Leading Issues Journal November 2006

Our Social Rights and Responsibilities: The new politics of welfare

The Brotherhood of St Laurence invited the Hon. Dr Geoff Gallop, the former Premier of Western Australia to deliver the keynote speech and Sambell Oration at a conference Wednesday 30 August 2006 addressing our social rights and responsibilities in contemporary Australia.

The term *mutual obligation* **remains ambiguous and contested.**
What does it mean? Is it simply about stopping people abusing welfare? Is it about the 'new paternalism', obligating people to do what governments think is in their best interests? Or could it be a part of a new politics of social inclusion and a national reform agenda for building the capacities of our people? The conference explored both the general principles and their key policy applications: the current 'welfare reforms', agreements with Aboriginal communities, and the role of parents in ending child poverty.

Dr Geoff Gallop spoke about 'rights and responsibilities: towards a genuinely Australian understanding' for the Brotherhood of St Laurence's annual Sambell Oration. He explored the concepts of rights, responsibilities and mutual obligation - from the points of view of early radicals and English liberals through to their application in modern Australia.

"To talk of community without reference to 'liberty', 'citizenship' and 'solidarity' all at once ought to leave a feeling of incompleteness," said Dr Gallop. "Indeed it is because we live in a rights-based society that there is so much debate about restrictions on freedom, limitations on participation, gaps in accountability and conditions on welfare."

To read the presentation, go to:
http://www.bsl.org.au/pdfs/Sambell_Oration_2006_Gallop.pdf.

Secretary-General calls for action on Gender Equality

A landmark proposal for creating a powerful new United Nations women's agency moved a giant step closer to reality yesterday, with the endorsement of a high-level panel on reforming the sprawling UN system.

"This is the most dramatic step forward in decades, for women and for the UN," said Stephen Lewis, the UN special envoy on AIDS/HIV, who has lobbied vigorously for an agency that would deliver programs and services to billions of women throughout the world on an unprecedented scale.

"It holds the prospect of transforming the lives of women < removing the worst

poverty and oppression, saving lives in the midst of the AIDS pandemic and other massive health problems," said Lewis, who leaves his job at the end of December, but will continue to promote the new body.

Its creation is part of a series of recommendations tabled in November 2006 by the panel, which was appointed by Secretary-General Kofi Annan. He is expected to ask the 192-country General Assembly to adopt it before his term ends Dec. 31.

The panel of 13 Prime Ministers and Presidents recommended the creation of a powerful and ³ambitiously resourced² gender agency, to be entrusted with a dual mandate

· programming on the ground, by guaranteeing it a presence in every country office, on a par with major agencies like UNICEF and UNDP, and

· chief adviser to the Secretary-General on gender equality and women¹s empowerment.

This structure would make the Agency a full member of the UN country teams throughout the world, and give it stable, core funding and specialised staff. ³The Executive Director of the consolidated entity should have the rank of Under-Secretary- General,² and would report to ECOSOC (the Economic and Social Council) and the General Assembly, through the SG.² In other words, the new agency will have clout.

Reaction world wide has been positive. Panel members have underlined the importance of their proposal, and their hopes that the GA will act swiftly. "I am more than optimistic," said Ruth Jacoby, director-general of the Swedish foreign ministry's development corporation, and a Panel member. "This is as close to victory as you can get."

Lewis¹s office said in a statement that the recommendation, ³of "an enhanced and independent" policy, advocacy and operational agency for women's empowerment and gender equality, to be headed by an Under Secretary-General, is an inspired and entirely welcome remedy. If implemented and funded as recommended, the new organization will begin to correct over six decades of UN neglect and indifference toward women.² The Special Envoy¹s statement went on to stress the importance of acting on the key elements of the recommendation: ³To make up for lost time and turn rhetoric into reality, the new organization will need a budget of $1 billion².

African women leaders, who had encouraged the Panel to make such a recommendation, supported the call for serious funding in the weeks leading up to the Report. In a joint statement, Liberia's President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Graça Machel, President of Mozambique's Foundation for Community Development, and

the Ministers of Health of Botswana and Kenya, Hon. Sheila Tlou and Hon. Charity Ngilu, underlined the need for major funding:

"Let's put that in perspective: last year, UNICEF had a budget of over $2 billion for children. Surely half of that would not be excessive for the world's women. Surely ameliorating the lives of half the global population is worth $1 billion a year, for a start."

