

## Our World in Crisis? 9<sup>th</sup> May

Dear All.

This course is a strong reminder about the importance of reflection, debate and conversation. We are so bombarded with polemical accounts of what is happening around us and beyond. Many of the subliminal messages we receive encourage limitation and narrow focusing.

Without expressing any political view, this week's budget was replete with such messages. It focused on immediate financial pressures, which can be very pressing. Many have asked 'Where in the budget is the provision for climate change and attention to societal inequities, and the provision for our children and grandchildren?'

That is why attaching news links to my favourites has been so exciting.

The Diplomat [www.the-diplomat.com](http://www.the-diplomat.com)

Global Policy Forum [www.globalpolicy.org/](http://www.globalpolicy.org/)

One World International [www.oneworld.org/](http://www.oneworld.org/)

International Movement for a Just World (JUST) [www.just-international.org/](http://www.just-international.org/)

Euronews [www.euronews.net](http://www.euronews.net)

New York Times [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)

Guardian [www.guardian.co.uk/](http://www.guardian.co.uk/)

BBC World News [www.news.bbc.co.uk/](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/)

Al Jazeera [www.english.aljazeera.net](http://www.english.aljazeera.net)

Asia Times Online [www.atimes.com](http://www.atimes.com)

Joseph Camilleri [www.josephcamilleri.com](http://www.josephcamilleri.com)

### **Recommended print media:**

Australian Financial Review.

The Independent..

The Guardian Weekly

The Jakarta Post

International Herald Tribune/Asahi Shimbun

Far Eastern Economic Review

China Daily

Times of India

In case you have decided that this sounds too overwhelming and you had best stay with ABC News Radio, and ABC Radio National (quite a good news source), take heart. Professor Camilleri has inspired me to add these and more to my favourites. The erudite professor maintains that you can soon become adept at skimming the news and recognising the new developments. Regular reading will keep you up to date. The more diverse your reading, the more you learn about the inconsistent views or biased viewpoints. Despite censorships! The learned Prof. suggests we *should* know what

millions of Chinese are reading. He also indicated that Al Jazeera is not particularly radical, just the only Arab news that we can access.

Even more exciting, **Le Monde Diplomatique** identifies the source of its information with footnotes. It gets a rating of 9.25 out of 10 from the Professor (to compare, he rates the BBC as 5 to 6 and the Sun Herald a 0.5!! – if that is libellous, let's refer to it as a Melbourne Tabloid). The rating relates to breadth and depth. The BBC has breadth - it covers a huge area internationally. So for a basic idea of what is going on, you can't beat it. It does not, however, provide the in-depth analysis of Le Monde Diplomatique. It is even better if you can read Le Monde in French. Then, the rating may go off the chart!

The major task for session 2 was the little *Big Debate*. **'Is globalisation something radically new?'**

You may remember from last week that I was to lead with the case for the negative. In my reading and perusal of web sites it became clear that the case for both sides could be cogently and convincingly argued. The odd thing was that many discussions made presumptions about the definition and meaning of the term globalisation - that proved a great boon to this laid back debater! Most discourse on globalisation encompassed trade, financial systems, political systems, terrorism, environment, communications and culture.

The affirmative side presented the case for the radical nature of communication – of which this blog is an example. We can reach into the far corners of the World. We can fly any where in hours. We can readily trade and move commodities and people easily. We are living at a time of unprecedented international interaction. Even world health may now be approached on a global scale . This was exemplified in our approach to SARS and Avian Flu. Our opponents were a well-travelled medical practitioner who had worked in less developed countries, and an honours politics student.

Nevertheless the negative team had a feisty criminal lawyer and a psychologist. I could see I would need to deal a dramatic blow to the case of the opposition - so in true psychological tradition, I asked a question: "Is Globalisation radically new? Is sex new?" We can have sex on the net, on the telephone and in planes. We can do it differently and in varied circumstances but *is it new?*

I then put forward an almost *irrefutable* case for the human drives behind the 'new' globalisation - the time honoured oldies: greed, desire for power, aggression, altruism, mutual co-operativeness, tyranny and, come to think of it, sex. These drives are as old as Shakespeare and as old as the 16<sup>th</sup> century and as old as ancient Greece - the force and drive to conquer, to explore, and to plunder the zone of operation. It could be seen as the new form of colonialism. It contained inequity and exploitation. The poor within nations suffered the greatest inequity. The gap between rich and poor got larger. I argued that there wasn't much difference between the poor Arabs watching the approaching military might of the Alexandrian armies, and unable to do anything but wait, pray or flee, and the Iraqis awaiting the Shock and Awe campaign in their vulnerable shelters. They reported sitting in their living rooms, able to watch the bombing of Baghdad on their TV, but unable to do anything but wait, pray or flee.

My team-mate had facts galore to argue that inequity and exploitation were not new. Many people in underdeveloped countries, for example, have mobile phones but no sewerage. She was dazzling in her expose of unfairness!

In our discussions after the debate we all agreed that Globalisation was old and new good and bad.

Then there was delicious food and chats with others. The course is very well organised. I have discovered that 67 are enrolled in the course, but there is an ambience of intimacy and warmth. The seating is circular and this has been done to enable maximum eye contact. It works brilliantly. There is also a great deal of energy in the room considering we have all put in a day's work already.

After dinner we were treated to a conversation with Dr Barry Carr, Reader in History and Latin American Studies, Latrobe University. "Globalisation-perspectives from Latin America". I have to confess extreme ignorance about the "Americas" - apart from a romanticised image of South America –correction Latin America – I am unaware and a blank slate. I am ready to receive. (This, of course, excludes my entrancement with Cuban music, The Buena Vista Social Club, and the movies of Antonias Banderas - on the down side, I have an awareness of Chile and El Salvador, torture, corruption, the sadness of Les Disparu and the bankruptcy of Argentina).

