

RELATEWELL

ISSN No. 1327-7553

April 2011

Vol 15, Number 2

**Making Marriage, Domestic Relationships
& Family Work**

**Food & Family . . .
Food for Thought**



EUREKA: Important issues families need to be informed about

What is this Quarterly About?

The Quarterly aims to support all committed relationships, especially marriage and family from three directions. The first is psychological - articles helping people to relate better. The second is economic - pushing for a just and fair society where all families live with financial security and none will be sentenced to living as working poor. The third is socio-political - eradicating any forms of discrimination against any family on the basis of race, gender, colour or different traditions. It encourages all adults to become politically aware and involved in bringing democracy to life.

What is its purpose?

Its **first goal** is to proclaim the importance of interpersonal relationships within all domestic relationships, the most common of which is marriage. Relationships flourish best when economies, market forces and profits are subject to principles of social justice which are enforced by vigilant and vibrant communities.

For this to occur each individual needs to take responsibility for:

thinking freely
feeling deeply
enjoying simply
acting justly
living courageously; and
loving caringly

The **second goal** is to revitalise interest in and commitment to democracy and politics. The greatest threat to democracy is the dumbing down of people through manipulation of the media, propaganda and advertising. There is a need to restore faith and idealism in both government and politicians.

The greatest cancer in democracy is cynicism, cowardice and despair. These are expressed in statements such as:

“All politicians are crooks”
“Government is the enemy of the people”
“Both major parties are as bad as each other”
“Our vote can’t make a difference”.

Those amongst the rich and powerful who place success, fame and ego above self, community and growth have no doubt of the importance of their vote. They never waste it. They ensure their voice is heard especially if they happen to own the media or are able to employ an army of lobbyists and spin doctors to exert undue influence on politicians.

The RELATEWELL Quarterly wants citizens to arise from their slumber. One of the great superpowers in democracy is an Informed, Caring and Passionate Public. They are more powerful than a passive silent majority driven by populist bias, ignorance and bigotry stoked by fear and hate.

The RELATEWELL Quarterly first appeared in October 1996 and is now in its fifteenth year. It is produced by a team of five people.

RELATEWELL (Family Relationships Institute Inc.) is a non-profit educational community agency governed by a Board of Management. RELATEWELL has no affiliations with any religious or political organisations.

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Waterwheel Press Pty Ltd

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A Quarterly of Issues for all Australians.

Front Cover: *Recreation!*

The views expressed in this Quarterly are those of the various authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Board of Management of RELATEWELL (Family Relationships Institute Inc.).

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Food and the Family:

Food For Thought



There are two issues around FOOD. The first is the escalating price of basic food items, especially wheat. The population of the world is increasing faster than the amount of food being produced.

Background

The laws of the free market are quite clear in this case. The greater the demand for food, the steeper the increase in price especially when demand exceeds supply. Following the mass hysteria of the 1980s based on a philosophy that greed is good, a nasty practice has been elevated into sound Economic Management. The measure of an efficient industry is increased profit. Profit has become less and less connected to production of goods as in the early days of capitalism. More and more it has become the domain of merchant bankers who fiddle with money to achieve wealth. This includes buying big debt at a bargain rate and selling it to an increasing number of gullible investors.

The demand for workers is reduced by an increased use of wizard technology. Employment opportunities shift from production involving skilled labour to service and hospitality jobs where wages are lower. It also creates an increasing number of very wealthy entrepreneurs. The new breed of money changers seek to create a labyrinthine network of money exchanges. They have learnt to create money by shifting money around. Stability in employment is sacrificed for any financial game. The trend is to move industries overseas to save money by using poorly paid labour in China and India. The latest get-rich scheme is to plant crops not for food but to produce ethanol to drive

our cars. The power of the oil countries knows no bound. They can send democratic governments to war to maintain the hegemony of the combustion engine. They now seek to insure that there will be an alternative fuel to oil as supplies dwindle by buying up arable land producing food and converting it to the product of ethanol fuel. They have sabotaged public transport to ensure that roads have priorities even though the new freeway has less than five years before it becomes a virtual car park at each end.

"When we buy food we pay for intensive advertising, transport, the availability of an abundance of products never used by the majority of families to build empires like Coles and Woolworths."

Food Prices on the Home Scene

The second issue with food is much closer to home. Two major problems are emerging. The first is a surge in food costs. Australia is witnessing an increasing shrinking of the middle class, together with a striking increase in those who are extremely rich and a sharp increase in the number of very poor people. There is a new class of poor – the working poor. Since 2008 there has been a rapid escalation in the cost of basic grocery items such as bread, milk and vegetables. Prior to the floods throughout Eastern Australia, the following items had seen huge price

"The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) says that obesity is worsening throughout the developed world and is now becoming a major public health concern. 61% of Australian adults are overweight or obese."

increases over a three year period. When we buy food we pay for intensive advertising, transport, the availability of an abundance of products never used by the majority of families to build empires like Coles and Woolworths.

