

INFORM-ACTION

Newsletter of the Social Action Office - Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes Queensland

When the Crunch Comes ...

What's the bottom line that pulls one up by their boot straps and determines how they act? What does one do when the crunch comes in having to decide between upholding core human values central to an agreed upon Universal Declaration of Human Rights (and other UN conventions) and that of contradictory government policy? The answer to these two questions is being played out in front of us at present in Australia with the situation of mandatory detention of asylum seekers and refugees. The Government is holding fast to its policy with its Minister *doing her job* while several Government backbenchers, with Petro Georgio in the lead, introducing two Bills into parliament demanding a change to this inhumane legislation. We can *Thank God* for Petro and those supporting the Bills and pray that their integrity and courage be strengthened. We must pray as well that those *just doing their jobs* may see not just with eyes of the *party line* but with human hearts full of compassion.

We are at a serious crossroad in this country – we need those we elect to parliament to act in this fashion:

*... to watch over the community and its parts;
but in protecting private individuals in their rights,
chief consideration ought to be given
to the weak and the poor.*

*Quadragesimo Anno (The Fortieth Year) #25
On Reconstruction of the Social Order – Pius XI, 1931*

We are a long way from this ideal but we must keep reminding these people that, that is their duty. We must, in solidarity and following the leadership of so many leaders of faith communities, continue to lobby for change. Its crunch time for all of us and, especially as religious women and men, we have a job to do and it's a tall order. If we are to continue to *live into* our prophetic role in the church and society we cannot be *safe ships in the harbour because that is not what the ships are built for* – we have the ability and capacity to be



Courtesy of http://www.usp.com.au/fps/exp-life_in_baxter.html

out riding the rough seas of our current context – speaking very loudly and publicly about the injustices around us.

So we say: **what do I do?** *Do I sit back and bemoan the terrible policies and state of affairs or do I take action?* We live in a time when we have so much information about great humanitarian disasters as well as a time of great change. Maybe we need to ask: *Do I succumb to both compassion and change fatigue?* It is very easy to do this but it means that our “ship” is idle in the safe harbour.

Two very practical actions that any of us can easily take are enclosed with this INFORM-A^{CTION}:

- 1) write to and support Petro Georgio and other MPs who want change to the untenable mandatory detention policy
- 2) sign and get other people to sign the housing petition which the Josephites will present to federal parliament on Mary MacKillop's feastday on 8 August.

Annette Arnold rsj
Director

2005 - The International Year of Microcredit and SAO

Since March the SAO has joined with a local community association to establish a Microcredit project that will enable women and children (especially those experiencing domestic violence) to enter suitable, safe and affordable housing. The SAO is always looking for ways to keep connected with the grassroots reality of the issues it lobbies on and this is an excellent example. The SAO would like to hear from any other groups, especially ministries of religious congregations, who would like to network with us. Please contact Annette Arnold for more details on (07) 3891 5866 or email annette@sao.clriq.org.au.

Tribute to Fr Ted Kennedy



Ted Kennedy at the ANTaR 'Sea of Hands' celebration, Redfern Park, October 2002

*Photo by Catherine De Lorenzo
Used with permission*

Early in the morning of 17 May 2005, Ted Kennedy passed over from this life and no doubt was welcomed into the afterlife by hundreds of fellow travellers who knew the depth of his commitment to living the Christian gospel. If we think of a saint as someone whose example shows us how we should all act, Ted is no doubt a saint in the very best sense of the word. His life will continue to provide inspiration and courage to many people in their living of the gospel.

The Passing of Edward (Ted) P Kennedy

In 1973 a fresh band of Sisters of St Joseph were setting off for Walgett in western NSW. In the January of that year, Father Ron Perrett of Armidale Diocese who held a responsible position in the diocese approached our Provincial. Ron requested that the sisters attend an in-service at the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary residence at Potts Point, Sydney. It was there that I met Ted Kennedy. During those days at Walgett and for years after, I spent time at Redfern with other religious sisters and brothers, many who remain part of a network to this day. We were moulded and strengthened by Ted's example as well as words, often in homilies within St Vincent's Church at daily Mass or at funerals which we accompanied to Waverly Cemetery where Ted now lies buried. The Gospel at Ted's funeral Mass was the 'The Beatitudes', the charter of Ted's example and a mantra for those who dispersed from Redfern

to be with Kooris, Murriss and others of the First Peoples or who simply went out to evangelise after having received the Good News from the parish priest of St Vincent de Paul and from those whom it served.

We have lost a mentor in and champion of that Good News.