But now I have learnt that exciting encouraging developments are occurring in the Latin Americas. The World Social Forum, for example, set out a charter in 2001 in Porto Allegro which was approved and adopted in Sao Paulo in April 2001. The goals go beyond the economic focus of the World trade Forum. The W.S.F is an alternative to the view that big business can change the world for the better. WSF aims to fight poverty, disease and environmental damage. It wants globalisation to be replaced by a fairer, healthier, cleaner version of global trade in which poorer countries have better opportunities to advance them selves. To aid this, delegates have repeatedly called for the 'criminal debt' of many developing nations to be cancelled { BBC News [news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/business/4204829.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/business/4204829.stm)).

Another good news story is the apparent implementation of election promises by Brazil's President Chavez. He was elected in 1998 on a platform to fairly distribute the nation's oil wealth. Venezuela has also implemented the Cuban designed system of pedagogy and has been now certified as illiteracy free by UNESCO. The oil wealth it is claimed is being used to increase high school and college education, health care for all programs. (Source 4-10-05 by CommonDeams.org- World Social Forum, Venezuela: Another World is possible by Deborah James).

### **Take home messages**

- Another World is Possible. A better fairer world distribution of resources.
- The gap between the wealthy and the poor is huge and growing, within countries and internationally.

The program concluded with another snack and final address from The Prof.

I headed out into the rain to the creaky sound of my paradigms beginning to shift. Next week we face the score on the WTO and TRIPS. (not the hallucinogenic kind, but Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights).

**Tip of the week**

I heartily recommend the Joseph Camilleri Website for an eerie revisit of the argument against the invasion of Iraq, and follow up articles. It is enough to make any peacenik weep.

But this course is like being in therapy. I have a guide and mentor and other teachers who are helping me face and confront the unbearable truth. I also am part of a support group of 66 others on this journey. Just as in therapy, I discover a lot of what I knew or feared all along. I am being given new frameworks, new ideas and some encouraging new awareness. I feel renewed hope in my capacity to make a difference and to act in a positive way for the sake of the world and its children and grandchildren.

For now I need to read read read.

Cheers fellow peaceniks.

Lyn

## Our World in Crisis? 16<sup>th</sup> May

Food and conversation made a good beginning. Then we were straight into it with a conversation about the poverty trap and the politics of trade. This was lead by Jeff Atkinson, Advocacy Co-Coordinator, Oxfam Australia. According to Jeff, trade and poverty or prosperity are intimately connected. (This was my first bolt of awareness. I have always considered economics and concerns with mammon to be a dry boring area to be avoided whenever possible). Jeff said that much of his work at OXFAM involved trying to stop things becoming worse. If free trade or open markets are visited on the less developed Countries before they are ready, it is disastrous for the local agricultural producers. Cheap subsidized western goods would completely overwhelm the local trade. The philosophy of free trade is that the free market will ensure that only the most competitive will survive. The inefficient will have to turn to what they can do *more efficiently*. In other words, the free market is a kind of economic evolution. The fallacy of this in traditional agriculture in small underdeveloped communities (eg Thailand) was summed up by Jeff as “bullshit”. He asked if we could imagine the small farmer who had farmed traditionally in underdeveloped counties (now called *less developed*), turning to the manufacture of, say, shirts?

The World Trade Forum sets the rules and the less developed countries were just cottoning on to their need to be influential. It is not an enforcer but deals are made as in a market. Nothing is passed until the end when deals can be traded off against each other. The obvious problems of this are the inequity of power and influence. This is where Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual property rights (TRIPS) come in. To summarize, this complex agreement protects patent ownership, particularly of the pharmaceutical companies. The companies maintain that their huge investment in research and development justifies a patent that prevents the manufacture and marketing of cheap generic drugs. However, the costs are prohibitive to the world's poorest people whose income may be less than a dollar per day. These are the countries where drugs could save many lives. In places where HIV and malaria and infectious diseases are rampant, life saving drugs should be available at low cost. So there is a clause that in countries like Africa the patent will allow the local manufacture and distribution of cheaper generic drugs. This safety mechanism, however, has largely not been implemented. Our group debated: Is TRIPS ethical? The discussion was passionate on both sides. Our conclusion was: it could be , but it isn't.

An alternative, the World Social Forum, was set up to rival the WTF in 2001 in Porto Alegre, Brazil. More than 100,000 attended the 2004 summit in Mumbai India. Delegates ate food from street stalls as opposed to champagne and canapés, and convened in tents. The WSF was founded by a coalition of Brazilian trade unions, charities and left wing political and environmental groups. The expressed aim was to fight poverty disease and environmental damage.

Dinner gave me an opportunity to digest the program so far. It was most interesting to chat to fellow participants. One woman was saying to sympathetic older women. “I can

understand why people don't want to know what is happening. It's so frightening. The power of the corporations and their vested interests is so huge. You just feel powerless." (Some of us had a jump of a few months on her for nervous breakdowns!! After reading Tim Flannery, Jared Diamond, and Ian Lowe I had my own global-warming-terrified-realisation 5 months ago. So I could reassure her that you do find the shaking and night terrors subside after a few months!). Facing it eventually feels better than denial. You may then feel more empowered to fight the good fight and make a contribution.

The final piece de résistance was the denouement by Professor Camilleri of the concept of **SECURITY**. (An aside- The Prof has said that mono lingualism is a limitation and that the dominance of English is to become passé. So I will attempt to walk the walk in this regard by adding a smattering of French to the dialogue, hopefully this will increase our rapport!).

