

Robin TRM, 3/2/03

**Peter Hamilton**

**From:** "Pip Wilson" <almanac@acay.com.au>  
**To:** "Peter Hamilton" <peterh@nor.com.au>  
**Sent:** Sunday, 2 February 2003 6:28 PM  
**Subject:** Feb 2 Special Edition: Dr Keith Suter on peace; Groundhog Day; Candlemas

Peter,  
 Good to see you yesterday. Thank you for your hospitality.  
 I'll phone Paul Brunton ASAP.  
 A link to photos of today's Coffs peace demonstration, below.

# ~Wilson's Almanac~

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
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**Every day is a red letter day**

*Think universally. Act terrestrially. Pip Wilson*

**Seize the day!**

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**Candlemas Day**

Formerly called by Roman Catholics the *Feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary*, now called by them the *Presentation of our Lord*. In Roman Catholic churches all the candles that will be needed in the church throughout the year are consecrated on this day.

The customs of Candlemas have an ancient pre-Christian heritage: the ancient Romans had a custom of burning candles to drive away evil spirits, and the purification goddess Februa, celebrated today in ancient Rome, was commemorated with candles as later applied to Mary.

It is not actually known if it was a Christian ceremony engrafted onto the Roman rite of *februation*, or purification, or not, because it has been a Christian ceremony for a very long time, but the parallels are striking and it is probably more than coincidence.

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**Candlemas/Purification/Presentation/Our Lady of Candelaria**

"Forty days after giving birth to Jesus, Mary went to the Temple, as proscribed by Mosaic law to be purified and to present Jesus. But actually this holiday is another one of those Christian holidays, timed to coincide with an existing pagan celebration of the beginning of spring." **Source**

**Awakening the Ground**

In Western Europe, this was the time for preparing the fields for the first planting.

**Candlemas in olde Scotland**

Scottish schoolchildren made small presents of money to teachers on this day. The boy and girl who gave most were called King and Queen respectively. Children were then dismissed for a holiday, forming a procession along the streets, carrying the King and Queen of Candlemas. The latter part of the day was the *Candlemas bleeze*, or blaze, a bonfire of furze.

Typically, in Scotland the landlord would come around today to tenants to see if they wanted to remain another year.

**Superstition concerning Candlemas**

If every remnant of Christmas decoration is not removed from the church by Candlemas (Feb 2) there will be a death in the family occupying the pew where the decoration is left.

**Purification flower**

The snowdrop, in flower about now in the Northern Hemisphere, is called the Purification flower.

**Groundhog Day**

Candlemas is known as 'Groundhog Day' in the United States, from the saying that the groundhog first appears from hibernation on that day. If he sees his shadow, he goes back for another six weeks - indicating six more weeks of bad weather.

European settlers brought the custom with them, mainly from Germany, but also from England and other parts of Europe, where a badger had performed the same prognostications for centuries prior.

There is, no doubt, an ancient connection with the pre-Christian religions and the cross-quarter day (half-way between equinox and solstice) of Imbolc/St Bridget, as discussed yesterday. Note this old verse, in which it is a snake, rather than a mammal, that signifies the coming of warmth to the frozen earth:

*This is the day of Bride [Bridget],  
The Queen will come from the Mound.  
This is the day of Bride,  
The serpent will come from the hole.*

**Kightly, Charles, *The Perpetual Almanack of Folklore*, Thames and Hudson 1987**

The ancient tradition of lighting candles at this time (sympathetic magic to reawaken the sun), found repose in the Catholic Church's co-opted Imbolc, which it named Candlemas, devoted to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

## Punxsutawney Phil, Groundhog - Groundhog Day as tourist commercialism

### More

### The Shadow Report – Phil's record

#### **Was *Groundhog Day* the movie a rip-off?**

"*Groundhog Day*, the 1993 movie starring Bill Murray and Andie MacDowell, will not have to share its profits with the author of a 1981 book which was similarly about a man condemned to live the same day over and over. As AP reports, a US District Judge on Monday rejected a \$20.44 million lawsuit brought by Leon Arden, the author of *One Fine Day*. Judge Denny Chin held *Groundhog Day*, about a weatherman who gets trapped in a time warp in Punxsatawney, was not as dark as Arden's book."

