

The Common Good

Taking a Preferential Option for the Poor

A newspaper of the Christchurch Catholic Worker

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Hope – vital for our time

Jim Consedine

*The most beautiful
sea hasn't been
crossed yet*

*The most beautiful
child hasn't grown up
yet*

*Our most beautiful
days we haven't seen
yet*

*And the most
beautiful words I
wanted to tell you*

I haven't said yet

— Nazim Hitmet



Teresa Windle

He writes of hope even as he travels to wars and conflicts all over the globe and ventures into countries, many war-torn and desperate, making 47 overseas trips in all, visiting 66 countries. He was moved and deeply troubled by what he saw, the violence,

the senseless wars, the wasted lives, the money used on arms purchased to simply go and kill people who are perceived to be different. He rails against violence and war in nearly every chapter, devastated as he was by what he was seeing and hearing on a daily basis across his desk and on his visits.

I have just finished reading *Hope, the autobiography of Pope Francis*, which is a brilliant easily-read book and gives vital clues as to how to maintain hope in a time of world insecurity.

I was conscious that while I am reasonably up to date on various crises around the world, including within the Church, Francis had a hundred more crossing his desk every day. Yet depression never seemed to affect him. He emerges as one who is a huge figure of hope for the future - if we take corrective action now.

In his book, Francis shares deep reflections on his Italian roots, his childhood in Argentina, his calling to ministry, and follows his adult life as a priest, a bishop and archbishop working in the slums, and finally his 12-year tenure as the 266th Bishop of Rome.

What is hope? Hope is a spiritual gift, the belief that God, the Creative Loving Presence in the Universe, is with us all the time, in good times and bad – even in our very worst experiences. That belief is not restricted to Church members or religious people alone.

An example to illustrate: *'In the Congo, I kiss the hands and feet that have been chopped off. I stroke heads. Listen to signs. I admire the courage of these testimonies. Their tears are my tears. Their pain my pain.'*



Enough! Enough! Enough of the atrocities which cast shame on the whole of humanity. The war in the Congo has brought over 5 million deaths since the end of the 1990s. It is the largest conflict since World War II. It has left wounds unhealed for years, over which, with the scandalous interference of multinational companies and foreign powers, ethnic forces fight to death over natural resources and power.'

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Who are we?

Members of Te Wairua Maranga Trust, which publishes this paper, have since August 1989 been operating as a community following a Catholic Worker spirituality. We view the Treaty of Waitangi as our nation's founding covenant. We try, however inadequately at times, to live the Sermon on the Mount and its modern implications. We operate two houses of hospitality in Christchurch named after Suzanne Aubert and Thomas Merton. We offer hospitality to people in need either on a temporary or more permanent basis. We have a continuing outreach to a number of families offering friendship and support. We promote non-violence and a 'small is beautiful' approach to life, practise co-operative work and peace-making, focus on issues of justice, support prison ministry, help create intentional communities, and try to practise voluntary poverty and personalism.

We engage in regular prayer and we also celebrate regular liturgies at the Suzanne Aubert House, 8A Cotterill St, Addington, (off Poulson St, near Church Square), followed by a shared meal. Anyone is welcome – phone Francis, 338-7105.

We do not seek funding from traditional sources. We hope to receive enough to keep our houses of hospitality open and our various works going. Catholic Worker houses do not issue tax receipts since they are running neither a business nor a church social agency. We invite people to participate personally and unconditionally. Should you wish to make a regular contribution, you may do so through our Te Wairua Maranga Westpac Trust holding account (number 031703-0036346-02). Donations may also be made to **Te Wairua Maranga Trust, Box 33-135, Christchurch. The Common Good:** Editor: Jim Consedine, jim.conse@xtra.co.nz.

www.catholicworker.org.nz

religious people alone. It is a gift available to all, regardless of their official affiliations, and is shared by many who have no religious affiliation but are blessed with good hearts and open spirits.

On the other hand, optimism is different to hope, though closely related. It reflects a general attitude of well-being towards the future regardless of the odds. Useful though it is, it is built on more precarious grounds and lacks the spiritual depth and divine connection.

Hope is the gift that keeps on giving, even in our darkest hours. I am often reminded of Anne Frank, the teenage Jewish girl who wrote *The Diary of Anne Frank*, which became a spiritual classic. During the German occupation of Holland in World War II, she was holed up in an attic in a family friend's house in Amsterdam for fear of the Nazis who were searching house-to-house for Jews to arrest and deport to their concentration camps.