Kay McPadden rsj

*Peace demands the most heroic labor
and the most difficult sacrifice.
It demands greater heroism than war.
It demands greater fidelity to the truth and
a much more perfect purity of conscience.*

Thomas Merton

Trafficking in People: A Modern-Day Form of Slavery

Sr Pauline Coll, Good Samaritan Sister and former Eco-Justice Coordinator of the Social Action Office and its current Administrative Assistant, is very involved in the emerging Australian network around the trafficking of women.

On 13 May 2001 the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), representing one million women religious in their Institutes, declared:

our determination to work in solidarity with one another, within our religious communities and in countries in which we are located, to address insistently at every level the abuse and sexual exploitation of women and children, with particular attention to the trafficking of women which has become a lucrative multi-national business.

Throughout the world, conferences of religious have passed resolutions supporting the call for education and action laid out earlier by the UISG.

The illegal international trade in people is a multi-billion dollar business that provides huge profits at little or no risk to traffickers. According to the United Nations, human trafficking rates third behind the crimes of drug and firearms trafficking in terms of profit-making capacity. Trafficking in women, men and children constitutes a grave violence against women, men and children, and is a breach of their

fundamental human rights. Almost all countries are involved in trafficking in some way. Countries are described as being source, transit or destination countries.

Australia is certainly a destination country

Recently in Sydney and Melbourne there have been unsuccessful attempts to prosecute traffickers. The crime of trafficking covers a wide range of offences, including, but not limited to, murder, assault, sexual assault, kidnapping, extortion, unlawful detention, slavery, sexual slavery, debt bondage and conspiracy.

An accepted international definition of trafficking is found in the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children supplementing the Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime, which says:

"Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.

Exploitation shall include, at the minimum, the exploit-

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Landmine Action

In late 2004 the Social Action Office once again took on the southern Queensland coordination of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines Australian Network. Annette Arnold has taken on the role of coordinator but preparation for the 2005 Landmine Action Week in May was carried out by SAO Project Worker, Alison Francis.

A decision was made to focus on young people and secondary schools were contacted and invited to participate in an *ODD SOCK DAY* as a way of highlighting the impact of landmines on people's lives. People were encouraged to wear odd socks, stockings or shoes, and pay a gold coin donation towards the ongoing work of the campaign. This idea was not only taken up by some schools but by many workplaces as well. Resource materials were prepared and distributed.

An exciting development with the involvement of young adults in the landmine campaign is the *Bombs Begone* campaign which originated at Methodist Ladies College in Melbourne. This campaign will be launched in Queensland on 29 July at Corpus Christi College Nundah. Two students from Melbourne will join with students from several Queensland schools to share their experience and begin the campaign in Queensland. If any person or school community is interested in being part of this please contact the SAO as soon as possible as there are a limited number of places in the workshop.



Odd Sock Day 2005 at Justice Place - Kay McPadden rsj (Murri Ministry), Alison Frances (SAO Project Worker) and Carmel Bennett fmm (Caritas)

LANDMINES – one of the ongoing problems: Anti-Vehicle Mines

What's the problem?

- Anti-vehicle mines go on killing and maiming (mainly killing) long after conflicts have ended;
- Anti-vehicle mines have an even greater effect in stopping or delaying the movement of essential goods and humanitarian aid in impoverished mine-affected countries than anti-personnel landmines. Anti-vehicle mines can create a many-fold increase in the cost of the shipment of essential goods and humanitarian aid if air-lifting becomes necessary. The number of people who die and suffer as a result of the impact of anti-vehicle mines on the transport of essential goods and humanitarian aid is likely to greatly outnumber the number of people killed and maimed directly by anti-vehicle mine instances; and
- Anti-vehicle mines are indiscriminate, they fail to distinguish between civilians and military personnel.

ACTION: You can write to The Hon Alexander Downer, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600 OR Senator The Hon Robert Hill, Minister for Defence, and ask them to:

- Legislate a ban on the production, transfer, importation and use of anti-vehicle mines in Australia and by Australians other than by the Australian Defence Forces for training in demining and avoiding the hazards of anti-vehicle mines;
- Pass a motion supporting the development of an international treaty that would ban the production, transfer, importation and use of anti-vehicle mines globally.

Visit this site to download the petition and get people to sign it: <http://australia.icbl.org/AVMPetition.doc>

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ation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

There is certainly a need to be active in working to stop this modern-day slavery. We need to be informed about this evil – we need to collaborate with others who are trying to work at different levels against trafficking and for the victims. One of the most difficult areas in this modern-day form of slavery is that of DEMAND. It is one of the more difficult questions that continues to be researched.

Information about Trafficking is available on many websites. Links are available through the SAO website.

