NONVIOLENCE *Today*

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We hope *Nonviolence Today* will promote nonviolence in a broad sense. It is strictly nonprofit and all editors donate their time and use of personal resources. The editors for this issue were Jan, Janelle and David. We hope you will continue to support our efforts to promote the understanding and practice of nonviolence.

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The Hearing of David Keenan

The cliché of 'David versus Goliath' is inevitable, so let's deal with that from the start. That's the last of that cliché.

Picture the scene: The Australian Tax Office turned up in force. There's the large barrister, Mr. P. E. Hack, resplendent in his undergraduate robe. (I've got to note this 'cos, as a Doctor of Philosophy, I'm entitled to wear a much more colourful and elaborate robe on appropriate formal occasions. I call it my 'dressing gown'.) There's the instructing solicitor, who reminds me of a rather corpulent Mr. Bean, whispering in Mr. Hack's ear when the going gets rough. Behind them are two Tax Office people, the desk laden with papers, and well-thumbed copes of the very large volume 'Bloggs on Bankruptcy' (I can't read sideways) with lots of yellow 'stickies' hanging out of it. There's a third Tax Office adviser. They've run out of space, so he's sitting at the end of the public gallery, trying hard to look like he's not there and having nothing to do with the untidy gaggle of Dave's supporters and assorted noisy children, or the few 'reptiles of the media' who have bothered to attend. (That's not my phrase, it's from ABC TV's 'Media Watch'.)

A formidable array aligned before the severe Justice Susan Kiefel, her Wesleyan preacher's tails gracing her undergraduate gown, dark hair combed back and tied, peering down into the well of the court through her glasses. Her Honour is in complete control. 'Don't mess with me,' her entire presentation shouts.

I'm there wearing my several hats, mainly as a supporter of Dave; declaring my interest, I'm his 'media advisor', guiding Dave on how to deal with journalists; as a possible character witness 'cos we've been mates for years; as his 'tame peace researcher' or somebody who knows a few things about several of the issues traversed by his case and has a PhD to prove it, and as a sometime reptile of the press myself. Oh, yeah, I'm also on occasional crowd control, grabbing a toddler, dandling a baby, and explaining to friends unused to courts what's going on.

I don't want to describe a Dickensian situation, but when the stern court official stalked up and warned us that if the children made too much noise he'd have to ask us to leave, I was tempted to tell him that his court was about as friendly as a tomb.

To the left, where the defendant stands, is one skinny person. Our Hero. Wearing The Suit and The Tie. More than once this morning he's been chipped by his friends, helpfully saying, "I've never seen you in a suit before! Is it yours?" Of course he looks uncomfortable. David Keenan in a suit and tie is like a wombat wearing an aqualung. He hides it well, but he's terrified.

Maybe the barrister is having a bad day, but for somebody commanding a lavish fee for being a highly qualified and supposedly articulate 'mouth for hire', I'm thinking that this character has trouble articulating complex sentences. Listening to Parliament on the wireless often has me thinking the same thing about not a few of our politicians. I'd be thinking of asking for my deposit back if I'd hired this learned person for his eloquence and loquacity.

Another point worth mentioning now is just what this case was not all about, 'cos some readers may have probably read the only press report of the result of the case, in The Australian Financial Review for Wednesday, May 5, 1999, at Page 5. This case had nothing whatsoever to do with whether or not conscientious objection to paying income tax, on the basis of international conventions endorsing freedom of conscience and belief, was allowed under Australian domestic law.

Very simply, the Tax Office wanted to have Dave declared bankrupt so it could quite easily and cheaply get the money he owes them. Dave had to show that he had the money, and could pay, but won't. The Tax Office can still get their dough, but if he won, it would take longer, cost more, cause them more hassles, and could set a precedent other, less honourable, miscreants could exploit for their own mischievous ends.

It follows that, at least as I was taught when I was in journalism school some twenty years ago so I admit my training might be out of date, if you are going to report on something complicated like a court case, it's usually a good idea to actually attend the court case and take

lots of notes. Ms. Fiona Buffini, AFR reporter, wasn't in Court 7 in the Commonwealth Law Courts building between 10:15am and 11:51am on Wednesday, April 28, 1999. Had she actually been there, or even read the judgment on the Web later, which in my professional view as a journalist and tertiary journalism educator is unprofessional as well as cheating, she should have been able to figure out what the case was actually all about and written her report accordingly, as well as have it published the next day instead of a week later, and faked the newsworthiness of her report by not including any date of when the actual case occurred. This kind of behaviour helps give journalism its bad name, annoys the hell out of types like me who take our standards, practice, and ethics seriously.

Her story was entitled, *"Tax Objector must pay up", says Judge* (AFR 5 May '99, P5). In fact the judge said no such thing, and the story clearly implies that David *lost* the case. I wonder who fed her this? I've fed *her* to ABC TV's 'Media Watch' show.

The Prosecution case is presented. No surprises here. Dave's conscientious tax resistance is dismissed because the International Conventions so solemnly signed and given loud lip service by our governments actually don't apply in domestic law, unless very specifically enacted in Australian law. So David is, so drones Mr. Hack, no different from your typical tax evader who hasn't paid his taxes. To extract the dues, plus penalties, interest, and costs, Mr. Keenan must be declared bankrupt. It makes no matter that he can actually pay the money.

Then comes the ambush.

Courts don't like ambushes. People appearing in court are required to lodge their submissions and all relevant evidence before the actual hearing so both sides, and the judge, have a clear idea of what's going to be argued. Court time is expensive.

So the Tax Office suddenly increases the amount owed them by Mr. Keenan from some $10,000 to over $14,000. Dave has consistently withheld only 10% of his owed taxes, the bit he estimates funds the military, and hasn't kept a cent of it for himself. This year he paid it by donating books on nonviolent defence to the Australian Defence Academy Library [Two of which are reviewed in this issue. eds.]. The double takes in the court are palpable, from Her Honour to the public gallery, now minus noisy or bored children. The reptiles of the media lean forward, intent on what's happening.

Her Honour is not amused. She says that she would be inclined to grant Mr Keenan an adjournment. David suggests that the ATO have failed to take into account his recent Application to Vary Provisional Tax. Rather than risk an adjournment the tax office agrees to accept the lower figure and her honour asks them to calculate the new total. The barrister hums and haws. I'm thinking, 'Take your shoes off, if you've run out of fingers'.

In his summing up, minus the figures, which *are* coming, Mr. Hack is reaching. This is a public debt, owed to the public, so it's different to a private debt, much more serious, he tells the judge.

The exchange is worth reading in full:
Mr. Hack: Your Honour, perhaps the final point is this: that section 52(2) involves the exercise of a discretion and it is relevant in the exercise of the discretion that this a public debt and not a private debt. That is, it is not a debt as...
Her Honour: I'm not following you so far. A debt is a debt so far as the Bankruptcy Act is concerned.

