

Open these pages and discover the truth behind Australia's largest and best known charity. Rather than being the quaint old charity group of the popular imagination this report exposes the Salvation Army as a racist, hierarchal, homophobic, exploitative, right wing cult complicit in attacks on indigenous peoples and the economically disadvantaged. Based on historical accounts, media reports and the Salvation Army's own newspapers and texts this report will show you the other side of the "Starvation Army".



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Twelve Reasons To Reject  
The Salvation Army



# MR. BLOCK

HE BECOMES A VICTIM OF CHARITY



## 12 Steps To Rejecting the Salvation Army

The following essay is designed to stop you from ever supporting the Salvation Army again by demonstrating that they are a ruthless, moralistic, racist, homophobic Christian conservative cult dedicated to the maintenance of the status quo. Whether or not you agree with everything we say please ponder our arguments carefully and reconsider your attitude next time the Salvoes come calling.

### 1. Historical Role.

From it's earliest formation in the "Darkest England" of late Victorian society the Salvation Army constructed itself as a force for conservative Christian values, albeit with a few crumbs thrown to the poor. The Salvation Army's founder William Booth realised after a period of evangelising in London's slums that he would get nowhere in realising his goal of banishing the three A's, "Alcohol, Atheism and Anarchy" from England's underclass if he did not at least keep them from starving. Indeed Booth's social work efforts have been directly tied by historians to his initial utter failure in converting the underclasses using more conventional religious means (1). A former pawnbroker, Booth saw the Salvation Army as a solution not a charity though. The social system that created the conditions of poverty and inequality in the name of providing cheap labour was not to be improved or replaced via social revolution or struggle, but by creating a "kinder, gentler" form of industrial capitalism, one imbued with "christian values" of hard work, abstinence and of giving to the poor. Booth characterised the revolutionary Christianity of the Diggers and Levellers as "utopian" and believed that Salvation Army members could earn a profit from their businesses and keep a good conscience. In his view (and contrary to many others) the Bible was detached from social change and economics and the work of Christians was to tend to the poor. Ultimately though the Salvation Army's role was conversion and saving souls, what was important was not "whether a man died in a poorhouse... but if his soul is saved" (2). Dispensing the absolute basics of food and temporary housing to the underclass therefore was very much motivated by the need to recruit as much as it was by any of the Bible's dictums. Certainly those poor who were unfortunate enough to impinge on the Army's morals were quick to discover themselves out in the street, hungry or not (3).

Therefore right from the beginning the Salvation Army was very much in favour of a exploitative system in which one class exploited another to whatever degree they could get away with, as well as in support of other traditional structures which preserved inequality (the family, hierarchy, etc). Booth realised that military structures had a certain appeal to sections of the working class and so devised a set of uniforms, an army band and a rigid autocratic system which he presided over. Control of the Army passed from Booth to his first son and so remained until ranking officers pulled a coup. It's structure even today however remains ruthlessly hierarchal with little power at the grassroots and almost total power at the top (4). With a structure like this the Army was hardly predisposed to supporting grassroots control



of society in any form and in fact clashed with many of the groups who fought for it (5)

The moral code that was to be enforced and prosletized by the Army was extreme even by Victorian standards. No drinking, no swearing, no smoking, no premarital sex, no gambling- in fact virtually no fun except playing in the band. All this was supposedly because such behaviour was profane as sanctioned by the Bible, although this is highly arguable as they themselves at times admit (6). Any of the poor they were supposedly helping who broke their moral code were to be denied access to the meager food and housing they supplied, a fact attested to by George Orwell and a policy which pretty much continues today (7). In seeking the answer to poverty in embracing God and giving up what are arguably the symptoms of poverty (alcoholism, prostitution, etc) the Salvos were pushing an individualistic solution to what was a mass social problem and blaming the victims of a harsh society for their misfortunes. To think that in a period when people were starving in the streets, when men, women and children were working 14 hour days for a pittance and living 10 to a room, that such a group could piously walk around disdaining those who struggled for better conditions, giving out the odd handout and telling people what was really important was to trust in God and give up the few pleasures available to them is sadistic by anyone's standards.

