

SPEECH TO:



# Salvation Army JustAction Conference

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**John Key MP**  
NATIONAL PARTY LEADER



It's a great pleasure to be speaking to you this afternoon.

The Salvation Army is an extremely impressive organisation. As a religious organisation, it has always placed as strong an emphasis on works as it has on faith.

Your founder, William Booth, ordered the "three S's" of the Army's work deliberately – first there was soup, second there was soap, and finally there was salvation.

For well over 100 years, the Salvation Army has cared for the poor and marginalised of New Zealand. Today it provides a very wide range of social services, from residential alcohol and drug programmes, to services for pregnant women at risk, to accommodation for people with intellectual disabilities, to court and prison services.

I don't know if the Salvation Army is the biggest provider of social services in New Zealand, but it is certainly one of the biggest. Indeed, it is one of the biggest non-governmental social service providers in the world.

At a personal level, I know people who have been through the Army's Bridge programme for alcohol addiction, and it has not only turned people's lives around, it has saved lives. I can't speak highly enough of it.

To provide these sorts of services you rely on voluntary donations, both from church members and from the general public, through donations, bequests, sponsorships, business partnerships, and from your annual Red Shield Appeal.

The National Party has quite a bit to say about organisations like yours.

In my Burnside speech at the beginning of the year, I said I wanted to turbo-charge the efforts of private and community groups making a difference. I challenged businesses to play their part in supporting community efforts. I said I didn't think "more government" was the solution to every social problem.

A month later I announced our policy to abolish the cap on charitable donations, so that individuals and businesses could give as much as they liked to charity and still claim a rebate from IRD at the end of the year. I thought this was just common sense, but those speeches ended up exposing a huge ideological divide.

You see, some people have a deep-seated conviction that the government is always best placed to improve society, by taxing people and spending the money on its own programmes. Under this view, private giving and privately-organised programmes are simply patronising.

That's why the Government went into attack mode after those speeches.

Steve Maharey said that the things I was talking about in the Burnside speech amounted to nothing more than "Tory charity". Michael Cullen said that only "the active and redemptive power of the state" could make a real difference in society, rather than "random acts of charity, however well meant". Helen Clark said our charitable donations policy was

simply “tax cuts for the rich”, and insinuated that I had announced this policy in order to gain financially myself.

John Minto, in his column in the New Zealand Herald, said my model of more business involvement and more government funding for community groups working with families was “a charity model based on the philanthropy of Victorian England, whereby the under-taxed rich patronise the deserving poor ... We are back to Dickensian England with Key”.

Not surprisingly, I have a very different view. I think it is a sign of a mature and caring society that people do things for one another – that they do them selflessly, without being compelled, and without the government having to organise it all.

And though no one wants to go back to Dickensian England, don't forget that the out-pouring of philanthropy in that era achieved great things. It certainly funded the efforts of William and Catherine Booth in establishing the Salvation Army.

I think there's a few people who need to get out of their ivory towers, put down their textbooks on political theory, and come down and look at what organisations – like the Salvation Army – are doing in their communities.

I'm not one for ideological stances; I support what works. And National's policy on charitable donations will work, because when the government spends \$1 on this policy we know that charities will have benefited to the tune of \$3.

So it's a kind of matching policy – when people or businesses donate money, the government chips in as well.

If National's policy sees donations increase by as much as we estimate, then donations will increase by up to \$300 million – nearly doubling the amount that goes to the sector now.

Furthermore, we know that charities – like the Salvation Army – are extremely effective and deliver high-quality services despite being thinly resourced.

A report prepared in 2004 by PricewaterhouseCoopers found that for every \$1 provided to a voluntary agency, between \$3 and \$5 worth of services are delivered in the community.

So we can do a bit of maths here. For every \$1 spent by the government on this policy, charities will benefit by \$3, and in turn the community will benefit by between \$9 and \$15. To use the language of my previous career, that's a very impressive return on the government's investment!

What is more, I believe this policy sends a clear and strong message. National supports private giving and is serious about backing community groups – groups like the Salvation Army.

Now I want to change tack.

Since the trial of Clint Rickards, Brad Shipton and Bob Schollum; since the recent reports

in the Sunday News about the sexual behaviour of some police officers in the Bay of Plenty; and since the Commission of Inquiry into Police Conduct was released; I have been thinking more and more about violence in New Zealand.

Certainly, there has been enough said over the past couple of months about the main protagonists in the police affair. It is time to let Mr Rickards, who was found not guilty, begin a new career outside the police. It is time to let Mr Shipton and Mr Schollum continue to pay their debt to society.

In the wake of those trials, and Dame Margaret Bazley's inquiry, there has been an enormous amount written and spoken about police behaviour. There has been a lot retold about attitudes to women. Much of this has been downright sickening.