Mr. Hack: It is, but when it comes to the question of the exercise of a discretion the fact that it's a public debt - that is, to the revenue of Australia as distinct from a debt between subject and subject - that is a factor which ought to weigh against the exercise of a discretion.
Her Honour: I don't quite follow that. Views might differ about this.
Mr. Hack: Well, perhaps I could remind your Honour that the Courts are publicly funded.
Her Honour: I wouldn't get into that debate. It's also being cut.
Mr. Hack: Perhaps not enough; if I could help my argument by saying that. [To be fair, he probably meant not *funded* enough.] But the fact that it's public revenue at stake rather than private debts is a relevant factor. It carries more weight.
Her Honour: The small business community might not agree with you on that.
Mr. Hack: Well, that is so but the Parliament has struck a budget which requires the raising of taxes to fund the activities of government. One can't, as it were, opt out of the system because one has a view about the desirability or otherwise...
Her Honour: Is there any decision that supports the philosophy that you are advancing.
Mr. Hack: Not that I could take your Honour to. Your Honour, in my submission, would not exercise the discretion favourably to the respondent in the present circumstances.
Her Honour: Thank you, Mr Hack.

I'm starting to like this judge. She's asking the ATO for a previous court decision in which it was established that a debt owed to the public purse, such as by somebody not paying all their taxes, is different or ought to be regarded differently, and much more severely, to me owing you money for something you did for me and for which I agreed to pay, which is a private debt. Mr. Hack cannot provide a previous case reference to establish this proposition. Plus taking a swipe at the funding of the Court itself!

Pythonesque replays of this point are running through my brain. Maybe Mr. Hack is used to impressing juries, launching into florid expositions. "The defendant, Y'Honour, is keeping food from the mouths of welfare recipients and aging pensioners! He's defrauding hospitals and orphanages! The destitute and the lowly of society are languishing in squalor because this miscreant won't pay all his taxes! He's taking even crumbs of bread from the mouths of the homeless! Drag him down below, cast in rusted clanking irons, and away from the sight of all reasonable men whose very presence he befouls and offends!"

Mr. Keenan presents his case. Having guided him through the media work needed to get publicity for his situation, which has, so far, been quite successful, I'm thinking that my next task will be to

coach him to be a better public speaker. He's so quiet we all lean forward to try to hear what he's saying.

Afterwards, his supporters, except me, heap praise on the power of his submission. The words might have been powerful, but the delivery disappeared into the panelled walls and carpet of the court. You can read a sterile transcript of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's awesome 'I have a Dream' speech and think it makes little sense. It doesn't make much sense only on the reading. You have to hear it, absorb the passion, the resonant cadences, the calculated pauses of the skilled preacher, for MLK's words to sear themselves into your psyche. David Keenan would put you to sleep. Then again, Brian Harridine's rejection of the GST in the Senate, ending with the, for the Government, devastating words, "I cannot", was equally halting.

But the Court is strictly supportive, cautioning Dave that representing yourself is often dangerous. As he presents his submission, she compliments him on the thoroughness of his preparations. Mr. Hack had earlier sought to use Dave's acknowledged thorough preparations as a reason not to accord him any leniency once the serious legal jousts began.

Dave's in there, sprouting 'X and Y in CLR Unreported' and 'Justice Zog's dissenting judgment in A and B, ALR Volume 3,000 at Page 256, paragraph 34,' citing International Treaties, as cited by Mason, HCJ, in Queensland versus Mabo No. 2... Amazing stuff, provided you hadn't been with him as we ransacked legal databases and tried to make relevant sense of often obtuse and, as lawyers say, 'nice' legal arguments. When this started out, Dave knew how to properly interpret legal judgments about as clearly as I know how to make sense of computer circuit diagrams. Certainly a statement about successful legal self–empowerment.

Her Honour allows David to present new evidence under oath. At last the court clerk has something to do other than telling children to be quiet and scowling around the court looking for something to be offended about. David affirms that he's going to tell the truth.

The line of questioning is to establish that he can pay his debts, that he's solvent, that he owes nobody any money except for the Tax Office.
Her Honour asks about his debts.
Dave: "No other debts apart from..."

Her Honour: "Well, there is a mortgage debt?...
Dave: "Yes, apart from those described in my affidavit, no other debts."

Her Honour: "And what of the regular payments on the mortgage debts, are they paid weekly, monthly?
Dave: "Monthly as far as I'm aware."

Her Honour: "And how much are they?"
Dave: "My wife deals with that - I couldn't tell you."

Her Honour suppresses a grin. The Tax Office crew suppresses what looks like a collective double–take: He lets his wife take care of their mortgage payments?!! The snickers from the public gallery are audible.

Dave and the ATO sum up. The court retires. I chat with our friends, and with the reptiles of the media. Some reporters have missed out on the theatre occurring, though the Steve 'Scoop' Austin from the ABC compares this to 'The Man from Oz'. Get your laughs in court or across the river at the Lyric Theatre. The rest of us pace about outside the court. I can't remember, but somewhere during the day, I must have rescued Dave's daughter, Tara, from some toddler mischief, and his nephew, Hamish, was definitely handed to me to dandle.

Her Honour returns and delivers her judgment. We concentrate hard. She's almost as hard to hear from the public gallery as Dave was half way back in the yawning cavern of the room.

But the upshot is clear. Because David can pay his debt to the Tax Office, but won't, is no reason to have him declared bankrupt because he has the means to pay his debts, even if he won't. The ATO has other, albeit more legally difficult, means available to extract the money, so they'll have to use them.

As Dave's legal advisers have indicated, the Federal Court doesn't like being used as a debt collector.

It's a significant if pyrrhic victory.

No doubt this judgment will be used by other, possibly far less honourable, persons, to stave off the Tax Office from getting them for not paying all their taxes.

Make no mistake. Having lost this round, the ATO will be applying all its not insignificant legal and financial resources to hunting Dave Keenan down. They've been knocked down a peg by the courts, and they'll be out for revenge upon him who dared challenge them on what they thought was their turf, and beat them.

Oh, Yeah. Insofar as our careful media strategy went, we failed to predict that Alfie Langer, whoever he is in the Great Cosmic Scheme of Things, was resigning from whatever it is he was doing [Football. eds.]. The media, in general, treated this event like it was a major national event of awesome significance. The only sections of the two most watched Queensland TV news shows that night without some Alfie Langer angle were the finance and the weather, and Alfie would have been in there as well had the Aussie dollar wobbled, the All Ordinaries dipped, and the very Heavens opened up, these events even remotely attributable to his resignation.

I actually teach News Values and Journalistic Ethics to journalism students at one of Australia's leading journalism schools. Damned if I can, applying my own standards, figure out why all channels apparently went 'Ape Shit' on the Alfie Langer story. And overlooked what was, by my admittedly biased standards, a much more significant story. On the Day. C'lest vie.

Dr. Mark Hayes

For the full judgement and other information regarding David's conscientious objection, see http://uq.net.au/~zzdkeena/CO#Latest.