Milk 18.5%
Potatoes 46.3%
Carrots 19.4%

Australians are beginning to replace fresh fruit and vegetables with cheaper foods that lack nutritional value. This is despite overwhelming evidence that good diet is important for the prevention of cancers, heart disease, diabetes and obesity. Australians are getting fatter because an increasing number of Australian families are struggling to afford healthy food choices. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) says that obesity is worsening throughout the developed world and is now becoming a major public health concern. 61% of Australian adults are overweight or obese.

Significant Cause of Obesity

The food processing industry is using increasingly sophisticated promotion and persuasion via TV advertisements. Fresh seasonal and locally grown food was once the standard diet for most Australians. New supermarket chains, take-away franchises and international trade have changed our eating habits. A leading US food writer Michael Pollan advises people who are concerned about their health to avoid food products that make health claims.

The national food regulator for Australia and New Zealand FSANZ has members on its board with ties to the food industry. Other members have acted for food industry groups and companies like Nestl  and Meat and Livestock Australia.

An independent Health Scientist Judy Carman wants the composition of the board changed to represent public health and safety experts rather than representatives of trade and commerce.

There is a need to tackle the powerful food industry. Here are some powerful reasons. It is not easy for the public to know which foods are good for us and which are not:

- The powerful food industry use clever market strategies.
- The most highly processed sugary and salty breakfast cereals are the most heavily marketed to children.
- Vitamins and minerals can be added to most cereal allowing them to be marketed as healthy, no matter how much sugar, fat or salt they contain. Kellogg's Coco Pops are fortified with calcium, iron and zinc. The packet describes them as "nutritious grains of puffed rice". They are 30% sugar.



- There is no mandatory labelling of food containing artificial Trans fatty acids because of lax labelling laws. Many states in the US and some European countries have mandated a maximum level of 1% or less Trans fats in processed foods. The Harvard School of Public Health Analysis of 140,000 men and women found that a 2% total intake of calories from Trans fats translated to a 23% higher risk of heart attacks or death from heart disease.
- Professor Bruce Neal a leading Nutritionalist from the George Institute for Global Health has broken ranks with the industry because he believes the food industry's self regulatory code aimed at curbing junk food marketing to children is fundamentally flawed.
- Public health advocates say the food industry's promise to stop marketing junk food to children is a sham. The larger companies which run their own websites are exempt from the code.
- A Public Health Lobby comprising the Cancer Council Victoria, Diabetes Australia, VicHealth and the World Health Organisation's collaborating Centre for Obesity at Deakin University wants tougher action against offenders.

By Bill O'Keefe

PROMOTING DEATH AND SUFFERING

The Role of Multi National Tobacco Companies

by Dennis Kelly



"As early as 1987, the Tobacco Institute was demanding that the Royal Australian College of Physicians withdraw an anti-smoking document from public distribution because it connected the number of deaths from smoking related diseases to identified brands of cigarettes."

There are not only devastating effects on health for those who smoke, there are also serious economic effects. Smoking not only kills between 12,000 to 16,000 people each year but costs the economy \$31.5 billion dollars.

Is it okay to promote suffering through lung and throat cancers, emphysema and heart problems? Is it decent for the big tobacco companies and the Tobacco Institute to continue to thwart the efforts of the Government and medical authorities to inform the public about the dangers and risks associated with smoking?

As early as 1987, the Tobacco Institute was demanding that the Royal Australian College of Physicians withdraw an anti-smoking document from public distribution because it connected the number of deaths from smoking related diseases to identified brands of cigarettes. The document was supported by a number of other health and medical groups. The then Executive of the Tobacco Institute made the ridiculous claim that the document was just another version of pseudo statistics and its circulation would damage the credibility of the medical profession. The only damage the truth would inflict would be on the company's profits.

In the same year the Director of the Australian Council on Smoking and Health distributed a list

of body organs that had been removed from patients because of smoking related cancer over the previous twelve months in Western Australia. It was headed –

The Soft Targets of Tobacco Smoking

521 lungs	85 bladders
221 voice boxes	82 stomachs
161 miscellaneous body parts	71 tongues
148 gullets	68 wombs
151 kidneys	40 pancreases

By 2011, the multi-national tobacco companies have lost the battle to suppress information about the dangers of smoking.

Cigarettes More Dangerous Today

Despite company claims, cigarettes are now more carcinogenic according to Professor Nigel Gray from the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand. Professor

"One of the significant problems facing democracy is the ability of big money to trap governments into a situation where the government's economic interests are directly linked to the industries economic well being."

Gray reported evidence from the US that the chemistry of cigarettes has changed. He listed careless manufacturing techniques and adding dangerous flavouring techniques involving sugar which when burnt, released a carcinogenic acetaldehyde. In fact, cigarettes are not regulated.

Tobacco Companies Work Against Health Initiatives

From the point of view of morality and decency the tobacco industry have learnt nothing. Their sole concern is to maintain profits. They seek a licence to kill and thwart government moves to further reduce suffering due to smoking.