- Professor Camilleri declared that security is a feeling within us and not just about events.
- We may all feel insecure. It is no respecter of borders
- Security is a psychological phenomenon. (Psychologists take note)
- Today we are experiencing the **Globalisation of insecurity**
- Global warming and environmental problems are not confined by borders
- **Economies** are globally affected
- **Break up of old States** contributes to insecurity, giving rise to ethnic tensions, nationalism and fundamentalism
- **Proliferation of new States** with the end of the cold war and in central Asia Southern Europe and Africa has lead to **massive refugee flows**
- **Regional arms race** e.g. Nuclear arms in India, Pakistan, Israel. It is no longer a race between two superpowers, but rather a conflict amongst world's arms suppliers.
- **Privatisation of security** and health transport and industry. This includes: private guards, private intelligence, private soldiers and mercenaries. Also the selling of statutory forces
- **Criminalisation of conflict** This includes deliberate escalation of conflict for short-term gains. Organised crime operates on a trans-national scale.
- **Environmental degradation**
- **Desertification**
- **Acid rain**
- **Deforestation**
- **Piracy**
- **Epidemics including HIV AIDS** This is the 4<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death globally. It is the leading cause of death in Africa.

Joseph Camilleri then posed the question . Is security human or national?

Is it about border protection or people?

He presented a convincing case for the **futility of a border centric view**,

- Do large military forces increase security?
- Israel has the greatest amount of arms in the Middle East . Does it feel secure?

- **What price would you pay for security** and how many would you kill to feel safe? 20 million. Are there things you wouldn't do?

**Human Security has two main aspects:**

- Protection from chronic threats such as hunger, disease and repression
- Protection from sudden and hurtful disruption in life patterns

Professor Camilleri asserted that threats to security exist at all levels of income and development.

**THE BIG REVELATION.**

**Here it comes .....**

**Border protection is no use – It is too narrow a concept**

- Focus on non defined external threats diverts from education and human rights which promote human security
- masses of resources are spent on violence
- more people are killed by their own national forces than by the forces of other countries
- increasingly the globalised world is a world of risk

Finally, the most breathtaking statement about the scale of risk we all face is summarized by *Ulrich Beck* in his book *The Risk Society*. He contends that we are beset by risk on a massive scale.

Here is the shocking take home message.

**1. SPACE**

**Many risks know no boundaries.** Nuclear war, global warming, massive refugee flows epidemics

**2. TIME**

**There is risk to unlimited numbers of future generations** (e.g., global warming, genetic damage through nuclear and other toxins)

**3. PROGRAMING FOR ACCEPTANCE of FUTURE RISK**

The world is increasingly programmed **to accept** future risk. Those who develop huge nuclear arsenals program risk into this. Increasingly, risk is undertaken consciously. Global warming risk is being factored **in** to future policies. The entire insurance industry is predicated on this. Apparently we seem prepared to take these risks and they all connect with technology.

The final question left with us is: Does technology drive human beings or do human beings drive technology? Well, that is for next week. I hope you all recover from the shock of the last revelations on **Our World in Crisis?**

Till next week. I am now fully reminded that we need to be super well informed about the world and that -

Peace is the only way

Cheers fellow Peaceniks  
Lyn



## Our World in Crisis? Week 4

The course is proving so stimulating that I arrive eager and on time, ready for further anxiety inducing revelations.

In week 1 we were **Making Sense of Our Times**

In week 2 we looked at **Economy in an Age of Uncertainty**

In week 3 we faced **The Rich Poor Divide**

Today the session was titled **Insecurity and Uncertainty**. I feared that I was about to be further divested of my comforting ignorance

On arrival, herbal teas and meeting with other participants helped me make the transition from work to focusing on the big (enormous) picture. The evening commenced with a conversation with Dr Kristian Camilleri, Lecturer in History and Philosophy of science, University of Melbourne. *“Technological change: what is it, who drives it, and to what benefit?”* Kristian encouraged us to contemplate the deceptively simple questions. Has technology shaped our world beyond the obvious – machines, gadgets, communication, travel, production? How has it transformed how we see the world? Do we see a beautiful forest or a potential development site? Do we see trees or dollars?

What is the distinction between technology – [the application of knowledge]- and science – [search for knowledge]. Do we apply all knowledge just because we can?

Another important question is – Who benefits? More than half the world’s people will never make a phone call.

After the second great and hideous (my description) world war, Dr Kamilleri asserts there was some reaction against the unbridled use of technology. The human cost was due to the “advances” in weapons and the environmental degradation, and this has shown us the (dark) side of technology that can be harmful.

I was surprised to learn that the internet came from military theory, thus further complicating the knowledge picture. What should be pursued in science and what should be applied? Is technology driving the choice of scientific study and research? How beneficial have the advances been? Dr Camilleri quoted a study by Ivan Illich stating that a quarter of the average American’s life is spent in a car or working to pay for a car. Yet most of us would presume that the car was saving us time and effort.

Dr Kamilleri stated that the current generation carry a heavy load. On the one hand we bare the responsibility for things we didn’t cause, and on the other hand we bare the responsibility for what may happen to future generations. He continued that ethics, until now, has dealt with how you live an ethical life and how you live ethically with others and in consideration of others. Now we have an ethical responsibility for the future. At this point another bolt of awareness descended upon me. **Do we need a whole new ethical dimension, that encompasses past correction and future responsibility?**

I addressed this question to Kristian and he referred to Hans Jonas. I (googled him) and found the title “The Imperative of Responsibility – Ethics for the Technological Age”

(1984). Jonas maintained that human survival depends on our efforts to care for the planet and its future. He formulated the principle “Act so that your actions are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life”. Jonas had suffered from a sense of the betrayal of philosophy when his mentor and teacher Heidegger joined the Nazi party. Jonas fled Germany but discovered at the end of the war that his mother had been gassed at Auschwitz. Here, technology and research had been put to unethical use I think (ironic understatement).

We then returned to our groups and workshopped two questions:

1. When it comes to deciding about the developments, funding and application of new technologies (eg. genetically modified foods, fusion energy, nano technology), who should make the key decisions, in whose interest, and how?
2. In what sense, if any, can the advent of nuclear weapons be said to have changed the world? What does it tell us about the ethical implications of the “risk society”?

These enormous questions are crucial for our times. I was left wondering on what level are they being debated by our community? And more to the point, within our political systems. More questions (sigh).

Dinner rescued us. Conversation remained lively and encouraging.

Back from dinner we were soon lively and awake for the lecture “ The Economics and Politics of War” by the distinguished Prof.

