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The Manknell Doctrine

by Alastair McIntosh

18 COMMENTS

4TH MARCH 2018

Note:

This is a PDF saved for my own web site of an html piece with comments published at:
<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/04/the-manknell-doctrine/>

Words obscured by the logo at the foot of some pages are:

- p.2 - "Big charities have not been immune from the world..."
- p. 4 - "... process to consider how such an extension can best be achieved ... to analyse ..."
- p. 5 - "It was a period of renewal, as it were, of the Manknell Doctrine."

Third Sector

(<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/index2.jpg>) I was struck by an editorial in the Senscot Bulletin (<https://senscot.net/senscot-bulletin-16-02-18/>) by Laurence Demarco, a seasoned observer of the Third Sector world of NGOs, social enterprises and charities. Noting the irony that Oxfam's safeguarding polices are amongst the best in the field, he saw the deeper problem as being one of scale and ethos. Increasingly, charitable enterprises have had to adopt the practices of corporations. With it, too easily, their priorities go "drifting from moral leadership to the ruthless financial demands of survival."

The social commentator Gerry Hassan observed similarly in a blog last week (<http://www.gerryhassan.com/blog/after-the-oxfam-and-save-the-children-scandals-what-does-it-take-to-be-a-good-organisation/>). Big charities have not been immune from the world around them.

They too have been drawn, he said, into “the cult of leadership ... the prevalence of managerialism, and the adoption of modern business practice.”

I have found myself toying with these points less in terms of sexual ethics, as in the wider picture of what’s happened to the Third Sector over the past half century. Present times are brutal for poverty-related organisations. We’re scrabbling to survive, to keep some semblance of our programmes on the road. This climate of cold comfort has not come from nowhere. It has form, a long gestation. I’m not an economic historian. My grasp of politics is cursory. But in trying to make sense of present times, and in discussions with voluntary sector colleagues, I’ve jotted down some thoughts on how we got here. I’ve asked myself, what happened to the post-war dream.

Third Sector and the Post-War Dream

A third of a century ago, in 1984, I co-authored a first British book of its kind, *Marketing: A Handbook for Charities*. I had been working as a VSO volunteer in Papua New Guinea (PNG), engaged in teaching and appropriate technology. I’d come back, signed up for the new MBA course at Edinburgh University, and went on to adapt some of the material to the voluntary sector.

It was an era when old-style charitable amateurism was rightly under challenge. In PNG, they’d speak about the 3-Ms of the white man’s world: the missionaries, the mercenaries and the misfits. Back home, charity was very often therapy for the middle classes. Retired colonels and titled gentry chaired the fundraising committees. Ladies cut both ribbons and the sandwiches. Whether misfits, or missionaries, the “in” buzz phase was “increasing managerial professionalism”. That meant going cap in hand to learn a few tricks from the mercenaries.

Looking at the Third Sector today, looking back and asking how we got to where we are, it set me thinking of the drivers and their wider contexts. Living in Glasgow, I see co-workers and beneficiaries reeling with concussion at what’s happening to the poor. I see organisations built to cooperate having to compete for shrinking funds. What’s playing out is more than just the wild vicissitudes of outrageous fortune. What’s playing out are bygone social choices. I emphasise, I’m not an economic historian, but here’s a broad brush of how I see what’s happened from a ground-eye view.

In the post-war years of the twentieth century, from the late nineteen forties to the nineteen seventies, there was a general sense of Britain being a mixed-economy social democracy made up of three sectors. The First Sector or the public sector, government and its agencies of policy, applied taxation to sustain the fabric of the community.

The Second Sector or the private sector, industry and commerce, represented corporate and individual enterprise. As Adam Smith had always presumed, but later politicians failed to register, it played out its activities on land, resources and social basis of the wider community. Taxation and an acceptance of regulation was the price paid for that privilege, all working for the common good.

Then there was the Third Sector – the voluntary or not-for-profit sector, the NGOs, charities, cooperatives, faith groups, trades unions and other civic bodies. During the relatively optimistic 1960s to at least the mid 1970s, the Third Sector saw itself increasingly as being at the cutting edge of social change.

Britain was on a trajectory of continuous improvement. As The Beatles said in 1967, “It’s getting better (Better)/ A little better all the time (It can’t get no worse).”

The Third Sector saw itself as being in the vanguard. In the 1970s the Dundee Association of Social Services had a formidable director, Miss Shirley Manknell. I vividly remember her doctrine. She used to say:

“The voluntary sector’s task is to fill gaps in social welfare until the government catches up.”

Once that happens, the sector could move on to the next most pressing issue.

