

Who would Jesus vote for?

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Andrew Denton, on *Enough Rope* (29/3/04), interviewed Don Chipp, founder of The Australian Democrats. This is some of the dialogue:

Andrew Denton: We will try and avoid getting too party political. You said that when you were in government, and this may refer to Vietnam, that one of your mistakes was that you adhered blindly to policy. For, for a man of principle, what is the cost of that personally?

Don Chipp: The first speech any member of parliament hears when he's sort of elected to parliament. The Whip calls him, the party Whip, and he says congratulations ladies and gentlemen on being elected to parliament. Now I just want to say one thing to you, now you're here you'll forget all that rubbish you were talking in the election campaign about helping your fellow man. Now you'll do and think and vote who ever your party tells you. You see these young men and women six months later they're different people.

Andrew Denton: How did you deal with that?

Don Chipp: I didn't for a while. I became a creature of a machine, I was doing things that I didn't want to do, voting for things I didn't want to do. And finally I said no it's not worth it, you may as well go out and dig a good honest hole.

A reality check about the business of politics.

In discussion with a friend about the recent interview of Malcolm Fraser by George Negus on ABC TV on May 20, this friend said to me, "I would vote for him now if he was in office and saying such things."

Here is some of the transcript:

GEORGE NEGUS: You intrigued me when you said that the Vietnam situation was doomed to failure from the start. But then you said there was a lesson to be learned from that. I guess you're talking about Iraq, right?

MALCOLM FRASER: Yes, I'm talking about Iraq.

GEORGE NEGUS: So you think we should be in there?

MALCOLM FRASER: That we should only have been in there if there was a multinational force under the control of the United Nations, and if there was a resolution specifically authorising military force against Saddam Hussein.

GEORGE NEGUS: So if you were prime minister when all that kerfuffle was going on about whether it was the US or the UN we should support, and John Howard, Tony Blair and George Bush did their deal becoming the 'Coalition of the Willing', would you, if prime minister, have done the same?

MALCOLM FRASER: I would have said to Tony Blair and to George Bush – to George Bush in particular – "Do what your father did. "Maintain the international coalition. Make sure that there are Muslim states supporting what we do. We need a specific resolution from the Security Council..."

GEORGE NEGUS: You wouldn't have gone it alone?

MALCOLM FRASER: No, I wouldn't have. I would have done everything I could to persuade both Blair and Bush that an American-led operation in the name of the United States could not succeed. It had to be an international operation. Being American, it's too easy to call it, "The infidels invading Iraq. A Muslim country being governed by Americans, infidels, whatever." And from the Middle East perspective, I believe that it was doomed to failure. I don't want to see America humiliated over Iraq.

My friend who said "I would vote for Malcolm Fraser now if he was in office and saying such things," was responding to someone speaking from guiding principles. That which creates a negative reaction within us is political spin and political expediency, as reflected in the comments by Don Chipp.

So, how to approach the coming election?

A global positioning device (GPS) reads coordinates from four satellites and is able to determine longitude, latitude and altitude. When we can read coordinates then we are able to find our position and then determine direction. I will be using the following coordinates in the lead up to the Federal election to help me come to a mind as to which party I will vote for. These principles will help me think through what is at stake.

- 'What would Jesus do?' is the wrong question, for this implies the absence of Jesus. A better question is, 'Where is Jesus in this situation and how might I cooperate with what he is doing, through the Spirit, in the world?'
- An interpreting principle I apply is 'People are an end in themselves and not a means to an end'. I try to detect whether a particular policy is using people or serving people. To my mind, in the lead up to the last Federal election, the asylum seekers were used as a means to end. They were not an end in themselves.

Another way of expressing this principle is to apply Martin Buber's 'I-Thou' concept. Buber was a Jewish Philosopher. He recognized that whenever we treat another person as a rung on a ladder to climb over in order to get to the top or as someone to push out of the way, then we are treating the other as an object, as an 'It'. The relationship becomes 'I-It'. It is a subject-object relationship. The self as subject and the other as object. However, when we treat the

other person as someone made in the image of God, as a person of great worth, then we meet subject to subject, we meet as 'I-Thou'.

The big issues confronting the world are to do with how we treat the other. Is it subject or is it object? Are people a means to an end or an end in themselves?

- Fowler, in his description of stages of faith, details the movement from immaturity in Stage one to maturity in Stage six. In Stage five there is a *'commitment to justice freed from the confines of tribe, class, religious community or nation ¹*, and in Stage six there is a *'radical commitment to justice and love and of selfless passion for a transformed world made over not in their images, but in accordance with an intentionality both divine and transcendent ²*.

In setting the Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations collectively moved toward the sort of maturity Fowler described in Stages five and six. The Millennium Development Goals are targeted to address poverty and injustice on a global scale.

For more information on the Millennium Development Goals go to: www.micahchallenge.org

A coordinate for me will be the issue of maturity. Will there be a pandering to the stages of immaturity, of looking after number one, or will there be a direction toward maturity, of looking out for those whom the world has beaten up by poverty and injustice and left in the ditch (following the Good Samaritan parable)?

1 James Fowler, Stages of Faith (Dove Communications, 1981), 198.

2 *ibid.*, 201