



Te Ope Whakaora

Public Sphere

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News & Updates from The Salvation Army Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit | June 2013

Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripples of hope, and these ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance. Robert F Kennedy Jr.

EDITORIAL

I became a paid-up member of a political party this week. With my \$25 fee, I seamlessly joined the clunking machinery of a parliamentary party. My hope is that by becoming affiliated with this particular political party I can learn how the wheels of power work in our area. However, after a little reading I was surprised to learn that less and less people are doing the same.

It seems that actual membership to political parties has been in steady decline across the developed world since the 1950s and 1960s. This has been seen most dramatically in Western Europe where party members now make up less than two per cent of the voting public in the United Kingdom, France and Ireland.

In New Zealand, it's only a little better—party memberships have dropped from around 24 per cent of voters in the 1960s, and now sit at just under three per cent of the electorate.

And not only has voter engagement on a membership level declined, voting numbers have also dramatically dropped. At the last election, just over 70 per cent of 3.2 million eligible voters made it the polling booths. Enrolment on the electoral roll itself among Aotearoa's youngest cohort of voters (18-24 years old) sits at an abysmal 73 per cent, compared to 98 per cent of those in the 40-plus age bracket.

As the old Russian saying goes, 'We get the government that we deserve'. Perhaps disengaged youth voters should not be surprised to read that nearly 50 per cent of the \$22 billion social welfare budget is allocated to superannuation, while spending for youth training schemes and transition programmes make up less than one per cent of allocated monies. One could argue that the Government is skewing

Public Sphere is an e-newsletter from The Salvation Army's Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit.

its spending priorities toward those who vote, but my main issue of concern is people's overall apathy about getting involved in the political process.

It doesn't take a political science degree to work out that lower party membership and voter participation rates result in less accountability for our nation's leaders. However, as another electoral cycle rolls around for our local body politicians, maybe the alarming statistics should make us consider whether we should throw our own hats into the ring. Despite the relative obscurity of the local body politician compared to his or her counterpart in the Beehive, they have incredible power in the communities in which they serve. For example, these often unheralded leaders can have a huge influence on the number of liquor and gambling outlets opened. They wield discretionary budgets to organise sports events, festivals and local infrastructure enhancements. And they also have the opportunity to use their influence and resources to improve community cohesion in a way few can.

With only a few months before nominations close, give serious thought to whether your local health board, licensing trust or community board could do with your input. When more of us engage and serve in civic institutions, we create the 'ripples of hope' that Robert F Kennedy Jr. spoke of. This makes us contributors, not just bystanders, to the waves of change in our neighbourhoods.

Justin Latif

PUBLICATIONS

Pasifika Report Launch

'More than Churches, Rugby and Festivals'

On Monday 20 May, the Unit launched its first State of the Nation report on Pasifika peoples. The report examines the past and present social progress and contribution of

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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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Pasifika peoples in New Zealand and challenges policy makers, the Pacific community and all New Zealanders to understand these realities in order to respond and to shape Pacific development and progress in the future.

Thank you to all those who attended the launch event. Over 100 Pacific Leaders, MPs and representatives from community organisations, churches, Auckland Council, education, health and the media came together at Otahuhu Salvation Army to help launch the report and discuss the issues and challenges it raises. MPs from Labour, National, the Greens and New Zealand First were given the opportunity to respond and give their commentary at the launch.



Coverage of the report was present in various media outlets, including a commentary in the [New Zealand Herald](#) and on [TV One News](#). We look forward to further dialogue and debates in response to our findings and the challenges the report presents.

Read or download our Pasifika Report [online](#).

If you are interested in a hard copy, email ronji_tanielu@nzf.salvationarmy.org. We also welcome feedback and are willing to meet about the report and offer presentations if that would be helpful to you.

Prevent People Trafficking Conference Report

In April, the Unit partnered with the US Embassy and ECPAT Child Alert to host the Prevent People Trafficking Conference. Over 110 delegates and guest speakers assembled for two days with the sole focus of recognising

and preventing the trafficking of people within New Zealand and the wider Pacific.

PREVENT PEOPLE TRAFFICKING CONFERENCE 2013



A full report on the conference by our Social Justice Advocate Chris Frazer is now available [online](#).

Housing Report

Senior Policy Analyst Alan Johnson is currently working on a report that will produce a number of proposals around housing policy and the accommodation supplement. This will be launched at the end of July.

UNIT NEWS

Submissions

The Unit made submissions on two new Housing Reform Bills this month. The Housing Accords and Special Housing Areas Bill passed its first reading and was referred to the select committee under urgency in May, and the Social Housing Reform (Housing Restructuring and Tenancy Matters Amendment) Bill will be before the Select Committee in early July.

Recent submissions and publications from the Unit can be viewed on our [website](#).

Meeting and Greeting

Unit Staff engagements this month have included meetings with the Auckland City Council, Committee on Auckland Social Housing Unit, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Housing, plus participation in the Alcohol Issues Forum and the Housing Corporation Stakeholders Forum.

Just Action Conference

18–19 September 2013 Vodafone Events Centre, Manukau, New Zealand

Secure your registration and join us at Just Action 2013. The event will be an invaluable opportunity to be equipped for social justice action and hear from renowned social justice activists such as Dr John M. Perkins, Shane Claiborne and Matt Friedman, and to meet and network with others

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passionate about creating a more just New Zealand and world.

If you'd like to advertise this event to your church, community group or youth group please contact justin_latif@nzf.salvationarmy.org.nz.



 Rebuilding Justice Together
Conference | 18-19 September
TELSTRA CLEAR PACIFIC EVENTS CENTRE, MANUKAU

The Just Action team can provide you with flyers, posters, a promotional YouTube video, newsletter inserts, a display banner (short term loan). It's also possible for one of our team to talk to your group, if you wish. Get in touch with Justin today to book a date/time.

Generous earlybird and student discounts are available, and you can now get a group discount. If you register 8 people you get a 9th registration for free!

Register now at www.salvationarmy.org.nz/justaction. Here you can also find more information on the conference and on our headline speakers, plus accommodation, transport and eating options.

Get the latest updates, news, take part in social justice discussion and hear more about our speakers on the [Just Action Facebook page](#).

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