The poor are always the first to suffer from these policies. We have structured our society into those who can achieve and benefit and those who will fail, not through a lack of ability, but because of lack of access to resources. The gap between these two groups is widening here in New Zealand, as it is in many countries around the world.

Unable to talk during the day for fear of disclosure, trapped with her family above a lounge below, she kept a personal journal of hope, writing reflections each day. In days just before her arrest and deportation to the death camp at Bergen-Belsen where she died of typhus, she wrote, *'In spite of everything, I still believe that people are really good at heart....I see the world gradually being turned into a wilderness. I hear the ever-approaching thunder, which will destroy us too. I can feel the sufferings of millions and yet, if I look up to the heavens, I think it will all come right. ...I am filled with joy. I don't*

think of all the misery, but all the beauty that still remains.'

And Patriarch Michel Sabbah, former Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, writes (*Keeping Hope Alive*, CG 111), *'We must carry one another if we are to go forwards. We must use our imaginations rooted in Christ, to find openings where there appear to be none. When we have reached the limits of our hope, together we carry one another as we turn to God and ask for help. We need this help not to despair, not to fall into the trap of hatred. Our faith in the Resurrection teaches us that all human beings are to be loved, equal, created in the image of God, children of God and brothers and sisters of one another. Our belief in the dignity of every human person is manifest in our service to the wider community.'*

We live in an age of tremendous upheaval. Even in our own country, many of the safeguards of the past have been eroded and not replaced. Institutions, previously regarded as productive and life-giving, have been weakened by neglect or deliberate the policy of governments. In Aotearoa, the public health service would be a classic case of a wonderful community institution being eroded by huge underfunding and greater placement in private hands.

Hope is the belief that even small things are important. We all have a role to play as Dorothy Day suggests. It might seem to be tiny, seemingly inconsequential. But added to a million similar actions, it builds a bigger mosaic of goodness, justice and peace-making. Of such is the Reign of God in our time.

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resources. The gap between these two groups is widening here in New Zealand, as it is in many countries around the world.

As Pope Francis points out in his book, the temptation is to say nothing can be done is not one that Christians can hold. He kept planting seeds of hope wherever he went, every public action he took and in virtually every address he gave. His autobiography is full of hope.

After being imprisoned for peaceful protest, living through the Great Depression and facing a pending World War II, Dorothy Day wrote in the 1930s, *'Certainly when I lie in jail thinking of these things, thinking of war and peace and the problems of human freedom... and the apathy of the great masses of people who believe that nothing can be done, I am all the more confirmed in my faith in the little way of St Therese. We do the minute things that come to hand, we pray our prayers and beg also for an increase of faith – and God will do the rest.'*

This visionary faith led her to the founding of the Catholic Worker movement which has spawned more than 200 houses of hospitality around the world (including six in New Zealand), making a commitment to pacifism, hospitality to the poor and voluntary poverty, and to living the non-violence of Jesus as a way of life.

Conclusion

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Pope Francis – *Hope – the autobiography*, with Carlo Musso, Penguin Books, 2024, 302 pages, \$39.99.

Editorial 1 Swan Song??

It appears that we are moving ever closer to the final days of *The Common Good*, our quarterly Catholic Worker paper. Though needed more than ever in our troubled times, this has come about because of health concerns to some key people who have produced it for 30 years – and are now obviously that much older. Passing on the CW writing charism and production mahi has not been an easy task. Nor has ‘reading the signs of the times’, as Vatican II instructs about what to do and when to do it.

I have edited the CG since its inception but now have multiple health issues which have marginalised me to a large degree. I can no longer run around the Port Hills and back home through Sumner as I dreamed I once did. Rather, I am close to moving to a rest home for safer personal care.

At 81, I feel I am getting a bit too long in the tooth to keep doing the ministries I have always loved doing. But like Dorothy Day, I believe enough seeds have been sown to give the Catholic Worker a viable future in Aotearoa/NZ. I may yet be able to continue working on the CG but it appears unlikely. It all depends on my future health and wellbeing. Please note the ?? at the end of the heading above!

