

## **EBERHARD, YOU ARE STILL WITH US**

### **David Legge Inaugural Eberhard Wenzel Oration Australian Health Promotion Association Conference June 2002**

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Untreated AIDS in Africa is normal;  
Mothers die in Papua giving birth;  
Hunger stalks the pavements of South Asia;  
Despair breeds violence around the earth.

Yet billions go to map the human genome,  
And to the search for extraterrestrial life,  
And billions flow for tools of mass destruction,  
And forests fall to bring the morning strife.

These contrasts, sharp like shadows in a vacuum,  
Question what humanity should mean,  
Like Philip Ruddock's badge they turn my stomach,  
Contrasts such as these are just obscene.

Yes count me in, I am revolted too;  
But no more words; just say what I can do.

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Beyond denunciation is a must;  
These contrasts are no secret, that's for sure.  
Canned images of US wealth are thrust  
Into the streets and faces of the poor.

We need to know how contrasts such as these  
Are generated, normed and reproduced.  
We also need to understand the ways  
In which the acquiescence of good people is induced.

One system shapes our access to resources  
And shapes how we interpret what we hear;  
Unequal health is made by global forces,  
It's complex but the basics are quite clear:

So unequal health reflects globalisation?  
But tell us what to do; let's move to action.

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We need to mobilise across the seas;  
Seattle, Melbourne, Rome, important days;  
But action calls for clear analyses;  
Words can be used in very different ways.

Globalisation can refer to space,  
A smaller, closer, quicker, shrinking world,  
Space shrunk by mobile phones and aeroplanes  
Computers linked by fibreglass unfurled.

Globalisation also means regime,  
Regime of economic flows and rules of trade;  
Power, institutions, force and scheme;  
Flows by rules and rules by structures made.

One word, two meanings, that's a useful clue,  
But what must change and what can we all do?

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One word, two meanings, and these are clearly linked.  
The flows, the rules, the structures and the power  
Drive the investments and technologies which shrink  
Our world and compress the months to hours.

Dynamics of regime determine who gets what,  
And who will eat and who will access care,  
And which technologies will grow and which do not,  
And when dioxin spills who will be there.

From different meanings different strategies flow:  
Increase the funds for basic human need,  
Drugs for AIDS and vaccines for the poor,  
But also reform this regime based on greed.

Regime reform; that's the global go!  
So what shall we do and what do we need to know?

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The workings of this globalised regime  
Suck resources from the South to North;  
Poor countries bleed their wealth through open veins,  
Subject to economic discipline backed up by force.

The IMF, the pit bull for finance,  
The bureaucrats of WTO,  
The Paris Club meets secretly in France,  
While the dogma of the Bank is put on show.

The threat of US 'Super 301',  
The arming of dictators to make them free!  
Blockade of Cuba, bombing of Iraq,  
Dissidents are terrorists and enemies.

The flows reflect the rules reflect the force,  
Yes yes, enough, so what should be our course?

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Mobilise to challenge the power of wealth,  
Rewrite the rules, reverse the economic flows;  
Explore the links between development and health,  
Health can advance as the economy grows.

The health of poorer countries does improve;  
Some wealth flows from growth and trickles down;  
Some are less poor and upwards move;  
Healthy living in the better parts of town.

But the poorest of the poor do not progress,  
The gulf expands between the poor and rich.  
The income gap impacts on infant deaths,  
Bhopal epitomises unfair risk.

Half full, half empty – progress but expanding gap;  
This complex world requires a detailed map.

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Sure, call for aid, investment in vaccines;  
But policy must grasp the reasons why  
Wealth concentrates in this regime,  
While the poor are forced to suffer and to die.

Two forces drive this globalised regime,  
Two opposing tendencies in tension.  
Options open through having more free time,  
But crisis looms from productivity's expansion.

Growing productivity gives people time,  
Farmers with technology grow more food;  
More food frees labour to do new things,  
Living better and making common good.