As the Empire expanded and social problems increased William Booth was one of the first to recommend that the poor be sent out to colonise other lands regardless of the feelings of those who already lived there and the fact that Britain had more than enough resources to clothe, feed and house all it's population. Booth was in fact one of the first to draw up detailed plans for how agricultural colonies could be designed to soak up Britain's mass of unemployed and it's arguable these ideas had some affect on Imperial planners (8). Arch capitalists and politicians such as Cecil Rhodes, Theodore Roosevelt, etc lent moral and financial support to such plans (9). Certainly as the Empire expanded so did the Salvation Army and along with all the other Christian sects they were quick to carve out a slice of each country's indigenous people as their spiritual property regardless of how the locals felt. Backed with the rest of the Empire's wealth and might the Salvation Army formed a strong part of the Christian vanguard who were to tear colonised people's communities and spirituality apart whilst preaching the values of hard work and capitalism (10).

As the Empire and the Salvation Army expanded so did the seeds of rebellion and the Salvation Army whilst maintaining an "apolitical" front maintained it's support for the ruling regime wherever they went. As Booth had famously stated a "philanthropic" body cannot afford to alienate the class which supports it (11), a notion very much alive in the Army today (12). Most famously the Salvation Army clashed with the Industrial Workers of the World internationally. The IWW was an organisation committed to radically restructuring society in order to equally divide the spoils of wealth amongst those who created it. They primarily sought to do so via the formation of One Big Union for all workers and took part in organising strikes, sabotage and other struggles primarily (but not wholly) amongst the unskilled and transient sectors of society- those who other Unions would not support and who were most

likely to be the poorest and therefore the target also of the Salvos. The two groups not only competed for the minds and support of the working classes, but also for public stages and spaces from which to speak.

The IWW campaigned both in Australia and the US for the public speaking rights the Salvos enjoyed, but were denied to them and also against the war. On at least one occasion the Salvation Army joined with disgruntled troops to physically attack IWW members and certainly attacked the radical labour movement at any opportunity in their activities. (13). However whilst the IWW enjoyed huge support amongst sections of the working class it was also continuously attacked by the Salvation Army's primary donors, the ruling corporations and governments and after many years of deportations, broken strikes, assassinations and bannings the IWW largely faded (although it continues today). The IWW as one of the most vociferous critics of the Salvation Army termed them the "Starvation Army" and penned numerous songs and parodies of hymns (most famously by Joe Hill) ridiculing them for their "pie in the sky when you die" attitudes. When people today argue that at least the Salvos are one of the few groups who dole out charity to the homeless they should take a closer look at their role in abetting the destruction of grassroots organisations that sought to let those most oppressed fend for themselves and should also have a think about why out of so many groups of the Victorian era the Salvos were so generously supported by the rich and allowed to survive.

As with so many other British goods and habits the Salvation Army were of course imported pretty much intact to Australia. Booth was committed to creating a world wide Christian army to usher in a social order and was quick to send his troops all over the world, ready or not (14). Right from the start they pushed the same conservative messages as their British forebears and encountered the same level of abuse from those who wished to enjoy a drink, bet or a smoke (15). Similarly too they clashed with the IWW and other labour organisations over whether religious piety or class struggle was the way to a better life. In the last 120 years the Salvation Army has consolidated itself as an integral part of Australian society and has built itself up to be the biggest charity in Australia with a paper that claims the biggest Christian readership in the country (16). Also through it's enterprises, donations and the increasing patronage of government and business it has gained control of a vast number of services, companies, buildings, training academies, publishing houses and other resources. Internationally the Salvation Army is strongest in the West, but has expanded to include chapters in just about every country in the world. Having examined their historical role in suppressing revolt, aiding colonialism and spreading reactionary Christian doctrine we can now look at the reasons why progressives should continue to reject the Salvation Army today.

