



Te Ope Whakaora

Public Sphere

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News & Updates from The Salvation Army Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit | **October 2012**

‘The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much, it is whether we provide enough to those who have little.’ Franklin D Roosevelt

EDITORIAL

Recently an American political commentator remarked that there was a time when collaboration and compromise between politicians was common, even when different parties held the ascendancy in Congress, the Senate or the Presidency. More recently the dialogue has been characterised by confrontation, personalised criticism, overt expressions of hatred and total intransigence in negotiations—even when the failure to negotiate could create harm for many people. Some have seemingly hoped, even worked, for chaos, to hasten the downfall of the ‘enemy’. The commentator suggested that these changes towards more bitter confrontation meant the American political process was becoming more like a parliamentary system where the job of the opposition is always to ‘oppose’.

In New Zealand, the continuation of a government-funded social welfare system is accepted by most, in principle. As usual, the party currently in government is proposing new policies and practices aimed at ‘improving’ the existing system; and the opposition is indeed ‘opposing’ the proposal. Each side is engaged in a dialogue informed by their distinctive world views, and often characterised by personalised criticism and challenges to the integrity of the other.

The current proposals for welfare reform are justified by concern for the cost of the current situation; and by an argument that ‘not working’ brings vulnerability, limited life choices, poverty and poor health whereas paid work brings self-respect, a better life and a better future for the working person and their family. The opposition argues that the proposal is a threat to the rights of unemployed people, that many of those seeking employment will not have the training and experience required to match the

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available jobs, that there are actually not enough jobs in the current financial environment, and that tightening eligibility for the Domestic Purposes Benefit is a threat to both women and children.

Inevitably, the debate will continue beyond the passing of the current legislation, because there are different perspectives on this and other issues. However, it is important for each one of us to imbue our dialogue with a shared commitment to each other’s wellbeing, and a shared unwillingness to make life difficult for our neighbours. It is the only way—isn’t it?

Judith Christensen Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit

UNIT NEWS

Engaging and connecting

Following the recent report on poverty by The Children’s Commissioners Expert Advisory Group, we will consult with a number of clients from the The Salvation Army’s Manukau Community Ministries. They will provide feedback on the reports proposals and hopefully give their own ideas on ways to alleviate poverty, and this will help inform our submission on the report.

The Unit is also currently engaged in discussions with some members of senior management and Board members within Housing New Zealand on policy and operation issues emerging as a result of a number of changes to how they allocate, manage and deal with tenancy issues in State houses. In some communities this seems to have brought a number of problems, frustrations and problematical issues for people The Salvation Army works with. The Unit would be interested in any information or experience centres or services would like to share around Housing New Zealand so we can include these in the discussions.

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We welcome your feedback → **Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit** | New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga Territory | **Auckland Office:** PO Box 76249, Manukau City, e: social_policy@nzf.salvationarmy.org, p: (09) 261 0883, m: 027 450 6944, f: (09) 262 4103 | **Wellington Office:** p: (04) 802 6269

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News, updates and *revelations* from The Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit | September 2012

We are in the process of formulating a letter to MPs on what amendments we'd like to see added to the Alcohol Reform Bill. Given that raising the purchasing age has been dismissed by Parliament, lobbying MPs on these other amendments is vital to ensuring a law with some teeth is passed. We'd appreciate your feedback on which amendments you think would have the greatest impact on your communities. Email your suggestions to justin_latif@nzf.salvationarmy.org.

Just Action 2013

Planning is going well for our national social justice conference Just Action 2013. Leading social justice speaker Shane Claiborne and civil rights activist Dr John Perkins have both accepted our invitations. We're also in talks with two other leading voices in this arena. For an added practical element to the conference we plan to have a Habitat For Humanity house next to the conference venue, which conference delegates, interested volunteer groups and the recipient family will build. The house will then be moved to a nearby suburb for a deserving family to move into.

Over the upcoming tertiary holidays we would like to employ an intern to work with us to help prepare for this conference and with our other activities—so if you know anyone who could be interested in our work and helping with this conference please email: justin_latif@nzf.salvationarmy.org

PUBLICATIONS

Submissions

At the moment the Unit is responding to a number of pieces of legislation in Parliament.

Currently submissions are being drafted on:

- ♦ Lobbying Disclosures Bill
- ♦ Paid Parental Leave Bill
- ♦ Prohibition of Gang Insignia Bill
- ♦ Welfare Amendment Bill

The Unit has also been asked to comment on the upcoming Family Court changes and the Youth Offending Strategy Review.

Over the next nine months The Unit is also making some brief submissions to some of the 21 Auckland Council Local Board area plans. We are acutely aware of some of the issues facing our nation's largest city, therefore we are intent on contributing to the policy and community development plans from the Auckland Council, particularly through submissions to the Council's over-arching Auckland Plan, the Unitary Plan and other strategies.

If you would like to provide any feedback or thoughts to these submissions, please contact ronji_tanielu@nzf.salvationarmy.org.

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