NvT

Samoan Symphony

Six men sit cross-legged in a dusty paddock in south-west Sydney. The sounds of the housing estate below drift up - a child whinges, a dog barks, a ball bangs rhythmically on a garage door. The men are Samoan chiefs, discussing last night's security patrol. *'We found one kid, 4 or 5 years old, still on the street at ten o'clock', reports a solidly-built man in a sarong. 'Took him back to his mother, told her, "It's yours". We find him again we'll ring the police.'*

Not long ago, anyone foolhardy enough to go walking around the Claymore public housing estate after dark would have found a lot more to worry about than a kid staying out too late. Robberies, assaults, vandalism, violence and drug abuse were so common on this vast development near Campbelltown on Sydney's south-west fringes, that only the most appalling occurrences made the news elsewhere - such as in October 1995, when five people were killed in a series of house fires in a small cul-de-sac called Proctor Way. With four houses torched inside a month - the culmination of protracted violence, drinking and feuding - tenants clamoured to be relocated. Soon 25 of the 80 properties in Proctor Way lay vacant. As the exodus continued, nobody took much notice of two men, Brian Murnane and Maik Tuisila, who were coming the other way.

Unlike many of his people, Maik Tuisila is not a big man. But when he appears around the corner of his house sharpening a machete, even at 67 his presence is compelling. He's off to harvest some taro, the potato of the Pacific, from the spectacular communal garden he and his fellow Samoans have established behind Proctor Way. Islander staples like taro, yams and banana plants predominate, but there's also more prosaic vegetables, like tomatoes, corn and silverbeet. *'What amazes me'*, says Brian Murnane, *'is that it doesn't get trashed. Every other community garden, the complaint is they've had to have it fenced, because the vandals get in and smash it up. Well this is supposed to be the worst suburb in New South Wales, it's been there eighteen months - and the gardens are blooming out there.'*

Tuisila was working in Bankstown in Western Sydney as a voluntary court interpreter when he read about the violence in Claymore. Perturbed by suggestions that Pacific Islanders were prominently involved in the disturbances, he presented himself at 86 Proctor Way, where at the invitation of a beleaguered NSW Department of Housing, a small community housing organisation called Macarthur Community Tenancy Scheme had set up office. When Tuisila offered to move in to the street in order to 'help the community' and mediate with his people, Macarthur's manager, Brian Murnane, readily accepted.

Built in 1977, Claymore is a textbook example of a disastrous experiment in public housing. Instead of a reasonable social mix, of age, wealth and household type, the 4,000 people who live there are a concentrated cluster of the severely disadvantaged. Single parent families occupy almost half the one thousand homes and almost half the population is under 15. At 52 per cent, unemployment is four times the rate for the Campbelltown area and six times the national average.

The physical layout of the estate compounds the problems. Constructed at split level to an American plan (the Radburn model), the houses are inverted: car access is via the backyard, with the 'fronts' facing onto a vast reserve. The result makes residents uncomfortable, because they have no proper entrance, no front yard and little private space.

If Claymore was bad, Proctor Way was the pits. Even after two decades working with the homeless and down-and-out, Murnane was taken aback by his first encounter. *'It was virtually out-of-control - a no-go area. People… used to sit out here and have drinking parties. There was a fire going and you wouldn't have walked through… it was intimidating. I don't know whether they would have done anything to you or not - depends on how much alcohol they had consumed at the time.'*

Battened down behind barbed wire and steel grilles, Claymore shopping centre resembled a concentration camp. Even the school looked like a prison. The reserve, where the community was supposed to gather, was an eerily empty space. Badly lit, it had no play equipment, no picnic tables, not even a bench. *'It was an area that nobody had any sort of ownership of'*, says Murnane. *'It was just a dumping-ground for rubbish, broken bottles, syringes… Children couldn't play there - it was just too dangerous.'*

One of his first initiatives was a street clean-up. While Tuisila organised the

Samoans to clear the reserve and cut back the scrub, Murnane painted over the ubiquitous graffiti and placed three large skips along Proctor Way. Residents, instructed by Department of Housing officials to avoid contact with their neighbours for fear of trouble, cautiously emerged to deposit an old pram, a clapped-out washing machine, a mouldy mattress. *'We got seventeen and a half tonnes of rubbish in half of Proctor Way'*, Murnane recalls.

The reserve cleared, the Samoans began planting out a garden. Their motives were more practical than aesthetic. *'That's our eating stuff.'*, says Tuisila. *'Save us a lot of money'*. Meanwhile Murnane fast-tracked repairs and services for tenants, but the biggest problem remained: to entice reliable, community-minded tenants into the vacant properties and somehow break the existing pernicious cycle.

'Trouble seems to attract trouble. For example, over in Preston Way, there was a family selling drugs and the people coming to the door to buy drugs were so much of a problem the rest of the neighbours started to move out. The only people who would put up with it were people involved in the drug culture. So in a street of 20 houses, you had eight drug houses. And the area gets a bad name and it becomes a whole downward spiral.'

Apprehending drug dealers was up to the police. But preventing the burglaries that financed their clients' habits was another matter. Here Tuisila had several weapons the police lacked: an unassailable belief that he had God on his side and an army of Samoans of impressive physique and unquestioning loyalty at his disposal.

'I am one of the Chiefs of Samoa', Tuisila says simply. It sounds impressive, until you discover that Claymore is fairly running over with Samoan Chiefs, from talking ones, who do the speechifying at cultural events, to planning ones, who resolve practical matters. But although Tuisila estimates there are fifty to sixty title-holders on the estate, there is a distinct pecking-order. With a royal lineage he claims to trace back over a hundred generations, Tuisila's authority is undisputed, in this jurisdiction at least.

Through his chiefly networks, Tuisila initiated nightly patrols of Proctor Way and the surrounding area. *'Fifteen of us, all Samoans, we walking around… so the troublemakers, they are afraid to do anything… We found a lot of trouble-makers, but we give them a word of good advice… a fair chance, so they can change their minds and keep out of trouble. Used to be a lot of people hanging around here, riding on motorbike, making a lot of noise… breaking in houses - but not now.'*

Apart from the verbal 'warning', Tuisila is adamant the patrols do not directly intervene. *'If we see anyone committing a crime, we straight away contact the police.'* If they come across vandalised property, they report it to Murnane. They aim to deter, rather than catch, criminals. And although they liaise with the police, they are perceived, especially by the Islander residents, as being of the community - Us rather than Them.

'Some police are all right', says Chris, a soft-spoken fourteen-year-old Samoan. *'But some just take it overboard. Like we just hang around behind the Claymore shops and last night, police just pulled up and said we were trespassing… or sometimes if we're going out for a day with friends, the police will jump on the train with us, follow us.'*

Chris likes Claymore. *'Everyone is close, everyone knows each other. But people think if you're from Claymore, you're bad. I'm not bad. I don't do all that stuff. Like I know people who do, but everyone is just stereotyped. They should give it a chance, come down and see what we're really doing.'*

Chris is good at school, would like to finish Year 12, then do a TAFE course and play sport. *'The sporting facilities at Claymore, the football field and the basketball courts and that, they aren't the best.'* After school, he hangs out at the Claymore Youth Club playing pool, but it's not much of a work-out for a teenager built like the proverbial brick dunny. By evening, Chris and his mates need to let off steam.

