



JULY 2018

# SPC News

SPC News articles can be read in full at [socialpolicyconnections.com.au](http://socialpolicyconnections.com.au)

## Can we preserve our social values AND a prosperous economy?

### Editorial

One of the key concerns at Social Policy Connections has been how to maintain our social and community values as Australia adjusts to rapid economic change. Everyone wants a prosperous economy, but there is less agreement about the distribution of resources and social equity.

As we have reported over the 13 years of Social Policy Connections, growing inequality is threatening to

undermine living standards for many people, not just in Australia, but also in Europe and the United States, the heartland of western prosperity. Social disease is fomenting political instability and the rise of xenophobic nationalist movements, threatening to fragment systems of international governance, just as China is flexing its economic and strategic muscles. As many have attested, driving the economic policies exacerbating inequality is the ideology of what is termed neoliberalism.

In this issue of SPC News, **John Menadue** challenges views coming from the political right that concerns about inequality are simply the “politics of envy”, the old left-wing class war propaganda. Menadue argues robustly that the class war is indeed real, but it is being waged by the rich against the majority, especially the real battlers.

In a response to Richard Denniss’s Quarterly Essay “Dead Right: How Neoliberalism ate itself and what comes next”, **Rosalind Dixon** argues in “Partially right: rejecting neoliberalism shouldn’t mean giving up on social liberalism” that correcting problems with neoliberalism does not mean giving up the benefits of socially responsible markets.

Pope Francis has often highlighted the problems arising from growing inequality, criticising strongly the astonishing gap between the rich, especially the very rich, and most people, notably those severely impoverished. Along with his predecessors, the Pope blames extreme versions of neoliberalism as a rationalisation for greed. **Bruce Duncan** sketches the Pope’s economic views and responds to some of his critics. Francis is trying to build alliances with business, economists and scientists along with civil and religious leaders around the world to tackle these global issues, in collaboration with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The Middle East remains very volatile, not least because

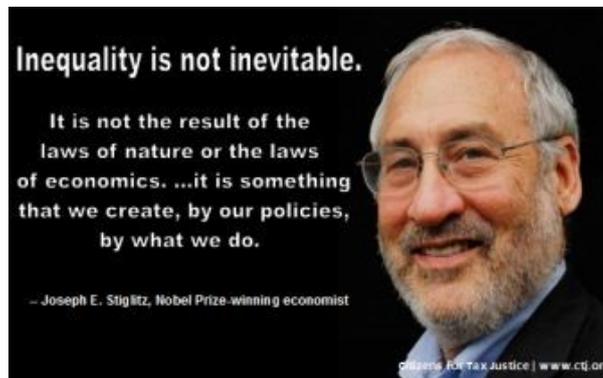
of setbacks to the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. Former Australian Ambassador to Israel, **Peter Rodgers**, warns that the collapse of prospects for a two-state solution will result in dire outcomes for both Israel and the Palestinians.

Recently returned from a meeting in France of Pax Christi International, **Caesar D’Mello** reported at the SPC Forum on 21 June on how Church and other networks are questioning the effectiveness of ‘just war’ thinking, and are endorsing non-violent ‘just peace’ methods for promoting human rights, social change and sustainable peace-making.

SPC continues to keep a watching brief on these and other social and political problems, attempting to run a moral compass over them to determine their social impact, critique policy failures and

suggest better ways forward.

As you will have seen in our recent invitation to renew your membership or make a donation, we have been in conversation with the University of Divinity and other groups about contributing more effectively to the public conversation. Revamping SPC with a higher profile will require added resources and personnel, and we are grateful for the help and welcome suggestions from our supporters.



citizens4tjustice

## SPC 2018-2019 memberships & appeal for donations



Please consider making a donation to develop SPC as a strong, independent, ecumenical voice for social justice. SPC relies entirely on pro bono contributions from writers, helpers, and board members.

Our warmest thanks to our writers and contributors to our events and website, offering valuable perspectives on current affairs. We welcome your articles or book reviews for consideration.

On our website, you can read a report on our activities in the 2017-2018 financial year, together with a list of publications. You can also download your membership renewal or joining forms, as well as a donation form. Subscription remains \$40 for individual members, and \$80 for organisations.