## 2. Homophobic

Whilst the Salvation Army is at pains to distance itself from right wing Christian fundamentalists



many of its views echo them and many of the “pro family” Christian coalitions it takes part in are full of them (17). One area in which they are in full accordance is on the issue of homosexuality. The Salvation Army unequivocally condemns homosexual activity although unlike their fundamentalist brethren they believe God wants to take pity on homosexuals rather than wanting to smite them. The Salvation Army are on record as having campaigned against the legalisation of homosexuality in various countries (18) and against translations of the Bible that interpret God’s view on homosexuality positively (19). Homosexuality is seen as a perversion and a corruption, but whilst Salvoes may find Gays and Lesbians behaviour distasteful they are instructed to address them politely and attempt to convert them (20). They believe that the “social disease” from which the homosexual suffers is curable via God’s “love”, but where it is fully entrenched it is possible for people to still refrain from “sinful” activity and therefore avoid going to hell (21). Furthermore the Salvation Army through the War Cry and the distribution of homophobic books adds to the myths that gays and lesbians are more promiscuous, diseased and morally corrupt than their heterosexual counterparts (22). One of their prime arguments against homosexuality is the fallacious, but popular idea that it spreads AIDs (what about lesbians?) and other STDs in and of itself. Rather than arguing for safe sex however they see the solution in abstinence and ultimately in the disappearance of same sex relations altogether (23). Whilst pushing an “understanding” line the Salvation Army has no qualms in pushing such scaremongering claims as “the homosexual lifestyle is simply an invitation to an early grave” (24).

Because of these views and also the actions that come from them in opposing homosexuality and counselling people to repress rather than accept their sexuality the Salvation Army can be seen as part of the patronising, “caring” edge of homophobia in our society. Whilst they are not out bashing gays and lesbians themselves the Salvoes provide the supposedly rational and moral arguments that lead to such activities and further their oppression. Certainly by preaching such homophobia they contribute immeasurably to the ill treatment and unhappiness of those gays and lesbians who remain closeted within their ranks.

### 3. Religious Cult

Given the weird uniforms, puritanical doctrines, rigid hierarchy, guru worship and band playing the Salvation Army could almost be seen as the Hare Krishnas of Christendom. Unlike the Moonies, the Jehovahs Witnesses, Koreshites or other Christian sects who also impose a strict interpretation of the bible and a strict moral and dress code the Salvation Army are a widely accepted part of society due to their charity work even though they indulge in record burning, millinerianism, demonic references and other kooky practices (25). Salvation Army members must pledge “unquestioning obedience and sacrifice” to their Church and internal dissension is tightly controlled (26). Booth himself after all described autocracy as God's own system (27). The fact alone that young people are expected only to marry within the Army, that Officers are to only marry other officers (and have to leave if they marry “civilians”) and

that they must get permission to even go courting in the first place indicates an unhealthy degree of control over followers lives (28). What is their charity work anyway except slavish following of the Founder, patronising and amateurish social work and a front for recruiting?

Salvation Army material constantly refers to The Founder, William Booth in tones almost idolatory. The question frequently seems to be not what is relevant or what is Christian, but what would have the Founder (read Guru) have thought. Such slavishness to one man (who existed in very different times) seems very reminiscent of guru worship and certainly the Salvation Army’s rejection of smoking seems to be far more based on what Booth thought than on anything in the Bible since as they admit the Bible doesn’t refer to smoking in any shape or form (29). Connected to this Booth worship is the continuance of the rigid hierarchy and rule system self admitted “dictator” Booth put in place (30). With few modifications the Salvation Army remains a strict autocracy under a largely male power structure with the General at the top wielding almost total power (31). The Army admits censoring divergent views within its ranks and all are bound to the “11 doctrines”(32). This kind of anti-democratic activity seems to be largely outside what most would see as modern Christian activity.