Their latest effort is to sabotage the Australian Government's plain packaging law. Philip Morris claim that provisions in the free trade agreement between Australian and the US to be signed by both countries next year mean that plain packaging laws violate international law because it takes away intellectual property rights. Is it reasonable to argue that a company can establish property rights to a brand name? Philip Morris insists on its legal rights to advertise the brand name on a product which played a major role in causing the deaths of some of 15,000 who died last year as a result of smoking.

Philip Morris argues that the upcoming Pacific Partnership would allow companies to sue member governments if they made legislation which curtailed business activities. This raises further questions as to whether promoting an addictive substance which kills people is a legitimate activity. Are these immoral business activities? What about recruiting child soldiers, child prostitutes or inciting racial hatred. Simon Chapman, a Professor of Public Health at the University of Sydney said the stance taken by Philip Morris was consistent with the tobacco industry's history of attempting to use trade agreements to defeat individual countries' health laws.

In the US, President Barack Obama signed a landmark Federal Law curtailing the marketing of cigarettes and forcing them to print graphic warnings on all cigarette packets. The cigarette companies are now claiming that this law is a violation of free speech. How can we have a law which forbids exciting racial hatred but allows a company to destroy the health of millions? In 2001, the Supreme Court rejected restrictions on outdoor advertising of cigarettes in Massachusetts ruling that it violated free speech.

The outrageous behaviour of the tobacco industry does not stop here. Any attempt by the Australian Government to limit smoking promotes new scare tactics by the tobacco industry warning of a new disaster for the public. The latest scare is that increases in taxes on cigarettes have encouraged smugglers and the illicit trade of cigarettes has soared 25 percent. Louis Camilleri has expressed "concern" that this smuggling poses a direct threat to the

Government's revenue base!!! The Australian Taxation Office collects near \$6 billion a year in tobacco excise and duties. The decision last April to raise the tax on cigarettes by 25 percent would only deliver an extra \$5 billion in taxes over five years. The tactic is to switch the focus of the debate to a question of dollars. This tactic is ridiculous when smoking costs the Government \$31.5 billion dollars in health care related services and advertising campaigns.

Another tactic used by the smoking lobby is to use its enormous financial resources to control even the legal process. British American Tobacco (BAT) succeeded in having a Sydney judge removed from hearing a cancer compensation case where there were allegations that BAT had destroyed documents. They succeeded in their appeal to the High Court that Judge Jim Curtis should be removed because he might not approach the document allegations impartially because of his pre trial findings of fraud by BAT in an unrelated case. Strange that BAT had not challenged the judge's finding at the time.

The major problem however is more sinister. The tobacco industry as early as 1980 were exposed by Senator Peter Baume as having commercial links with the Reserve Bank of Australia and a number of insurance companies, superannuation funds, pension funds and statutory bodies. The Australian Government's Future Fund has also invested \$148 million in tobacco company shares to pay for politician's retirement.

One of the significant problems facing democracy is the ability of big money to trap governments into a situation where the government's economic interests are directly linked to the industries economic well being.

Is Democracy to become a Tool of Big Money, Big Companies?

Is the welfare of the people and the nation, to be forced to negotiate itself around the complexities of the legal system? When will we again have Governments seeking a clear mandate for social reform and refusing to allow these reforms to be watered down by the sophistry of lobby groups, focus groups, spin doctors and shock jocks?

One place to start with is the tobacco lobby and refuse to accept their political donations. British American Tobacco donated \$140,000 to the Coalition in just one year but failed to disclose this to meet the deadline set by the Australian Electoral Commission. In the financial year 2008-2009, BAT made 30 separate donations to the Liberal and National parties. Their donations ranged from \$32,000 to \$50. The total donation was \$128,860. The Liberal Party also received a donation of \$62,000 from Philip Morris in that period. The Liberal Party's third largest political donor in the 2008-2009

"Lucky Strike has a Facebook page administered by one of its employees. It includes the comment "We have gathered here to pay homage to Lucky Strike, the bestest cigarette in the world". Other pages, one with tens of thousands of members had images of old and new Lucky Strike advertisements".



financial year was the tobacco industry. The ALP no longer accepts donations from tobacco companies.

Can democracy flourish if Government's hock themselves to the financial clout of large corporations?

Should Government's be required to negotiate its health and well being initiatives through a complexity of laws designed not to benefit the whole community but maintain the advantages and privileges of giant corporations and industries.

The Next Onslaught

The tobacco giants are now using Facebook to subvert bans and international conventions against cigarette advertising. Lucky Strike has a Facebook page administered by one of its employees. It includes the comment "We have gathered here to pay homage to Lucky Strike, the bestest cigarette in the world". Other pages, one with tens of thousands of members had images of old and new Lucky Strike advertisements.

What are the Clues to the Morality of the Tobacco Industry?