'We walk through at night everywhere, just for exercise and that and people probably think we're looking for trouble… If we're walking by the road, people will shine high beams at us. We hate it when they do that. They should mind their own business. And like everyone gets really ticked off about it and then they'll start taking out their anger on throwing stuff at houses or something.'

It's different with Tuisila and his group. *'We respect the elders. When they walk past, we just say 'hello' and that. If we're sitting down in a friend's house in Proctor Way, he'll just come over and say "How you doing, anything happening?" We go 'no', and he'll just walk away… And if he asked us to go inside we would probably just go inside… because we don't want to make trouble.'*

Tuisila's Neighbourhood Watchdogs are nothing like the self-appointed vigilantes who have appeared in the rougher urban communities of America. No civilian commandos or red-bereted guerrillas here, just fifteen men aged thirty to sixty-something, shining torches here and there as they amble round the streets and across the reserve.

The activities are not without ritual. Each patrol begins and ends with singing, sometimes *a capella*, sometimes with one or two guitars along, always with sublime group harmonising of evangelical songs from the various denominations to which these Samoan Australians belong: Assembly of God, Latter Day Saints, Emmanuel Fellowship, Seventh Day Adventist. After midnight, the group signs off with a stirring rendition of the Samoan National Anthem. But though Tuisila confesses they sometimes make up the words to it, 'just for fun', this choir has a serious intent. *'We are singing there as protection for the community', he explains. 'So when the troublemakers come around, they hear the people are there, and won't be coming back.'*

As a crime deterrent, this unlikely musical strategy appears to work. Police records for March 1997 to April 1998 show a 30% drop in crime in Claymore that year, with only 7% of the malicious damage and break and enter offences

occurring in the three streets most assiduously patrolled by the Samoans.

The improvement also reflects the community-building activities of Macarthur CTS, which range from sausage sizzles to a newsletter. But why would the attentions of these courtly chiefs prove so persuasive? Is there some hidden menace to their ministrations? PaePae Fomai, who moved into Proctor Way in 1997, sees no mystery in it. *'Samoans might just look like giants to the trouble-makers,'* she says. *'But I sincerely think that because we have got faith in the Lord, they see something in us that scares them.'*

Paepae's own belief in divine protection allows her to face danger with equanimity. Two months before she and her family moved in, a partially blind and mentally retarded single mother was savagely gang-raped, her children were threatened and her furniture set on fire. Paepae's introduction to the estate was far less harrowing, but still not pleasant. *'Our fourth week here, our car just got burnt right in front of our front door… they came back to make sure it was alight. We had people throwing rocks… that's how bad it was.'*

Paepae's husband, Austin, is the leader of the Emmanuel Christian Fellowship in Australia. It has branches in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney. *'We're not a denomination as such'*, Paepae explains. *'All it includes is praising, through prayer meetings, singing and healing. Most of our programs get done under this roof.'*

Outside the four bedroom house where Paepae and Austin live with their seven children, the yard has been covered with a tarp and sofas line the walls. Almost every night, the extended family gather here to praise the Lord. As toddlers munch chips and wander through the crowd, a teenager plays a guideline riff on the guitar. But this music is about blended voices: a traditional form of Delilah, a melodious Hold My Hand. The Reverend Fomai, whose huge bulk makes Pavarotti look slight, weighs in with a deep baritone. His father's voice is lighter, Maik Tuisila falls in the middle and Paepae provides a sweet, true counterpoint. The older kids join in with gusto, the teenagers a bit self consciously. Paepae reminds them what it's all about. *'The Lord said to Joshua… lead the people, go and walk around Jericho six times and the seventh time, you will blow the horn and those gates will just come down, through praising the Lord. And it did happen - the Bible says so.'*

The voices mingle and soar, a transcendental outpouring of faith, hope and shared humanity. The singers are soulful, but not transported. A woman quiets a child without missing a beat. There is no writhing on the ground in religious ecstasy, none of the performance associated with some Charismatic or Pentecostalist gatherings. Just twenty people sitting on old sofas under a tarp on a grimy estate, singing their hearts out.

Unfortunately, the neighbours were not impressed. *'They used to complain, ring the cops on us'*, Paepae recalls. *'I talked to a couple of families - when they partied, they had their music going sky high, and they were smashing windows and throwing things… I said, we understand. If you party, it's no problem to us, it's your thing. But when we sing it's not as if we're fighting or drinking. We are just praising the Lord. When the cops came by, we said we are not partying up large or doing drugs or anything - so they said it was all right.'*

Paepae's cousin had moved into Claymore in 1996. *'A week before they moved in all the windows got smashed… I was so scared for them. But we prayed to the Lord to keep them safe while Brian put new windows in.'* As word of the new order on Claymore spread among the Samoan community, a chain reaction began, albeit cautiously, as one family then another applied for a house in Claymore rather than wait for something in a more desirable area. The increased Samoan presence had its own effect. *'After we shifted to Claymore, there was about three families on this side that were not Samoans, but they started moving out a couple of weeks after we moved in'*, Paepae says. *'I don't know why'*, she adds, puzzled.

Perhaps it was the singing that drove them to leave. It evidently worked with one lot anyway. *'The house on the other side, they used to have fireworks every night - the really loud ones that sounded like bombs'*, Paepae recalls. *'One of the men that lived there worked where they make fireworks, so he'd bring them home… and when the cops came down, they don't arrest anyone because they can't find anyone in the house. All the neighbours were really annoyed. One girl had to start work at five in the morning and her mum said she would cry because she couldn't sleep - the fireworks were going into her bedroom until the early hours of the morning. We were under here hoping the things won't fall on the tarp and burn it down - that's mostly what we were worried about. We moved here in November and by Christmas week we were sick of it. So we thought, we will go to the Lord with prayer to get help that this will stop… so we went to the Lord and in one week that family shifted out.'*

The Fomais left Samoa in pursuit of that universal migrant's dream: a better life. *'Life, for the children especially, is limited in Samoa,'* says Paepae. *'You could go to university, come back, work in the plantation. There is not enough jobs. So our first aim was to go to New Zealand to have our children, so they can have a good future. Then we got a calling from the Lord to start our Fellowship in Australia. That's why we shifted over here. Our first word to our children is that you have to believe in the Lord. And they have to live a good life - find a good job and stick to it.'*

One of Paepae's sons is a runner with the recycling trucks that cart away Sydney's bottles and cardboard. The other children are still at school. *'Other races, when you are twenty-one you are given the key to go out and enjoy your life, but to us, when you are twenty-one, that's opening up a life amongst the family. You are an adult, but you are still a baby to us… I think once they go out flatting and that, they get in all sorts of trouble.'*

At school, Lisa, 16, has to juggle Samoan expectations with the Australian way. *'You've got a lot of pressure from your parents to graduate so you can get a*

better job than just become one of these factory workers. It's hard, because you've got to balance your schoolwork, you got your Church stuff and home, and trying to have some fun, hang out with your friends'.