Our Wairua Maranga Trust is in the process of being removed to Otaki, where there is an expanding CW movement led by Adi and Shelley Leason, their whanau and close allies. If there are indeed ashes from the demise of *The Common Good*, I am confident new springs of growth will emerge. *Bread and Roses*, the CW paper of the most northern CW group, is already well established.

It has been a huge privilege to have printed and produced 114 issues over these three decades at no cost to readers and no advertising to distract or compromise the message. We always made it free of

charge such is our trust that Providence would provide – and always has! Such thinking presents a massive contradiction in our time and the culture of obsession with money and growing the GDP. Over the decades we have been generously supported by a bevy of friends and supporters.

Every issue of course has cost money, about \$2400 per edition at our peak run of 3500 copies, posted to all over NZ and to the wider world. The trebling of postage in recent times has half-killed us, as NZ Post has sought to get rid of letter-mail. We responded by cutting our cloth to suit and changing to a digital copy for many. The result was the print costs have halved, as have the number printed.

We owe a special debt of gratitude to Barbara Corcoran, our layout editor, who has been faithfully committed since the first issue in August 1996, to Francis Simmonds and his team who have done the mailout also since issue one, to Maree Williamson our labels executive officer, and to our printer, New Century Press, and its owners Gina and Bryce Butterfield. Gina and Bryce have been very generous in holding our price per copy at about 2010 rates, despite their cost increases. All these people have played an important role in our continuance for so long. May God bless them for their generous hearts.

If you wish to receive electronically any possible occasional writings from me in the future, God help you! But if you are that desperate, you can be added to the list, please email Maree at maree.williamson37@gmail.com

If this is our last full edition, I say *grazie* to our readers on behalf of our team for supporting us for so long – and *vale* friends. If it is not, well.....

—Jim Consedine

Editorial 2 Who is my neighbour?

Pharmaceuticals are Australia’s third largest export to the USA, after meats and metals. The narcissistic US president has recently threatened to impose a 200% tariff on these exports, trying to force medicine manufacturers to move to the USA. This move threatens the Australian system of subsidising many medications for the benefit of poorer people. In the USA, a country controlled by wealthy corporations, such subsidies, or even an effective government-run health system, are condemned as ‘socialism’.

President Trump’s threat is an example of the

unjust economic structures that dominate the world. Governments and corporations extract resources such as minerals and timber from poorer nations, and minimise the wages of their own workers, funnelling profits upwards to increase their own wealth and power. Even the World Bank – a tool of the wealthiest countries – does this. When it lends to poorer, indebted countries, it demands ‘structural readjustments’, such as lessening their ‘public spending’ on social welfare systems, at the expense of their poorer people.

The famous story of Jesus in the gospel of Luke

(Ch 10), about the ‘good Samaritan’ is in stark contrast to this unjust worldwide economic system. The simple story tells of a person beaten up by robbers and left lying on the road. Jesus had just answered a lawyer’s question by telling him that our most important obligation is to love God and our neighbour. His story of the victim illustrates this teaching. Two people with high social standing – priest and Levite – cross the road to avoid contact with the assault victim, whereas a foreign stranger, a despised Samaritan, goes out of his way to help the distressed man.

This story is not some minor segment of Jesus teaching. Matthew’s Gospel (Ch 25) puts it even more strongly in the story of the Last Judgement. Every one of us, it says, will be assessed on whether we helped people who were hungry, needed clothes, were sick or in prison.

The global capitalist financial system is clearly working in the opposite direction. It neglects the people who need our special care. In Jesus’ time it was the widespread slave and peasant classes who were exploited for the comfort of the wealthy. Today, among others, it is the millions who in Asian factories

produce our clothing, electronics and other ‘necessities’. Even more expendable are those forced to become refugees by the wars planned by us wealthy nations to ensure that wealth continues to flow in our direction.

By an amazing selective blindness, we, who are comfortably off, often fail to notice that because of this system, every 10 seconds a child dies of hunger somewhere in the world – about 9,000 child deaths every day. But we are continuously and deliberately distracted by trivial or distorted news pouring from the mass media, and even more now by ‘social media’.

Worse still, the churches, which should be using most of their energy and resources to criticise and change the structures which so oppress and starve the poor, almost never speak strongly about the systemic social sins which cause their daily suffering.

—Peter Murnane OP

NZ-born Dominican friar Peter Murnane OP, a long-time supporter of the Catholic Worker, now works in Sydney among the poor.

