

Opinion

THE WHOLE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH



Bomber



From the Left

NOW THAT John Key's credibility over Kim Dotcom and what he knew about the GCSB spying has been smashed to smithereens, there have been other issues that have slipped under the news radar, like our dropping crime rate and Hone Harawira being arrested.

Media love crime because the fear it provokes drives TV ratings. The reality is our homicide rate has dropped dramatically over the past 20 years, but the anger that drives violence is still causing terrible damage to our communities.

The social friction that recession drives makes lashing out at each other far more likely, and that stress isn't easing up anytime soon. The latest report showing that 86% of child abuse by age five occurred to those on welfare, reveals what a role poverty has in generating abuse.

Those who claim child poverty and child abuse are not connected are the same people who would believe that poor people choose to be poor. It's a wilful ignorance more focused on playing the blame game than coming up with actual solutions.

The other big issue of the week was Hone Harawira getting arrested. While other political leaders were huffing and puffing about setting up inquiry's into this and that, Hone was on the frontline of the social cleansing Housing NZ is inflicting on beneficiaries unfortunate enough to live in a suburb deemed too rich for them. The state house tenants of Glen Innes were promised in 2008 that they wouldn't have to move if they didn't want to. They were lied to.

Housing NZ even had the audacity to blame the protesters and not its policy to rip out as many state homes as possible and sell them off.

Right after Harawira was freed from arrest, he flew up north to have a bowl of soup with Sam Kahu, who ended his hunger strike after Paula Bennett had agreed to meet him. From being arrested on the frontline of the housing crisis, to breaking a hunger strike with poverty protestor ...

That's political leadership!

BOMBER

For more of Bomber's views go to www.tumeke.blogspot.co.nz

THUMBS UP



Police for nabbing over 700 drivers caught since 2009 for driving while under the influence of drugs.

Bennett's 'social obligations' are unfair

By Suzannah Rowntree

MINISTER for Social Development Paula Bennett must be behind on her kindergarten quota.

The ministry's 'Supporting Vulnerable Children' crusade pledges a 98% early childhood education attendance rate throughout the country by 2016, to say nothing of a 95% immunisation rate.

You'd think this quota would depend on the willingness of parents to comply.

But instead of trusting people to make informed decisions about surrendering their preschoolers to strangers or having them injected with chemical cocktails, Bennett's new slew of welfare reforms makes preschool attendance and the state-sponsored Well Child checks compulsory for beneficiaries.

Under the "social obligations" of the new Social Security (Benefit Categories and Work Focus) Amendment Bill, parents receiving a benefit will be compelled to send their children to an approved preschool from the age of three, ensure regular school attendance from the age of six, register children at birth with an approved healthcare provider and attend all Well Child checks.

Who knew losing your job disqualified you from making decisions about your children's health and education?

Bennett insists that the reforms are not invasive or coercive. "It doesn't feel like I'm going into their homes and telling them exactly what to do, it just feels like I'm trying to put the right kind of care around them and their kids."

Well, that's nice for you, Paula, but feelings don't always reflect reality. Let's look at the sanctions that await recalcitrant free-thinkers.

Parents who refuse to cooperate with the compulsory programme will undergo three stages of "support contact" with

WINZ to "encourage" them to submit to their "social obligations". Parents who continue to show evidence of independent thought after this will have their benefit slashed by 50%. And in case anyone should be foolhardy enough to continue defying their benevolent overlords, "there are operational processes in place for clients to be referred to CYFS or fraud investigation if they continue on a 50% sanction," according to the MSD's Welfare Reform Paper E.

The Bill reflects these sanctions, dressing the CYFS threat up as "intensified case management support". There's literally no choice for parents who just want to opt out.

Who knew losing your job disqualified you from making decisions about your children's health and education?

The structure targets responsible parents making principled educational or medical decisions for their children. Not irresponsible parents with neglected children, unless you want to redefine irresponsible as committed to providing better educational alternatives than those available at the local "cookie cutter kinder".

But this legislation doesn't just affect beneficiaries who want their three to five-year-old children to learn in a rich and stimulating home environment. It should also be a concern to everyone who sees that 98% early childhood education and 95% immunisation quota.

Because the Social Security Reform Bill proves one thing,



WHERE WILL IT STOP?

If coercion is needed to achieve this goal, coercion is what we'll have. If the MSD believes it knows best, and is willing to impose its vision on beneficiaries, why should it stop at them? Today the beneficiaries, tomorrow the rest of us.

Submissions to the committee are due by November 1, 2012. For more information and help making a submission, visit hef.org.nz

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Truth's INBOX



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Water wage charges

Like many Auckland residents, I am annoyed at the increased water charges and I could not understand is why we are receiving monthly invoices.

A recent article in the *NZ Herald* reported that Watercare pays a massive salary of more than \$500,000 to its boss and, wait for it, Watercare has 120 staff earning more than \$120,000, plus salaries of more than \$200,000 are paid to 19 staff members.

The cashflow each payday to its well-paid staff means that Watercare is obliged to recover the salaries from the residents of Auckland in a timely fashion, hence our monthly water bills. These salaries are obscene and prove that the residents of Auckland are being ripped off.

People have told me that they are worried about the increased water charges because they cannot afford them and they have had to cut down on food and other items which, in happier times, many families took for granted.

JOHANN NORDBERG (Te Atatu South)