popular support.

Anglican theologian, philosopher and political thinker Phillip Blond has become a proponent of a form of distributism that has growing influence in British debates.

Blond is an adviser of the British Prime Minister, David Cameron. He argues that both capitalism and government are out of control, echoing ideas from both Occupy and the Tea Party. Blond speaks of an 'oscillation between extreme collectivism and extreme individualism', which for him are connected to a concentration of power both in government and the market.

He goes on to claim that Occupy and the Tea Party are 'essentially different expressions of the same phenomenon' in that they are expressions of resentment at the concentration of power in violation of the principal of subsidiarity, while the remedies they propose will fail because 'they demand salvation from either the gods of the market or government'.

In words Schumacher and the earlier Catholic distributists would have approved of, distributism, Blond argues, 'calls for going smaller and more local in search of solutions (music to the ears of classic conservatives) while leaving the central government to build the infrastructure and guarantee basics like education and health care (ideas that would warm any bleeding heart)'.

Bad week for Pell and climate change deniers

ENVIRONMENT

Tim Stephens

The last couple of weeks have not been a good time to be a climate change sceptic. On 20 October the Berkeley Earth Surface Temperature Project (BEST), led by self-described climate change sceptic Professor Richard Muller, reported the conclusions of its independent assessment of land temperature records.



Muller's team, which included fellow sceptic Professor Judith Curry, [found](#) that the BEST results agreed with those published by other groups such as NASA and the Hadley Centre in the UK which have found that global land temperatures have increased by a remarkable 1 degree Celsius in just 60 years.

In an opinion piece in the *Wall Street Journal* Muller [concluded](#) that 'global warming is real. Perhaps our results will help cool this portion of the climate debate.'

A week after the BEST team released its findings, Cardinal George Pell, Archbishop of Sydney, delivered a much-publicised [lecture](#) on climate change science to the Global Warming Policy Foundation, a think-tank in London that aggressively pushes climate change denialism.

Although titled 'One Christian Perspective on Climate Change' the lecture had precious little theological content. Instead the lecture was centrally concerned with climate science.

Pell criticised those who lazily defer to the consensus of scientists and set about himself to explain climate science, leaving the impression that he sees himself as a modern Galileo fighting against the scientific establishment. Yet what followed demonstrated a misunderstanding of the fundamentals not only of climate science but the scientific method and the history of modern science.

Pell's misuse of chaos theory and the invocation of the late Professor Edward Lorenz is particularly galling, given that [Lorenz's insight](#) that chaotic behaviour (such as the weather) may have predictable outcomes (climate) is at the heart of climate modelling.

Even if we take at face value Pell's claim that it is a matter for the layperson to decide himself what the science says, surely as part of that decision-making one ought to consider what the mainstream science has to say, even if only to dismiss it.

Pell does not refer to, for example, Professor David Archer's excellent book [Global Warming: Understanding the Forecast](#) (one of several used in science courses worldwide to teach climatology), or to any one of the many hundreds of articles on [climate change](#) published in the world's leading scientific journals such as *Science* or *Nature*.

Rather, he simply repeats the sceptical talking points of prominent climate change contrarians Professors Ian Plimer and Bob Carter, and Christopher Monckton, only one of whom, [Carter](#), has published a peer-reviewed article on climate science. All [three](#) have been repeatedly shown to have no credibility in climate science, frequently making wild and inaccurate claims.

The [response](#) by Australian climate scientists to Pell's speech was understandably scathing. Dr Karl Braganza, Manager of Climate Monitoring at the Bureau of Meteorology, told [Crikey](#) the Cardinal's argument 'that climate science lacks empirical evidence is specious. There is lots of observational evidence for the greenhouse effect, and the enhanced greenhouse effect.'

Lest you think this assessment of Pell harsh, bear in mind he has [accused](#) climate scientists of having 'fiddled with the evidence' in a reference to United Kingdom researchers whose conduct was [confirmed](#) to be entirely proper and scientific.

Regrettably Pell seems entirely uninterested in the mainstream science. Not even the BEST conclusions merited a mention in his lecture, allowing him to repeat the untruth that global warming has stopped. His lecture is a collage of climate denial talking points that one finds on the weirder conspiracy sites on the internet.