Editorial 3 NZ Govt referred to ICC

We welcome the decision of the Palestinian Solidarity Network Aotearoa (PSNA) to refer six New Zealanders to the International Criminal Court because of their silence/complicity in the face of the ongoing genocide in Gaza and the West Bank which has sickened the vast majority of New Zealanders and betrayed our country’s independence in matters of foreign policy. New Zealand has become sycophants in the face of the bullying of the US and Israel in this matter.

For the past 21 months, members of the Catholic Worker have been marching weekly in several locations in support of the Palestinians right to self-determination in their own land and opposing the ongoing slaughter by the Israeli Government and their US-funded military machine. Tens of thousands of families have been ripped apart by the invading Israeli military and nearly 60 000 killed in this time, the majority defenceless women and children.

We are clear, as is the PSNA, that being opposed to this war is not anti-Semitic in any sense but anti-Zionist and we support the worldwide groups of Jewish diaspora, active in nearly every country, who also totally oppose this genocidal slaughter. Zionism is a race-based ideology of apartheid, similar to the South African model of the last century. It is practiced by the Israeli state. It is not their religion.

This referral to the ICC was initially blocked from all media outlets in New Zealand, even though they were presented with all the information. Such is the power of the Israeli/US war axis! Such is the weakness of the corporate media here!

The CW core belief in the God-given dignity and independence of every human being regardless of their culture, race or status, makes us proud to be associated with this initiative.

Statement from PSNA

The Palestine Solidarity Movement Aotearoa just filed a referral to the International Criminal Court in the Hague. It accuses four New Zealand government ministers and two business leaders of criminal complicity in war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide by assisting Israel’s mass killing and starvation of Palestinians in Gaza. The six are:

- Prime Minister Rt Hon Christopher Luxon
- Minister of Foreign Affairs Rt Hon Winston Peters
- Minister for Space and Minister of Defence Hon Judith Collins KC
- Deputy Prime Minister Hon David Seymour
- Rocket Lab Chief Executive Officer Sir Peter Beck
- Rakon Limited Chief Executive Officer Dr Sinan Altug

PSNA co-chairs, John Minto and Maher Nazzal, say the referral carefully outlines a case that these six individuals should be investigated by the Office of the Prosecutor at the ICC for the contributions they have knowingly made to Israel's crimes in Gaza.

'The 103-page referral document was prepared by a legal team which has been working on the case for many months. It is legally robust and will provide the Prosecutor of the ICC more than sufficient documentation to begin their investigation.'

'This is a grave step which we have not taken lightly, but the government's ongoing and meaningful support for Israel, despite its horrendous war crimes, is not only egregious to most New Zealanders, but is also criminal conduct under international law.'

They say the referral follows a 'letter of demand' issued to the government in 2024 outlining the actions that a reasonable government would take to prevent

and punish the crime of genocide, and the actions the government should take to avoid criminal complicity with Israel.

'For 20 months these political and business leaders have supported Israel to commit crimes which have shocked the human conscience. This has brought shame on the whole country. Even today, nearly 60,000 Palestinians – mostly women and children, have been killed, and the key individuals who have helped to make this nightmare possible must themselves be held to account.'

'We believe this is the first time New Zealand political and business leaders have been referred to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. We hope it is the last.'

A Brief History of Gaza

Dana Sajdi

An Israeli protester called Katya is demonstrating against the entry of humanitarian aid to Gaza. What is disturbing is not so much her effort to limit aid to a demonstrably starving people, more than half of them children, but how she'd only allow 'the minimum calories needed for them to survive.'

This calculated statement by an average Israeli citizen seeks to deprive a population of 2.1 million people of any surfeit of food. It keeps them on the brink. Katya is able to think this because, in Israeli discourse, Gazans are sub-humans in a 'maximum-security prison,' who are kept barely alive, who must do their utmost to survive.

Immigration

The idea of a Jewish nation-state, Zionism, arose in the late 19th century as a response to pogroms in Russia and anti-Semitism in Europe. Zionist leaders saw Palestine as the most suitable location for that nation-state, given Jewish collective memory of the Land of Israel. During World War I, the British made a promise to the leaders of the Zionist movement. In 1917, British Foreign Secretary, Lord Arthur Balfour declared:

His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being

clearly understood that nothing may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine....