The best clue is their behaviour in parts of Asia where there are no government regulations and restrictions. Indo-

nesia is one of the world's last bastions of a laissez faire regulation of tobacco advertisements on TV. The tobacco industry sponsors soccer, sporting events, pop concerts and cultural events. Young women often hand out free packets at these events. More women and youngsters are taking up the habit. One in four boys aged between 13 and 15 now smoke. Amongst men the rate of smoking is 70 percent. The percentage of women who smoke is small, 5 percent, but the number has tripled in five years. The \$6.2 billion revenue from cigarettes is only 8.5 per cent of total revenue. The health related costs each year are \$21 billion according to the anti-smoking group, Combat.

Indonesia remains one of the few countries where pro smoking advocates are given air time. Their message is not that smoking is not dangerous, they proclaim smoking has health benefits which include properties that can cure various maladies from liver cancer to autism.

Where there is no law there is no freedom. Where there is no morality, laws become play things for those among the rich who believe greed is good and profit is the name of the game.

Making Marriage, Domestic Relationships & Family Work

Part 40

by Don Burnard, Psychologist

1. Considerations on Love

The word Love takes many forms. A few come to mind -

lover	<i>loved</i>	unloved	loving	unloving
<i>love-sick</i>	love-bug	in-love	<i>loveless</i>	
love starved	self love	<i>love tryst</i>	love boat	
shared love	<i>unrequited love</i>	love child		
love potion	making love	falling in love	lover boy.	

If love was a currency, the message would be clear: Dealer Beware! The word love as a noun is certainly promiscuous. It will sleep around with any other noun much to the confusion of us mortals.

Love as a verb is a different matter. It sorts us all out. It reminds us that love is primarily something we do. Love as a verb is not an everlasting euphoric state. Nor is it an endless banquet. Love as a verb is very choosy. Love as a doing thing flourishes when it is reciprocated. A person who understands that love is a verb needs to choose someone with a similar perspective. Love then becomes an exchange of gifts freely given. Those who confuse the word love with the word investment are soon disappointed. Love given as a deposit to receive love back soon becomes a downward spiral. Love which is given as a gift spontaneously is able to wait for a spontaneous response. To love is to give freely and to love in return is much more than a debt repaid.

Love as a verb is dynamic and full of surprises. Love develops the lover. The one who is loved also develops new ways of responding with love. Love is developmental for active lovers.

Love as a verb is more about needs than wants. Love is strongly linked to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. To love begins as a choice to find what is necessary for survival not only for oneself but for those dependent on me. Love reaches out to the extended family, tribe and community. The rhythm of love is two people each giving according to their means and each

receiving appropriate support according to their needs.

As the need for survival is met, the dynamism of love becomes apparent. To love evolves into making ourselves secure. This is expressed in making sure that we have a permanent roof over our heads and a constant supply of food. A nest egg of savings is set aside.

The desire to belong to a community or tribe transforms love once again. Love seeks to build bonds of friendship with others and the focus is on choosing a suitable partner to establish a family.

As the need to belong is fulfilled, a deeper need emerges. That is the need to be valued not just for my possessions which I am willing to share but for being me, the unique person I am. Unique does not imply superiority namely I am better than others. Unique implies that I am different from others and that I do have something different and something valuable to offer. To love now includes a search for identity based on self worth.

Once I have a sense of my own worth there emerges a need to leave something of my true self behind. To love now involves a determination to leave behind me something of enduring value. For many the legacy is children who will grow up to be decent human beings and responsible citizens. The legacy may be poetry, music or more compassionate social structures. Big egos do not survive death.

Love as a verb involves the whole person. In this sense it differs from passion and the desire to have and raise children. Passion and desire have more in com-



"At a recent Congress of the International Society for the Study of Personality Disorders, a paper by Professor Twenge argued that permissive parenting, celebrity culture and the internet are contributing to the emergence of narcissism amongst today's youth."

mon with the forces of nature than with human qualities and personal choice. As the people of Brisbane and Ipswich know, as the people of Christchurch know, and the victims of the 2009 Victorian fires know, nature which is so abundant and, at times, calming can suddenly become capricious, uncontrollable and destructive.

To love makes it possible for human beings to cope with and survive the elemental unchecked forces of nature around us and within us. Love is all we have when our world appears out of control or we ourselves feel out of control.

The most loving acts are those which involve the whole person. We are thinking, feeling and doing creatures. It is not surprising that love involves not only doing but thinking and feeling. Love as a verb combines doing together with positive feeling and realistic thinking. This challenge is part of the reason that although everyone wants to be loved so many people find it hard to love.

The biggest challenge in loving is that both parties need to be real and authentic. If the only way a person can be someone is by being someone else, their life is a waste. Most soon learn that the goal of love is more complex and challenging than the elemental force of passion with its heightened anticipation and impulsive expectation.

The goal of love is intimacy which for both partners involves a mutual experience of allowing someone

else to "into me see" (intimacy). This involves mental and emotional intimacy and that aspect of physical intimacy which is called affection. Orgasm reveals the power of our nature and like the natural environment can be unreliable and unpredictable. When combined with love however, it is a powerful human experience.

2. Considerations on SELF

At a recent Congress of the International Society for the Study of Personality Disorders, a paper by Professor Twenge argued that permissive parenting, celebrity culture and the internet are contributing to the emergence of narcissism amongst today's youth.