When I marched with over 200,000 others to protest against the proposed war on Iraq I was aware of the many placards. “ Make Love not War”[golden oldie]. The huge banners with aggressive looking world leaders and a vast number denouncing the war as a quest for rich oil reserves in Iraq.

As a psychologist I am conscious of the failures to quell human aggression as a social and psychic phenomenon. I am aware that we need to learn to take pathways of co-operation and to address human needs and social inequity. I, and many in my profession, focus on this and poverty inequity and injustice as the causes of war.

*I am beginning to understand a little more about the politics of oil.*

Dr Camilleri began with an absolute declaration “Our world runs on oil. It is all about oil Any-one who does not know this is not living in the world . We live in an oil/gas based economy. We are all participants in a global oil based economy. It is all about demand supply and consumption.”

Dr Camilleri then showed us maps that made his next point Where is all the oil for export? Where are all the rich reserves? Answer: In the countries that hardly consume but export: the middle east (I noted to myself that they were the targets of the neo conservatives concerns (Iraq, Iran) and interests (Saudi Arabia).

These countries, he pointed out, were predominantly Muslim. “All the oil is in Muslim countries. It is as if god decreed that all oil shall be Muslim” (the prof is a master of irony).

The places of greatest and growing consumption, however, are North America and Western Europe - with China and India having growing economies and usage.

*There is a mismatch of production and consumption and production.*

*This is the stuff of war*

*This is the business for killing in massive numbers*

He presented the following:

- Those who consume most oil have none of it
- Those who have all consume none of it.
- When the oil prices rose by 400 percent in 1973 there was panic.
- Current rises relate to a dwindling supply.
- Gas is also part of the picture . One encouraging anecdote from the prof related to the deal for gas between Germany and Russia. “Putin said to Merkle. Interested in gas? Germany and Russia will not be supporting an invasion of Iran”

Another stunning revelation for this intrepid adventurer in the ‘real world’

I headed out into the chill night air. On the tram ride home I had a conversation with a participant who had lived and worked in Peru as a priest. He alighted way before my destination. I had half an hour to think about the implications of that evening’s session.

Next week we will further explore **energy and the politics of oil.**

### **More Web Links:**

Center for the Study of Technology and Society

<http://www.tecsoc.org/>

Center for Democracy and Technology

<http://www.cdt.org?>

Berkman Center for Internet & Society

<http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/home/advising>

Alliance for Public Technology

<http://apt.org/>

Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society

<http://bst.sagepub.com?>

That’s it for this week. I am left wondering whether we will be able to shake our addiction to fossil fuels in order to save the planet for future generations? Are we at a crossroads? Can we choose life?

To be continued.....

Cheers Peaceniks.

Lyn

## **Our World In Crisis? week 5**

Observation: We are now at the crucial halfway point. We cannot turn back, but wonder whether we can continue. This is in terms of the impact of revelations. Naturally, as the PFP sponsored participant, I will attend relentlessly! But we have arrived at a point at which it seems tempting to shut down emotionally. Some participants start to arrive late and some are seen lingering in coffee shops rather than arriving on time. I was only fifteen minutes later than usual. Today we are going to look at **Energy and the Politics of Oil- subtext –Climate Change** or as last month's TIME magazine has said: "Be Worried - Be Very Worried".

5.30 Arrive with some time to talk to other participants and hear general announcements. Then we commence with the workshops in groups.

### **Discussion of the Kyoto Protocol**

1. We discussed the key issues at stake in the negotiations.
2. Why did the US and Australian governments refuse to sign?
3. Does the agreement represent progress?
4. What are the prospects for stabilising global warming?

The discussion was lively around the efficacy of Kyoto. It set targets for emission reduction that would be inadequate for reduction of emissions needed to solve the climate problem. It expires in 2012. Developing nations are not included. Some in our group thought it was powerless. Others thought it had the importance of the Nuremburg war trials - ie many people did not get tried but the importance of justice was affirmed and benchmarks on war crimes were ratified. Kyoto basically makes the non-ratifiers stand out like the proverbial sore thumbs. Despite Australia and America's non-participation, more than 120 nations have ratified it. Carbon trading, (a way of equalising carbon emissions in which low carbon emitters may trade credits for low use) is taking hold in trade. At least it is a start!

6.35 Conversation with Dr Barrie Pittock. Honorary fellow CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research. Energy Politics and Climate Change.

This gentle scientist has impeccable credentials and delivers his message in a quiet but firm manner. Climate change has happened. So far the WHO has attributed 160,000 deaths to Climate Change. It predicts 180,000 deaths in Sub Saharan Africa by 2020. Barrie gently affirmed the evidence for glacial reduction in Greenland and shrinking of Polar Icecaps and gave us no illusory comforts, not even a reassurance that we may not have already reached the point of no return. Indeed, we may already have set off the next dramatic shift in climate that will produce a chain reaction of catastrophic climate-altering phenomena.

As a psychologist, I asked Barrie, the scientist, "Why have governments been deaf to all this scientific evidence?" Barrie responded: "European governments have not been deaf. In the UK or Sweden or Germany..... even China is also showing concern. It is the US, which produces around 25 percent of emissions, and Australia with the highest per capita production of emissions, which is deaf". He expressed the opinion that this relates to *an*

*irrational commitment to economic rationalist principles of unending growth on an oil and coal based economy.*

#### References

Pittock, Barrie. *Climate Change: An Australian Guide for the of the Science and Political Impacts*\_ free publication. [www.greenhouse.gov.au](http://www.greenhouse.gov.au)  
Pittock, Barrie (2005) *Climate change –Turning up the heat* Earth Scan CSIRO publishing.

Then it was time for dinner. The discussion about global warming was quite heated. But it seems no-one was left in denial about it as an established phenomenon. As I looked around the room at rapt faces I saw shock and awe. This was very serious stuff.

The finale to the evening was the Professor's lecture on Afghanistan, Iraq and the "war on terror".