Furthermore the Salvation Army has an insularity and arrogance stemming from it’s God given mission that continually leads it into conflicts with local communities and community sector workers. Its main drug and rehabilitation unit was recently shut down in Victoria due to a lack of medical facilities (33) and it has come under much criticism for using untrained volunteers in its domestic violence Careline in NSW (34). When confronted by critics who point to it’s amateurish and potentially dangerous practice of using improperly trained volunteers largely drawn from it’s own ranks to deal with complex issues such as domestic violence and drug addiction (which have potentially fatal consequences) the Salvation Army retreats into resting on it’s dubious laurels and crying poor. This is quite strange when you consider the property and resources they boast of owning at other times (35). In the Area of domestic violence this is particularly dangerous since in NSW the police have been generally using the Care line over better resourced services and the Salvoes have been failing to refer abused partners to such services and are accused of improperly advising people over their options (36). One can only conclude that true rationale at work here is that since they see themselves as God’s Army they also see themselves as having the God given right to work in these areas regardless of whether they are qualified to do so. This is arrogance is openly stated in publications in which they claim they do a better job than “humanist” agencies without offering any evidence of these claims (37).

Similarly the Salvation Army has clashed time and again with local communities in the construction of hostels and other services. Whilst some public reaction to Army projects is based on ignorance and prejudice against homeless people the Army has shown no ability to educate and inform people of their intentions. Instead in league with local councils they have acted like any other property developer ignoring local protests and riding roughshod over the



community. Two recent examples of this have been in the construction of a hostel in North Melbourne (replacing a defunded public school) and one in Sydney (38). Again it appears that the God given priorities of the Salvation Army must rule supreme.

Other than the cultlike organisation and religious arrogance of the Salvation Army we also must not forget the overall rationale of their founding- to save souls via tending to the poor. Whilst the leadership of the Army admits there has been some slackening of religious focus the Salvation Army's primary mission continues to be saving souls. According to its Yearbook the Salvation Army is engaged in "spiritual warfare" (39) and describes its social work as "indirect evangelical work" (40). As one Salvationist put it "All the time at any task I am doing the work of an Evangelist. The aim is to communicate Jesus" (41). Officers are trained in evangelical work firstly and foremost and then assigned to either the social or evangelical wing- two wings that compete and crossover within the organisation. Due to this it is impossible to see how the Salvation Army can claim not to be using its social work as a method of recruiting people to Christianity. Similarly whilst the Army claims it does not use funds raised for charity for evangelical work it must be noted that all officers (as opposed to unpaid soldiers) who draw a wage from Salvation Army coffers must spend at least some of their time evangelising and thus religious activities are surreptitiously funded (42). Certainly the testimonials of ex drug users and others who came to its ranks via its rehabilitation programmes and its use of 12 step programmes (which constantly refer to faith in a higher power) would indicate an agenda in its "good works" largely hidden from the public (43). Lastly the Army's refusal to take part in Government programmes where religion must be exempted indicates that saving souls via conversion to its beliefs is the primary agenda not tending to the poor and sick (44).

### 5. Support for the Right Wing

The Salvation Army continually claims that it is apolitical however a close look at its connections, activities and history quickly refutes this. Right from the beginning the Salvation Army saw itself as a bulwark against socialism with the Booth's censuring those sections of the early Army who attempted to attack the rich for their role in creating poverty (45). Catherine Booth (wife of William) even went so far as to identify her cause to wealthy donors as, "the only organisation whose members to any appreciable extent buttonhole the dangerous classes on their own ground and turn them away from anarchy, infidelity and socialism" (46). Booth is on record as being opposed to hurting capitalist interests and certainly his ascetic attitudes towards poverty and "blame the victim" mentality were the very values the rich hoped to inculcate in the poor of the time.

The Salvation Army's support of right wing attitudes in society of course goes way beyond redirecting radical attitudes amongst the underclass. The Salvation Army in Australia and internationally aligns itself and forms coalitions with a variety of fundamentalist

Christian groups whilst attempting to distance itself from the excesses of those groups. In Australia the Salvation Army participates in evangelical tours of Fundamentalists such as Billy Graham, fights with Right to Lifers to oppose euthanasia and restrict (though not ban) abortion rights, encourages youth to join in with a US Fundamentalist "True Love Waits" celibacy programme and forms part of the right wing Australian Christian Coalition lobby group in Canberra (47). The Salvation Army was also opposed to the Beijing Womens Conference on the grounds that it was controlled by lesbians and feminists, lobbied as part of the opposition to legalising gay and lesbian marriages and are fully supportive of working with police (48). Furthermore they are part of the Religious Alliance Against Pornography, an international group seeking to ban pornography via the governmental censorship of music and literature- a move that in numerous countries has generally seen the persecution of political and sexual minorities whilst the mainstream porn industry continues to thrive (49).