That was still the generation of recovery from the Second World War. Bombed-out sites were built on. Cities redesigned. Social policy had a relatively clean sheet. Music played with sounds not heard before. Sex had recently been invented, and Britain was at last laying down the violence, if not the mythology, of its empire. With currency decimalisation in 1971 and entry into the European Economic Community in 1973, we were adapting to become like any other progressive peace-time European nation.

However, behind that urbane façade, Britain’s three-tiered feudal structure that had been set going by the Norman conquest remained in place. Not until 1956 had British Railways abolished Third Class travel. Second Class has now been renamed Standard Class, but First Class still reminds us of the pecking order, lest we forget.

As such, and as E.P. Thompson reminded us, the English working classes had not come from nowhere. It had been a question of *The Making of the English Working Class* (Gollancz 1963), a southern echo of Tom Johnston’s earlier, *A History of the Working Classes in Scotland* (Forward 1929). Whether through the Enclosures, or through the Lowland and Highland Clearances, the urban poor had been, to a considerable degree, “made”, and for some their inter-generational poverty a birthright and a birth-rite.

The war had paved a way for a degree of social leveling even if it carried with it blind spots of a victor’s arrogance. The health service came in, inheritance taxes escalated in the 1960s, and there was comprehensive schooling. But the structural poverties of the social class system remained hidden in plain sight. Whereas other European countries, most notably Germany, developed works councils to deepen worker participation, British industry dragged its feet. Relationships between workers, bosses and government deteriorated as the glue of war dissolved.

The OPEC oil crisis of 1973–1974 weakened the country, and the coal miners’ strike that came in on the back of it led to the power cuts and the imposition of a three-day working week between January and March 1974. Ted Heath’s Conservative government fought but lost the 1974 election on the theme of “Who Governs Britain?” The incoming Labour Party promised the conciliation of a Social Contract between government and workers.

Part of this was that in 1975, Harold Wilson’s government set up a Committee of Inquiry on Industrial Democracy. Its clumsily worded terms of reference were:

“Accepting the need for a radical extension of industrial democracy in the control of companies by means of representation on boards of directors, and accepting the essential role of trade union organisations in this process to consi

 BELLA CALEDONIA an best be achieved ... to analyse the

implications of such representation for the efficient management of companies and for company law.”

But the resultant Bullock Report (as it was called) of 1977 was ill-received by industry chiefs and shareholders. Meanwhile, as wages rose under the Social Contract, so did inflation. Industrial relations festered, and in 1979, Margaret Thatcher swept to power with a confrontational approach to labour relations and a deregulatory approach to social policy. Added to that, 1981 saw the election of Ronald Reagan in America. Old style British conservatism was now turbo-powered with US neoconservative “Reaganomics”.

Thatcher and the Rise of Reaganomics

Reaganomics was a version of free market economics – also known as libertarianism or neoliberalism. That, in the sense of a “new-freeing-up” of labour, markets and the transnational flow of capital. This was freedom for the Second Sector, for industry and commerce. De-regulating labour would strip away what capitalists – the owners of capital, shareholders and bond-holders – perceived as restrictive union policies and government regulations.

The stripping away of “red tape” and successive “bonfires of the quangos” would “get government out” of the people’s hair. The abolition of currency exchange controls in 1979 would allow production to be moved abroad where labour costs, environmental and other protections would be lower. The British working classes would be shown their place. Like turkeys listening to rich farmers, they might even vote for Christmas.

A Conservative Party catchphrase of the 1970s had been “Freedom of choice”. It sounded good, but was in practice an assault on the fabric of the commons and community. For sure, we were told, the gap between rich and poor would widen. But the cake would grow. Cutting taxes, privatising pensions, selling off council houses and stripping regulation away from banking and financial services would allow “rational” players in free markets to optimally allocate resources. The poor would be enriched by crumbs from off the table of this “trickle down economics”. Its critics called it Voodoo economics. It showed no understanding of the psychological wounds created by an ever-more-unequal society. But the stock exchange was rising. And house prices were rising. And in the 1980s “alcopops” came in to woo the younger drinkers.

New Labour to the Bank Collapse

In the second half of the 1980s, after another stint in Papua New Guinea, I found myself as business advisor to the Iona Community, its head offices then based in the Pearce Institute in Govan. The effect of Mrs Thatcher’s policies were brutal on the poor. Part of my job was appeal to Brussels. The Strathclyde Regional Council had a specialist funding unit. Thanks to its European liaison officer, Norman McGrail, I was able to secure considerable assistance from such sources as the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund. The experience of those times is partly why, I think, the Third Sector in Scotland remains so much pro-Europe.