The evidence presented in those recent trials revealed a treatment of the complainants that was judged not to be criminal but which was, to most people, completely unacceptable.

Sex between an authority figure – someone with a position of power in the community – and a teenage girl, is dubious to say the least. Group sex involving three of them is abhorrent.

I think if most of us imagined our daughters or sisters in Louise Nicholas's shoes, we would weep. Nor, for that matter, would we want to recognise our sons or brothers in the role of the accused men.

What concerns me is the idea that the type of behaviour discussed in the inquiry's report was the product of a few rogue police officers, mainly in the 1980s. That would make the findings of the inquiry simply a piece of historical analysis.

But it would also miss an opportunity for us to step up and confront some of the less savoury aspects of behaviour, and particularly male behaviour, which still exist in New Zealand society.

As we know, and are rightly proud of, New Zealand was the first country in the world to give women the vote.

Debate is raging in the United States about whether that country is yet ready to elect a female president. We, however, have already had two female prime ministers and two female Governors-General. The Chief Justice, Speaker of the House and the departing CEO of our biggest listed company are all women.

This is no longer remarkable because, in so many ways, New Zealand is a country of opportunity and women have rightfully seized that opportunity.

But, as we all know, there are many women whose life experiences are very, very different to those who have achieved great success.

There are those whose life stories would read very much like Louise Nicholas's but who

will never have their day in court and whose experiences were not confined to the provinces, or to the 1980s, and the perpetrators were not policemen.

The trials throw light on a pattern of behaviour and an attitude towards women which persists in this country.

In my first major speech this year I talked about an underclass. Helen Clark's response was to say it didn't exist.

I'm not sure if she saw the sentencing earlier this year of Nathan Fenton. He murdered his girlfriend, 17-year-old Mairina Dunn. He beat her to death with the butt of a shotgun before he took off with his ex-girlfriend, who had just miscarried his twins and who had been hospitalised five times as a result of his beatings.

Brutality of this sort is, thankfully, uncommon. There are not many Nathan Fentons. But the incidence of domestic violence in this country is still far too frequent. Nor is it confined to the underclass. Domestic violence is the disgraceful secret of some otherwise successful men, and is the sorry burden of their partners.

There remains a dark side to the experiences of too many New Zealand women and children at the hands of too many New Zealand men. The evidence can be seen partly in the disturbing crime statistics relating to domestic violence.

In reply to written questions submitted by my colleague Simon Power, the Minister of Police revealed a number of disturbing facts.

Around 50% of murders are related to family violence. In 2005, the last year for which we have figures, there were 63,685 family violence incidents reported to police. From these incidents there were 18,305 arrests. That is almost exactly 50 arrests a day.

In the same year, Child, Youth and Family received 66,210 care and protection notifications, of which 49,063 required further action.

It goes without saying that the perpetrators of violence are usually men, and their victims are women and children. These are the reported figures, but they are only the tip of the iceberg. All crime is subject to under-reporting, but violence against women and children is one of those crimes least likely to come to police notice.

For some of these women and children, violence occurs only rarely. For others, however, violence is so common as to be virtually a normal part of everyday life. This strips the dignity, self-confidence and hope away from those who are subjected to it.

It is a judge's job to measure one crime against another, and to set a sentence accordingly. To me, however, domestic violence, which encompasses the injuring, bullying and oppression of women and children, is always sickening.

What can we do about it?

I think one of the keys is to foster intolerance – intolerance on the part of society, and

intolerance on the part of the government.

For the government, the task is this: to send a clear message, through the laws it enacts, and the priorities it makes, and the directions it gives, that family violence is unacceptable.

The way to send a message is to make the law clear and precise and then to enforce it strongly and vigilantly.

That leads us straight to the current debate about section 59 of the Crimes Act.

This has been an extraordinary debate, and one marked by opacity and misunderstanding. What is quite clear, however, is that almost all members of Parliament say they want the same outcomes.

Number one is this – we want to prevent parents being able to use the current Section 59 defence of reasonable force to get away with what amounts to violently beating their children.

Over the years there have been some cases – although not many – where parents have been acquitted of assault after using implements like a riding crop and a hosepipe to hit their children. That is unacceptable.

The second objective is this – we don't want to criminalise good parents who occasionally give their children a light smack.

Parenting is a tough job. Children, even the best ones, push the boundaries, and in the real world they can do so for long periods of time. The reality is that most parents will, from time to time, resort to the odd light smack of a child.

No one wants to turn those parents into criminals. That would be an absurd outcome. Helen Clark was spot on when she said before the last election that she absolutely did not support a ban on smacking because to do so would be trying to defy human nature.