What is narcissism? It is defined as excessive self love or ego-centricity which in turn leads to exaggerated self interest and self concern.

Narcissistic character is defined as a personality characterised by excessive self concern and over-valuation of self. Narcissistic Personality Disorder is characterised by among other things a long standing pattern of grandiose self importance.

For a discipline that claims to be scientific, Psychology fails in this case to measure up to rigid consistent and valid standards of reality based measurement when speaking of self.

"Professor Twenge says "that narcissism doesn't help you compete. It blows up in your face". What drives competition is not the self but the ego. This is why common expression speaks of a big ego but a strong self. The self is concerned with growth and the healthy self is concerned not with imitation but with the expression of its individuality."



Greek mythology did not make the same mistake. Narcissus was a very handsome and beautiful young man who saw his image reflected in a still pool of water. He was so mesmerised by his own physical beauty as he stooped to draw water from the pool that he refused to stir the water so as to not lose his own reflection. In the long run he perished transfixed by his own physical beauty.

In Greek Mythology the disorder was that he mistook his physical appearance as being the true measure of his own worth. The focus of his excessive concern was not his self. The self is the core of a person and as the Gestalt School of Psychology emphasises: the self is the whole person. The whole is not only greater than any particular part but is it more than the sum of all its parts.

Professor Twenge says "that narcissism doesn't help you compete. It blows up in your face". What drives competition is not the self but the ego. This is why common expression speaks of a big ego but a strong self. The self

is concerned with growth and the healthy self is concerned not with imitation but with the expression of its individuality. Any person may do violence to their own self when they allow someone else to define who they are. The tragedy of so many celebrities is that the only way they could be some one was to be some-one else and add a little more physical perfection to a stereotype. For Marilyn Monroe and Betty Grable they sought to be a sexual symbol of perfect dimensions without a rival or peer. Every expression, every pose had to express the perfect sex symbol.

Professor Twenge, as quoted, said that "telling children they were special to build their self esteem was a parenting technique that could foster narcissism." The real issue is the reason you tell them they are special. If "special" implies they are better than others, the children can more easily become self absorbed. They will lack the determination to make their lives worthwhile. If they are told they are special because they are different from eve-

ryone else and they are loved because of the fact they are different they will be able to give themselves esteem and share who they are more confidently. What distinguishes self esteem is that we give it to ourselves. Whereas fame and success are bestowed on us by others and others can just as easily take it away and give it to someone better.

Our nation of self can be inflated if we are confusing self which is the core of our identity with ego which is measured by our achievements.

The Professor is quoted as saying that the “inflated sense of self in narcissists means they lack empathy”. My experience as a Psychologist is that the person who accepts and values their own self rejoices when others share their true self. People with a strong sense of self are more likely to be empathic as they recall their struggle to be true to themselves. They are less likely to be vain because self is not in competition with any other self. The person with a strong sense of self is less likely to be materialistic because differences once valued and recognised do not lend themselves to comparison or competition. The self does not seek a greater entitlement than other selves.

3. Considerations on Selfishness

Philosophically and psychologically the only problem with taking one self seriously is that the reason that I am entitled to do it applies equally to every other human being. But is this such a big problem really?

Philosophically and Psychologically, the two most harmful words in the English language are **selfish** which is what we are told we must never be and **unselfish** which is what we are taught to always be. So it's not surprising that the word selfish has totally negative connotations. We are encouraged to practise self control and self denial. If we are taught self is something to control or deny, it is not surprising that we don't value it and take it seriously. No wonder so much effort in modern life goes into **ego** which is measured by achievement and possessions. There is little encouragement to focus on the self. So we avoid discovering our true self. Shakespeare wrote “to thine own self be true.” The founder of Christianity went a lot further. “Love others as you would have them love you”. In other words, love others as you love yourself.

In Western Society the big ego is much more prized and desired than a strong self. No wonder so many of us are confused about our place, our worth and our identity within society. We are brain soiled into attempting to define our identity in terms of ego (our achievements) rather than in terms of our self (our inner core).

The greatest nonsense is the idea that an emphasis on self will reduce our responsibilities to the society or tribe. This may be true in societies where there are barely sufficient resources to feed all. But in prosperous societies it is the emphasis on ego as a measure of worth that places people in ruthless competition with each other and creates winners and losers.

A society which encourages winners and losers breeds too many casualties in the form of broken people. Broken people mean broken socie-

ties; broken societies make it difficult for marriage, domestic relationships and families to flourish.

The Problem with the Word Selfish

The problem with the word selfish is that it needs to be defined further. Is my selfishness enlightened or unenlightened?

Enlightened selfishness occurs when what I really want has also some positive impact on the lives of others. Enlightened selfishness enables us to give to others but not end up dried-up, exhausted and bitter. The reward is I have enjoyed what I have done. It is what I really needed to do. Parents often act this way for their children. Partners need to do more of this with each other. Find things they both enjoy to increase joyful sharing. We all need to discover the secret of how much better it is for couples when they both find a way to enjoy supporting each other and to enjoy the support they are given.