Lisa has only one real complaint about Claymore. *'The drugs and that. All my friends are kind of like hooked on speed or like coke and all that. That goes on in all the suburbs, but here everyone starts off young. Like just little Year Seveners.'* She reckons most kids do it because of problems with their parents. *'They're still strict on girls at home. You know, "girls be home, boys do whatever". I'm right because my dad's not like that. He gives us the same freedom as the guys.'* She has tried marijuana, but that's it. *'I'll just stick to my cigarettes.'*

She already knows what she wants to do after school. She giggles nervously at the thought. *'I really want to be a fashion designer. I love art. But I don't know if I could make it… If I do graduate, I'm going to be the first person to graduate in my generation.'*

Brian Murnane still gets anxious when he sees smoke rising from Proctor Way. These days the cause is not house fires, but hungis - the traditional Samoan method of cooking over hot stones, used for weddings and other special occasions. *'They do it in their backyards, pigs and meat and everything… A couple of times, the neighbours have complained and the next thing the fire brigade has arrived and put the fire out.'*

Maik Tuisila, who presides at such functions, is writing a 'culture book' so that the Samoan traditions will not be lost. But while he exhorts the young to honour and respect their parents in the old way, he also urges Samoans to become integrated. *'I keep on telling my people, it doesn't matter where they come from, we are all living in Claymore, so we are all Claymore residents. We are living here, not the Housing Department people. We have to work together and do things together for our benefit and our welfare. And that's the reason I am here - to help all the nationalities, Asians, Middle East, Polynesians, wherever. We are all Australians now.'*

While he welcomes the Samoans' 'stabilising influence' in the area, Murnane is concerned that Claymore does not become 'a Samoan ghetto'. *'We also have a number of Croatian tenants, Arabic-speaking… single people, young people, older people, people with mental illness - what you would find just in the general community.'*

What distinguishes the Community Housing tenants from others on the estate is that they all want to be there. *'With the Department of Housing, people in many cases had no choice. They wanted to be somewhere else… they were resentful of the system, and because they didn't like it here, they weren't committed to the community… We are finding, if we put people where they want to live, and they know that they can get their repairs and maintenance done in a reasonable time, then they will stay. They then want to develop the community and overall it makes for a much happier environment for everyone.'*

Last year the Macarthur CTS merged with Wingecaribee Community Housing to form Argyle Community Housing, which will administer 300 properties on behalf of the NSW Department of Housing. But Murnane is determined to retain the hands-on, localised approach that has been shown to work so well. The office will remain in Proctor Way, physically part of the community, rather than in some remote outpost of the bureaucracy. *'We don't want to become a mini-Department of Housing… The key to our success here has been developing a close relationship with our tenants.'*

The Argyle approach, now seen as something of a model for the industry, was Highly Commended in the National Community Housing Awards in Adelaide in April. It has the enthusiastic backing of a revitalised NSW Department of Housing, whose Deputy Director-General, Jennifer Westacott, has first-hand knowledge of the problems of large public housing estates - she grew up on one, on the New South Wales central coast.

'What we have really picked up is a need for us to think about the organisation not as one Department, but as 77 client service teams and try to get a local focus… and try and give our people the kind of decision-making freedom they've got in Community Housing. That's very hard to do in big bureaucracies, because people want sameness, they want the McDonalds approach.' The Department is also considering 'de-Radburnising' the estate: demolishing some houses and putting a road through the reserve, to restore the much-missed front yard to each house.

It's all part of the new Big Picture approach to social housing. *'There's more to managing an estate than repairs, maintenance and rent collection'*, says Murnane. *'You need to look after the social needs as well.'*

To this end, the community lobbied for an integrated government service centre. Its cutesy name, Gumnut Cottage, belies its critical role: representatives of housing, health, social welfare and the police attend, along with domestic violence counsellors, all within walking distance of the Claymore shops.

Last February, the then NSW Minister for Urban Affairs and Planning, Craig Knowles, came to Proctor Way to launch a report, Home and Housed, that analysed changes in the community since the fatal fires of 1995. It was the first time the television cameras had arrived to record good news. The progress was extraordinary. The earlier stampede out of the area had been completely turned around. In fact Argyle had a twelve-month waiting list. A survey of Claymore residents showed that Proctor Way, once the 'worst street', now led the estate in terms of safety and security. There was a new sense of pride and neighbourliness abroad, people looking out for each other in small ways, planting flowers, actually talking.

'D'you want sauce on your sausage, darl?? Onions? Thank you for helping. Who wants one with onions?' The sausage sizzle that follows the street clean-up has become a regular event, a source of community ideas and connections. *'It'd be good if we had a bike track round*

here', says one boy, a lively type. *'We used to have one, and it was used all the time - but they got rid of it.'* A woman suggests a sports competition, the prize to be a voucher for a sports store. Another boy wants lots more playground equipment - although the place is teeming with kids, there's far less on Claymore than in the adjoining private estates. *'The little kids are bored, just playing marbles all day',* he complains. *'Yeh but if they put things in, youse kids break 'em',* grizzles a mother.

The boys drift off. I ask them if the break-ins still happen much. They nod. *'TVs, videos, play stations - things they can get money for drugs for.'* The first boy pipes up. *'We can't say we haven't done it ourselves.'* The others look on, frozen, as he relates, matter-of-factly, how he broke into someone's house and stole a TV. *'Got $200 for it. Haven't been caught'.* His mate laughs nervously. *'Yeh but you've just dobbed yourself in!'* The money's gone, on video games, movies, having a good time. But the thief is not as pleased as he expected. *'Stupid thing to do',* he says. *'If I could've went back, I would've. But it's too late now.'* When I tell Murnane of the impromptu confession, he is dismayed. If the kid got away with it once, he's likely to do it again. Another statistic, another bright youngster down the drain. A week ago, all he wanted was a bike track.

Out on the reserve, a man on his way home breaks off some silverbeet for dinner. Alongside the banana leaves and taro, pink daisies now run riot - a frivolous touch added by two resident Josephite nuns who help with literacy and childminding. Down below, at the entrance to Proctor Way, the Samoan presence in the area was recently honoured by the planting of ten tall palm trees.

Late one night, long after the mellifluous strains of the Samoan Independence anthem had ended, seven trees were carted off to adorn houses in the nearby private housing development. The people of Proctor Way took it as a compliment - life's got so much better up their end, the robbers have changed sides.

Siobhán McHugh, 1999

Reprinted with permission from *The Australian* magazine, June 5-6, 1999.

A book about people in public and community housing, *Shelter From the Storm*, by Siobhán McHugh in conjunction with the NSW Federation of Housing Associations, will be published by Allen & Unwin in October.

NvT

Nonviolence and Relationships

There is some irony in the fact that those of us committed to social change often fail to maintain relationships at a personal level or, if we do, they are often not based on the values we seek to promote at the political level.

Feminists have pointed out that great icons of justice and social change, ranging from Tolstoy and Marx to Gandhi and Martin Luther King, were appalling husbands and inadequate fathers. Nelson Mandela, in his autobiography, also acknowledges the difficulty of being a revolutionary and at the same time, a husband and father, conceding that it is an area he has failed in.