This unnamed 'non-Jewish' people constituted 85% of the population of Palestine at the time, and they were majority Muslim with a substantial Christian minority, most of whom spoke Arabic. The refusal to give any attribute to this community is a colonial move par excellence.

European Jews migrated to Palestine in waves starting at the end of the 19th century and continued into the 20th century. Lands purchased by Jews could only be worked by and sold to Jews. This had the consequence of the removal of Palestinian peasants who lost the right to cultivate land as they had done historically. Although Jewish land purchase never exceeded 6% of Palestine, peasant displacement and pauperization became a phenomenon.

In 1936, Arab Palestine employed strikes, civil disobedience, and attacks on British and Zionist targets. The reaction of the British was swift and brutal. They deployed an army of 20,000 against about 2,000 insurgents. They employed executions, collective punishment, administrative detentions, and home demolitions, strategies that are familiar to Palestinians today. Throughout the revolt, it is estimated that that death toll was 37 British people,



80 Jews, and 1,000 Palestinians.

The rise of Nazi Germany increased the need of a refuge for Jews, especially after Europe and the US closed their doors to Jewish immigrants. So, both legal and illegal immigration increased, and Arabs got more alarmed by the number of Jewish colonists who were refugees.

A Jewish State

In the 1940s, it was Jewish agitation rather than its Arab counterpart that shook Palestine, most famously in the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem in 1947. Soon afterward, the British withdrew from Palestine and handed it over to the UN. Both Arab and Zionist communities prepared for war.

In 1947, the UN Security Council voted to partition Palestine into two states, one Arab and the other Jewish. The Arabs rejected the resolution, which gave the Jews, who made up only a third of the population, more than half of the land, including, the most fertile coastal plain. In 1948, Israel proclaimed itself a state. Five rather small and uncoordinated Arab armies, each with its own ambitions, fought the nascent Jewish state. This war lasted until 1949.

Israelis call it the War of Independence and the Palestinians call it al-Nakba, the Catastrophe. During the war, 750,000 Palestinians were expelled or fled from their homes due to massacres, rumors of massacres, and psychological warfare. Not only were Palestinians displaced, but the armistice lines, drawn at the end of the war, resulted in an enlarged Israel.

It is estimated that only 100,000 Palestinians remained in Israel. Two million of their descendants, 21% of the population of today's Israel, are citizens. The remaining area was immediately annexed by Jordan with a West Bank and an East Bank. It transpired that Jordan had colluded with the Israelis in advance. The other area, what became the Gaza Strip, was given to the protection of Egypt.

Gaza

The Gaza Strip, 41 kilometers long and between 6 and 12 kilometers wide, quadrupled its population with refugees. These Palestinians understood that they would return to their homes and lands once the war ended. Indeed, in 1948, there was a UN Security Council resolution calling for the Palestinian refugees' right of return. But the new Israeli state adopted denial of refugees' right to return, first as policy, then as law. The houses, businesses, and land of these 750,000 were declared 'Absentee Property' and confiscated wholesale. Numerous Palestinian villages were levelled. Israel wanted the most land with the least number of Palestinians, who were seen as a demographic threat and had to be ethnically

cleansed.

The refugee population of the Gaza Strip is concentrated in eight refugee camps from north to south: Jabalya, al-Shati, al-Breij, al-Nuseirat, Dri al-Balah, Khan Yunus, and Rafah. The refugees depended on the newly-established United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) for most necessities. UNWRA established schools and many other services en route to becoming one of the largest employers of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. In January, the US and seven other countries stopped funding UNWRA because of an unsubstantiated Israeli allegation that 8 out of 30,000 UNWRA employees belonged to Hamas.

According to historian Beshara Doumani, the Gaza Strip became the cauldron of Palestinian politics. It is from the Gaza Strip that three of the founders of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) came. It is where the first Intifada, a popular and largely peaceful uprising against Israeli occupation took place, from 1987 to 1993.