We can also see the Salvation Army as a healthy part of the conservative right through its workings with the government. In the late eighties in the name of "the right to work" the Salvos collaborated with the Federal Labor government in changing unemployment benefits from a "living wage for all" and a welfare net to a system whereby unemployed people are paid to look for non existent jobs and increasingly harrassed whilst doing so. Currently the Salvation Army works as case managers (read dole police) for the CES cutting off the dole those who infringe on their rules and are part of a push to increasingly privatise CES functions (50). Those unemployed unfortunate enough to land themselves in Salvation Army training schemes will also find themselves under a strict internal moral and political order. It is hardly any surprise to find that entrepreneur Dick Smith and right wing talk back host John Laws, constant critics and enemies of welfare recipients are two of the Army's biggest supporters.

The Salvation Army whilst on the one hand wringing its hands about war has also provided food, entertainment, religious and moral support to Australian troops in almost every conflict they have been involved in (51). Interestingly the Salvation Army's official Australian histories leave out mention of its role in troop support in the unpopular Vietnam conflict, but the Salvos continue to prepare for future combat by providing canteens at Kangaroo '95 and other military exercises (which also provide training for the genocidal Indonesian military) (52). The Salvation Army's supposed (but obviously false) policy of not interfering with politics has also allowed them to work and receive financial support from a number of vicious right wing regimes (including Apartheid era South Africa and Rhodesia) that have been under attack internationally for human rights abuses.

### 6. Stupid Outfits and Poor musicianship.

Need we say more?

### 7. Colonialist.

Along with all the other religious groups the Salvation Army was an integral part of



Christendoms exploitation of indigenous people and aided in the attacks on their spirituality. Up until the late 1960s the Salvation Army ran a number of missions for Aboriginal people in which their movements, beliefs and lifestyle were closely monitored and in which they were confined to the mission and their children forced to follow a strict Christian pattern of work and education. They also aided in the removal of children from their families in government and church attempts to integrate children into white society. Whilst the invading white culture had stolen their land the Salvation Army and other Christian groups now moved in to try and replace their culture. Aboriginal resistance was strong, but certainly the problems facing their communities today and the continuing oppression of their culture can be linked to the Christianisation of which the Salvoes were a vital part.

Whilst the Salvation Army's collusion with these racist policies is totally ignored in their official histories (indeed no mention of Aboriginal people is made at all) we can still see the traces of their policies at work today. In a number of articles in the War Cry covering the federal government's "reconciliation" whitewash the "mistakes" of the past are quickly glossed over. The Salvation Army is quick to point to it's Aboriginal members (mainly stolen children who grew up within the Army) who choose to assimilate to its culture, but makes no mention of its many critics or of indigenous spirituality. For the Army it is simply a matter of "Getting along" instead of addressing the majority demands of land rights and a treaty. By continuing it's recruiting tactics within Aboriginal communities and by not addressing its past crimes the Army merely builds on its racist legacy.

Whilst there are plenty of examples of the Salvation Army working in the past with racist authorities in countries other than Australia (even to the extent of attempting to take control of "Indian Affairs" in the US, working in apartheid South Africa, colonialist India, etc) we can see their colonialist attitude still at work today. The Salvation Army along with other christian groups has opposed the recognition of "witchcraft" (read shamanism) as a valid religious belief within the new South African constitution and supports US fundamentalist groups in their attempts to convert displaced rainforest dwellers in South America to Christianity(54). Salvation Army members also administer sections of Indonesia for the military controlled government and have gone to the extent of ordering villagers to change traditional dances due to their sexual nature. They are also active in bringing bibles into "godless" China and North Korea. In Papua New Guinea they continue to run religious based missions on an "educational basis" (although they no longer stipulate that people must first embrace god to receive their services) with Australia serving as a training base and a "launching pad" for missionary activities in the Pacific (55). A continuity of racist practice within the Army cannot be denied.