1997 saw the end of the eighteen year run of Conservative governance with the election of Tony Blair’s New Labour. From the late 1980s, Scotland’s civic energies had pounded in to the devolution agenda. Under the Labour government, the noughties brought in nearly a decade of resurgent public funding for the Third Sector. It was a period of  Manknell Doctrine. During this era the

professionalisation of charities continued apace. Scottish charity law was reformed and the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) came about in 2003. Meanwhile, many charities that had been established as old-style trusts had regrouped themselves as companies limited by guarantee.

The upside of such taking on of a corporate structure was that it gave trustees protection from potentially unlimited liability. That mattered in an increasingly litigious age. The unintended consequence, was that it further pushed the professionalisation of the sector in ways that required more and more, well, professionals.

Middle class skills were needed to comply with reporting and compliance requirements. I know of one charity, and I'm sure there's many others, that started off with only one middle class person on its board. Today, it has only one person who is not middle class.

Why? Because "corporate governance" now rules. Strength of governance is, for very understandable reasons, a pivotal requirement of funders, from the Big Lottery downwards. These, in turn, are driven by good practice, but also, by a weather eye on the front page of *The Daily Mail*. It means that an effective board needs strong skills in such areas as finance, law, personnel, PR and marketing. These are middle class skills, and sometimes bring into a board a middle class culture that can leave the grassroots thinking, "nae fur the likes o' us."

Austerity as Victim Blaming

New Labour was a neoliberal hybrid. It built on and tweaked, but failed to transform, some of the ratchet measures of Thatcherism. It didn't help that other developed countries went down similar paths. The neoliberal project had become normalised, until October 2008, when the banks collapsed.

So it was that Gordon Brown's Labour government succumbed again to Conservative rule in the 2010 general election. While some nations, most notably Iceland, made the rich pay for their misdemeanors, that was not the choice of Britain. Britain played the card of victim blaming. Austerity squeezed blood from out the public sector, and paled the faces of the poor.

In Scotland, some of us saw independence as a way forward. It never would have been a quick-fix panacea, and in the end, was not as yet to be. In England, years of drip-feed hatred by an oligarchic press had fed a xenophobic nationalism. Brexit means that even European funding paths are closing down. Furthermore, there is evidence, at least amongst environmental charities, that UK grant-giving bodies, based mainly in the south, are looking up at Scotland but deciding charity begins at home.

Meanwhile, child poverty and homelessness is escalating. We are seeing a reversal of the Manknell Doctrine. The Third Sector is having to step in where the First Sector, under lobbied pressure from the Second Sector, has abdicated. What few funds there are to address poverty are the target of more and more desperate organisations whose more structural funding sources have dried up. Oxfam was one of those that used its influence to sail as closely to the law as possible to lobby. Many inside commentators think that such explains the relish by which certain sectors of society have greeted its shortcoming.

Remergence

The truth is, many of us are not coping. Look at our balance sheets. Look, even, at the fact that three bodies were pulled out of the Clyde in separate incidents on a single day last week. You can't put one and one and one together to make four, but many folks in Glasgow suspect poverty as a factor in the background. If you live along the banks of Glasgow's river, you know the kind of reasons why they jump.

Austerity is meanness canonised. God knows with what upcoming effects on mental health, and on our children's future. Corporations and the rich may think they have a right to rule the world. But they don't. That's just a buccaneer's philosophy. Businesses are granted rights, or charters, to use the land and its resources in the framework of community. Many respect and treasure that. They're the members of the family. Others must be told they have no right to rip the fabric of community for selfish gain.

As I write, I think about a Pink Floyd track, "The Post War Dream":

"Should we shout, should we scream
'What happened to the post war dream?'
Oh Maggie, Maggie what have we done?"

I think also of another Pink Floyd track from that era, a track on *Atom Heart Mother* called "Remergence". From whence might come our re-emergence? We're working on the answers here in Scotland, but we need to deepen traction.

We need history to show us who we are, and vision that can show us what we might become. That's why we need to bring to consciousness the forces that have shaped us. And then, perhaps, "remergence" from the atom heart; as Neil Gunn said, *The Atom of Delight*.

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18 Comments

Wul

4 months ago

I used to think that charities were run on the proceeds from collecting tins and second-hand shops and that all their activities were carried out by unpaid volunteers.

When I got a job with the council, I found out that many charities are funded directly by local authorities, for example by charging around £1k/week upwards for a place in a residential school for children whose school and family life have broken down. Or £800/week for a fostering placement.

This arrangement seemed to suit both parties. The local authority got to “outsource” the difficult and complex task of looking after troubled young people and the charities grew their activities.