Those of us who are grassroots activists committed to long term social change, may have noted a variety of patterns in relationships.

Starting at university, there is the familiar pattern of women who seek to "save" or support the charismatic heroic male leaders, particularly if they are representatives of an oppressed group. It has been noted that current feminist thinking dates from a critique developed by women activists during the heady days of the late 1960's, when they realised that the personal attitudes of so-called radical male student leaders was no better than those they sought to overthrow - there was no connection in their mind of the politics of the boardroom with the politics of the bedroom. A woman's role was still to look after the children, do the cooking and provide sex for the male activists.

Research indicates that the average period of activism is about eight months so the core problem is the one that faces long term activists. A male activist usually finds himself in one of two positions : either he maintains a relationship with a passive partner who stays at home and looks after their domestic existence, or he finds himself in a relationship with a woman activist when both of them are so heavily involved in activism that they

have little time to nurture their own personal relationship. Invariably these relationships founder as a relationship needs time and energy, and two committed activists rarely put aside that space in the long run.

In addition, there are single male activists who avoid commitment by having multiple partners as they move around the different actions and perhaps the chosen few who can, in effect, take a vow of 'brahmacharya' or abstinence, like those radical Catholic priests and nuns some of us used to encounter or the Buddhist monks in parts of Asia that some of us have worked with.

Activism frequently involves irregular hours, giving priority to meetings and bursts of intense campaigning that can last for days or weeks. If there is a commitment to personal change as well, there is often a tension over lifestyles depending on the intensity of views held - vegetarianism/veganism, simple living, to what extent can we participate in the consumer society, group housing, appearance, having children or whether or not an ideological commitment is involved.

Many activists, moving around a lot, find themselves strongly attracted to individuals they meet in the intensity of campaigning and these affairs tend to be short term - which is fine if that is what both partners are seeking but disastrous when the romance is dysfunctional.

A frequent male problem is *"loving the world so passionately that they never find the time to love one individual."* They drift through short term relationships, sometimes justifying lack of commitment on the grounds that priority must be given to "the revolution" or see sexual liaisons as fulfilling personal needs in much the same way as charismatic leaders and politicians justify having extra-marital affairs or keeping mistresses.

I suspect that many male activists would pay lip service to commitment and equitable relationships but do not put it into practice. Sometimes we can come to grips with the issue in workshops and we grow but at other times there is no deep commitment to real change.

If children are involved in a relationship, there are fundamental questions around child care and childrearing, spending time with children, and the danger of provoking a reaction in the children when they become teenagers and resent the fact that their parents are so different from the families of their peers.

There also seem to be an inordinate number of single mothers around where the men have moved on and left the women with the children - are we in fact any different from the rest of society in this respect ?

Many activists live on a low income so are frequently not in a position to provide financial support, yet they are committed to the idea of paternity so they want access - unless their commitment to activism takes them away somewhere else. Quite a few older male activists seem to move on into the company of younger women, impressed with their stature in the movement.

Another issue centres on expectations which are often high when committed souls meet but the crunch is greater when individuals move on or one burns out before the other, leading to frustration and discord. As the years creep by, many men return to conformity while women move on politically or spiritually, or the woman becomes preoccupied with starting a family and the man cannot adapt to his new extra responsibilities.

As we travel more, there is the complication of relationships which cross national barriers with problems later developing of cultural differences and split families. Immigration authorities also make it hard to sustain long term relationships over a great distance.

Maybe - a cynical view - the happiest outcome is when both activists grow older and with a mortgage and family to adjust to, join the ranks of the middle class, a common enough scenario.

These observations invite further comment and written from the past experience of a heterosexual, there is no attempt to comment on gay relationships. Let the polemic begin…

Peter D. Jones

Peter Jones is an aging activist in Tasmania who admits that he is guilty of a number of the charges he refers to but writes reflectively to hear what others think on the issues raised.

NvT

National Nv Gathering 2000

22-25 April 2000, in Brisbane. Plan on being there!

Special focus: *Limiting uranium mining and the nuclear industry in Australia - What's the best contribution ANN can make?*

Ongoing focus: *Building relationships and networks between nonviolent activists + a social time.*

Timetables and venues are being organized. More details in the next *NvT*.

Organizers: Margaret Pestorius, Louise Finegan, James Langley, Bryan Law. (nonviolence@iig.com.au).

NvT

Gandhi's Peace Army

***Gandhi's Peace Army: The Shanti Sena and Unarmed Peacekeeping (Syracuse Studies on Peace and Conflict Resolution)* by Thomas Weber, foreword by Elise Boulding, Syracuse University Press, 1996. ISBN 0815626843.**

The book is very well researched, and until now the actions the Sena has engaged in have not been documented in any detail, nor the philosophical foundation on which it rests been given analytical attention.

The Shanti Sena which is based largely on Mahatma Gandhi's ideas, was established in 1958 ten years after his death.

Gandhi's initial decision to recommend the founding of peace brigades was as a response to Hindu/Muslim communal disturbances. And it has been during riot situations that the Shanti Sena has done its most significant work.

The Shanti Sena's philosophy of nonviolent conversion and conciliation in action was not always completely successful. It would seem that it was quite often impossible for voluntary organisations like the Chambal Valley Peace movement, India 1960, to do things on their own with neither the number of dedicated workers or institutional support. Never the less there is a lot of interesting stuff about prison rehabilitation regimes with Shanti Sena action achieving a measure of success where banditry and gangs had become a way of life. (The Government had not been able to solve the problems through methods of force and violence.)

The book has a good coverage of Shanti Sena methods showing their task divided into three phases: 1. removal of tensions that have led to the unrest (without resort to police or courts) after careful investigation of the background to the situation; 2. intervention in disturbance (even at risk of death); 3. relief work among victims after riots.

Weber says that whilst the Western peace activists have called for the internationalising of the Shanti Sena idea, a flow of influence in the reverse direction has also occurred. The strong influence of Western and particularly U.S. peace movements has gone into the shaping of the Sena. At international peace conferences held in India 1949 and 1960 a great impact was made by the U.S. movement with its antiwar preoccupation and the championing of the ideal of Gandhi's Shanti Sena by Western pacifists. This led eventually to a focus on peacekeeping, at least partially so that the Sena could play a leading role in the international antiwar movement.

A great many valuable tactical guidelines can be found in the techniques developed by the Shanti Sena during its "peacekeeping years". Weber says however that it is doubtful whether independent interpositionary peacekeeping ventures would very often be able to command the economic and logistical resources required and, more importantly, raise enough volunteers to achieve a critical mass that would make a difference in preventing or stopping hostilities (rather than merely raising consciousness about nonviolent alternatives).

Weber says it is important to continue efforts to encourage the establishment of local peace brigades and to interest the United Nations in the creation of a truly nonviolent and unarmed peacekeeping force.