There is also a problem with the word unselfish. The problem is that like all negatives it promotes dutiful behaviour and subsequent resentment. To seek to be unselfish is as ridiculous as defining myself or anyone else as being uncomplicated which is an insult or unenergetic which is a sign of illness.

Terms beginning with the negative prefix “un” are never helpful and at times are quite brutal eg unpatriotic, un-Australian, uninvolved. Why use “un” as a prefix to the word self which is not only the most important concept in identity but is the key to discovering our own true worth and that of others. Let's abandon the word unselfish.

It is an awareness of self that allows us to celebrate differences and abandon conformity. The self embraces the whole person and enables us to avoid the search for perfection. As Leonard Cohen reminds us in the song, Anthem –

There is a crack
A crack in everything
That's how the light gets in
That's how the light gets in

We do not get our identity by being more successful or more attractive than others. Our identity comes from the reality, sometimes flawed, of who we are.

A problem in our society is that there is one word that the establishment, the privileged and the business industry cannot bear to have, the prefix “un” placed before it. That is the word profitable.

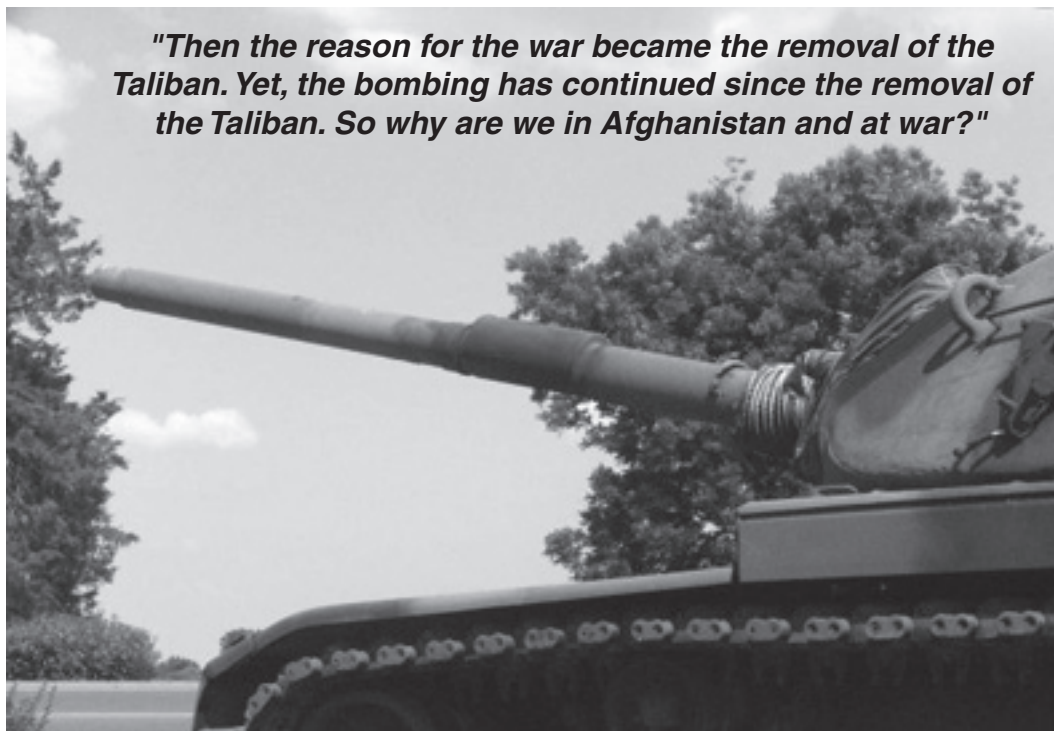
We are conditioned to believe that profit is democracy's guiding star and that to be **unprofitable** is a sign of failure and that means we are **unsuccessful**. We need to ponder whether it is worse to be **ungenerous** than unprofitable and whether success is only worthwhile when it is not at someone else's expense.

Interesting enough no has succeeded in placing the prefix “un” in front of the word famous. The most common prefix is “in”. It is interesting that so many supposedly famous people are remembered in history as infamous.

AFGHANISTAN

A Trilogy of Military Failures

"Then the reason for the war became the removal of the Taliban. Yet, the bombing has continued since the removal of the Taliban. So why are we in Afghanistan and at war?"



The slaughter of civilians continues in Afghanistan as it did in Vietnam and Iraq. There follows the same pattern of immediate denial by the US Commanding General and then an admission, an apology and a payment of money to bereaved families.

The case for the war in Afghanistan has been totally undermined since WikiLeaks began releasing secret US diplomatic cables. It is not surprising that a Republican Congressman called for Julian Assange, WikiLeaks co-founder, to be assassinated and Presidential hopeful Sarah Palin demanded that he be hunted down like al-Qaeda Leader Osama bin Laden. There is a loud strident voice in the USA which so often drowns out the voice of calm reason on which the US established its greatness in the world. The voice of reason seems stilled. In Australia, former Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser has been the voice of reason. He believes that pursuing the war ignores the lessons from previous failures when Australia supported the US military. The US and NATO are seeking to impose a style of government on Afghanistan which he says is foreign and alien to that country's history and culture. How can we expect, he asks, to establish in Afghanistan by invasion a democratic system that has taken the best part of 1,000 years to develop?