So productivity is the right direction?  
It's only half the story and this half needs correction.

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Expanding productivity threatens crisis,  
Buying falls when more is made by few,  
But policies which are based on corporate choices  
Weaken aggregate demand anew.

Profits fall and so costs must be pared,  
But cutting jobs and wages slows demand.  
Corporate takeovers increase market share,  
Further reducing jobs across the land.

So taxes are cut to maintain profitability  
(But governments to spend are thus more loath),  
And services are privatised for business opportunity,  
Users pay the price for corporate growth.

Perverse contradiction is the clue;  
But what does it mean for strategy; what shall we do?

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We'll come back to strategy but first let us trace  
How poor countries are affected in ways unfair.  
While growth in productivity can create space,  
(New roads, clean water and better health care)

Productivity increase undercuts farmers,  
When dumped US wheat in cities cost less  
Than local foods grown in the hinterland summers  
And trucked to market across roads under stress.

As sales in rich countries flatten and stall,  
The WTO is used to get  
Barriers to poor country markets to fall,  
While the IMF forces repayment of debt.

These abstract dynamics, distant and clean,  
Lead to untreated AIDS and contrasts obscene.

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The kinds of policies that could help to preserve us  
Would encourage the growth of productivity;  
But regional production of useful goods and services,  
With the profits reinvested locally.

Capital markets need to be tamed,  
Technologies grown which serve basic needs,  
Jobs created which build buying power,  
In line with productivity.

A trading regime with rules and enforcing  
In favour of poor countries needs to be made;  
Reversing the push for global selling and sourcing,  
Regional self-sufficiency through South South trade.

These policies sound too easy to be true  
But let's follow them for now and see what we should do.

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To implement policies such as these would  
Confront the structures behind the rules,  
The bullycrats of Bretton Woods,  
Backed up by US military tools.

And what would it take to reverse our support  
For the structures and rules of this global regime?  
Endorse Jubilee and control the debt rort?  
Curb speculation through the Tobin tax scheme?

The way we treat ourselves provides a clue;  
We can't say 'sorry' and shame the unemployed.  
An unkind culture makes people insecure,  
Unkind and unfeeling to the outside world.

So charity it seems begins at home.  
How might we take this challenge as our own?

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Health promotion deals with populations  
In partnerships, at home and overseas,  
Community development, intersectoral collaboration,  
Empowerment, mediation and advocacy.

Address local issues in ways that strive  
To lever reform of the global regime.  
Local projects which help to realise  
A kinder, more generous national dream.

But we are part of this culture unkind;  
Compassion fatigue affects us too,  
And when we conceive reform in our mind,  
Is it not framed by our own world view?

From economics to ethics this journey has spanned;  
What signposts can guide us through this complex land?

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Remember and learn from Eberhard Wenzel,  
Whose life work confronted those contrasts obscene,  
Who wept at destruction environmental,  
But explained its links to the global regime.

More aid for vaccines he would see as a plus,  
But warn against symptom palliation,  
Where aid obscures the deeper injustice,  
Built into the rules of globalisation.

Eberhard raged and denounced the regime,  
The forces, the structures, the rules and the flows;  
Denounced its hypocrisy and contracts obscene,  
And worked towards its overthrow.

Remember Eberhard for his hard work and tears,  
Wicked fun, great achievements across many years.

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Eberhard Wenzel also knew and taught,  
That culture affects how things seem.  
Insecurity at home leads to meanness abroad,  
Blind to our role in an unfair regime.

Eberhard strove to see beyond  
The blind spots of cultural norming.  
He linked in his practice reform of the world  
To the project of his personal forming.

To the First Nations peoples Eberhard turned,  
Their stories, their values and rituals,  
Steering the person whom he became;  
By signposts both ethical and spiritual.

Eberhard you are still with us,  
We shall honour your teaching in our practice.