Reading between the lines, it is apparent from Pell's lecture that it is not an informed scientific view that is driving his understanding, but rather his politics. He clearly dislikes the Greens; I am with him on this for various reasons, including the fact that they support abortion and oppose nuclear energy.

But ideology is no guide to physical reality, and political views should not drive scientific ones. Whether one is left or right on the political spectrum the same laws of physics apply, and it is those laws of nature that determine what is happening to the world's climate.

Climate change science is like any other area of science, although it is one where there has been very considerable attention for a considerable period by a considerable number of scientists. The near unanimity of the conclusions reached on the rate and cause of recent warming is remarkable.

In a 2010 [paper](#) in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* by Professor William Anderegg et al., it was found that around 97 per cent of climate scientists actively publishing in the peer-reviewed literature supported the thesis that human activities are causing climate change.

It is no surprise then that every major science academy including the [Vatican Academy of Sciences](#) have warned that the world is warming and that we are causing it. Other Church leaders have accepted this reality; the Archbishop of San Salvador, Msgr Jose Luis Escobar Alas, declared last week that climate change is the [most serious](#) problem confronting humanity.

Climate science is complex and [not explainable in sound-bites](#) . Of necessity the layperson must defer to the experts. If Pell had offered views on neuroscience, quantum computing, immunology, the geology of Mars or any of the other topics covered in the latest issue of [Nature](#) we would rightly be scratching our heads at his intervention, unless he truly were a polymath of Galilean standing.

But the discourse of climate change has become so debased and post-modern that any views, however bizarre, can be given an airing. Like homeopathy and astrology, Pell's pseudo-science should be ignored, and the scientific method allowed to continue, however unpalatable the conclusions may be.

Richard Branson's advice to Alan Joyce

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

Perhaps the best thing Qantas CEO Alan Joyce could do at this time is to read the self-help business advice of Richard Branson, the co-founder and part owner of rival airline Virgin.

The essence of Branson's philosophy is to treat your staff as if they were your friends. He believes the most important characteristic in a business leader is to be able to demonstrate that you genuinely like people. '[If](#) people know you care, it brings out the best in them.'

Branson says: '[A](#) company is people ... employees want to know ... am I being listened to or am I a cog in the wheel? People really need to feel wanted.'

Joyce is doing the opposite, [declaring](#) war on his staff and their unions: 'They are trashing our strategy and our brand. They are deliberately destabilising the company.'

What is most revealing is the strength of his [hostility](#) towards worker input into how to run Qantas. '[The unions] are sticking by impossible claims that are not just to do with pay, but also to do with unions trying to dictate how we run our business.'

He dismisses pilots' demands to preserve Qantas' [safety culture](#) as self-interest. This is despite the fact that the company's own website [boasts](#) that this culture is a point of difference that gives Qantas an advantage over its competitors.

'Among Qantas pilots, there is a clear culture of safety rules being unbreakable. Pilots who have worked at other airlines before coming to Qantas often report that the culture of adherence to safety rules and regulations is stricter than anywhere else in the world.'

Treating workers as partners rather than cogs not only makes good business sense. It is an ethical imperative, according to an [opinion paper](#) published last week by the Edmund Rice Business Ethics Initiative.

The paper analyses Joyce's ethical intent expressed in his declaration 'My priority is to do the right thing by Qantas'. It asserts that Joyce remains vague about what he means by 'Qantas', but most probably means shareholders, management and the Board rather than stakeholders, which includes groups such as workers, the travelling public and the tourist industry.

'In the ethical realm, 'doing the right thing' must extend to others affected by what the actor does. For this reason, many businesses talk about 'stakeholders' not just 'stockholders'.

'Part of stakeholder capitalism is a recognition of the importance of a 'social license to operate' that may be withdrawn if the society where the business operates comes to the

opinion that the business is damaging that society.'

The Edmund Rice Initiative is not critical of the increase in Joyce's pay and bonuses, which was approved the day before he grounded the airline. However it suggests profit sharing bonuses should be given not only to management but to staff at all levels, who will consequently be motivated to improve their productivity and quality of service.

The lesson for Joyce is that acting ethically in such ways could well prove to be the most profitable business strategy, as his rival Branson already knows.

