

Talking Cents is an ecumenical group charged by the Auckland Anglican Diocesan Council to promote an alternative to current economic and political thought, and to encourage debate within the church. Ministry units are encouraged to distribute these articles. This article is contributed by Jean Brookes, Anglican priest and member of the Auckland Diocesan Social Justice Working Group.

Speeding up the long haul!

On lazy, hazy days of English summers, I sat beside the scorer of local matches and the mysteries of cricket unfolded.

In the early 1950s, David Sheppard emerged as a brilliant opening batsman for England. In 1955, as an evangelical, he was ordained in the Church of England (CoE). He was posted to St Mary's, Islington, London. Early in 1958, David and his wife Grace moved to Canning Town, the East End of London. Both worked at the Mayfair Family Centre, where David was the warden. In 1960, David opposed the cricket tour of England by the white South African team. He last played for England on its tour of Australia and New Zealand in 1962-63.

In 1969, David became the Suffragan Bishop of Woolwich and in 1975 the Bishop of Liverpool. Derek Worlock became the Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool shortly afterwards. A remarkable friendship emerged. Wider ecumenical relationships in later years included the Rev'd Dr John Newton, Methodist District Chair.

The bishop and the archbishop had high profiles in the city and were often seen together. They were known as 'fish and chips' – always together and never out of the papers. Many issues were addressed, including unemployment. In 1981, they became critical communicators and advocates in the chaos of the Toxteth riots.

When Margaret Thatcher was the Conservative Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990, David was outspoken in his opposition to many of her policies. From 1980 to 1997, he was a member of the House of Lords as Bishop of Liverpool, and in 1983 he wrote *Bias to the Poor* (Hodder and Stoughton). He was Deputy Chair of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas. Derek had introduced David

to Catholic base communities and liberation theology when they visited South America. This thinking contributed to *Faith in the City* (Church House Publishing, 1985) which claimed that the Thatcher Government's policies were causing poverty. The report hoped parishes and local communities might bring about change.

In 1985, Liverpool church leaders supported fans when the Heysel (Brussels) football stadium crush killed 39 people at the European Cup Final (Liverpool and Juventus); and again in 1989 when 96 people were killed at the FA Cup semi-final (Liverpool/ Nottingham Forest) at Hillsborough (Sheffield Wednesday).

David retired as the bishop of Liverpool in 1997. He quickly returned to the House of Lords with a life peerage as Baron of Liverpool and chose to sit on the Labour benches. He felt more freedom to speak out on carefully selected issues.

David died in 2005. The statue celebrating David and Derek's collaboration is on Hope Street, which links the two cathedrals. It takes the form of an ever-open doorway, a powerful symbol of their ministry together.

Batting for the Poor (Andrew Bradstock, SPCK, November 2019) is the authorised biography of David Sheppard, cricketer and bishop. He was influential in shifting evangelicalism to addressing social injustice through structural and policy change, and his commitment to ecumenism was internationally recognised.

A snap British General Election was held on 12 December 2019. Widespread concerns included Brexit, the NHS, immigration, social services, housing, jobs, the loss of vocational training and inadequate infrastructure investment – especially in the towns. Many Labour voters supported Brexit, one reason why thousands of

working-class people in the North of England deserted their Labour Party roots and voted Conservative. But Liverpool stood firm.

The Conservative Party gained a large parliamentary majority. However, post-election prime ministerial statements suggested working-class people and the environment may not be protected after Brexit.

How will British people of faith respond to a new era in European and British politics when the gap between the rich and the poor remains, and political and religious extremism is on the rise? Will they express David Sheppard's belief in a divine bias towards the disadvantaged?

A socio-economic system that was introduced to New Zealand in 1984, known as Rogernomics or Neoliberalism, was similar to Thatcher's form of capitalism. New Zealand is facing its own General Election in 2020. How will churches respond to the same market ideology that shows itself in issues such as child poverty, welfare and housing? Will we have David's commitment to a highly focused long innings with his acute sense of timing?

My Anglo-Catholic CoE childhood created a profound connection between God and creation. Now, as an Anglican pākehā I meet God in Aotearoa. I expect to learn truths, especially from Te Ao, the worldview of tangata whenua and eco-theologians.

I accept the challenge to be an ally to Māori as the indigenous peoples of this land. My experience suggests to me that in pākehā /tauwiwi work with Māori on social justice issues, we are called to:

- embrace who we are as tangata tiriti (manuhiri – guests in Aotearoa)
- identify our values and worldview(s) as tangata tiriti
- explore worldview differences in dialogue with tangata whenua
- analyse and act on Crown and government practice that negatively affects the sovereignty of tangata whenua
- seek relationships of reciprocity with tangata whenua and work together on common ground
- keep turning up, be clear why we are present and committed to the long game
- be ready to let go of some of our settler power and wealth and not close off processes and decision-making.

*“O God, Give us the courage to imagine living differently,
Startle us into newness of faith,
Support our spirits as we tackle the long haul of working for justice,
And help us create an empowering and celebrating country.”*

(David Tutty, Ecumenical Vigil before the 1999 NZ General Election)