I wonder how healthy it is to have so much of the social security of our most vulnerable people reliant on “charity”. Does it move the needy into a different category of citizen where they become “charity cases”? Does it move those in need of support offshore to a “third” sector?

The large charities must behave (and are) like businesses. This gives them an interest in promoting the neo-liberal model of downsizing the state and buying in of services to the public. As such they could be seen as being in “competition” with direct, state-funded public services.

Another aspect I noticed was that, as a securely employed council staff member with union representation, I was much more able to criticise and complain about any inadequacies of the council than the “independent” charity bosses who went cap-in-hand each year to council service managers to seek renewed contracts.

For the avoidance of doubt, I think that much invaluable work is being done by charities and that they have saved and turned around many thousands of lives in Scotland, often in ways that councils are too inflexible and unresponsive to attempt.

Reply (<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/04/the-manknell-doctrine/?replytocom=403312#respond>)

Katrina

4 months ago

A thoughtful reflection that resonates, Alastair. Perhaps time some of the big players in the first sector, e.g. NHS, delivered practical measures to reduce poverty (e.g. welfare rights support) rather than trail out the annual public health reports & studies highlighting inequality? Also a need to enlighten all of us about the commonweal, common land/resources & to remind the second sector of that, too? Would a basic citizens dividend/income go some say towards addressing the issues touched upon in your article ... as well as all the richness that comes from positive meaningful relationships built upon self determination and autonomy at the personal, family, community and Scotland level?

Reply (<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/04/the-manknell-doctrine/?replytocom=403328#respond>)

Alasdair Macdonald.

4 months ago

I agree substantially with Mr McIntosh's  BELLA CALEDONIA since the 1960s.

With the 'need to shift expenditure off the public balance sheet' in response to the neoliberal economic hegemony, the third sector became the vehicle for delivering many services which were formerly carried out by public servants. In effect, they were in receipt of public funds but were at a further remove from the direct democratic accountability and authority of councils and, indeed, government.

In the majority of cases, the third sector undertook its work very well – and continues to do. However, as with any organisation, third sector bodies, like Apple, like RBS, like departments in councils, etc there is the perennial problem of goal displacement, when the organisation is skewed towards serving the interests of its employees and members at the expense of the clientele. This is one of the reasons for the inflated salaries of senior officers and the attractiveness as a 'career path' for middle and upper class people.. All organisations, not just third sector ones, have to have a far greater degree of transparency.

The other problem – and it is one where the Cameron government turned the screw quite severely – is the restriction on third sector bodies 'engaging in politics', on pain of withdrawal of funds and perhaps removal of tax status, etc. Charities always played a significant role in articulating concerns, such as the appalling levels of poverty and the consequent effects in drug and alcohol abuse, suicide, crime, etc.

Since probably 1968, I reckon that there has been a right wing counterinsurgency in the western nations, driven essentially, by the very wealthy but deploying tactics of divide and rule to bring about things like Brexit and the election of Donald Trump. Traditional 'left' wing parties, like Labour, played a significant role in moving this forward. Across Europe and much of the west, 'left' wing parties which formerly held power for many years are languishing in the doldrums and have lost contact with most of their traditional support base. Mr Gerry Hassan dealt with this in 'The Strange Death of Labour Scotland'.

Well done, Sir!

Reply (<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/04/the-manknell-doctrine/?replytocom=403715#respond>)

SleepingDog

4 months ago

@Alasdair, there have been criticisms of some charities for limiting themselves to tackling the symptoms of systemic injustice rather than the root causes. Your point about "the other problem" is that the UK government tried to legally enforce that limitation.

Greenpeace UK chose to defy this legislation and were fined.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/apr/18/greenpeace-first-organisation-fined-lobbying-act> (<https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/press-releases/un-report-criticises-lobbying-act-and-urges-uk-governme>)

Here's what the government apparently want from charities, enforcement of its policies:

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/mar/05/st-mungos-homeless-charity-helped-target-rough->

You could go back to Vera Brittain's WW2-time views on the functions of minorities. If they avoid belligerence and self-righteousness, and rise above the resentments and paranoia induced by oppression, an energetic minority can (she says in Humiliation with Honour) start a reform movement, to assist the victims of power, keep alive civilized values, and plan for the (post-emergency) future.

Reply (<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/04/the-manknell-doctrine/?replytocom=403903#respond>)

John Carnochan

4 months ago

This is an excellent piece describing the mood music of today.