There are important steps to take now, that gender advocates can support in their countries. Three good starting points would be:

1. Endorsements by several developing countries in every region, to take the lead in ensuring General Assembly adoption of the Report¹s recommendation.
2. Initial commitments by donor countries towards the $1 billion start-up target.
3. And, since the new agency for women will need a leader with vision, expertise, authority, empathy and devotion unparalleled in the history of multilateralism - let the global and transparent selection process begin, with nominations from every part of the world.

Kofi Annan has endorsed the call for rapid action: ³I believe action can be taken immediately on the Panel¹s important proposals for advancing gender equality and women¹s empowerment. As the Panel rightly stresses, the commitment to gender equality is, and must remain, a mandate of the whole UN system. To make that mandate effective, it is urgent to endow the System with a single, strong voice on women¹s issues, based on the principles of coherence and consolidation. I hope, therefore, to begin moving this particular recommendation forward in the coming weeks, so as to enable my successor to appoint a new overall head of our gender activities soon after he takes office.

The Panel stated that its recommendation meant ³strengthening the coherence and impact of the UN¹s institutional gender architecture by streamlining and consolidating three of the UN¹s existing gender institutions as a consolidated UN gender equality and women¹s empowerment programme. It explained: ³The gender entity would be a full member of the Chief Executives Board (CEB) and proposed UN Development Policy and Operations Group. The ³normative, analytical and monitoring² division would subsume the Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women (OSAGI) and the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW). The ³policy advisory and programming division would subsume the current activities of UNIFEM.²

The High-level Panel's recommendation goes next to the General Assembly. Member States' decisions are crucial on: getting the start-up funding at the critical $1 billion mark, approving the plan to replace the UN's current, weak women's machinery with "sharply focused operations on gender equality and women's empowerment issues, equipped with high-quality technical and substantive expertise, to provide leadership in regions and countries", and finding the top-level

leader through an open, transparent world-wide search.

As Lewis[1]s office said: [3]We have great hopes for what the new women's agency can accomplish through targeted programmes in developing countries. At long last, the UN is poised to act on behalf of more than 17 million women living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, and the additional 225 young women between 15 and 24 who will become infected every hour today. It can now begin to reverse injustices that have forever been tolerated: the fact that one in three women worldwide has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused during her lifetime; that women produce most of the world's food but own just one per cent of its deeded land; and that they make up the majority of the poor and illiterate.

The text of Annan[1]s 9 November 2006 remarks can be found at:
_http://www.un. org/News/ Press/docs/ 2006/sgsm10724. doc.htm
(http://www.un. org/News/ Press/docs/ 2006/sgsm10724. doc.htm)
(document number: Secretary-General SG/SM/10724 GA/10530)

Source:NGO Committee on the Status of Women/ NY

Article on how Stephen Lewis campaigned for a UN Women's Agency:

World's women have an advocate: *More than half the globe's people need their own UN agency says Stephen Lewis*

World's women have an advocate

More than half the globe's people need their own UN agency: Stephen Lewis

OLIVIA WARD

Should Editors publish sensitive material?

Caution should temper freedom of speech

SYDNEY – A Fairfax/Ipsos Poll of 1,510 Australians shows that while most Australians expect editors to exercise judgment and take sensitivities into account in deciding what to publish, views differ across party lines and in different parts of Australia.

The poll, conducted between 14 and 15 February across Australia, shows that more than half of Australians (54%) believe that editors should not publish material that may offend groups in the community just to emphasise freedom of the press, compared to 44% who believe they should. Three per cent did not have a view on what editorial decisions should take into account.

Almost six in ten young Australians (57%) and women (58%) believe that editors should factor community sensitivities into their decision-making, compared to only 50% of those over 55 years of age and men.

Independent voters (52%), closely followed by Labor supporters (48%) are the most likely to say that freedom of the press is paramount and that editorial decisions should not be hampered by community sensitivities. However, only 29% of Democrat supporters and 38% of Greens voters share this view.

In geographical terms, Victorians are the most sensitive to community concerns, with 59% responding that editors should not publish sensitive material just to emphasise the importance of free speech. At the other end of the scale, half of West Australians believe editors should publish such material to make a point.

"It's clear from this result that Australians believe that editors should exercise judgment at the same time they exercise their right to freedom of speech and the press," said Randall Pearce, General Manager of Ipsos Mackay Public Affairs.
Source: IPOSS Australia Newsroom February 2006

Do Australian newspapers have a future?

According to the Australian Press Council, "traditionalists believe that the Internet is no more likely to bring down newspapers than the advent of TV half a century ago. The special attributes of newspapers, their immediacy, involvement, credibility, creativity, consistency and flexibility of use will continue to ensure their longevity."