The Professor began with a definition of power which would normally take him 15 full lectures at least. We got the essential message:

"Power is not something that you have; it is something that you are. It is relational. A mother has relational power over a child. Power is not owned like a million dollars or an orange. Power enables the gaining of specific goals. Terrorism is primarily psychological and uses fear. Nazism and Stalin used State terror to gain control over an entire nation(s). 30 million were killed by Stalin. Why do we stress Islamic terrorism?

Professor Camilleri pointed out the political strategic (regional) significance and the economic and survival significance of the oil reserves. He continued by saying that all hegemonic powers have eventually failed (e.g., French, British, Portuguese), and that the period of decline was the most dangerous and that America was in decline. He asserted that Iraq has been one of the costliest wars ever for the US (\$81 billion). Over 39,000 civilians at least have been killed. Several thousand American troops and some hundreds of British troops have been killed. Australia had an agreement to keep our troops in the low risk zone. So far there have been no combat deaths. Afghanistan is becoming increasingly unstable. Its primary export is opium. To consider 'What has a military solution achieved?', see web site. <http://www.josephcamilleri.com>.

It is not possible to encapsulate all the details from this session. Follow up reading is encouraged. However the take home messages are clear.

- Climate Change aka Global Warming is happening now.
- Predictions may have some error but these errors may mean the problem is greater not smaller.
- There is a great deal of evidence for the human effects on escalating climate change.
- We are in dire straits if we fail to make big shifts in our energy use and reduce our carbon emissions worldwide.
- We must move towards sustainable energy this decade.
- We may have even have reached the point of no return or be very close to it
- Our greatest hope is to heed scientific evidence and proceed to reduce emissions.

- Armed conflicts to make us “secure” add to our problems and waste resources energy and lives.

My understanding is that our greatest enemy is ourselves - our human, fallible selves. As with all seemingly insurmountable problems, we must work towards solutions and necessary change. We cannot afford to say it is too hard. The planet is at risk of its demise. Those of us who work in the crisis field know that we must act immediately as well as making long-range plans and identifying strategies. Finally, and most importantly, *we all may make a difference* if we choose to become informed, and then to act responsibly. Our Planet deserves this - so do future generations.

Homeward bound at last. Time to reflect and rest.

Till next week

Cheers fellow Peaceniks  
Lyn

## **Our World in Crisis? Week 6**

### **6-6-6 September 11 - Before and Since.**

I am reflecting on this topic as I sip my Fair Trade coffee on Saturday morning. It is only a short while ago that every political speech was prefaced with "The world has changed since 9/11." Have we really examined this concept or made assumptions about a literal meaning? Most speeches connected 9/11 with "The War on Terror" and were used as justifications for stern measures against terrorists. These speeches were frequently a prelude to tough legislation, border protection and the invasions and bombings of Afghanistan and Iraq.

This week we had the exciting challenge of enacting a hypothetical. The Topic was a terrorist attack on our own Aussie soil.

#### **Do not be alarmed**

At this point I wish to avoid the calamity that proceed from the famed Orson Welles broadcast in 1938 on the "War of the Worlds" (Mercury Theatre On Air). This assimilated broadcast on an attack by aliens produced panic on the east coast of the US. This event provided a stimulus for the study of mass hysteria. There may be some parallels with the way the media, and governments have been accused of operating over terror fears.

I REPEAT

*This is not really happening. There has not been a terrorist attack on the MCG!*

But for the hypothetical we responded to a supposed bombing of the MSG on grand final Day.

Upon arrival, I was too nervous to eat or chat. My role in the hypothetical was Germaine Greer and I was already well in character. There was no place for small talk.

#### **The Scenario (imagined) An Act of Terror in Melbourne.**

Due to my awareness as a psychologist of the potential for contagion and copy cat acts with graphic depictions in the media- in this case the net- I will not describe the scenario in detail. Instead I will focus on the responses and the implications of these.

The class was set up at tables. The government police and ASIO were seated together (the usual suspects). At the second table various international figures were seated, including American, Islamic, british and european leaders. The third table was for the opposition, the Greens and the Democrats. The fourth table had the press including Arabic Indonesian and Australian. I was at the fifth table in the fine company of the intellectuals. I have refrained from naming the protagonists to avoid libel. But I believe that we can assume that Germaine would never claim defamation, given her own undefeated title of iconoclastic ratbag.

The parts were played brilliantly. The Government responded with verbose platitudes, self congratulation on its brilliant response and an affirmation of a Churchillian "we will never surrender to terrorists etc." The opposition managed to also verbosely say very little and to affirm its bipartisanship. The Greens and Democrats were a little more forthright. The press was also entirely predictable with shock jocks and tabloid columnists calling for strong measures and suppression of certain groups. The intellectuals showed more independence of thought but I was the most fortunate person at the enactment. As I listened to the platitudes and denial of responsibility by the government I was grateful that my research on Germaine gave me a great opener.

Germaine began her retort with her famed "bullshit". She pointed out that the dead at this home attack were a tiny toll, albeit tragic. She compared this to the 40,000 civilian deaths in Iraq, since the invasion. In the days of protest prior to the invasion of Iraq, Germaine had called for women in Australia to protest by appearing fully veiled. She believed this would be even more powerful than her previous invocation to naked protest in the 1960s.

Germaine charged the government, particularly the Prime Minister, with making us a target. She bemoaned the fact that the only thing her homeland had going for it was obscurity. It was an intellectual wasteland. But since this very small man with the shaggy eyebrows had lined up beside the 900 pound guerrilla of the USA, we are now a target.

Oh, I can feel the headiness of playing Germaine again as I write this! It is wonderful to have permission to speak the truth. Are we losing this? Where is the real debate and conversation?

The shocking finale was the denouement of the “terrorists” These were not Muslim fundamentalists or connected to Al Qaeda. They were possibly a group in our midst. Our own disenfranchised so called “home grown terrorists”.