### **8. Dodgy business practices and corruption.**

The Salvation Army has always run it's own businesses and it's commercial qualities and connections have been a long established part of the sect. Initially all property and businesses had to be under Willam Booth's total control, but over the last 100 years things

have become far more diversified and numerous cracks have continued to appear.

The first criticism that can be levelled at the Salvation Army is an old one- dodgy business practices. Even in the 1880's the Salvation Army was accused of undercutting other firms wages and of competing with poor women for laundry via it's enterprises (56). Today it continues to undercut independent craftspeople through it's workshops and has a huge number of charity shops staffed by volunteers selling donated goods at inflated prices to the disadvantaged. Whilst the Army could redistribute goods that come to it for free at no cost it is important for them to maintain belief in the capitalist order amongst it's recipients. The Salvation Army also dumps tons of goods and clothing in suburban tips rather than give it away to avoid oversupplying the market (57). Similarly the Salvation Army rents out it's housing and provides donated meals to the homeless at a price. When people have attempted to live in disused Army property they were met with break ins, the seizure of property and other attacks before the Army resorted to the use of police and the eventual demolition of the building leaving a vacant lot (58). Given that the Army owns a huge amount of property throughout Australia it is not unlikely that numerous such evictions have occurred.

Linked to the increasing commercialisation of the Army's activities is a level of increased corruption within it's ranks (this has similarly occurred amongst other charities such as St Vincent De Pauls). This was most significantly indicated in a scandal in it's NSW and Victorian branches in 1990 when members were charged with arson and skimming off cash from the sale of donated clothing. Most of the cash had been drawn from morally suspect sales of donated clothing to Third World countries (59). A police taskforce had been set up after a fire destroyed a Salvation Army warehouse in Williamstown and an insurance valuation discovered that 1000s of items had disappeared before the fire and couldn't be accounted for. Eventually the Salvation Army was forced to admit that it had had no internal accounting system for clothes donated to it and that such scams could have been going on for years (60). With the expansion of Salvation Army industries and generally little but a moral break to prevent management ripping off money increased corruption is inevitable.

### **9. Increased Corpratisation.**

Since the 1950s public donations to the Salvation Army have been decreasing although the introduction of the Red Shield Appeal in 1967 has alleviated matters somewhat. In the past few years the Army has reported a major drop in donations something it ridiculously attributes to the introduction of legalised gambling. In response to decreasing funds they have increasingly turned to further developing their cosy ties with government and corporations.

Since the 1880s the Salvoes have enjoyed financial support from state governments (and federally after 1901) and whilst the community sector has seen major cuts from recent conservative governments the Salvoes have increased their cut of the community sector pie by tendering out for services such as case management and care for the homeless. They have also increased their income by empire building at other groups expense. In NSW for instance



the Salvation Army has now secured itself a position as Sydney's only provider of food packages. By supporting conservative religious charities governments can reduce their responsibility, spending and accountability yet at the same time attempt to prevent economic circumstances from getting dangerously extreme. In this way groups such as Salvation Army form part of a concerted attack on welfare rights. It is not inconceivable that in the long term the Salvation Army will return to its traditional role as the only form of welfare available to the lower classes and indeed it has been known to refer to itself as a cheaper alternative to the welfare state (61).

Whilst the Salvos have been looking to strengthen their connections with government they have also been increasingly courting private business. Companies with dodgy corporate track records such as BHP and MacDonalds have been flocking to support a charity that has traditionally supported them. Chain stores such as KMart have begun helping the Salvation Army in return for the enhancement of corporate image that such "good works" bring. The Salvation Army has also begun using MacDonalds as a supporter to help get people out on doorknocks through the offer of free burgers. Such policies can only hinder the Army's independence and push them into even more sycophantic pandering to the rich since they are increasingly controlling the purse strings. A good example of this was the recalling of 6000 copies of the War Cry in 1993 and a public apology to MacDonalds after one Salvationist criticised MacDonalds food as unhealthy (62).