Pauline Coll sgs

USIG website re trafficking: <http://www.usig.org/English/histdeclaration.html>



Poster by K Robertson
<http://www.forceten.org.au/>
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Book Review

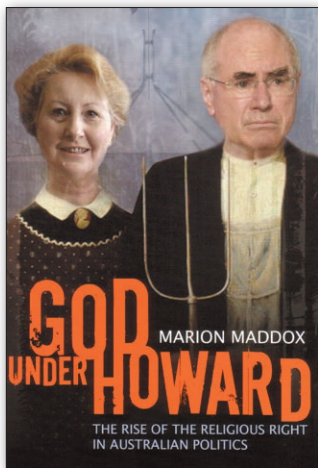
God Under Howard - The Rise of the Religious Right in Australian Politics
by Marion Maddox

Allen & Unwin, ISBN:
1741145686

The SAO staff and 2005 Planning Group awaited the launch of this book with great interest as Marion Maddox's analysis of the intersection of religion and politics in Australia has been of significance to the SAO since the 2001 Federal election. Just prior to the 2001 election, Maddox launched her first book *For God and Country: Religious Dynamics in Australian Federal Politics*. It was prior to and following that election that the SAO experienced a sharp increase in criticism from people who do not accept that the Gospel of Jesus means lobbying for change of policies that impact negatively and heavily on those most disadvantaged in society and our planet - this being the SAO's mandate and work. Maddox's insights helped inform the analysis of the SAO 2001 election campaign (*Fair Go, Fair Share in Income Health and Housing*) and the criticism it received. Since that time Australia has seen a much stronger growth in the religious right and its relationship to politics, so in 2005 when the SAO is undergoing further analysis of its mode of operation, it is once again informed by Marion's work.

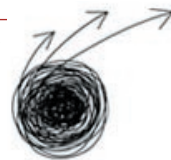
Marion Maddox, with two doctorates (theology and political philosophy), teaches at Victoria University in Wellington New Zealand, where she specialises in the subject of religion and politics. She is an Australian, who has previously worked in both Adelaide and South Australian Universities. Her extensive and thorough research and experience more than adequately positions her to present her analysis of how religion and politics are interfacing in the current Australian context. The many book reviews of this text indicate that she is as much liked as hated for this work. The SAO Planning Group have had the opportunity to reflect with Marion on our mandate and her work has provided some very valuable insights into both the context we find ourselves in and the basis for criticisms we have received. It is an intriguing and excellent read and if people are wanting some sound research and an informed opinion on the current interface of religion and politics in Australia, then this is an excellent text. If people want to understand more why threatened politicians want politically active people of faith to stick to their so called "moral" issues, and not enter into social issues, then there is another good reason to read this book.

Annette Arnold rsj



FOR YOUR CALENDAR

2005 International Year of Microcredit
www.yearofmicrocredit.org/



JUNE

- 10 Myall Creek Massacre 1838
- 12 World Day Against Child Labour
- 14 The Society for the Promotion of Universal and Permanent Peace founded in London 1816
- 15 King John of England put his seal to the *Magna Carta* 1215
- 17 World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought
- 19 Equal pay for women in Australia 1969
- 20 World Refugee Day
- 23 First Universal Peace Congress opened in Paris 1889
- 26 International Day in Support of Victims of Torture
- 26 Native South Africans celebrated Freedom Day with bonfires and candles 1953, initiated by Chief Albert Luthuli who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1960
- 27 Helen Keller born in Tuscomb, Alabama 1880
- 30 Introduction of unemployment benefits in Australia 1945

JULY

- 2 Voluntary Native Title Agreement signed between the Gungari People and the Cowley family
- 3 National Aboriginal and Islander Week begins
- 6 The Dalai Lama born in Tibet 1935 - awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989
- 10 Sinking of Greenpeace ship *Rainbow Warrior* in Auckland 1985
- 16 First atomic bomb detonated in New Mexico 1945
- 18 Nelson Mandela born 1918
- 18 Peace Pilgrim born in New Jersey 1908
- 29 Dag Hammarskjöld born in Sweden 1905
- 31 National Tree Day

AUGUST

- 2 First Indo-Chinese refugees allowed to settle in Australia 1965
- 4 National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day
- 6 Hiroshima Day 1945
- 8 Feast of Mary MacKillop, founder of Josephite Sisters
- 9 Atom bomb dropped on Nagasaki 1945
- 9 International Day of the World's Indigenous People
- 15 Oscar Romero born in El Salvador 1917
- 16 Wave Hill Station returned to the Gurindji People 1975
- 23 International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition
- 25 World Migration Day
- 26 *MV Tampa* rescues 433 asylum seekers from a sinking vessel 2001
- 27 Dom Helder Camara died 1999
- 28 Refugee and Migrant Sunday
- 30 East Timor's independence ballot 1999 - 78.5% of East Timorese vote for independence

Go to sao.criq.org.au/calendar.html for more information