I am consistently and constantly in awe of the work of individuals who are driving small community groups and charities with a sincere sense of purpose and mission to make things better for the people around them. These "good folk" are usually inspired by fairness, compassion for their fellow humans and a passion to make things better. Currently these heroes spend huge amounts of their time and energy trying to resolve unfairness and in-built bias in the systems they are forced to inhabit. They are often left to feel that the work they do is not worthwhile, is not valued and is irrelevant and no desire to make money, and the very best of them do not consider themself

demand compliance to a business model/structure that most often has little relevance to the mission, purpose and experience of charities and groups seeking support. Larger charities are far better able to comply and do so eagerly, squeezing out smaller charities and groups in the process.

As an example of how the current arrangements fail to match the complexity of the challenge I would cite the use of the phrase Scale Up. The majority of small charities and community groups have no interest in scaling up, they want to do what's best in their own community; that is where they are most effective and efficient. Discounting or disregarding the value of any small community group simply because they cannot answer the question of how they will scale up or how they will sustain their work is unfair, unhelpful and disrespectful. Similarly, demanding small charities and groups adhere rigidly to "outcomes" as the primary measure of their success does nothing but perpetuate the trend of failure. This is particularly true when the outcomes are decided by the funding agency.

This model of transactional processes used by commissioning bodies, funders, local authorities and government will always favour the larger charities which are structured to mirror recognisable business structures and processes and operated by managerial professionals. While this system apparently makes those with the resources more comfortable, it does nothing to reduce the demands on public services. It does however increase the likelihood of a small charity altering its successful practice and locally specific mission to suit the practices and aims of the funders therefore reducing effectiveness and perpetuating demand and very often increasing it.

Why do we not challenge Government and Local Authority agencies with the same vigour and hold them to the same standards we currently demand of small community groups and charities (?). If our statutory services were truly effective there would be an ever-decreasing need for charities. This is what Christie defined as failure demand and the single most difficult barrier to prevention.

Reply (<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/04/the-manknell-doctrine/?replytocom=403888#respond>)

Wul

4 months ago

Totally agree with this John,

I was once involved in the start up of a small local, handicrafts charity and your analysis is spot on.

At an early meeting of this new, small charity, the volunteer management committee had a visit from a "consultant" with a project management background.

The visiting expert explained to the men around the table all the policies and documentation they would need (risk assessment, complaints policy, business plan, materials handling procedure, target measurement process, key performance indicators, monitoring policy, code of ethics etc. etc.) and you could feel the energy drain from the room.

After he left, one of the men sighed and said "Ah didnae sign up for a' this, Ah'm goanny have to resign".

This type of enforced managerialism goes against the grain with local people who roll up their sleeves to get stuck in and solve a neighbourhood problems.

It kills the enthusiasm and energy of most normal people, but is meat and drink (quite literally) to middle class, middle management professionals.

What bothers me is how did we let this type of stifling bureaucracy get such a hold on us? It seems that the more unregulated the "market" becomes, the more regulated the citizen must be.

Why is that?

Reply (<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/04/the-manknell-doctrine/?replytocom=404045#respond>)

Alastair McIntosh

4 months ago

Well, hello Wul, Katrina, Alasdair, Sleeping Dog and John ... who have so far commented here. I've waited 24 hrs before responding so as to catch all in a oner, it's less bitty like that.

For starters, I very much appreciate your sharing. It takes a lot of time and emotional energy to write a piece like this. I kept wondering if I might be out of touch, or inaccurate, so it is rewarding and reassuring to see it landing well amongst folks who clearly have experience. I sent it to Bella specifically because Mike Small fields the site in a way that allows feedback such as you've all shared.

This piece had its origin at a charity board I serve on, poverty and human potential related, where we are having to lay off staff notwithstanding Herculean efforts to keep the full show on the road. Many others are in the same position. In situations like that, it is easy for good servants on a board to feel inadequate, even self-blaming. To offset that, I made a set of comments, the convenor asked if I'd write them up as a few paragraphs, and it grew as I did so. Let me now very briefly respond.

WUL – you wonder how healthy it is to have so much care outsourced to charities. I think the answer to that lies in why it's done. A healthy reason, is that charities can offer varied and innovative approaches. An unhealthy reason, is that it extends control, it is easier than hiring and firing, gets round union issues, etc. It rolls back what I have called (as a way of posthumously honouring the old battleaxe of Dundee!) the Manknell Doctrine. Your "Ah didnae sign up for a' this ..." comment in your second post is brilliant. Frankly, I look at most of the "best practice" policy and compliance statements and assessments we have to make, and it nauseates me. Brings back a memory of the title of a 1972 Malcolm Muggeridge book, "Chronicles of Wasted Time". I know, as soon as I walk into an organisation, if it has a healthy soul or not. We don't need tick the box to tell us that. However, I must also concede that in today's instrumental or managerial world, with legal liability so sharpened, it is hard to see how to do without such dismal Chronicles. All that I can say, is keep on calling it all back to the human.

