

NZ's moral voice more of a whisper

By Jessica Rowe

The New Zealand Government should speak out against the cruel treatment of prisoners detained at Guantanamo Bay, says Green Party human rights spokesperson Keith Locke.

Prisoners, held at the United States Naval Base in Cuba, are subject to harsh conditions and torture that flout international human rights standards, according to a recent report by Amnesty International.

"We should be the moral voice, like some other countries," says Locke.

"We obviously haven't got the power the United States Government has, but we definitely can speak up as a national institution," he says.

Prime Minister Helen Clark told Parliament in March, prior to meeting George Bush, that international human rights violations at Guantanamo were not on her agenda to raise with the President.

She said: "As I have already observed, raising human rights issues is a two-edged sword."

Helen Clark said that if she confronts the President over human rights issues at Guantanamo, he has every right to retaliate by criticising human rights issues in New Zealand.

"I observe that once one opens up issues, then the comeback

could be interesting," she said.

Locke says: "Surely the gross human rights violations at Guantanamo cannot compare to the human rights issues happening in New Zealand."

"The United States are entitled to point out our human rights issues in New Zealand."

"But it's hardly comparing apples with apples."

"Any country is fair to point out human rights issues in other countries," he says.

Meanwhile, Amnesty International campaign manager Gary Reece says the New Zealand Government has a "direct reason" to bring up the issue of Guantanamo with the United States.

Soldiers from the New Zealand Special Air Services (SAS), deployed in Afghanistan in 2002, said they were concerned about the handling of 50 to 70 prisoners they handed over to the United States army, says Reece.

He says the New Zealand Government should be concerned, because it is likely the prisoners would have been detained at Guantanamo Bay prison camp.

If this was the case, the New Zealand SAS would be partly responsible for the violation of international human rights standards, Reece says.

"It's important we bring the issue into the open," he says.



POLITICAL STATEMENT: An Amnesty International protestor in the UK.



PHOTO: PRUE SMITH/OXFAM

PICK ME: These children at Black Sands, Vanuatu, will benefit from an increase in New Zealand's ODA.

Overseas handouts to increase

By Dylan Quinnell

After years of making pledges, the Government finally raised New Zealand's level of overseas aid in its recent budget – but we are still well behind other developed nations.

Last month Foreign Affairs Minister Winston Peters announced an increase of \$70 million in New Zealand's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA).

But the country's contribution of 0.3 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI) – income after tax – leaves it languishing as one of the lowest donors in the OECD. This is a long way off the 0.7 per cent it agreed to reach by 2015.

Oxfam, which is given some of the funds to use on its overseas projects, is delighted with the increase, saying New Zealand's aid has proven to be effective and will be used to help those desperately in need.

However its advocacy director Mary Wareham cautions that even after the increase, "New Zealand will still fall near the bottom of the OECD because other countries have also raised their level of ODA."

"Even after the latest commitments have been fulfilled we will still only be halfway to 0.7 per cent," she says.

ODA is a Government donation, set aside in the budget and used to combat poverty in developing countries.

This is done through bilateral and multilateral agreements, emergency relief packages and donations to NGOs like Oxfam and the Red Cross.

In 1970 the 22 nations of the OECD, including New Zealand, made a pledge to contribute 0.7 per cent of their GNI as ODA by 2015.

This pledge became the basis of the Millennium Development Goals which were adopted by 189 countries at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000.

The eight goals are to be achieved by 2015; the aim, to "create an environment which is conducive to development and the elimination of poverty".

The primary responsibility of the poorer countries is to work towards achieving the first seven goals. These include eliminating extreme poverty and hunger, improving health standards and increasing education and gender equality.

However, the achievement of these goals relies on developed countries upholding their end of the bargain.

So far only five countries: Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Luxembourg and the Netherlands have reached the UN target of 0.7 per cent.

Before the latest increase, New Zealand had done little to fulfil the 1970 agreement.

New Zealand, along with Japan, has failed to even commit to a deadline of reaching the 0.7 per cent.

Part of the problem is that achieving this goal relies on cross-party cooperation.

The Greens, United Future and the Maori Party are all committed to upholding the agreement, but National has refused to be tied down.

Before the last election, the Labour Government pledged to raise New Zealand's level of ODA from 0.27 per cent to 0.35 per cent by 2010.

This would be the first increase in eight years.

Wareham believes that New Zealand's contribution is spread too thinly over 100 different countries, and argues that there should be more focus on the Pacific, something the Greens agree with.

"There's a huge problem with water and sanitation in the region, conflict in the highlands of Papua New Guinea and a general lack of education," she says.

Winston Peters, New Zealand First leader, said in a *New Zealand Herald* article that "over half of the new funding will be spent in the Pacific, particularly in Melanesia — Papua New Guinea, Solomon and Vanuatu — where the need is the greatest."

Wareham argues that climate change will need to be addressed separately from ODA for it to be effective.

"The Government is going to have to start throwing a lot more money to poor governments to combat climate change," she says.

Consumers' lack of product awareness no help to fair trade

By Amy Williams

Fair trade has been in the media spotlight recently – but Kiwis could be doing more to further the cause.

World Fair Trade Fortnight, held in May, is the biggest promotion of the year for advocacy groups like the Fair Trade Association of Australia and New Zealand, Oxfam and Trade Aid.

A series of events were held throughout the fortnight, with a speaker tour, activities in participating shops, and the world's biggest coffee break fundraiser in workplaces around the country.

Yet many New Zealanders are unaware of the fair trade issue.

"I really don't know that much

about fair trade products," says coffee drinker Ross Cooper, 25.

Director of the Fair Trade Association Steve Knapp says his organisation works to bring together parties interested in fair trade, and that businesses, schools and community groups are all becoming involved.

"We have the fair trade community award scheme," he says.

"Auckland University, as well as Auckland City Council, is on its way to becoming fair trade accredited, and we have some fair trade schools as well."

Knapp says by choosing fair trade products, communities can show social responsibility.

Products like coffee, chocolate and sugar in particular are often

produced in developing countries, and the global market pays low prices for them.

Fair trade initiatives make sure producers get paid a better price for their crops, helping

"It's not as if Nestlé doesn't know there's a labour problem."

them improve conditions on their farms and the surrounding communities.

Trade Aid shop manager David Rose says major industry players are aware of the issue, but change is slow.

"It's not as if Nestlé doesn't know there's a labour problem," he says.

Rose says people can promote fair trade by changing their buying habits and asking for fair trade products where they shop.

"People are beginning to say, I can make a point of difference here," he says.

The Fair Trade Association monitors the supply chain and flow of goods to make sure the product is from a fair trade source before it can use the label.

Rose says that while large retailers have been slow to stock fair trade products, many wholesalers are choosing them – meaning people may be drinking fair trade coffee without realising it.

The Esquires chain of coffee shops has recently switched to using 100 per cent fair trade coffee beans, meaning Kiwi coffee drinkers can easily support fair trade.

While individuals, businesses and community groups can get involved on a basic level, the government promotes fair trade through NZAID, its international aid and development agency.

"Fair trade is implicit throughout our whole trade and development policy," says NZAID economic advisor for trade and development Vicki Plater.

Plater says from 2005 to 2006, the Government spent \$27.9 million on trade-related assistance to help make trade fair.