Margo Keenan

NvT

People Power

***People Power: A Look at Nonviolent Action and Defense* by Susan Neiburg Terkel, Lodestar Books Dutton 1996, ISBN 0525674349. Reading level: Young adult.**

This book is about nonviolent action - what it is, how it works, and why it is so special. It is non academic, and liberally sprinkled with appropriate quotes such as *"Hope has two beautiful children their names are anger and courage: Anger at the way things are and courage to see that things do not remain the way they are"*.

The principles of nonviolence are so simply and clearly set out, from home invasion to moral reasons for breaking laws, to people power in withstanding military force, that it will capture even the mildly interested.

She impresses the value of training for nonviolent action - the ability to endure suffering, non retaliation when someone hurts you and learning skills to overcome fear - dispelling the myth that nonviolence is passive or cowardly.

It would be hard to put together a book on nonviolence without mentioning Henry David Thoreau, Dr Martin Luther King and Mohandas Gandhi and and again Susan Terkel does not let you down. Along with more modern examples of situations where nonviolent action has and still is working successfully, it feels comfortable to read how Gandhi's experiment with Truth enabled him to lead 300 million Indians to overthrow British foreign rule finally in 1947, and to thus create the first documented large scale nonviolent action in history. Gandhi said *"nonviolence is a plant of slow growth. It grows imperceptively but surely - and noncooperation with evil is as much a duty as cooperation with good."*

A feel-good, must-read book for modern parents and all who think generically for the future.

Margo Keenan

NvT

Undercurrents - A News Sensation

"The news you don't see on the news". This challenging U.K. video magazine *Undercurrents*, is fun and informative. It is the first ever alternative news service on video and covers environmental and social justice events worldwide. Not being mainstream media's definition of news, it beats Rupert Murdoch and N.B.C. type, and is clearly not the news they want us to see. At times it shocks and exposes, whilst it informs.

In its unique documentary style, crimes committed by the 'good' guys are reported on camera, sometimes effecting a win for the activists, such as in the case of logging activities in a N.S.W. forest when the logging company people were caught on camera, engaged in acts of brutality towards activists using nonviolent defence strategies to prevent the logging taking place. When the case went to court, the video showed the brutality, and the logging company lost the case and the forest was saved; our Prime Minister of the day saying Australia would not accept such thuggery.

Undercurrents highlights Communities Against Toxics, active in cases where industrial companies move into urban areas and pollute the air and ear and bring about a breakdown in physical and mental health. It keeps us aware of the arms trade World Fair, and hypocrisy of politicians as well as human rights issues to do with race and ideologies.

Undercurrents invites all video camera users to become video activists, to help keep them going by sending short humorous clips and fully completed videos to become part of their world-wide network which houses the only archive of camcorder protest footage in the world.

The video magazine is produced every few months and has won several awards: U.K. Green Screen, Tokyo Video Festival and Olympiad Video Festival Brazil.

Margo Keenan

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NvT

Information Liberation

by Brian Martin, London: Freedom Press, 1998. ISBN 0 90038493 X (Pbk). Distributed in Australia by Anarres Books, P.O. Box 150, East Brunswick, Vic., 3057. $27.90 (post free).

This important and valuable book must be read by anybody concerned about information control in and flows through what is clearly our information dependent and saturated society.

Readers of Brian Martin's earlier books, such as *Uprooting War* (1984) and *Social Defence, Social Change* (1993), also published by Freedom Press, will be familiar with his careful, precise, accessible, and deceptively straightforward presentation of complex issues, arguments, and suggestions for change. *Information Liberation* is another provocative, stimulating, thought provoking, challenging, and empowering contribution by an Australian academic author with, in these educationally economically rationalist times, a rare explicit commitment to radical social criticism and progressive, in its best senses, social change.

The subtitle of *Information Liberation*, 'Challenging the corruptions of information power', flags a continuing theme running throughout the book, derived from Lord Acton's famous aphorism, 'power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely'. The follow–on from this is a detailed analysis, implicitly derived from another aphorism taken from Francis Bacon, further refined by Noccolo Machiavelli, and developed upon by George Orwell, that 'Knowledge is power', and all that flows from that.

The blurb for *Information Liberation* warns that 'most readers will find something to disagree with'. While it is not really germane to Brian's central purpose, and I happen to largely agree with his general analyses of power and its corruptions in our peculiar kind of society, I am uneasy that a crucial practico–ethical issue might be being overlooked here.

To be brutally brief here, under the collective assaults of globalisation, economic rationalism, post modernism, and their several, disparate, and apparently antithetical derivatives, however specifically manifesting in a given social mielu, the essential ethical purchase(s), the social 'hand holds' upon which the kinds of arguments Brian, and many other activists and theorists as well, can find a serious grip are, at best, heavily greased by 'the system' to dissuade or even prevent precisely the kinds of effective criticism and alternatives creation many activists are mounting. There is really nothing new about the dynamics in play now, though the names applied to contemporary forces might be different. In earlier times, dissidents were burned at the stake along with their books. These days, as Brian and authors he cites document, there are far more efficient, subtle, and pervasive means available to monitor and deflect even potentially effective dissent.

I am reminded of Herbert Marcuse's argument, advanced in 1968, about 'repressive tolerance' as a novel means of contemporary social control. In essence, Marcuse argued that, while the forces of oppression had ever more allegedly scientific means of violently controlling or destroying people, at least in so-called civilised societies, dissident ideas, especially cultural dissent manifesting in lifestyle, art, music, and the like, were apparently tolerated while 'the system' sought to incorporate dissenting ideas, minus their criticisms of the status quo, into its cultural reproductions. Last week's radical version of whatever dissident cultural eruption grips some minority on the streets turns up this week in some corporation's franchised record or boutique clothing stores, and will momentarily figure on next week's corporation owned FM commercial radio play lists, in between the ads mostly telling you that you are worthless unless you buy, listen to, use, or wear The Latest Thing. Indeed, as Theodore Roszak has convincingly argued in his excellent The Cult of Information (1994), which Brian Martin must have read though he does not cite it, the fact that, particularly with the rapid spread of the World Wide Web, we are deluged and saturated with mind-numbing amounts of information coming at us via more and more media is necessarily disempowering because this avalanche drowns the processes we ought to use to refine raw information into knowledge which is useful, even beneficial, to us, and distil knowledge into wisdom, which can be defined as reflective knowledge informing prudent, ethical, or wise action.

If turning the TV off, disconnecting from the Web, and concentrating on actually reading a book (how archaic, when a common desktop computer has a speech synthesiser, and a scanner with OCR software) like Information Liberation for long enough to seriously grapple with its content achieves some result, then Brian ought to feel he's achieved something.

Elsewhere in this issue of NvT, I have written about a specific incident to do with journalistic news values applied on a particular day in Brisbane in April, 1999. From the perspective of activists used to being overlooked, ignored, or misrepresented by the mass media, nothing new here. Indeed, such largely routine treatment reinforces Brian's case for information liberation to involve disengaging from mass media and turning to creating and using community-based networked media.