KATRINA – your mention of the NHS served as a reminder to me how important it is to affirm that in some of these big set-ups, and maybe especially here in Scotland where we're small enough to be in human touch with each other, there are very wonderful people doing their utmost to hold open visionary paths. With NHS, Sir Harry Burns was a case in point, who I'll name as he's now moved into another role, but there are others. You mention the land. I think that Scottish land reform is an incredibly exciting space in which community empowerment is happening, and with positive economic spin-offs. Basic income? I look at many folks here within the parish boundary of Govan where I live. They get so little in benefits anyway, and it strips them of dignity and makes flexible p/t work complicated. I find myself walking down Craigton Rd, observing what is quite often quite literally the shuffling poor amongst my neighbours, and thinking with respect to Powers that Be: "For God's sake, in your privilege and your tax avoidance, just suffer life to be a little easier for them."

ALASDAIR – what I most took from your comment, was your expression "goal displacement". In organisations with which I'm involved I see us contorted like amoebae to jump the hoops and fit and tick the boxes of funder requirements. I only partly blame the managerialism of funders (they have to cover their backs too). The overarching issue, is we live in a rich country but the rich help to create and then denigrate the poor. There's just too little sharing to go round. What to do about that? I don't know, short of letting out a long prophetic wail of declamation. "Woe be on you, who..."

SLEEPINGDOG – anent the prophetic, you call (as Jeremiah did – forgive me my passion for liberation theology) to keep civilised values alive and plan for the post-emergency future. You know, the other day, in the light of laying off staff, a grassroots volunteer asked me what was going on. I explained. And you know what he said, this guy called Michael? He said: "I get it. We've got to be like a bear that goes into hibernation, so it can wake up when things warm up again in spring." Jeremiah saw that as the return of the Israelites from their diaspora in slavery in Babylon. We too must not lose hope. We must hold on to those values you speak of, look out for our neighbours, and participate in the processes that might start to thaw the frozen social soul.

Lastly, JOHN C. You're the only person here I know, and I'm right there with you in what you say about being wary of the pressures of scaling up (see my links to Demarco and Hassan, above), and of "SMART" type transactional processes (specific, measurable, agreed-upon, realistic, time-bound). In one way of looking at things, such a methodical and measured approach is common sense. In another, the very idea that deep human work can be, say, measurable, displays a classic Whiteheadian (sorry, I used to be an academic) "fallacy of misplaced concreteness".

Friends – all your comments bring me back to the human, and the title of the Lewis poet Iain Crichton Smith's essays, "Towards the Human". In an essay titled "Not People in a Bad Place" he concludes, and I with him, and thanking you for your comments:

“Sometimes when I walk the streets of Glasgow I see old women passing by, bowed down with shopping bags, and I ask myself: ‘What force made this woman what she is? What is her history?’ It is the holiness of the person we have lost, the holiness of life itself, the inexplicable mystery and wonder, of it, its strangeness, it’s tenderness.”

Reply (<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/04/the-manknell-doctrine/?replytocom=404109#respond>)

SleepingDog

4 months ago

@Alastair, I am not sure about the appropriate biblical reference, possibly the one about ravening wolves in sheeps clothing, but there is surely a category other than the “missionaries, the mercenaries and the misfits” we should be concerned about.

I mentioned a concern that some NGOs/charities may be carrying out government policy. This would not at all be surprising if they were being infiltrated by covert agents, or at least were controlled by levers such as funding or access permissions.

There was an infamous speech given by US American Secretary of State Colin Powell where he called western NGOs a force-multiplier for carrying out US foreign policy. It is no secret that agencies like the CIA use aid front organizations, or infiltrate others (like British secret political police have).

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/jun/23/human-rights-imperialism-western-values> (ht

This, of course, directly jeopardises the lives of innocent NGO workers who can be tarred with the same brush or mistaken for agents of a foreign power on clandestine missions (like fake vaccination program teams who were secretly searching for Osama Bin Laden, according to Seymour Hersh).

Now, most of the charity workers I have encountered appeared pleasant and idealistic. But how could you tell? Some people had long-term relationships with the secret police agents sent to spy on them, or draw their group into certain actions.

<https://www.ucpi.org.uk/cover-names/> (<https://www.ucpi.org.uk/cover-names/>).

