

Newman Weekly

By Dr. Muriel Newman
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The New Zealand Centre for Political Debate

Three Anniversaries

This week's column looks at three anniversaries – the first anniversary of the formation of the New Zealand Centre for Political Debate, the five year anniversary of 9/11 and the ten year anniversary of US welfare reform.

NZCPD

The anniversary of the 2005 general election and the birth of the NZ Centre for Political Debate, is a time for reflection. As a Member of Parliament for nine years, I saw first hand how good people supported socialism because they could not see through the seductive rhetoric. It was my intention in establishing the NZCPD to create a vehicle through which opposing viewpoints could be represented.

Each week, the Newman Weekly newsletter raises public policy issues, questions objectives, and introduces expert specialist opinion and research. The NZCPD provides the vehicle for an interactive dialogue, encouraging discussion and debate through the weekly polls, the website forum, and through the publication of opinion pieces in the Soapbox Series.

Over the last twelve months the feedback I have received about the venture has been overwhelmingly positive – the weekly dose of politics has been well received, the NZCPD www.nzcpd.com website now attracts hundreds of thousands of hits a month, and our articles are regularly picked up by other media outlets.

However, like all vehicles the NZCPD has running costs - managing and maintaining the website, researching and writing the articles, arranging guest contributors and communicating with hundreds of readers each week all come at a huge personal cost and what I haven't been very successful in doing is asking Newman Weekly readers to become financial subscribers.

To be perfectly blunt, the NZCPD only operates through the generosity of others. If you have enjoyed your weekly dose of newsletter politics over the last year, I am

now asking you to subscribe: I believe \$1 a week is a fair minimum contribution, but I would invite you to be generous - the only way to really measure our success is through the generosity of subscriptions. Like any other private sector venture, the NZCPD must stand or fall in the market place. I do not receive any government funding (for obvious reasons!) and can only continue publishing if enough readers - like you - agree to subscribe and provide your support. To subscribe, please [click here](#)>>>>.

9/11

The next anniversary is a sad one - five years since.

Like many of you, I share the horror and sense of surreal disbelief surrounding the World Trade Centre attack, as well as the deep concerns about terrorism and the increasing threat of violent anti-western hatred. Although the images of 9/11 are surreal, the consequences are very real. The West is at war.

British journalist and author, Melanie Philips, in her September 11th article *Five Years On*, writes that this war against the west “did not start with Iraq . It did not start with Afghanistan . It did not start with 9/11. You could say that it actually started in the seventh century when Islam decided to conquer and rule the world... this particular phase of this war of religion started in 1979, when Ayatollah Khomeini came to power in Iran and reignited the Muslim world to the ancient cause of jihad... The aim was to impose the rule of Islam by force on those countries which were infidel”

She issues a sobering warning about the future: “we are caught up in a religious war, both military and cultural, that has been declared upon our civilisation but which we cannot even bring ourselves to name, let alone fight properly; and we are in acute danger of losing this fight because of the myopia, denial, craven cowardice and rank treachery by our own side” ([Click to view](#) >>>>).

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Welfare reform

The third anniversary celebrates 10 years of welfare reform in the USA. Introduced by President Clinton in 1996, the reforms replaced the US equivalent of the Domestic Purposes Benefit, which (as in New Zealand) had encouraged illegitimacy and entrenched disastrous rates of child poverty, with a programme based on work. The new welfare reform legislation had three goals: (1) to reduce welfare dependence and increase employment; (2) to reduce child poverty; and (3) to reduce illegitimacy and strengthen marriage.

In July, Robert Rector a Senior Research Fellow at the Washington-based Heritage Foundation, in his testimony to the US House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee stated that while poverty advocates claimed that welfare reform would be a disaster - increasing poverty, hunger and other social ills - "contrary to these alarming forecasts, welfare reform has been effective in meeting each of its goals" (to view Robert Rector's full report: *The Impact of Welfare Reform*, see www.nzcpd.com).

He reported that:

- Child poverty has fallen - some 1.6 million fewer children live in poverty today, with the greatest decreases in poverty being amongst black children.
- Welfare caseloads were cut in half, dropping from 4.3 million families ... to 1.89 million today.
- The employment rate of the most disadvantaged single mothers increased from 50 percent to 100 percent.
- The explosive growth of out-of-wedlock childbearing has come to a near standstill.

Ten years after welfare reform became the law

those who have enjoyed the greatest benefits are the most disadvantaged single parents with the most significant barriers to employment. In particular, young, never-married mothers with low levels of education and young children. Further, of all the US States, those that have had the biggest success in reducing their welfare caseloads and raising the incomes of poor families are those that had the strongest work incentives in place: the strictest time limits and the most stringent sanction policies.

According to Rector: "The designers of welfare reform were concerned that prolonged welfare dependence had a negative effect on the development of children. Their goal was to disrupt intergenerational dependence by moving families with children off the welfare rolls through increased work and marriage. Welfare reform produced unprecedented reductions in welfare dependence".

With New Zealand having some communities where 90 percent of families depend on a benefit, we are surely in need of urgent welfare reform. In an excellent editorial *Escaping the Poverty Trap* - this week's NZCPD Guest Commentary - the *Dominion Post* concludes: "It is idle to pretend that there are easy solutions, but that does not mean the Government should not be trying. The cost of failure is simply too high" (see www.nzcpd.com to read the full article).

The poll this week asks about the aftermath of 9/11: at what level do you support 'the war on terror' - not at all, moderately (through increased surveillance and border security), fully (through comprehensive measures including military action)?

Supporting the NZ Centre for Political Debate

If you enjoy reading Newman Weekly and value independent political discussion then I'm inviting you to consider becoming a member of the New Zealand Centre for Political Debate.

The NZCPD is an influential political force and provides a much needed independent voice on political issues. But life is all about reality and the NZCPD relies on the support and goodwill of others to continue. Contributions both big and small are most welcome.

The support levels range from a subscriber who receives Newman Weekly and has an opportunity to participate in our discussion forums, to those who would like to be foundation supporters or benefactors.

Thanks so much for your interest in Newman Weekly and taking the time to read this message. To find out more about how you can support us visit www.nzcpd.com.