Principles for a coherent refugee policy

THE MEDDLING PRIEST

Frank Brennan

In 2009, I was privileged to chair the National Human Rights Consultation Committee. During that inquiry we commissioned some very detailed research on Australian attitudes. A random telephone poll of 1200 Australians disclosed that over 70 per cent of us think that the mentally ill, the aged, and persons with disabilities need greater protection from violation of their human rights.

Quizzed about a whole range of minority groups, there was only one group in relation to whom the Australian population was split right down the middle. While 28 per cent thought that asylum seekers needed greater protection, 42 per cent thought we had the balance right, and 30 per cent thought that asylum seekers deserved less protection.

By way of comparison, 32 per cent thought gays and lesbians needed greater protection, 50 per cent thought we had the balance right, and only 18 per cent thought gays and lesbians deserved less protection.

Australia is a long time signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 protocol. It is one of the few countries in the region having ratified the Convention. Indonesia and Malaysia are not parties to the Convention. Since the Vietnam War, there have been periodic waves of boat people heading for Australia seeking asylum. These boat people often pass through Malaysia and/or Indonesia.

Under the Convention, parties undertake three key obligations:

1. Not to impose for illegal entry or unauthorised presence in their country any penalty on refugees coming directly from a territory where they are threatened, provided only that the refugees present themselves without delay and show good cause for their illegal entry or presence.

2. Not to expel refugees lawfully in their territory save on grounds of national security or public order.

3. Not to expel or return ('refoule') refugees to the frontiers of any territory where their lives or freedom would be threatened.

Given the wide gap between the first and the third world, it is not surprising that some people fleeing persecution will look further afield for more secure protection together with more hopeful economic and educational opportunities.

Having the status of a refugee has never been accepted as a passport to the migration country of one's choice. Then again, the international community has never been so callous or

short-sighted as to say that during a mass exodus one has access only to the country next door in seeking protection even if you have family, friends or community members living in a more distant country.

The responsible nation state that is pulling its weight will open its borders to the refugees from the adjoining countries and also expect some flow over from major conflicts wherever they might occur.

It is no surprise that Afghan and Iraqi refugees have turned up on the doorstep of all first-world countries in recent years. Nor is it surprising that Sri Lankans fleeing the effects of protracted civil war have arrived in countries like Australia.

With the ease of international travel and the services of people smugglers, it has become very difficult to draw the distinction between refugees who are coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom has been threatened and those refugees who, having fled, have already been accorded protection, but have now taken an onward journey seeking a more durable solution or sustainable migration outcome.

First-world governments say they cannot tolerate the latter because they would then be jeopardising their own migration programs and weakening their borders every time there was a refugee-producing situation in the world no matter how close or how far it occurred from their own shores.

This problem is not solved by drawing careful legal distinctions, because one person's preferred migration outcome is simply another person's first port of call where they thought there was a realistic prospect of getting protection for themselves and their families.

The problem cannot be solved by refugee advocates pretending that it does not exist or hoping that it will simply go away. Neither can it be solved by governments pretending that all persons who arrive on their shores without a visa are secondary movers.

When mass movements occur during a conflict, it is necessary for governments to cooperate, ensuring that adequate protection can be given to persons closer to their home country before then closing off the secondary movement route except by means of legal migration.

When countries of first asylum are stretched and unstable, other countries must be prepared to receive those who travel further seeking protection.

In the present debate on refugee policy, many people forget that the Howard Government created a nexus between the number of successful onshore asylum claims and the number of places available for humanitarian offshore cases. Usually we take 12—13,000 humanitarian applicants each year.

Advocates like myself unsuccessfully argued that even those countries without a net

migration program would be required to provide a durable solution for refugees within their jurisdiction, and that therefore there should be no nexus.

We need to admit that there is presently no strong community demand for the nexus once again to be broken. The nexus is judged by the community to be morally acceptable as well as politically expedient. This means that every successful onshore asylum seeker takes a place which otherwise would have been available to an offshore humanitarian applicant. Offshore humanitarian applicants do include very needy, deserving refugees without access to people smugglers.