After debriefing from the Hypothetical we had a break and dinner. It was hard to come down as the hypothetical had the power of a political psychodrama. I was accosted at dinner. One woman (still in role) even hurled invectives at me saying she had never liked me (Germaine), and now she knew why. As for me, I discovered why I had always loved Germaine - the capacity to see through lies and to call this is her abiding quality, and one that is sorely needed in these times.

### **The dialogue of civilisations: its origins and its future. Professor Camilleri**

The key words in this lecture were dialogue and discourse. There is no place for arrogance in these, the Professor declared. He also put forward the thesis that there are three leading figures in this dialogue of civilisations, and these people have opened up the discourse.

#### **1 Francis Fukuyama. “The End of History as we know it.”**

This has been an extremely influential work post - cold war. And yet what I suggested had come to an end was not the occurrence of events, even large and grave events, but History: that is, history understood as a single, coherent, evolutionary process, when taking into account the experience of all peoples in all times. This understanding of History was most closely associated with the great German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel. It was made part of our daily intellectual atmosphere by Karl Marx, who borrowed this concept of History from Hegel, and is implicit in our use of words like “primitive” or “advanced,” “traditional” or “modern,” when referring to different types of human societies. For both of these thinkers, there was a coherent development of human societies from simple tribal ones based on slavery and subsistence agriculture, through various theocracies, monarchies, and feudal aristocracies, up through modern liberal democracy and technologically driven capitalism. This evolutionary process was neither random nor unintelligible, even if it did not proceed in a straight line, and even if it was possible to question whether man was happier or better off as a result of historical progress. Both Hegel and Marx believed that the evolution of human societies was not open-ended, but would end when mankind had achieved a form of society that satisfied its deepest and most fundamental longings. Both thinkers thus posited an “end of history”: for Hegel this was the liberal state, while for Marx it was a communist society. This did not mean that the natural cycle of birth, life, and death would end, that important events would no longer happen, or that newspapers reporting them would cease to be published. It meant, rather, that there would be no further progress in the development of underlying principles and institutions, because all of the really big questions had been settled.”

Francis Fukuyama (1992). The End of History and the last man- Penguin publisher

#### **2 Vaclav Havel** Czech author who wrote post the crumbling of the Soviet union (See web link - [www.worldtrans.org/whole/havelspeech.html](http://www.worldtrans.org/whole/havelspeech.html)) [ctrl plus click to follow the link]

The Need for Transcendence in the Post Modern World. By Vaclav Havel

*“ In this postmodern world, cultural conflicts are becoming more dangerous than any time in history. A new model of coexistence is needed, based on man transcending himself. There are thinkers who claim that, if the modern age began with the discovery of America, it also ended in America. This is said to have occurred in the year 1969, when America sent the first men to the moon. From this historical moment, they say, a new age in the life of humanity can be dated.*

I think there are good reasons for suggesting that the modern age has ended. Today, many things indicate that we are going through a transitional period, when it seems that something is on the way out and something else is painfully being born. It is as if something were crumbling, decaying, and exhausting itself, while something else, still indistinct, were arising from the rubble.



Periods of history when values undergo a fundamental shift are certainly not unprecedented. This happened in the Hellenistic period, when from the ruins of the classical world the Middle Ages were gradually born. It happened during the Renaissance, which opened the way to the modern era. The distinguishing features of such transitional periods are a mixing and blending of cultures and a plurality or parallelism of intellectual and spiritual worlds. These are periods when all consistent value systems collapse, when cultures distant in time and space are discovered or rediscovered. They are periods when there is a tendency to quote, to imitate, and to amplify, rather than to state with authority or integrate. New meaning is gradually born from the encounter, or the intersection, of many different elements."

**3 Seyyed Mohammad Khatami** – former President of Iran, widely recognised as reformist. He is an academic and philosopher and a political figure. He was President of Iran from August 1997 until August 2005. In *Dialogue amongst Civilisation* he states

"In order to call on the governments and peoples of the world to follow the new paradigm of dialogue among cultures and civilizations, we ought to learn from the world's past experience, especially from the tremendous human catastrophes that took place in the twentieth century. We ought to critically examine the prevalent master paradigm in international relations based on the discourse of power and the glorification of might.

"From an ethical perspective, the paradigm of dialogue among civilizations requires that we give up the will for power and instead appeal to the will for empathy and compassion. Without the will for empathy, compassion and understanding there would be no hope for the prevalence of order in our world.

There are two ways to realize dialogue among civilizations. First, actual instances of the interaction and interpenetration of cultures and civilizations with each other, resulting from a variety of factors, present one mode in which this dialogue takes place. This mode of interaction is clearly involuntary and optional and occurs in an unpremeditated fashion, driven primarily by vagaries of social events, geographical situation and historical contingency.

Second, alternatively, dialogue among civilizations could also mean a deliberate dialogue among representative members of various civilizations such as scholars, artists and philosophers from disparate civilizational domains. In this latter sense, dialogue entails a deliberate act based upon premeditated indulgence and does not rise and fall at the mercy of historical and geographical contingency.

Even though human beings inevitably inhabit a certain historical horizon, we could still aim at meta-historical discourse. Indeed, a meta-historical discussion of eternal human questions (such as the ultimate meaning of life and death or goodness and evil) ought to substantiate and enlighten any dialogue on political and social issues. Without a discussion of fundamentals, and by simply confining attention to superficial issues, dialogue would not get us far from where we currently stand. When superficial issues masquerade as real, urgent and essential, and where no agreement, or at least mutual understanding, obtains among parties to dialogue concerning what is truly fundamental, in all likelihood misunderstanding and confusion will proliferate instead of any sense of empathy and compassion"

The consensus of these thinkers is the end of a World order. Khatami and Havel postulate transition and transformation and advocate dialogue.

I have noted that I have heard of Francis Fukuyama. He has been quoted in the speeches of Western commentators. Havel and Khatami are new names to me. So too the prominent thesis is of misunderstanding adversity and suspicion. It is heartening to reconceptualise a dialogue and a new way - A way that is not one of overpowering those that you fear and do not understand.

