



The Vincentian
Partnership for
Social Justice

**Working for social
and economic
change tackling
poverty and
exclusion**

Members:
The Society of
Saint Vincent de
Paul,
The Vincentian
Congregation,
The Daughters of
Charity
and
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JUST.NOW

November/December 2005 Justice Briefing

Advent 2005

As part of the preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice invites readers to write to the Taoiseach and the Minister for Finance, in response to Budget 2006 which will be published on the December 7th 2005. The Budget gives us a golden opportunity to be in solidarity with people who struggle with poverty and exclusion.

Budget time gives the Government an opportunity to increase the income of the 900,000 people (of whom 223,000 are children) living in poverty. However Budget time also calls all of us to take stock of what is happening, to note who will gain from Budget 2006 and who will lose. It is a time to express our appreciation of practical steps taken to reduce poverty and our dismay at continued failures. This edition of Just.Now presents some of the proposals made to the Government by the SVP and CORI to ensure a budget balanced in favour of people in poverty. It also focuses on the WTO meeting in Hong Kong on December 13th 2005.



Advent and Christmas time for

It will not take much time to write to the Taoiseach or Minister for Finance (*Leinster House, Kildare St., Dublin 2*) or to telephone their offices to acknowledge decisions made in favour of people in poverty or to object to a budget which does not address the poverty which oppresses so many Irish citizens (*see Page 3 for particulars*).

Budget 2006 - SVP and CORI Proposals

Income

- Increase of €17pw in Adult social welfare rates to €65.80. (*SVP and CORI*)
- Develop second Child Income payment for all low-income households with children, ensure it is adequate to tackle child poverty and structured to remove poverty traps. (*SVP and CORI*)
- Increase the weekly allowance for asylum seekers in 'direct provision' to €60 a week for an adult and €30 for a child. (*CORI*)

Healthcare

- Deliver on Government's own commitment to provide 200,000 full medical cards above 2001 levels. (The 'Doctor Only' medical card is an inadequate response to the health needs of low income households). (*SVP*)
- Health charges not to be increased e.g A&E €5, Drug Refund threshold €5. (*SVP*)
- Mental Health service resources to be enhanced to meet psychiatric needs of under 18's. (*SVP*)
- Give far greater priority to community care and restructure the healthcare budget accordingly. (*CORI*)
- Increase the resources for core community care services for older people with priority to be given to home care. (*CORI*)
- Raise the eligibility level for the medical card. (*CORI*)

Education

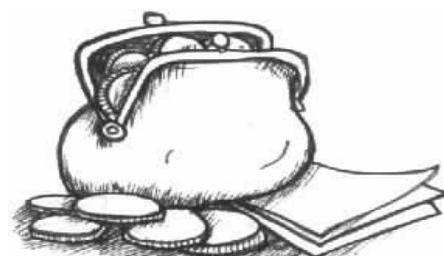
- Provide Early Childhood Care and Education half-day, five days a week for all children in the year before they go to school – starting with disadvantaged children. (*SVP*)
- Provide free school books for pupils in families on social welfare and up to FIS income eligibility levels. (*SVP*)
- Back to School Clothing and Footwear payment increase by €85 to €165 (primary) and by €70 to €220 (secondary). This allowance has not been increased since 2003. (*SVP*)
- Prioritise funding for primary and family-based pre-school education. (*CORI*)
- Provide 'early start' programmes in all disadvantaged communities (including those outside disadvantaged areas). (*CORI*)
- Extend time frame for Even Break initiative to a minimum of seven years, with a review process every three years. (*CORI*)
- Extend early start initiatives beyond school year framework to an all year support initiative anchored in the host community, with especial links to family units. (*CORI*)

Housing

- Build/acquire 10,000-12,000 social housing units per year to 2012 (mix of local authority and voluntary/co-operative housing). (*SVP*)
- Acknowledge that everyone has a right to appropriate accommodation and develop policy from this perspective. (*CORI*)
- Set a target of reducing the time spent on waiting lists to a maximum of 6 months. (*CORI*)
- Provide the resources to local authorities and to the voluntary/non-profit housing sector to make substantial progress towards reaching this target. (*CORI*)
- Provide sufficient resources to eliminate homelessness in the coming year. (*CORI*)

Environment

- Allocate adequate resources for a consistent, countrywide system to assist both social welfare and low income households with their domestic waste costs. Approaches may include waivers or allocations of bags, tags and bins. (*SVP*)
- Allocate the necessary resources to achieve waste reduction targets by implementing the relevant sections of the Waste Management Act. (*CORI*)
- Allocate substantial additional resources to develop and reward recycling. (*CORI*)
- Provide additional resources to ensure that water pollution is reduced. (*CORI*)
- Reverse the decision to abandon carbon taxation and introduce a coherent series of initiatives aimed at reducing dependence on oil, gas, coal and other fossil fuels. (*CORI*)



