



Presentation Society Justice Newsletter



Issue No. 1

Dear Sisters and Associates

In early February the Society Justice Committee – Joan Power (Victoria), Peta Anne Molloy (Queensland), Anne Shay (Lismore) and Kathleen Tynan – met with the Plenary Council and the Society Resource Group to review the highlights of the activities of Society since the 2001 Society Congress and to sharpen our focus for our working together for the next two years. At this combined meeting the participants re-formulated our vision for Society in the light of the outcomes from the IPA Assembly and the Directions from Congress.

As we reflected together on this reformulated vision at our first Society Justice Committee meeting for 2004, we decided that the major focus for the Committee this year will be the challenge to listen to and hear the cry of the earth and of those made poor. (cf Society Vision 2004-2006)

In this newsletter we hear the cry of the Earth again through the activity of *The Earth Charter* movement which has reset its goal for 2004 and through the Good News from Veronica Littleton and Kay McGrath that *Tabgha* has re-sited and will be offering some programs later this year.

The recent events at 'The Block' in Redfern challenge us to listen to the cry of those made poor in our own country.

As our specific action from this meeting we wrote to Mark Latham asking for information regarding the Labor Party's policy on three issues:

- **Reconciliation:** (Already he has promised to make an apology to the Stolen Generation on behalf of the Australian Government if elected) Specifically we asked how the Labor

Party plans to implement the recommendations of the Senate Report – *Reconciliation* – *Off track*;

- **Refugees / mandatory detention:** We urged the Labor Party to change its present policy and to abolish mandatory detention;

- **West Papua:** We urged the Labor Party to develop a policy that would urge the Indonesians to respect the rights of the West Papuans and to work with them in their struggle for self-determination.

We also wrote to James Wolfensohn, the President of the World Bank, and to Horst Kohler, the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, as the 60th anniversary of the foundation of these organisations approaches. In these letters we asked again that the World Bank and the IMF use their resources to bring about the cancellation of debt from the world's poorest countries.

We have included information about the UN-designated International Year for 2004 and a brief summary which gives an indication as to why a food crop has been used as a theme for a Year.

Finally, we have included a Lenten reflection which we used during our own prayer together at this meeting.

Joan Power
Peta Anne Molloy
Anne Shay
Kathleen Tynan and
Annette Shears (IPA Networker)

Presentation Society Vision 2004-2006

- Bringing forth a sustainable society founded on:
 - * Respect for the earth
 - * Universal human rights
 - * Economic justice
 - * Culture of peace
- Listening to and hearing the cry of the earth and of those made poor
- Nurturing a contemplative stance in keeping with our Presentation identity
- Channelling our resources so we can act in partnership.

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International Year of Rice 2004 – *Rice is Life*

2004 has been designated the Year of Rice by the United Nations. This year is linked with 2003, the International Water Year, since the most common method of growing rice is in fields flooded with water.

Devoting a year to a commodity is an unprecedented step in United Nations history. Compelling factors underlie this decision: the spectre of increased hunger, malnutrition, poverty and conflict in the coming decades. In 2002, these factors moved the government of the Philippines, along with 43 other countries, to formally request that the UN General Assembly declare 2004 the International Year of Rice. But the idea had been circulating among major agricultural organisations since 1999 due to growing concern that fundamental issues needed to be tackled on a global level.

Rice is a major staple crop for much of the world: It is the main food for 2.5 billion people – hundreds of millions spend more than half their income on rice to feed their families. Rice provides major employment for the poor – four-fifths of the world's total rice production is done by small scale farmers.

Recognition of gender roles and the specific needs of both men and women are key to effective and productive rice farming. Roles of women vary from region to region; over 80% of the work is done by women – planting, weeding, harvesting, processing, management, preservation of seeds.