There is a lot to consider. I wonder what Germaine might think about it all.

Till next week

Cheers peaceniks

Lyn

## **Our World in Crisis? Week 7**

### **June 13- Clash or Dialogue of Civilisations**

The participants are flagging. Some are straggling in, some are failing to arrive and some sneeze and cough. This writer has continued on valiantly in the cause of peace in our world. It is becoming more difficult to do the required reading and the course is revealing more complexity by the minute. The question of session seven says it all. Are we to have conflict or dialogue?

In our groups we discussed the question 'Are we heading for a clash of civilisation?' We discussed the view of Samuel P. Huntington. He has impeccable credentials as Professor of Science and Government and Director of the John M Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University. He states "It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions .... will be cultural." Huntington does not have a great deal of hope for the acceptance of "the Other". (Samuel P. Huntington, (1998) *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of the World Order*, London Simon and Schuster.

Huntington seems to have a mindset that conflict is inevitable between Nation States. He argues that people become more antagonistic the more contact they have through migration with "other cultures". This contrasts with the views of the following writers who believe increased engagement brings the chance for increased understanding harmony and richness.

Joseph Boehle (University of Birmingham) offers an alternate view to that of Huntington. He offers the view of inter-religious cooperation and global change - from a clash of civilisations to a dialogue of civilisations.

Mohammad Khatami, in his address, offers "Today, as in ancient centuries, engagement in dialogue requires wisdom, discipline and good will. He calls for us to recognise plurality in human culture, religion, language and colour, but also embraces this variety as a unique opportunity for establishing peace, freedom, and justice in our world. For this we need to put an end to playing deaf. Devastating wars have always erupted when one party has refused to listen to what others have to say.

The latter two thinkers are encouraging us to make an effort and to dialogue, to implement a will towards acceptance of difference. Our group had a lively debate on this. The dialogue centred on how we perceived conflicts and if we, as individuals, held out hope for dialogue and change.

So Peaceniks, here is the challenge: Yet again listening, conversation and dialogue towards acceptance and understanding. Not being deaf to what needs to engage in the world. A great challenge for all.

Next we had a conversation with Wahid Aly - Executive Committee member, Islamic Council of Victoria, Jonathan Keren Black [Rabbi] Leo Beck centre and Rev. David Pargeter, Commission for Mission, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania Uniting Church in Australia.

The most significant aspect of the conversation for this writer occurred when Larry Marshall asked the question. "Can you ever have a *just war*?"

Rev Pargeter just responded with a resounding "No!"

Wahid Aly and Rabbi Black hedged their bets (or so it seemed to me). Well ... (long pause), it seems you may need to defend yourself. Rabbi Black cited the example of Hitler, and Wahid Aly spoke in more general terms about aggressors.

Then, to my silent applause, Rev Pargeter stepped into the breach. To summarise an eloquent rejoinder (and perhaps to fail to do it justice), he responded yet again that war could not be just. To accept that it might be would mean that it was always possible to justify war. It becomes an allowable option. It was always the ordinary citizen who suffered from the wars of Governments and rulers. That in war there were points and pathways passed, neglected and other options ignored before the outbreak.

I expressed my admiration for this viewpoint and voiced my dismay at the elaborate war justifications of many theologians prior to the Iraq war. I expressed my concern that the wounds of previous conflicts may lead to the justification of later horrible wars where, in the end, the most vulnerable suffered. I declared that I was considering becoming a lapsed Catholic atheist instead of an ex Jewish atheist. (I got this a little wrong as the Reverend was Anglican).

Dinner was a relief.

We completed the evening with an address by Professor J. D'Cruz from the Monash Asia Institute at Monash University.

The audience was spellbound as he related his conversation with an African cab driver. He and the cab driver expressed differing views on the nationality of Ghandi. Each claimed him as their own. "So what are you going to do?" Professor D' Cruz exclaimed. "Are you going to throw me out of your cab and kill me?" The cab driver responded. "No. See this hand? See these five fingers? Should I cut off one finger? The small one? No, I need them all". Professor D' Cruz interpreted this as " We all need the other. We must live with it all. We cannot amputate any part of ourselves, or the world, it is all us."

He had other wonderful tidbits to reveal, although this was the best summary of the need for World consciousness. In Karalla, his birthplace in India, the lines are matrilineal. This even extends to the men only coming to the house of his beloved, at night. He must leave to have breakfast at the home of his mother. Further, the Professor reluctantly told me after the lecture (the men will lose all power if this gets around), they must go away if another man's sandals are at the door. How wonderfully civilised, I thought (still in Germaine mode). And how wonderful for the mothers!

On that inspired note I headed out for Brunswick Street and the St Kilda tram. So many amazing customs in other cultures. What richness in diversity!

Cheers Peaceniks

Lyn

## **Our World in Crisis? Week 8**

**20<sup>th</sup> June 06**

### **Australia and Asia: An Ambivalent Relationship.**

This is the most difficult topic for me to write about. Perhaps this reflects the very issue we are to discuss. Although Indonesia is our near neighbour, what do we know of it?

After drinks- tea and coffee- we launched into debate within our groups. The topic was “Australia’s future relationship with Asia will continue to suffer as a result of years of political neglect and a continuing failure to develop adequate levels of cultural literacy”.

Our reading had presented the hypothesis that Australia has not yet resolved its relationship with its indigenous heritage, nor its Asian regional location. Group members discussed the heritage of Australia as a British white outpost with all the inherited attitudes. The phenomenon of Pauline Hansen, the White Australia Policy and an ongoing mistrust of different groups was discussed. Our failure to include Indonesian languages in the school curriculum was noted. We all felt a bit at sea with this discussion, which was symptomatic of the low awareness of Indonesia in the general community.