Budget 2006 - SVP and CORI Proposals

Employment

- Place an ongoing emphasis on preparing and enabling unemployed people to access jobs. This would involve providing additional resources to support: increased numbers of places providing quality education and training, retraining and up-skilling. (CORI)
- Recognise the right to work of asylum seekers. (CORI)
- Allocate resources to address the youth unemployment problem. (CORI)

Taxation

- Increase single person and lone parent tax credits to €1720. (SVP)
- Increase the PAYE Tax Credit to €1385. (SVP)
- Establish a VAT refund mechanism for charities. (SVP)
- Poverty-proof all budget tax packages to ensure that tax changes do not further widen the gap between those with low income and the better off. (CORI)

- Increase the corporate tax rate to 17.5%. (CORI)
- Develop policies which allow taxation on wealth to be increased. (CORI)

Overseas Development (O.D.A.)

- Deliver on commitment to allocate 0.7% of GDP to overseas development aid by 2010 not 2012 (SVP)
- Honour the commitment to increase Ireland's ODA budget for poor countries to the UN target of 0.7% of GNP by 2012. (CORI)

Addresses and Telephone Numbers:

Taoiseach and or Minister of Finance
Leinster House, Kildare Street, Dublin 2.

Taoiseach office: 01 6194020

Minister for Finance office: 01 6045626

World Trade Organisation

A Very Important Meeting - December 13th 2005 - Make Poverty History

The World Trade Organisation.

On December 13th 2005 the World Trade Organisation will be meeting in Hong Kong. This meeting is a chance for world leaders to make a lasting change and make trade rules fairer.

Trade rules: rigged and robbing the poor.

The rules of international trade are stacked in favour of the most powerful countries and their businesses. On the one hand these rules allow rich countries to pay their farmers and companies' subsidies to export food – destroying the livelihoods of poor farmers. On the other hand, poverty eradication, gender equality, human rights and environmental protection come a poor second to the goal of 'eliminating trade barriers'. We need trade justice not free trade.

Take Action

Thousands of supporters are asked to send a Christmas card with a difference to An Taoiseach as part of the Make Poverty History campaign. The card, which will be available for free nationwide, will call on the government to help to make trade rules fairer when they attend the World Trade Organisation meeting in December. For information on where to get your card, keep an eye on the makepovertyhistory.ie website or write to card@makepovertyhistory.ie or contact the Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice at 01 8780425.



Prayer and Reflection

Advent is a time to remember that we are not working alone! It is a time when we can listen more intently to be in touch with God's deep desire for peace, justice and unity. We know that these things can only develop from global love and solidarity with others.

The Christmas Rose

What is the flower that blooms each year
In flowerless days,
Making a little blaze
On the bleak earth, giving my heart some cheer?

Harsh the sky and hard the ground
When the Christmas rose is found.
Look! its white star, low on earth,
Rays a vision of rebirth.

Who is the child that's born each year –
His bedding, straw:
His grace, enough to thaw
My wintering life, and melt a world's despair?

Harsh the sky and hard the earth
When the Christmas child comes forth.
Look, around a stable throne
Beasts and wise men are at one.

What men are we that, year on year
We Herod-wise
In our cold wits devise
A death of innocents, a rule of fear?

Hushed your earth, full-starred your sky
For a new nativity:
Be born in us, relieve our plight,
Christmas child, you rose of light!

C Day Lewis

Justice is when we see each man and woman, child and old person, as a brother and sister in Christ and so respect and enjoy them like that. Justice sees a person whole and entire, not just as a nice body, a fat bank-balance or in any other way that uses them. Justice is to see people as Jesus did: children of his Father. It's also the way we demand for everyone a life free of oppression and poverty, a place to live, the right to schooling, the freedom to live in equal opportunity without prejudice of skin or creed. Justice is to form with Jesus Christ the type of society he dreams of, a society of love and justice, of peace, truth, holiness and reconciliation. We pray not to be part of that building – that we can be partners with God in our world:

Help us, Lord, we ask,
to be people
who act justly,
love tenderly
and walk humbly with you.
Help us to be men and women
like your Son Jesus
Who gives his life for the good of his people,
for we are all brothers and sisters in him.
(Source unknown)

And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever." Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home. *Luke 1:46-56*

Prayer

The gentle rain of Your love is needed in the world, Lord. Help us to prepare the way for Your works, so through our prayers and actions the earth is ready to receive You and Your gifts of love, justice and peace.
Amen.

Prayer

Mary, show us the way to be open to God's radical transformation of our hearts, so we too may bring God into the world.
Amen.



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