From my perspective, as a sometime media worker, journalist, and media trainer and educator, the second chapter of Information Liberation, 'Beyond Mass Media' is probably the most provocative. I'm not going to pick nits with Brian's explicitly intentional neglect of the vast edifice of professional, scholarly, and informed popular media studies, comment, and critical literature because I share his implicit suspicion of much of it amounting to erudite navel gazing. Indeed, the last chapters deal with the propositions that much academic research is increasingly corrupted by commercial or externally imposed career advancement pressures, over against socially useful, empowering research, or 'knowledge for knowledge's sake', that apparently simple and even wrong ideas can retain or advance much of worth and value, and that so-called 'celebrity intellectuals' - even Noam Chomsky fits here - deserve greater scrutiny than lesser known or currently unfashionable writers.

Mention of Noam Chomsky as a 'celebrity intellectual' in the context of Brian's critique of 'the politics of research' and his all-but explicit endorsement of what amounts to an anarchist critique of information, power, and collective and participatory proposals for change shows how much Brian shares with Noam because both are concerned with how information, specifically in Noam's case, the mass media, is corrupted. Given that Noam Chomsky, and his colleague, Edward S. Herman's, 'propaganda model' of mostly journalistic media output, discussed most extensively in Manufacturing Consent (1988) is now very widely read, studied, and critiqued in tertiary media, journalism, and communications courses, I wonder if *Information Liberation* would attract anything like the same attention. Almost certainly not, because it is not sufficiently 'scholarly', does not cite or obviously draw upon 'the literature' regarded as currently fashionable within this particular academic community, the 'gatekeepers' for their students, and makes explicitly advocacy and activist proposals for change. On my reading of media studies literature and critique, in general, media studies scholars eschew media practice and effective actions for change in favour of ever more esoteric critiques of media output, and each other's ever more esoteric critiques.

A constant dilemma for activists is whether or not to engage in a media strategy as either the point or at least as an important part of an action or a campaign. Greenpeace are probably the masters of combining effective actions with sometimes spectacular media stunts. Other activists avoid media coverage, concentrating on the wrong they are seeking to challenge. If the media picks up on it, such as by monitoring police radio, that's fine, but getting publicity comes second to attempting to stop or slow some perceived injustice, or making a symbolic statement rooted in the activist's beliefs. Ploughshares actions fit in this latter category.

It's vital to always remember that when talking about 'the media' in this context, Brian and I are referring to a rather small but variably though usually influential part of the mass media's output, the news and current affairs part, which is mediated by journalists reporting on stories. Brian quite correctly points out that most journalists are subjected to strong corporate pressures to retain and build their outlet's audience, which is then 'sold' to advertisers, and this often affects the kinds of stories reported and even how they will be reported, even within the constraints of largely acceptable standards of fairness, balance, and ethics. Journalists are also keen to build and retain our audiences. What's the point if comparatively few people use our work and take it seriously as an important source of reliable information about events or issues remote from their everyday experience or knowledge? The picture is extremely uneven, to be sure, and no outlet or individual journalist should not be immune from criticism, or praise, support for quality or worthwhile journalism and trustworthy journalists being as necessary as creative criticism or complaints when we get it wrong.

There are several channels through which media consumers can complain, such as the Press Council, to individual broadcasting stations or the Australian Broadcasting Authority, the journalist's union (Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance - Journalist's Section), and the Australian Consumer's Association has published a good book on how to complain about the media. But, and this applies to his very salutary chapter on the limited effectiveness of whistle blowing and Freedom of Information procedures as well, the effectiveness of these channels varies enormously. Indeed, blowing the whistle inside a large corporation, government department, or a university, or starting a legal action for defamation, could be the worst possible step even the most obviously aggrieved or persecuted person could take because the criticised agency would be expected to stifle the criticism or complaint and exact revenge on the disloyal employee or outside complainant. Even the relatively successful examples of whistle blowing cited here are very much the exception rather than the norm.

Brian does not advocate ignoring the media, particularly its journalistic component, but I fear he may err too much on the side of almost permanently acute suspicion of even those admittedly fairly rare genuinely sincere and trustworthy media workers whom activists ought to cultivate, support from the outside, and whose expertise and skills can be extremely useful in campaign and general media literacy training workshops.

Though not a specific criticism of Information Liberation as such, and here I am focusing on Brian's chapter six on defamation law and free speech, the book must be treated as a basically sound introduction to and discussion of very general principles, and never relied upon as a single-source tactical or strategic 'how to' manual, though several chapters contain useful, and occasionally tested, suggestions for action or change. When dealing with any aspect of the law, such as defamation, it is essential to proceed carefully, do extremely through research, seek out, cultivate, and follow the advice of supportive or sympathetic professionals, and develop a flexible, principled, and realistic strategy informed by and congruent with your group or campaign's principles, goals, and values.

I commend *Information Liberation* to anybody in any way concerned about information power, its uses, corruptions, and realistically thought through proposals for change across a range of areas bound up with a crucial basis, tool, and process in our society.

Dr. Mark Hayes

NvT

in back of it all

What is NONVIOLENCE TODAY?

Nonviolence Today is published every two months to help increase the understanding and use of nonviolence. We publish reports and evaluations of trainings and actions, with a view to improving the quality of both. It's the peoples' magazine and first hand participant reports are especially welcome. *Nonviolence Today* also serves an educational role in promoting a theoretical understanding of nonviolence as a political philosophy. There is much diversity of opinion of what that is, but the common ground of agreement is probably that political power comes from cooperation. If we don't like the behaviour of power holders, then we withdraw our cooperation in sufficient numbers and they will be disabled. Nonviolent action is a technique which has existed throughout history and occurs in all cultures and has been used by an enormous range of social groups. Nonviolence can be applied to activities as widely different as personal growth and national defence. Violence is not necessary for social change and is, in fact, counterproductive to greater freedom, justice and harmony.

Subscription Information

Although *Nonviolence Today* is on sale in some alternative bookshops around Australia, subscriptions are a better form of support. Supporting and Maniacal subscriptions make it possible for us to send the magazine to organizations and people who couldn't otherwise receive it, e.g. organisations in the Third World. Unless requested not to, the names and towns of supporting and maniacal subscribers will be published for the time period which applies. The subscription card should have annoyed you by falling out of the magazine by now. You can pay by telephone with Bankcard, Mastercard or Visa. Phone Dave on (07) 3366 2660 (10am to 9pm 7days). If you like the magazine and want it to continue, please:
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Notes for Contributors

Nonviolence Today exists to promote
(1) nonviolence as a political theory and
(2) the study and practice of nonviolent action as a method of social change.

Theoretical proposals and analyses of actions and campaigns that advance these goals are most welcome. We may edit articles to maintain a focus on nonviolence.

We prefer contributions to be sent by electronic mail (see address above) or on a floppy disk, which we will return. Failing that, preferably typed (for scanning), or clear, legible handwriting (if in doubt, please type it). Please inform us of the authorship of any items you send and tell us if they're not for publication.

Photographs are extremely desirable, preferably: (1) clearly captioned on the back; (2) dramatic.

Copy deadlines are at the end of January, March, May, July, September, November.