However doubters, including *The Economist* (August 2006) taking the line that extinction of all or some of the papers in the UK is only a matter of time, claims '…that newspapers are on the way out and that it is only a matter of time before

there are closures with half the world's newspapers likely to close in the foreseeable future because 'business of selling words to readers and selling readers to advertisers, which has sustained their role in society, is falling apart.'

The Australian Press Council has recently published a Report, State of the News Print Media in Australia 2006. Taking a considered view of the state of Australian newspapers today by assembling relevant data and identifying major newspaper trends, it has been prepared by a unique collaboration between academics from Australian Journalism Schools and industry members of the Press Council under the guidance of a Steering Committee comprising both. It has involved ground-breaking news content research from a nationwide sample of newspapers.

The Council states that the study is not intended to be either partisan or polemic, that is, as a similar American study puts it, '…it is not intended to start an argument.' Rather the intent is to present as far as possible an objective analysis of what and how the news is reported in Australia in the print press.

Below is a link to some of the sections in this Report which are at http://www.presscouncil.org.au

Five Major Trends

News Content Analysis

Economics

Education and Training of Journalists

Source: The Australian Press Council was established in 1976. It is an independent self-regulatory body with responsibility for safeguarding the rights of Australian citizens to be kept informed of matters of public interest through maintenance of a free and responsible press. It consists of an independent Chairman, seven public members, ten industry members, a representative of the Media and Arts Alliance, and three journalist members.

USA Voting Behaviour

The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press in America is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. Sponsored by The Pew Charitable Trusts it is a nonpartisan "fact tank" that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.

The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations.

In 2006 Pew conducted a survey on voting behaviour in America. Results for the survey was based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International among a nationwide sample of 1,804 adults, 18 years of age or older, from September 21 to October 4, 2006.

A summary of the findings Who Votes, Who Doesn't, and Why
Regular Voters, Intermittent Voters, and Those Who Don't

can be found at Pew Research Centre http://people-press.org/

Who Should Lead the Liberals to the 2007 Election?

Howard's Leadership of Liberals Unassailable for 2007

SYDNEY - An exclusive Meet the Press/Ipsos Poll of 1,502 Australians shows that, after a decade as Prime Minister, John Howard has an unassailable position as the leader of the Liberal Party, with Peter Costello remaining a distant prospect to lead the party to the next election.

The poll, conducted between 14th March and 15th March across Australia, shows that half the Australian electorate thinks that John Howard should lead the Liberals into the 2007 election. In comparison, Peter Costello comes a distant second, with only a quarter (24%) saying his time has come to lead the party. Interestingly, 12% support Alexander Downer to reprise the leadership role, with 8% in favour of Brendan Nelson. Two per cent nominated another MP and 5% responded that they did not know.

In terms of political affiliation, the most striking result is Howard's dominance over Costello among his own party's supporters. More than two-thirds (68%) of Liberal party supporters want Howard to take them to the next election, while only 20% back Costello. Among Labor party supporters, Howard (38%) is also significantly more popular than Costello (29%).

However, the gap between Howard and Costello narrows among supporters of the minor parties. Costello shows real strength with Democrats voters (47%). Brendan Nelson is three times more popular to lead the Libs among Labor supporters (12%) than among Liberal supporters (4%).

While the results are fairly even when the electorate is divided into metropolitan and regional areas, they do show that John Howard is marginally more popular with the Bush (51%) than the City (49%), while Peter Costello is favoured by the metropolitans (25%) more than those in the country (22%).

Across the states and territories Howard maintains consistently strong support. Those in his home state of NSW are the most supportive (52%) of a fifth term as

PM, closely followed by Queensland and WA at 51% and South Australia (47%). In Victoria, his support base is lowest at 44%.

Predictably, Costello is most popular in Victoria (29%), followed by 24% of the electorate in NSW and WA. He has weaker support in Queensland (19%) and South Australia (17%). Support for Nelson is stronger in Queensland (11%) and SA (13%) than in NSW (8%). In comparison, former Liberal leader Alexander Downer maintains consistently stronger ratings across the country than Nelson, polling most significantly in his home state of South Australia (18%).

"As John Howard celebrates 10 years in the top job, he seems firmly established as the leader of his party and the nation," said Randall Pearce, General Manager of Ipsos Mackay Public Affairs. "If Peter Costello is to continue his bid for the leadership, his primary virtue will need to be patience."

Source: IPOSS in Australia