And some charities have turned out to be money-making scams, it appears, which suggest that fewer well-regulated charities may be more viable than many who largely escape scrutiny:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-37966383> (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-37966383>).

Is this “Powell Doctrine” of doing the State’s dirty work something that was a concern, was discussed, in Papua New Guinea or elsewhere, to your knowledge? Do charities vet for spooks, as one might suppose they do for paedophiles or fraudsters?

Reply (<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/04/the-manknell-doctrine/?replytocom=404262#respond>)

Wul

4 months ago

Thank you Alastair.

I should add, lest my tale appears too gloomy, that we got the wee charity going and the man didn’t resign.

We got all the policies written (with kind & free help from said “expert”) and then focussed on what matters; enjoying each other’s company & fellowship and keeping sensible safety rules.

Reply (<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/04/the-manknell-doctrine/?replytocom=404436#respond>)

Alastair McIntosh

4 months ago

Sensible rules, that’s it Wul, KISS – “keep it safe and sensible”. And SleepingDog, I think those of us involved in campaigning work are always these days aware of “spooks”. I know that when I campaigned on the Harris superquarry 1990s I was “assessed” by the company, because they later told me. But I also think it’s easy to get over anxious about such things. Anybody who wants to know what I’m about can simply analyse my website or Twitter, and that would go for most of us. I’m sure the spooks too, on limited resources, apply the vari

Reply (<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/04/the-manknell-doctrine/?replytocom=404506#respond>)



SleepingDog

4 months ago

@Alastair, I am sure you are right to point out the limited resources of UK secret state (compared to the USA, anyway; presumably the latter has the resources to infiltrate all western NGOs they wish). Gone are the days when Special Branch sent undercover agents to every public meeting, at least according to an old British Politics lecturer.

Indeed corporate spies are said to be more numerous than those of states, profits outpacing taxes no doubt, although there appears to be a cross-over of personnel:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/12/inside-the-secret-world-of-the-corporate-spies-who-ir>

Reply (<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/04/the-manknell-doctrine/?replytocom=404912#respond>)

Alasdair Macdonald

4 months ago

Alistair,

You have given much thought and attention to the comments people have made and I thank you for that.

You focus in your response on the conduct of the funding authorities and the multiple demands they make on applicants. This is sometimes known as the 'compliance agenda'. On the face of it, it is attempting to make things rigorous and robust, which are important, but it is, as often as not a means of dampening enthusiasm and removing the radical aspects, and turning the applicants into tools of the government.

However, goal displacement is often ego driven. The organisations are a way for some individuals to accrue power and sometimes remuneration as ends in themselves. Some individuals, often highly committed individuals who have done genuinely good work, can become barriers to the evolution of the organisation because they see themselves as the personification of the organisation and interpret proposals for change as attacks on themselves.

Reply (<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/04/the-manknell-doctrine/?replytocom=404885#respond>)

Alastair McIntosh

4 months ago

That's valid, Alasdair, and what I see is management morphing into managerialism when systems start to be followed for their own sakes, as ends, rather than as a means to the end of greater effectiveness. It is an example of what Max Weber called "the routinisation of charisma".

Weber (also of "The Protestant Work Ethic") recognised 3 kinds of authority. Traditional (eg inherited titles), bureaucratic (administrations) and charismatic (yes, celebrity, but deeper than that the Greek word charisma is a gift of the Spirit). He said bureaucratic authority always tries to routinise – regiment or standardise – the creative flair of the charismatic. That's often justified because creative charismatic flare can inspire, but be hard to sustain, but in the same breath the bureaucratisation can be suffocating.

The way I see it is we need a wise blend of both. The best funding agencies I've worked with often give their staff latitude of discretion. However, to advocate that is tricky. On the surface, it can seem like a back door to patronisation. It needs to be understood more deeply as recognition of the place for *discernment*.

I say that, being attached to and influenced by a nearly 400 year old tradition of Quaker discernment methodology. I realise it's maybe not so easy in more secular contexts where there may not be a shared sense of being "moved" by an enlightened inner spirit of things. Indeed, much of the time we struggle to keep up the standards within Quakerism too.

Lastly, can I just add to my criticism of how unconscious social class dynamics play out. With the right balance and self-awareness, those "middle class skills" as I've sweepingly called them, and the people that bring them are very necessary. I just wanted to be clear on that as it is easy, unwittingly, to violate the cycles of gratitude that are the



Reply (<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/04/the-manknell-doctrine/?replytocom=405656#respond>)

Jack Collatin

4 months ago

Why not have a Government that uses taxes to eradicate poverty, fully fund a publicly owned NHS, nursing homes, retirement homes owned by the public, run by LAs, staffed with fully trained professionals, who have 'jobs for life', a pension plan, protected by Employment H&S Equality Laws, where those who need wheelchairs do not rely on Lenny Henry and Red Nose Aberrations but are guaranteed Central and Local Government support and Care as a right?