I would add to his argument another consideration. Democracies are still struggling to function for the well being of all their citizens as most are facing an increasing gap between the haves and the have-nots.

Losing the War

The invaders are not only losing the war but the hearts and minds of the people. Fighting is more fierce than at any time since the invasion. Morally and strategically the war is difficult to justify. The Afghans in recent history have defeated the British Empire three times and the Russian Empire once. The justification for the invasion is that the war is in our national interest as well as in the interest of the ordinary Afghanistani.

Let's dissect these arguments. Civilian deaths increased in 2010 to a record high of 2,777, a fifteen percent rise on the previous year. Sixteen percent of these deaths are attributed to foreign and US supported government forces, according to the annual report released by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission.

The Governor of Konar province, Fazlullah Wahidi, has revealed that a US military operation involving US helicopters in the mountains of north eastern Afghanistan had been constantly bombing villages. Sixty-five innocent people including 22 women and more than 30 children were killed in an attack this year. This is the region where the 101st Airborne Division according to its Commander Mayor General John Campbell have killed 2,500 people in less than 12 months. The killing of civilians has become an even more bitter issue since a cousin of President Hamid Karzai was killed during a botched NATO Operation.



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Experienced ex-Army Generals are questioning Australian involvement in the war. Major General Alan Stretton served in Vietnam where he was Australian Chief of Staff in 1969-70. He believes the Australian Government's policy in Afghanistan is modelled on the failed strategies used in Vietnam and Iraq. He believes we are giving our soldiers an unattainable mission and then falsely telling them the war is winnable.

A senior lecturer in International Relations at Deakin University, Dr Scott Burchill, points out that the reasons for Australia's involvement are shifting, a point also made by Alan Stretton.

In early 2001 the US demanded that the Taliban hand over Osama bin Laden. The Taliban Leader said he would consider the request and asked Washington to pursue formal extradition proceedings with accompanying evidence of bin Laden's responsibility for the attack on 9/11. No evidence was produced at the time. Bombing of Afghanistan had already begun. Meanwhile the FBI was unable to say who was definitively responsible for 9/11. To make things worse, the US refused to extradite or prosecute two accused terrorists enjoying a safe haven in the USA. One, Orlando Bosch was charged with blowing up a civilian passenger plane in October 1976. All 73 passengers were killed. How can the US expect to be taken seriously by the Taliban?

Then the reason for the war became the removal of the Taliban. Yet, the bombing has continued since the removal of the Taliban. So why are we in Afghanistan and at war?

What has been achieved?

The current US policy towards Iraq and Afghanistan costs roughly \$250 billion a year. This is more than 20 percent of total US defence spending. Yet, the principal national security challenge facing the US is deficit reduction through reduced funding of the nations military/industrial complex. This is the view of Richard Haas former Director of Policy Planning in the US State Department.

The Cost Benefit Analysis: A Deteriorating Situation

The Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief, ACBAR, says that the sooner the troops withdraw,

the better it will be for the people of Afghanistan. The group representing more than 100 aid groups says that sending more soldiers would be a mistake and would make the situation worse than it already is.

Simplistic Portrayal of the Taliban

The toppling of the Taliban whom the US supported to topple the Soviet Union initially gave some Afghans democratic hope for a better future. But that hope has turned to despair. The Afghan government is seen as feeble and fraudulent by the majority and has led to a revitalised Taliban.

The current struggle within the country is between the largest ethnic group in the country, the Pashtun, who are 42 percent. Tajik's make up 30 percent. The rest are Hazaras, Uzbeks, Kurkmen, Aimaqs, Panjshiris and Nuristani. The struggle in the country is between two groups of Pashtuns. There is President Karzai and his supporters on one side and the Taliban on the other. The future of Afghan can only be decided by the ethnically diverse population and their ability to create a unified government that acknowledges and utilises the importance of tribal loyalty. Peace in Afghanistan is being blocked by Western ignorance of the tribal structures. Western forces continue to back a coalition of warlords that sprang from ethnic minorities known as the Northern Alliance. It was the Taliban that defeated the Northern Alliance and ousted them from Kabul. The officers of these Afghan warlords are being trained in Australia by the Australian Defence Force Special Units. The Dutch had refused to work with these people.

Corrupt Elements in Afghan Society

Afghanistan had been included on a UN blacklist of countries where child soldiers are used. The Karzai Government after being exposed has promised to end the practise.

For the first time the Karzai government had officially acknowledged the use of boys as young as nine dressed as girls and trained to dance for male audience then prostituted.

By Jim O'Donnell

EUREKA ...