### 10. Prohibitionist

The Salvation Army has always made temperance a central platform of its religious strategies. All its members are totally forbidden from smoking, drinking, taking non prescription drugs and gambling. Although it no longer resorts to interventionist tactics such as disrupting pubs and gathering places with its meetings the Army does continue to lobby the government to restrict personal freedoms and continue the destructive drug war.

The Salvation Army appears to have largely given up its older aim of removing alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking from society, but it still characterises the two as sinful regardless of the fact that the Bible makes no reference to smoking and no outright claim to the ills of alcohol. Generally the Salvationists quote obscure sections of the Bible and when this fails resort to the argument that the body is the "temple of the soul" and to abuse it is sinful (63). Why this doesn't lead them to opposing pollution, not drinking coffee, eating organic food and boycotting MacDonalds isn't explained. It would be far more accurate to characterise their attitude towards these legal drugs as a hangover from Victorian morality and a quirk of "the Founder". The Salvos attitudes would be funny if not for the fact that they base their rehabilitation schemes on these outdated religious morals and force people into twelve step programmes that see embracing a higher power as the eventual cure for the "disease". The Salvation Army is on record as stating that only "God can cure alcoholism, not human agencies" (43). As usual the Salvos concentrate on individual fault (read sin) over social and wider causes of drug addiction.

In regards to other drugs and gambling the Salvation Army push a hard line rejecting increasing calls from drug counsellors, the courts and anti drug campaigners for the decriminalisation of drugs. Salvationist literature continues to equate marijuana with harder drugs and characterise drug related crime as related to drug dependence and not to the drug

profiteering and police corruption that prohibition has created. During the recent media related drug hysteria in Melbourne the Salvation Army came out in full support for the continued ban on drugs and called for a tougher line on drug enforcement policies- policies that police often admit penalise drug users over their organised crime suppliers (65). Even the Army acknowledges that alcohol is more problematic and that alcohol prohibition in the US (which they also supported) was a mistake that actually increased alcohol intake (66). However they still continue to support and push for this form of modern day prohibition that penalises people for their lifestyles, wastes millions of dollars of public tax money and fills up the prisons and courts with people who have not committed anti social crimes against others.

The Army's line on gambling is similarly confused and destructive. Whilst they admit that yet again the Bible has no record of this practice (which they condemn on Biblical grounds) they continue to attack the rights of people to gamble. The recent loosening of laws relating to casinos and poker machines across Australia has seen the Salvos and other Churches push for their re-banning amongst claims of declining Church coffers due to the pastimes. The Salvation Army even goes so far as to be against arcade games (Watson). Whilst the destructive elements of gambling and indeed drug use cannot be ignored it is clear that banning such practices only drives them underground (where even bigger profiteers can control them) and that the Salvation Army continues to avoid confronting the social context within which such practices occur. It is certainly interesting that whilst lower class gambling is deplored yuppie stock market gambling which certainly gains profit from "incurring injuries to others" and often has about as much certainty as horse racing is never attacked by these pious prudes.

### 11. Anti Worker Practices.

Although the Salvation Army has on occasion provided food and shelter to striking workers stranded during Industrial disputes its treatment of its own employees has been by and large fairly shocking, reflecting its general meanness and patronising attitudes. The Salvation Army has access to a large pool of volunteer labour which it uses to the hilt in raising money and staffing its services often with dire results due to a lack of caring and training. In attempts to cut corners the Salvation Army puts both its workers and clients at risk, a case outlined by its Domestic Violence Care Line which has come under much fire in NSW.

Another problem that the Salvation Army runs into with its workers is the placing of tenants who require cheap housing with recently released young offenders and homeless youth. By using these tenant workers the Salvation Army sets up a quasi-foster parent arrangement in which the tenant receives housing and some food in return for living with and taking care of the teenager- a classic case of undercutting workers in the social welfare field via the use of economically coerced volunteer labour. The tenants don't receive any cash income and this is where the problems begin as in a number of cases tenants have found themselves in dangerous situations which they are not trained to deal with and have no recourse to getting compensation for since technically they are not a worker (68). A recent case illustrating this exploitative relationship was one in which a young mother's child was killed by the son of a senior Salvation Army officer who was in her care. She herself was sexually assaulted and nearly killed in the house where she cared for homeless teenagers sent by the Army. Because she was a tenant and not a formal employee the Army refused to pay



her compensation or give her aid after putting her in a life threatening situation as she was not covered by Work Cover. After going to the media and embarrassing them into helping her she stated, "I want to feel conciliatory rather than bitter, but it's just a pity it took media exposure to produce this sort of a commitment from a supposedly charitable organisation". (69)