Of course we would have to give up Trident, not allow the Rich to dictate how much dosh they are prepared to pay in tax, and so on.

When I hear of Directors of Charities awarding each other six figure salaries plus pension pots, I realise what the old adage means.

'Charity begins at home'.

I look forward to the day when the last charity closes down, and their work rendered unnecessary because wealth in this country is managed by 'the many, not the few'.

I cannot be alone in finding Telethons and Charity Events wrong, and a sure sign of a failed society.

Old Liz gets nearly £500million to renew the Central Heating in Buck House, and a rape victim must sit with Ruth Davidson and 'prove' that their child does not breach the Two Child Cap Totalitarian rules.

The obscenity of that alone should be condemned by all 'Sectors' of this society.

Reply (<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/04/the-manknell-doctrine/?replytocom=405243#respond>)

Sorley

4 months ago

I whole heartedly agree, Jack.

Reply (<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/04/the-manknell-doctrine/?replytocom=405432#respond>)

Alastair McIntosh

4 months ago

And what's more, Jack and Sorley, when you say – "Why not have a Government that uses taxes to eradicate poverty..." – that is precisely the hope that lies behind what, to honour her, I called here The Manknell Doctrine.

The trouble is when people vote not with their heads and hearts in harness, but with their hip pockets.

Reply (<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/04/the-manknell-doctrine/?replytocom=405660#respond>)

Tommy Lusk

4 months ago

As a "ground eye view" I would like to have heard more from Alastair's experience's working in the sector for such a long time.

For example: "I was able to secure considerable assistance from such sources as ERDF & ESF".

Was the money well spent? Did it have a big impact on the beneficiaries or was it used to build up the Organisation? Maybe it did both.

In the same way, I would like to have seen some examination of the "decade of resurgent public funding". How much was it "a period of renewal" for the intended beneficiaries and how much for the organisations?

The closest the article gets to reflecting on The Third Sector is the section on Incorporation.

I remember a lot of fear expressed in the naughties in the third sector around litigation. However, as far as I could see it was all talk, but it suited some people to play it up.

My personal belief is that in many cases, it was an intended consequence of incorporation that it took management away from membership. It allowed a relatively few folk the control they sought to do what they thought was best for everyone else. It was happening every where else in society, so why not here as well. Those people may have had professional titles but, in this sector, it is not professional or good practice to assume you know what's best for the people you serve.

There has always been a balance to be struck on committee's between representation and skills. In the eighties I volunteered on a community farm that was established on the efforts of the local housing scheme residents. They secured Urban Aid Funding and a Community Service Programme that resulted in employed staff taking over essential tasks from volunteers. An unforeseen consequence for many of the volunteers was the dent in their sense of purpose. Some recovered and learned organisational skills to add to their animal husbandry skills.

What helped were committee meetings that, for all their flaws, had a sense of representation of the membership. This allowed issues that arose from funding, to be addressed and thrashed out at meetings.

Strong governance has always been a requirement for organisations in the voluntary sector. It may mean incorporation on occasion, but mostly It means getting the balance right between required skills and representation of members/beneficiaries.

Austerity is tough on everyone below a certain income, and in finding a way through it I suggest a different quote from Gerry Hassan's article:

“What exactly are the characteristics which make a good organisation in this present climate?.....they are often grassroots initiatives with a strong sense of place and locale, and of mission and founding leadership.”

Or, as Talking Heads once sang:

“Same as it ever was
Same as it ever was”

Reply (<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/04/the-manknell-doctrine/?replytocom=405777#respond>)

Alastair McIntosh

4 months ago

The £130k (I think it was) of ERDF money built 50% share of the central wing of the MacLeod Centre on Iona, which for 30 or so years has served mainly youth groups from hard pressed areas. The £50k or so of ESF payed for young unemployed and disabled training. I last bumped into one of them 2 years ago, productively and happily employed on a farm in Stirlingshire.

I agree with you about the ofttimes tension between volunteers and paid staff. It can be just one of those dilemmas. I wish I could see easy solutions, and it's hard to generalise as these things vary so greatly between organisations.

BTW, I have tried to give everybody the courtesy of a response. A week has moved on now, and I'm going to give myself a break. But thanks for the interactions.

Reply (<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2018/03/04/the-manknell-doctrine/?replytocom=406660#respond>)

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