Occupy May Day. David Lytle. flickr cc.

## Ongoing class warfare

John Menadue

Upper income earners will be the biggest beneficiaries over the next seven years of recent tax cuts. Average total earnings for employees are about \$62,000 a year. Moving to a flat marginal tax rate of 32.5% for annual incomes

ranging from a low \$41,000 to a high of \$200,000 is a massive attack on our progressive taxation system. It favours the wealthy at a time when we are seeing disturbing decreases in equality.

To defend this largesse for the wealthy. Malcolm Turnbull tells us that the Coalition “believes in aspiration”. He tells us that the tax changes are “good for working families”. That is privilege speaking. It is not good for most families, and aspiration is not peculiar to the wealthy friends he serves. We all want to improve. And aspirations are not just about increased money. They include relationships, and essentials to life like clean air, clean water, liveable cities, and a healthy planet. They also include aspirations—indeed, rights we all have for ourselves are our families—for equal access to good education, good healthcare, and good housing. We are citizens, not just taxpayers.



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## Partially right : rejecting neoliberalism shouldn't mean giving up on social liberalism

Writing in *The Conversation*, Rosalind

Dixon responds to Richard Denniss's Quarterly Essay *Dead right: How neoliberalism ate itself and what comes next*, arguing that correcting problems with neoliberalism does not mean giving up the benefits of socially responsible markets.

“Being pro-market is not the same as being pro-business. In many areas, the pendulum has swung too far toward business, rather than to markets, and thus inadequate regulation of private contractors and firms that pollute and fail to pay taxes in Australia.”

## Is it time for a Just Peace framework?

SPC forum with Caesar D'Mello

Recently returned from a meeting in France of Pax Christi International, Caesar D'Mello reported at the SPC Forum on 21 June on how Church and other networks are questioning the effectiveness of 'just war' thinking, and endorsing non-violent 'just peace' methods for promoting human rights, social change, and sustainable peace-making.



May 'veteran' become a word just for history books. JJ. flickr cc.



The Separation Wall, Palestine 2006. MissyKel. flickr cc.

## Israel-Palestine : vale the two-state solution. Where to now?

Peter Rodgers

With the two-state solution in the morgue, governments around the globe will need to consider anew the unpalatable realities of this long-

running conflict.

Former Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, warned in mid-2017 that, if Israel kept control of the area from the Mediterranean to the river Jordan, “it would become inevitably – that’s the key word, inevitably – either non-Jewish or non-democratic”. If Palestinians in an annexed West Bank were given full rights, Israel would quickly become “a bi-national state with an Arab majority and civil war”. Israel’s current path, he described as a “slippery slope toward apartheid”.



Pope Francis at UN General Assembly 2015. Rick Bajornas UN. flickr cc.

## Pope Francis challenges economics, poverty, & globalisation

Bruce Duncan

Pope Francis has been relentless in his critique, indeed denunciation, of abuses in the international economy which are responsible for the Global

Financial Crisis and its continuing unresolved consequences. He refers especially to the growing inequality which he sees in Italy and much of Europe, destabilising governments and encouraging extreme nationalist movements.

He blames growing inequality and poverty in large part on major financial and transnational corporations and powerful special interests. These, he says, cloak their policies in an ideology that free markets will operate most efficiently with minimal regulation, thus giving little weight to moral issues of distribution or social consequences.



Peace on You. Dan Youra. Flickr cc.

## YTU COURSE. Equity & Sustainability. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, & the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Weekly lectures. Monday nights 6-9pm. 30 July-29 October 2018. Second Semester 2018. Enrolments 25 June-12 July.

For information, Dr Bruce Duncan CSsR 0409 897 971 | [b.duncan@ytu.edu.au](mailto:b.duncan@ytu.edu.au). For an appointment, YTU Reception 03 9890 3771 #9 | [admin@ytu.edu.au](mailto:admin@ytu.edu.au).

This 12-week unit at Yarra Theological Union within the University of Divinity examines the convergence between Pope Francis and the program of the SDGs.