As a parent I've learnt that other forms of discipline are far more effective than smacking when it comes to marking out the boundaries. This is especially the case as my children have got older. At their current ages, anything involving the removal of a mobile phone is particularly effective.

But what we are talking about here is amending the Crimes Act. By replacing Section 59, Parliament is determining what does and what does not constitute a crime. Parliament isn't determining what does and does not constitute effective parenting. That should be up to parents to decide.

In combination, objectives one and two – to prevent child abuse but not to criminalise good parents – have been expressed enough times by a whole range of MPs, across many different parties. Helen Clark has said it; Sue Bradford has said it. I take them at their word.

In fact, Sue Bradford couldn't have put these two objectives any clearer. In her speech introducing the bill she said: "I am not seeking in any way to criminalise ordinary parents. I

just want to remove a legal defence that is used when some people seriously hit or beat their children with objects like those mentioned.”

However, I actually think most MPs, including me, want something even more than this out of the current process.

They want to lower the bar on what is considered acceptable physical discipline, in terms of its intensity, or duration, or any other aspect. They want the threshold to be lower than it is at the moment under “reasonable force”.

So the three objectives most MPs claim to share are these:

- To prevent violence against children being protected by the defence of reasonable force.
- Not to criminalise good parents who occasionally give their children a light smack.
- To lower the threshold for acceptable physical discipline.

And if we have the same objectives it is surely not beyond Parliament’s capabilities to devise a replacement for the current Section 59 of the Crimes Act that will meet these objectives.

My colleague, Whanganui MP Chester Borrows, has put forward an amendment to Sue Bradford’s Bill that would do this. In my view, this is the correct response, and the one Parliament should adopt.

However, it is looking likely that Chester’s amendment will be voted down when Parliament next discusses the bill on the 2nd of May. If that’s the case, there is a clear need to develop some wording that MPs are happy with and which achieves their objectives.

The obvious question arises here. Why do we need something different? Doesn’t Sue Bradford’s bill already meet the three objectives? The answer is no.

Sue Bradford’s bill makes it a crime for parents to smack their children for the purposes of correction.

Say, for example, you see your young son slowly pushing his sister’s Barbie doll into the fire. Under Sue Bradford’s bill, you would be able to use force to pull your son away from the fire, because his actions constitute offensive or disruptive behaviour, as well as being potentially dangerous.

But if you then gave him a smack and told him not to do it again, this would be against the law.

The only way a smack might be justifiable was if you, say, smacked the Barbie out of his hands as it was going into the flames. Or if, in another context, you smacked your child’s hand away as he or she was reaching up to touch a live element on the stove.

But under the proposed bill, smacking for correction will be illegal. And I would say that 99% of smacking is about correction – it's about teaching children where the boundaries are and preventing them doing something again.

Therefore, the bill as it stands will criminalise good parents who occasionally smack their children lightly.

Proponents of the bill say that doesn't matter; that in reality no one is ever going to be prosecuted for lightly smacking their child. But if the reality is that no one is ever going to be prosecuted for lightly smacking their child, then don't make it illegal. Don't make it a crime.

It's poor law-making to write a very strict law and then trust the police and the courts not to enforce it strongly. The law shouldn't depend on which police officer or which judge or which jury you happen to get on the day.

As I said before, the way you send a message is to make the law clear and precise and then to police it strongly and vigilantly. Here, we are doing the complete opposite. We are making the law fuzzy and vague – given the confusing statements of various MPs – and expecting the authorities not to enforce it.

How on Earth can that be sending a strong message to parents?

So today, I want to offer something genuine and constructive on behalf of the many thousands of otherwise law-abiding parents who do a marvellous job of raising their children. These parents don't deserve to become criminals for using their discretion when it comes to being a mother or father.

I say to Helen Clark and Sue Bradford, if you are genuine in your statements, and genuine in your intentions, then let's get around the table and come up with a set of words we all agree on. Let's replace the existing Section 59 of the Crimes Act with something that will meet the three objectives we all claim to share.

It can be done. This is Parliament, after all, and this is our job. We deal with legislation of far greater complexity than this all the time. And, given the Government's light legislative agenda, we have the breathing space to get this right.

The parents of New Zealand who are charged with doing the most fundamentally important task in our society deserve our utmost support.

Of course, if Helen Clark and Sue Bradford don't want to accept my offer then the public of New Zealand should judge them by their actions – or in this case inactions – and not their words.

Let me conclude by simply saying to you, the members and supporters of the Salvation Army, thank you.

Thank you for the efforts you make and the actions you take. Thank you for being there

when often there is no one else.

Thank you for making our country a kinder and better place. We are lucky to have you and we salute your contribution.