In Asia, many farming families are being persuaded to plant varieties of high-yielding rice. In order to pay the high cost of these hybrid rice seeds and other essential inputs, the farmers are discovering that they need to increase their cash incomes. The result of this is that many men are forced to migrate to the cities to earn extra cash. The women are remaining at home – doing the men's heavy farming tasks as well as their own and facing the problems of split families.

These women are struggling with the disadvantage of having less access than men to agricultural resources, technical knowledge and support services (credit, extension services, training). In many places existing laws and customs prevent women from owning land.

In Africa, labour saving and income-generating technology are being implemented with the result that the new rice has an increased



The striking logo of the International Year of Rice was created by graphic designer Gerald Maxwell, of FAO's Information Division. Its undulating lines suggest the continuity of life and nature. The main visual elements - a bowl into which the rice plant gives its bounty -- symbolize the interconnectedness of humanity and agriculture. The deep blue background stands for fresh water - crucial resource for the successful cultivation of rice and other foods.

productivity and more protein than other rice varieties; it also requires the women to do far less weeding than before. This is good news!

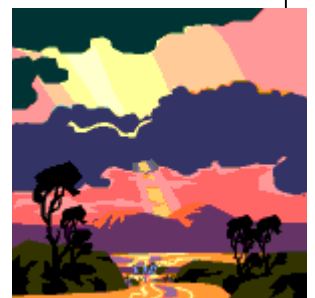
For the successful development and design of new rice varieties, it is necessary to have an understanding of the intra-household division of labour and gender roles in production.

TABGHA

The new home for Tabgha is at 52 Montrose Road, Cabarlah Qld 4352 (near Toowoomba). According to the Tabgha team the new property is “*five acres, situated on an escarpment, with breathtaking views, which one would never tire of*”.

The phone number is 07 4696 9700. The email address is tabgha@bigpond.com

If anyone wants more immediate information please contact Veronica Littleton directly. We will provide more information as it comes to hand.



The Earth Charter

The Earth Charter movement has a key goal for 2004. It is seeking endorsement for The Earth Charter by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) at the World Conservation Congress which takes place in Bangkok on 17-25 November 2004. We will provide updates on actions that we can take as the year progresses. Some Earth Charter material immediately available includes:

- A new look Earth Charter brochure available from Alison Steel — email kiscom@powerup.com.
- Video – *Quiet Revolution* (30 mins) which includes case studies of *The Earth Charter* in action in India, Slovakia and Kenya.



“Reconciliation: Off track”

In the light of recent events in Redfern, it is interesting to note that a Senate enquiry tabled in parliament last October stated that the reconciliation process was ‘off track’. It cited the fact that there had been no apology for the stolen generations, and that there had been lack of leadership from the Federal Government on this issue and an inadequate legislative framework for progress towards reconciliation.

Reconciliation is more than the government’s aim of *practical reconciliation* which seeks to provide Aboriginals with access to the social and economic advantages most Australians take for granted. The broader process of reconciliation is concerned with national identity, nation-building and the recognition that Indigenous peoples have distinct and valuable cultures.

In responding to this report, Dr William Jonas (ATSISJC Commissioner) said: “I am deeply concerned at the potential ramifications of a continuation of the current government’s approach. We are talking about further entrenching the inequality and marginalisation of Indigenous communities for future generations combined with a dissipation of public support and concern about this situation.”

(www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee) *Justice Trends*, December 2003

The following extract is taken from the speech given by Senator Aden Ridgeway at the funeral of T J (Thomas) Hickey recently:

What happened on Sunday night in Lawson Street was an extreme expression of the mistrust between Aboriginal youth and the Police Service set against a backdrop of poverty, a lack of jobs and limited education. This combined with a general sense of hopelessness that any young person there might have greater life opportunities beyond Redfern, Waterloo or surrounds.

“The Block” has its share of drug, alcohol and dysfunction problems, just like any other community where poverty is rife. What is exceptional here is that we have a community of Aboriginal people living in Australia’s largest and wealthiest city. They have life’s entire infrastructure at their fingertips — and yet the opportunities of life in the big city are not within their reach.



Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation – together we’re doing it

Why is it that many of these young people do not stay on at school? Why is it that their parents invariably can’t get a job and why is it that both adult and young are over-represented in the criminal justice system?

The desire to bulldoze the problems of Redfern and of Aboriginal people out of sight is one that has been expressed by generations of leaders and bureaucrats for the past 215 years. Intelligent politicians understand Indigenous people will not go away. Nothing short of a full judicial inquiry will offer the sort of outcomes and expectations that the community requires.

Racial tension will always be there but if we ignore it we do so at our own peril.

The complete article was previously published in *The Australian* on 18 February 2004.

West Papua Update

In early February the documentary *West Papua: Land of the Morning Star* was screened on the ABC. It provided historical information and moving footage of a country which seems to be a pawn in international politics.

The following passages are taken from the concluding remarks of the Annual Report 2003 of the Office for Justice & Peace of the Diocese of Jayapura, Papua, Indonesia (SKP). They point not only to the changing situation in West Papua but also to the value that inter-religious dialogue and collaboration can make to peace in Papua.

..... SKP believes that it is very important to maintain strong and active relations with religious leaders and develop this relationship to build solidarity. The importance of this is not only based on the possible threat of inter-religious conflict (which is a real possibility), but also the conviction that every religion is meant to bring peace to the world; religion's main mission is to create harmony in human relations and harmony in living together.

In 2002, we had the feeling that new space had been created for a peaceful approach to problems in Papua. The theme "Papua Tanah Damia" (Papua Land of Peace) became popular and was echoed by almost everybody. Public efforts were made to underscore this approach. In 2003, a completely different picture has emerged. Instead of increased harmony and peace, the situation has been dominated by conflicts, both violent and non-violent. In particular, the inconsistent policies by the central government have had a destructive impact on the situation, dividing people into various camps, frustrating civil authorities, or making the community



WEST PAPUA

Location: Western part of the island of New Guinea

Area: 418,000 km²

Population: 1,800,000, of which approximately 50% are indigenous Melanesians and 50% Indonesians.

Language: Melanesians and are composed of about 240 different peoples with each having their own language and culture.

Religion: Christianity, Animism, Islam

Political status: Annexed to Indonesia in 1963

UNPO (Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation) founding member, represented by West Papua Peoples' Front (WPPF).

More information from www.unpo.org

either

- i. sit back in passivity as they don't know what to do or expect, or
- ii. feel fed up with the complexity of the policies and lose all interest and trust in the government, or
- iii. move toward more radical actions to voice their grievances.

Lenten Prayer

Let us stand before the night and enduring passion of this land's first people, their stump still blackened and uprooted by the fires of our white culture. *Have mercy, O God, have mercy on us.*

Let us stand before the night and enduring passion of the homeless spawned from their own hearts' dark despair and our lack of hospitality. *Have mercy, O God, have mercy on us.*

Let us stand before the night and enduring passion of the refugees fleeing from new pharaohs, making their new Passovers of pain. *Have mercy, O God, have mercy on us.*

Let us stand before the night and enduring passion of the families where violence locks in shadows the battered women and their children. *Have mercy, O God, have mercy on us.*

Let us stand before the night and enduring passion of the frail and aged in the shadowlands of small rooms and sterile wards, where no-one comes except in memories and hope. *Have mercy, O God, have mercy on us.*

Let us stand before the night and enduring passion of the victims of our wars and hatred whose lives are pitched on killing fields and ploughed with pain and death. *Have mercy, O God, have mercy on us.*

Let us stand before the night and enduring passion of the sick who feel Christ's burning pain in flesh crucified and hope that wavers. *Have mercy, O God, have mercy on us.*

Let us stand before the night and enduring passion in each one of us: we who live our lives at some time, and for many reasons, away from light. *Have mercy, O God, have mercy on us.*