Another example of the Salvation Army's poor treatment of workers is its use of community service, trainee and disabled labour in its programmes. In the case of disabled workers the Army employs them from its own Shelters (which they pay rent for) to work at \$8 a day. Workers are blackmailed into this through fear of losing their pension (70). Those who would claim that no one else would hire such workers should consider that maybe rather than exploiting their labour the Army could provide other more enjoyable and educational programmes for people to do. In the case of people who are sentenced to community service the Salvation Army is consistently a winner using those lucky enough to avoid prison both as a media device for their "good works" and as a cheap source of labour. Community service workers are not allowed to dine with other workers and in some cases must also live at Salvation Army shelters (and pay for it) and are only paid around \$30 a week for a five day 8am to 4:30pm week (71). Similarly those on rehabilitation schemes (often drug and alcohol) and some homeless trainees also have to work for meager wages whilst paying around \$150 per fortnight to live in a tiny room in which no women are allowed, the Army officer can enter your room at any time and where you must return by midnight or be out on the street. All this whilst working in a harshly controlled workplace where you have to hear about religion all the time. The only way the Salvation Army gets away with these practices is via the Community Service and Charity laws which allow it immunity from Unions in these areas.

In areas outside its workshops the Salvation Army has also resisted the Unionisation of its workers. The Australian Social Welfare Union has spoken out in the past about a variety of charity organisations including the Salvos attempting to prevent workers from joining unions and gaining federal award status in order to gain protection from unfair dismissal. In NSW welfare workers do not have a minimum wage guideline and charities have worked to avoid them, (72). The Salvation Army seems to have been particularly notorious for these practices since in 1990 over 1500 of its welfare workers struck to protest their treatment and there have been ongoing problems since. The Salvation Army's avoidance of unfair dismissal claims makes all the more sense when one views their attempts at their Melbourne transport depot in 1991 to without warning replace drivers with contract labour. The drivers were given a 15 minute notice of their redundancy and a non negotiated redundancy package. Worker action ensured the Salvation Army had to back down from at least some of its actions, but it had already proven itself yet again to be a cruel and exploitative employer.

## 12. Religious Charity Not Social Change.

Having outlined various problems with the Salvation Army as a social force within society we can now attempt to tie them all together and offer alternatives. Even if you don't agree with all of the arguments we've presented it cannot be refuted that the Salvation Army is an organisation committed to curtailing personal freedoms, oppressing minorities and supporting the political and economic status quo. Having failed to successfully recruit the world's underclass into their ranks the Salvation Army turned in the 1880s to charity work to secure their position in society and to further their evangelical work. Both their conservative and religious views have led to them supporting an economic and political system that creates

discrimination, poverty and inequality whilst rejecting radical solutions and blaming that systems victims for their situation. In supporting religious charity over social change the Salvation Army has helped ensure future business for itself.

There are alternatives to Salvation Army style charity and morality however. Firstly it is important to acknowledge that if people require Salvation Army (or any other group's) resources to survive they should use them, but it is equally important not to have any illusions about what they're doing for you. Furthermore we think that people should put their money, time and support into forms of activity such as LET's schemes, squatting, permaculture, etc that look at helping people provide for themselves rather than remain dependent on charities. Self Help groups provide an important self managed alternative for people in situations of crisis and should be promoted as such. The number of grassroots alternatives is endless- the main problem facing them is funding and promotion. It is also vitally important that all people fight to regain a social wage for all regardless of lifestyle, act against all forms of structural inequality and indeed work to create a more equitable society overall. In closing we'd like to say that we'd ultimately like to see people smash this hierarchal society and all those who morally and financially profit from it, but that's just our personal preference.

-The Skeleton Army, Sydney, 1995.

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