Then we had a conversation with Dr Meg Curry, Honorary research fellow in Politics, La Trobe University, and Dr Gwenda Tavan, Lecturer in Politics at Latrobe University. Is Australia engaging with Asia? (Even trying to define engagement presented the first difficulty). Engagement implies terms and values and understanding. There was recognition of the generous response to the Tsunami and to the earthquake, while at the same time hostility towards Indonesia relating to sentencing of Australians and the relatively light sentences for the Bali bombers.

It seemed we have a split relationship with Indonesia of trust and mistrust. The politics of East Timor and West Papua are juxtaposed against our admiration for the warmth and courage of the Balinese and the Tsunami victims. As psychologists we know that sharply ambivalent relationships are the most difficult to resolve. Complicated relationships are prone to become volatile and reactive. Mistrust, poor communication, and lack of mutual knowledge add to difficulties.

Dinner break was most welcome.

Then it was time to sit back and enjoy a lecture by Professor Camilleri.

### **Global Governance: The Journey Thus Far**

Governance was defined as the way humans go about organising their collective affairs. This has progressed from City States to Nations. Professor Camilleri asked what a nation is. He declared that it is not language or religion but a state of mind and state of feeling that pervades a group of people within its boundaries. It is not attached to land but attached to moral social attitudes to time. That is, how you view history and the future.

Historically, clear geographic boundaries have been important. We are all limited in our capacity to comprehend the future. We view the future as an extension of the past. As a psychologist this concept appealed to me. We may have difficulty envisaging a new paradigm despite the clear evidence that we must find new ways of organising collectively

Professor Camilleri suggested that we need to move beyond tight nationalistic bounded States and Nations. We need to encompass a sense of shared destiny. He drew our attention starkly to the following:

Global Warming/Climate Change  
Nuclear Threat  
Third World War

SHARED DESTINY

We are a world which is simultaneously one and many. Whilst this may sound like a motherhood statement, it is part of the huge shift that needs to happen worldwide. This is from a narrow Nationalistic perspective of self interests to a Global perspective. This is not an idealistic perspective, but what is needed to ensure survival.

Professor Camilleri warned us that success is not assured. All known species have, historically, eventually become extinct. He added ruefully. "Hopefully we will muddle through". Camilleri defined the key meaning of Democracy as everyone participating in the decisions that affect everyone. And all participate in decisions that affect the future.

Meg Curry Whose History? The struggle over Authorship of Australia's Asia Policies.  
Australian journal of International affairs, 52.1, May 1998

Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark The History Wars [Melbourne University Press 2003]  
Allison Broinowski "Double vision: How Asia and Australia see Each other" Asia- Australia Survey. 1997-1989 pp33-34

## **Our World in Crisis week 9**

### **27 June Governance and Prospects for UN Reform**

Second last week, and as I alight from tram 112, I can hardly believe that the course is nearly over. But as I have been assured by the esteemed Professor Camilleri – ‘The Journey has just begun’.

Our group discussion began with an audit of group knowledge. How knowledgeable is our group about the UN system: its structure, organisation, functions, internal procedures, important policies and resolutions, its major achievements and the difficulties experienced. We were asked to rate ourselves from 0 (virtual ignorance) to 10 (comprehensive knowledge). We were also asked to rate the importance of the UN from 0 (complete irrelevance) to 10 (essential).

We had a handout revealing the structure of the UN. This defined six principal organs of the UN, including:

1. **International Court of Justice** eg. International Criminal Tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda
2. **Security Council** eg. Peace Keeping Operations and Commissions.
3. **General Assembly** eg. UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP
4. **Economic and Social Council** eg. Commissions for Human rights, Commission for Sustainable Developments
5. **Trusteeship Council** eg. UNESCO, WHO, IMF
6. **Secretariat** eg. Office of the Secretary General DDA – Department of Disarmament Affairs

In our discussion we were amazed at the breadth of areas covered by the UN. Our group was surprised at the collective knowledge we had of the UN. We also became aware of the positive achievements of the UN. We were all aware, through the press of the ‘failures’ of the UN such as the defiance of the Security Council by the Coalition of the Willing in its ‘illegal’ invasion of Iraq and the oil for food scandal and the AWB bypassing of sanctions. On reflection, it became like Shakespeare and Freud, both of whose influence on language and modern concepts is taken for granted or becomes unconscious (Freud again!).

We then had a conversation, moderated by the Larry Marshall, with John Langmore and Spencer Zifcak. John is the former Head of the Social Policy and Development Division of the UN Secretariat and current President of UNAAA. Spencer is Associate Professor, School of Law, La Trobe University. There was much debate on the UN failures and achievements. We were reminded that the UN was established post World War II in order to prevent further World Wars. John Langmore contended that this has, indeed, been achieved despite many areas of conflict and ‘contained’ wars. Jon appeared more sanguine about achievements and the future than Spencer. Nevertheless, the need for global governance, and hopes for improvement, was highlighted. It was agreed that many humanitarian programs and the WHO have achieved a great deal. The setting of



internationally ratified standards was also seen as significant (eg., the Geneva Conventions and Human Rights). These provide a benchmark from which to argue. Ref: John Langmore (2005). Dealing with America, The UN, the US and Australia. University of NSW Press Ltd.

Web Links: The United Nations <http://www.un.org>

The Academic Council on the United Nations (ACUNS) <http://www.acuns.org>

One World (global governance page) <http://www.oneworld.net/themes/topic>

We all ate heartily after this, and the conversation was spirited.

Finally we had a conversation with Rev Tim Costello, Chief Executive Officer, World Vision. The topic was “Does Australia have International Obligations?” The answer was a resounding ‘Yes’. Tim expressed the view that it was not ‘either/or’, in terms of needs at home and globally. Tim neatly sidestepped ‘political commentary’ but applauded private philanthropy and said all governments had responsibility to the community. We all felt inspired by his work and had renewed enthusiasm for supporting NGOs and for volunteering and contributing.

Well, it is all coalescing. There is a point in becoming informed as to how things work on a macro level in the world. As psychologists we can become lost in the minutia of individual concerns - even community and social concerns- and ignore or miss the impact of history and the world on us all.

Cheers Peaceniks

Lyn