This means that the Australian system without discrimination gives preference to three groups of onshore asylum seekers over offshore humanitarian applicants. Those three groups are transparently honest visa holders whose country conditions deteriorate after they have arrived in Australia, visa holders who make less than full disclosure about their asylum claims when applying for a visa to enter Australia, and unvisaed refugees who arrive by boat often having engaged the services of a people smuggler.

Strangely it is only the third group which causes great community angst even though most of that group, unlike the second group who come by plane with visas, are transparently honest about their intentions and their status.

When boats are not turned back, those asylum seekers arriving without visas should be detained only for the purposes of health, security and identity checks. Once those checks are successfully completed with a decision that the known applicant poses no health or security risk and if there be too great a caseload for final determination of claims within that time, these asylum seekers should be humanely accommodated while their claim process is completed.

Community groups should be invited to assist with the provision of such accommodation to those applicants most likely to have a successful refugee claim. Those unlikely to succeed should continue to be accommodated by government or its contractor being assured availability for removal on final determination of an unsuccessful claim.

I continue to concede that their refugee claims need not be subject to full judicial review provided we have in place a process which accords them natural justice and complies with the requirements set down by UNHCR. Given that we are a net migration country, those who establish a refugee claim should be granted a permanent visa, thereby being able to get on with their lives.

Until the treatment of asylum seekers in transit countries such as Indonesia is enhanced, we Australians must expect that some of the world's neediest refugees will engage people smugglers and come within reach of our authorities. For as long as they do not excessively skew our migration program, we should allow those who are proven to be genuine refugees to settle permanently and promptly so they may get on with their lives and make their contribution to our national life.

Let's not forget the honest assessment of immigration detention centres by Professor Patrick McGorry, Australian of the Year: 'You could almost describe them as factories for producing mental illness and mental disorder.'

Community partnerships with government could assist with the accommodation and transition needs of those asylum seekers most likely to succeed in their claims. In hindsight, we know that proposals such as turning back the boats, temporary protection visas for those who will be refugees for many years to come, and the Pacific Solution are not only unprincipled; they fail to stem the tide nor to reduce the successful claims.

We always need to ask, 'Why is it right to treat the honest, unvisaed boat person more harshly than the visaed airplane passenger who fails to declare their intention to apply for asylum?' If the answer is based only on consequences, then ask, 'Would not the same harsh treatment of the visaed airplane passenger have the same or even greater effect in deterring arrivals by onshore asylum seekers?' The Qantas 747 does not evoke the same response as the leaky boat, does it?

The Gillard Government's proposal for a regional processing centre in East Timor was unprincipled and unworkable, as is its proposed Malaysia solution, and as would be a simple restoration of the Pacific Solution by an Abbott government.

The Malaysia solution proposes a serious moral recalibration of the acceptable bottom line, wanting to move us from offshore processing to offshore dumping. At least the bona fide refugee under John Howard's Pacific solution was assured eventual resettlement in a third country, usually Australia or New Zealand. Under the Malaysia solution the bona fide refugee would be sent to the end of a queue which is 95,000 long.

The Abbott Opposition has now conceded that boats can be towed back only with the full cooperation of the Indonesians, and even then there would be serious questions about safety at sea, invoking our obligations under the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1974 Safety of Life at Sea Convention. Philip Ruddock has conceded that the Pacific Solution second time around would not be sufficient to deter hazardous boat journeys from Indonesia.

The long term work still needs to be done in Indonesia which is the main transit country to Australia. Both sides of politics know that the vulnerable will continue to arrive on our shores uninvited. Independent scholars need to maintain the faith of Petro Georgiou who told our Parliament in his valedictory speech:

I believed that politics was a tough business. There were two dominant parties, they were in conflict, they had power and they had resources. They were strong and evenly matched. They punched and they counterpunched, and sometimes low blows were landed. In my view, however, scapegoating the vulnerable was never part of the political game. I still believe this.

Let's not forget that it is only because we are an island nation continent that we can

entertain the absurd notion that we can seal our borders from refugee flows. All borders are porous in our globalised world. We need to manage those borders firmly and decently.

That is the challenge. At the very least, we must remain committed to processing and resettling those bona fide refugees who reach our shores regardless of the cooperative regional solutions we put in place to deter their arrival in the first place.