Dana Sajdi is an author and associate professor of history at Boston College.

crucifying Gaza

in ancient times in Gaza
the Romans crucified dissenters
hundreds at a time
nailed up at public crossroads
(named that for good reason!)
rebels, criminals, Christians
anyone perceived to be
a threat to the divine emperor

with modern day Zionists
claiming similar authority
thousands of civilians
crucified today
not on crosses

strafed by fighter jets
flying miles overhead
starved for lack of food, water
denied medical care, shelter, aid
buried alive under rubble
in homes, hospitals, mosques

perceived to be different
Gaza crucified yet again

—Jim Consedine

Enemy of the Sun

you may take the last
strip of land
feed my youth to prison cells
you may plunder my heritage
you may burn my books
my poems
or feed my flesh to the dogs.

you may spread a web of terror
on the roofs of my village
O enemy of the sun
but
I shall not compromise
and to the last pulse in my veins
I shall resist

you may deprive me of my
mother's kisses
you may distort my history
you may deprive my
children of a smile
and of life's necessities

you may fool my friends
with a borrowed face
you may build walls of
hatred around me
O enemy of the sun
but
I shall not compromise
and to the last pulse in my veins
I shall resist

it is the return of the sun
of my exiled ones
and for her sake, and his
I swear
I shall not compromise

to the last pulse in my veins
I shall resist
resist – and resist

—*Palestinian poet Samih al-Qasim*
(1939-2014)

Pentecost

walking forty-nine days
in the rain
after easter
a toothbrush, a change of clothes
a pair of strong shoes
and nothing else

walking, the soles of your feet burning
words coming out of your mouth
like tongues of fire
burning so the flame knows you inside out

moulding you
into some finer shape
maybe not of your own choosing
into some new fineness

so you grow old with the burning
so the orange ember light colours your hair
your tongue
the placing
of your feet
the way
you move
your hands

—*Kathleen Gallagher*



Around the Traps

Death of Pamela Mathias – Pamela Mathias was the oldest attendee attending our regular CW Wednesday night liturgies. She was 89 when she died peacefully, 4th June, a month after her last appearance at the CW gathering. A gracious and very welcome presence always, she was the grandmother in our midst and is remembered with great affection by CW folk. She was laid to rest after a requiem mass in her parish church, St Peters, Beckenham, Christchurch. Pamela. You will be missed. RIP

The health of Jim Consedine, our longtime editor, has been worrying in recent times. He has had a variety of health issues in the past 15 years culminating in a diagnosis necessitating surgery and a spell in hospital in early August. All of this means he can no longer do the workload he was accustomed to. However, he was attending vigils supporting Palestine almost up to operating day!

Adi Leason from the CW farm in Ōtaki paid a welcome visit with his youngest daughter Chevelle and was with us for a Wednesday night eucharist. He gave a brief talk about what is happening at their place, where they have 14 separate small accommodation units including tiny houses and

caravans for the homeless. There are upwards of 30 people staying for various lengths of time, some semi-permanent. It is an extraordinary place run on the CW principles of deep faith in the Gospels, personalism, commitment and hard work. Shelley, his wife, remained at home while Adi did his road trip. It great to see them en route to see Chevelle's grandparents in Timaru.

On the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Jack Leason, Hanneke Lewthwaite and their three children Francis, Linneai and Albert, also from the Otaki CW, came through heading south to Hanneke's family in Oamaru a fortnight later. We are lucky to have one of only two Carmelite monasteries in NZ located nearby in the Addington parish. They have long been prayerful supporters of the CW and distributors of *The Common Good*. We prayed for their wellbeing and intentions at our Eucharist. It was wonderful to have Hanneke and Jack join us for our Wednesday night gathering and hear of their plans. The CW is in good hands in the North Island with the likes of these young people taking up the challenge. Hanneke is a medical doctor and is working past-time in Otaki, while Jack is a farmer at the CW farm.#

NZ's Rocket Lab: a key role in Pentagon wars

Warren Thomson

This month (June) Rocket Lab is about to launch another key warfighting satellite from its site at Mahia Peninsula, south of Gisborne. The BlackSky Gen 3 satellite will go into orbit about 470 km above the earth, '... delivering very high-resolution imagery and AI enabled analytics for daily intelligence operations' (*Rocket Lab website, 27 May 2025*). This is the second launch in a series for BlackSky this year and the tenth overall for the military intelligence client corporation.

Upcoming also are more missions for HawkEye 360, part of a number of launches which started in January 2023 and involve putting 15 satellites into orbit to support international spying and warfighting operations.

Rocket Lab began as a small Aotearoa/NZ company but is now an American corporation. This week, at a ceremony attended by Nicola Willis, Judith Collins, Chris Hipkins, and a number of other establishment figures, Rocket Lab CEO Peter Beck was inducted into the Flying Kiwi hall of fame. It should be renamed the hall of shame!