Important issues families need to be informed about and act on

Telstra

Telstra have announced significant price increases which will reap them tens of millions of dollars. Telstra's CEO David Thodey said it was a "modest" move. Christopher Zinn from Choice Magazine said "any attempt to standardise costs makes it easier for Telstra and decreases their overhead by making charging more efficient". But with Telstra, when it comes to profit, enough is never enough.

Telstra will now bill all long distance and mobile calls in one minute blocks from late March. Only two years ago it moved to 30 second blocks. So no matter how careful a person is in reducing their telephone bills by reducing the length of calls to a minimum, a person who finishes a call after one minute and five seconds, will be charged for two minutes. So for less service time with millions of calls, Telstra will make tens of millions of extra dollars.

Telstra has been moving slowly to bring fixed billing into line with mobile billing. True to form, Telstra claims that the move will help customers in two ways. It will be easier to compare the cost of calls between different carriers. The second reason is more like a sleight of hand in a card game. Only ten percent of people according to Telstra will be affected because most people are on bucket plans. They pay a fixed amount each month for rental and receive call credits. Anyone trying to deal with invasive calls from Telstra and other companies knows that you have to be a trained lawyer to understand all the tricks involved to sort out all the pitfalls under the surface of what appear generous deals.

Gambling Restrictions

The present Government is committed to forcing poker machine players to commit to a set amount which they are willing to lose before they start playing. The gambling industry prefers a scheme for poker machines that will rely on smart cards rather than biometrics.

Biometric technology would have made it difficult for people to get around the curbs they agreed to before playing. However with smartcards there would be less concerns over privacy and less cost to the industry.

Despite the \$12 billion annual income of the industry, Ian Donald an Executive Officer with Smartcard told the government inquiry on gambling reform that half of Australia's poker machines already had smartcard readers. The cost of switching to a biometric system is not palatable to the pubs and clubs. In fact, the preference of the clubs and pubs is to have a venue-based voluntary pre-set system. The bigger poker machine bodies argue that the proposed system would create the worst of all worlds. It would mean that some gamblers, especially high rollers, would have



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to endure a potentially cumbersome bureaucratic process.

On the other hand, for many Australian families, the failure to deal with problem gamblers who contribute up to 40 percent of poker machine earnings is poverty, loss of employment, loss of self respect and children being denied the best educational opportunities. In some cases the worst result is suicide, prostitution and a life of crime. Whose well being would you make the first priority?

Clubs with gambling facilities have hit back with the usual scare tactics. Mandatory limits, they say, will lead to massive job cuts. The argument for mandatory limits is put by the Productivity Commission, an independent body whose findings show that 40 percent of poker machine takings come from problem gamblers. Do Clubs Australia believe the public will give the same credibility to their own

privately funded research? Clubs realise they have a lot to lose if the Government makes a stand. Clubs with gambling facilities get roughly 61 percent of revenue from gambling, almost the entire amount sourced from poker machines. Families have more to lose if the Government does nothing or compromises to satisfy a \$12 billion dollar monster.

Price Fixing Law Suit Settled

Over 4,500 customers of the two giant cardboard companies Amcor and Visy allegedly were overcharged for corrugated fibre packaging through a market-rigging arrangement. The action claimed the companies had formed a primary cartel to fix prices. Those found guilty of this practise would have gone to gaol.

The action brings to a close an action that started in 2005. Amcor was granted immunity for its co-operation with the investigation. Visy and its CEO Richard Pratt now deceased were fined \$36 million.

The trial had been set down for six weeks in the Federal Court. Two former Executives of Amcor were scheduled to give evidence. At the last minute the parties agreed to negotiate. There were complications because of the death of Pratt.

The result of the settlement is that Amcor agreed to settle the class action against them, paying out \$63 million plus undisclosed legal costs. Visy agreed to pay \$31.7 million plus legal costs. The legal costs involving 4,500 former customers will be enormous.

Milk War

It's called a milk war. The question is between whom? If Coles and Woolworths want to sell milk at \$1 a litre, there is only a problem if they want the farmers to slash

"It's called a milk war. The question is between whom? If Coles and Woolworths want to sell milk at \$1 a litre, there is only a problem if they want the farmers to slash their own meagre profit to help the two huge companies win customers. That is not a milk war. It's an example of thuggery and bullying of small farmers by two very large companies."

their own meagre profit to help the two huge companies win customers. That is not a milk war. It's an example of thuggery and bullying of small farmers by two very large companies. We have a Treasury advisor on competition telling a Senate enquiry that the Trades Practices Act of 1995 removed a law outlawing price discrimination. It was naively believed that the law was still equipped to deal with price discrimination. It is now claimed that reinstating the ban could make it harder for businesses to give their customers discounts. We now face the risk of closing down small diary farms or robbing those that survive of a decent living and adding them to the list of the working poor?

Let's pass a law that says a discount to customers is legal provided it does not lead to pressure on small farmers to sell their milk at a lesser price to maintain the bulk orders that only supermarket chains can provide. The legal system seems completely manipulated by the big and powerful super market chains.



Residential or Commercial Sites

*One day your life will flash before your eyes.
Make sure its worth watching.*

- Unknown