When Beck co-founded the company twenty years ago, he publicly stated that he would not take military money to fund the organisation. In April last year Beck announced 'It's an honour to be selected by the (American) Space Systems Command to partner in delivering the VICTUS HAZE mission and demonstrate the kind of advanced tactically responsive capabilities critical to evolving national security needs' (*RL media release, Colorado, 11 April 2024*). VICTUS HAZE is an American military research program experimenting with hypersonic space vehicles. What a difference a few billion dollars makes!

In recent years, attempts by RL and NZ Government officials to conceal the company's frontline military intelligence role have made way to public pronouncements glorifying its scope and 'success' in becoming the world's second biggest corporation in terms of satellite launches (after Musk's SpaceX). In Aotearoa/NZ both the major political parties have blatantly ignored the fact that Rocket Lab's ability to quickly replace satellites (an

absolute requirement of modern warfare) makes this country a prime military target.

Rocket Lab's own website emphatically reinforces the way it contributes to Five Eyes' warfighting strategies. As well as extolling the capability for 'rapid call-up launch on demand' it lists upcoming missions in its HASTE (Hypersonic Accelerator Suborbital Test Electron) series: 'Haste is operated under Rocket Lab National Security (RLNS), the company's wholly-owned subsidiary created to serve the unique needs of the US defense and intelligence community and its allies.' Also 'Rocket Lab will launch a HASTE hypersonic test mission for the U.S. Department of Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) in 2025.'

In 2025 RL is scheduled to launch a rocket from its Virginia, USA site for the 'US Space Force's Space Systems Command (SSC).' These involve very low earth orbit satellites which experiment with systems '...designed to increase on-orbit persistence.' In other words, ways to prevent destruction in a war-fighting situation.

The company is not always so public in its disclosure of its activities. At the end of last year its

website mentioned a mission with an 'undisclosed' client; from mid-2026 there will be '... two dedicated missions for a confidential customer' on a vehicle 'being rapidly developed to meet the demand for high assurance national security mission ...' (RL website). Rocket Lab is also working with the United States Air Force on missions for cargo transportation 'to advance global defense logistics for the (US) nation.'

Officials and senior politicians in this country have avidly supported Rocket Lab and there has been a complete absence of debate over the company's Pentagon warfighting activities and the implications for the real security of Kiwis. Our intelligence agencies rubberstamp launches from Mahia in an opaque process that allows no proper discussion of the military implications, and the ethics, of hosting a major warfighting operation in this country.

Warren Thomson is a veteran Christchurch-based writer and peace activist. This article first appeared in The Press, 9 June 2025

Israel–Iran War

The Disarmament and Security Centre/Te Whare Maukārōko (DSC) expresses deep alarm at the escalating military conflict in the Middle East and its nuclear implications.

On 13 June 2025, just two days before talks between Iran and the United States were due to take place in Oman, Israel launched strikes on Iran's military, civilian, and nuclear infrastructure. In response, Iran launched retaliatory strikes, prompting further Israeli attacks and renewed Iranian retaliation.

On 22 June, the United States joined the conflict, with President Donald Trump ordering strikes on three of Iran's nuclear facilities. Iran has responded with more strikes into Israel and a US air base in Qatar. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has warned that we are descending into a 'rathole of retaliation after retaliation.'

The historical context of this conflict is essential to understanding its causes. In 2015, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also known as the Iran Nuclear Deal, was agreed between Iran and the US, UK, France, Germany, Russia, China, and the EU. This landmark agreement placed strict, verifiable limits on Iran's civilian nuclear energy programme—ensuring it did not develop the capacity to build a nuclear weapon—in exchange for a lifting of economic sanctions. For the first three years, Iran complied with its obligations.

However, in 2018, US President Donald Trump—seeking a 'better deal'—unilaterally withdrew the United States from the agreement. This decision effectively derailed further progress under this historic framework and has directly contributed to the current crisis.

For over two decades, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has claimed that Iran is 'a year away or less' from developing a nuclear weapon. Iran remains under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) scrutiny, and inspections have confirmed that its uranium enrichment has exceeded the JCPOA limit, reaching 60%—a concerning development, as it is well above the 3% to 5% required for civilian energy use, though still below the 90% needed to produce a nuclear weapon. Despite this, on 18 June—five days after the conflict began—the IAEA Director General, Raphael Grossi, stated that recent inspections 'did not find elements in Iran to indicate that there is an active, systematic plan to build a nuclear weapon.'

Israel, by contrast, is the only state in the Middle East with a nuclear arsenal—estimated at 80 to 90 warheads—has refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and does not permit IAEA inspections of its nuclear facilities. Due to US and Israeli strikes on nuclear sites in Iran, IAEA inspectors in the country are now unable to conduct

further assessments—let alone determine the extent of the damage or any possible radiation leaks or chemical toxicity. We echo the IAEA’s warning that nuclear facilities must never be targeted.

NO to nuclear weapons

Ultimately, this crisis reveals a deeper truth about the flawed thinking behind nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence. The belief that possessing nuclear weapons guarantees security has once again been disproven. Israel’s nuclear arsenal has not deterred Iran’s attacks, and Iran, in turn, understands that pursuing nuclear weapons offers no real guarantee of protection. Rather than preventing war, the logic of deterrence has bred mistrust, escalation, and pre-emptive violence. The result is a cycle of fear that brings the world closer to catastrophe, not peace. Nuclear weapons don’t keep us safe—they keep us trapped.

We urge the media to reflect on the lessons of history and avoid repeating the mistakes that paved the way for past wars. While Iran’s political system differs greatly from those of Western democracies, this does not justify externally imposed regime change, as is now being suggested. The disastrous 2003 invasion of Iraq—also based on false claims of weapons of mass destruction—serves as a sobering

precedent, resulting in mass civilian deaths, long-term instability, and no nuclear weapons ever being found.

We are also deeply concerned that this escalation is drawing attention away from the ongoing genocide in Gaza, where Palestinians continue to be killed daily while attempting to access food aid. All conflicts must be addressed with equal urgency, accountability, and respect for international law.

We support the NZ Government’s call for a political resolution to the conflict through diplomatic means, and we share its position that Iran must not become the world’s tenth nuclear-armed state.

At the same time, we urge a renewed commitment to New Zealand’s nuclear-free principles and to the prevention of nuclear proliferation through diplomacy, multilateral agreements, and dialogue—not military force.

Finally, we call on the media and the public to reject the dangerous dehumanisation of Iranians, Palestinians, or Israelis. People are not their governments. Fear-driven narratives fuel war; we must instead rely on facts, international law, and historical lessons to guide us forward.

Want to help us out? Share and like our social media posts – search for The Disarmament and Security Centre (DSC).

Letters

12b/57 Ropata Cres
Lower Hutt 5010

Dear Father Jim

Thank you for sending me a copy of issue No 113, *The Common Good*, which arrived Thursday. I always enjoy reading it. Besides you, I also write to Cardinal Dew. He is a good man. Will Pope Leo be as successful as our beloved Pope Francis? I certainly hope so. We miss ‘Frank’ very much. It’s a big job.

Offering prayers for the success of your work,

John Sellers (aged 79)

New Brighton,
Christchurch.
August 2025

Dear Jim

It was with mixed emotions that I heard of *The Common Good*’s possible shut-down after 29 years. There was a sadness akin to that felt saying farewell

to an old friend, joy remembering the camaraderie and fun on our mail-out days over the years with Francis and the team, and the joy of Sister Judith’s freshly baked scones and jam for lunch. More importantly though I have felt a satisfaction of having played a very small part in the production of such a valuable resource.

The Common Good has done an important job highlighting the social justice values of the Gospel and how they can and should be an integral part of our daily lives, sharing input on many topics from a wide range of contributors. Your dedication and hard work and that of the CG editorial group will be missed by people from all over Aotearoa and around the world.

To everything there is a time, a place and a season. While it may pass into well-earned retirement, may the ethos nurtured by this uncommonly good little publication be carried forward into the future by those who have shared its pages over the decades.

Blessings in abundance,

Rex Knight

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Read *The Common Good* online at catholicworker.org.nz

The Common Good

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Christ in the Homeless

Referring to the poor and homeless, the majority of people ask us the same question, ‘How can you see Christ in people?’ And we can only say, ‘it’s an act of faith, constantly repeated.’ It is an act of love resulting from an act of faith. It is an act of hope, that we can awaken these same acts in their hearts, too, with the help of God, and the Works of Mercy, which you have helped us to do, day in day out over the years.

—Dorothy Day