Gossip, *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 13, 1995

**Encouraging:** An hour before writing this, I was at the peace demonstration not far from where I live. As Coffs Harbour is a country town, 600 kilometres from a big city, I expected to be one of the very few there. I thought 50 people would be likely, and 150 a huge crowd. It was not widely publicized and I didn't even know the venue until nearly midnight last night.

It's very encouraging that, by my estimate, a huge crowd of about 2,500 or 3,000 people marched. That really is a lot for a small town, especially as we are on the opposite side of the world from the forthcoming preemptive invasion, and winds in our hemisphere are less likely to carry radiation if things turn for the worse, now that the US administration has publicly allowed the possibility of having a Middle Eastern nuclear war. I felt very proud of my local community.

We passed by a couple of churches, and one can only hope our singing and idle chatter in the street as we marched by did not disturb the large congregations therein.

My amateur photos are now at <http://www.wilsonsalmanc.com/news.html>



## **Special: Dr Keith Suter on modern peacekeeping**

If one would be rich, it is said, one should seek the company of rich people. Perhaps when one would be a good communicator, one should seek the company of people such as Dr Keith Suter, for few are gifted with immense abilities like his.

In 1994 Keith was voted Australian Communicator of the Year, and he has many other distinguished awards and titles. I'm pretty sure that when he flies, his resumé isn't hand luggage, it's freight. One PhD wasn't enough for Dr Suter, so one day he went and got a second. Such is his output, I do believe some goblin waved the no-sleep wand over him.

I'm very fortunate that I didn't have to seek Keith's company at all, though my chances of attaining, by



osmosis, Keith's eminence and prolific output are about equal to my chances of becoming rich.

Keith and I met through our work some 18 years ago when I was editing a magazine called *Simply Living*, for which he wrote a column. We enjoyed a very good working relationship for several years, and our conversations have always been very fascinating and illuminating to me. Such is his eminence, when I left that magazine it was a strange case of the editor asking the journalist for a reference!

The other, night Keith and I caught up for the first time in ages and he offered this article to the members of *Wilson's Almanac*. I'm grateful for it. Article below.

Abundance and gratitude,

Pip Wilson

## Change of heart to peaceful solutions

By Keith Suter, PhD\*

What happens if they give a war and no one turns up? Some Western Governments are trying to whip up public opinion in favour of a war against Iraq, but they are not having much luck.

In Britain, the main supporters for Prime Minister Tony Blair's military ambitions are in the opposition Conservative Party. Many of his Labour Party backbenchers and most of the media are - at the very least - sceptical of the need for a war.

This is not just an issue over Iraq. There has been a major social change in Western countries towards the "peace" issue. During the Cold War peace groups were branded as unpatriotic and "Moscow fronts". Now "peace" is respectable - it can even be displayed on the Sydney Harbour Bridge on New Year's Eve as a greeting to the world.

This helps to explain what has happened to the peace movement in countries like New Zealand and Australia. It seems to have disappeared just when it is needed. Many Governments are gearing up for war against Iraq, but there are not the wide range of peace groups that operated in Cold War years.

Instead, the peace movement has become mainstream, middle-class and middle-of-the-road. It is now respectable and its values permeate all sections of society. There has been a quiet social transformation.

This change in values may be seen in four ways. Most noticeably, there is a lack of support for a war against Iraq. The media and many parts of the public are sceptical.

This is not from any love of Saddam Hussein but from a general sense of combat fatigue. Conventional military operations do not seem to be as effective as in the past.

After all, there was a war against Saddam 11 years ago but that did not solve the problem. And the United States-led operation in Afghanistan has still not brought peace to that country.

Wars do not seem to settle anything; they only lead to fresh wars.

Second, there is increased interest in the roots of war and more imaginative ways of settling disputes. If conventional military forces do not work, what could?

In Afghanistan, for example, imagine what the situation would have been like if the US had poured aid into the country in the late 1980s as the Soviet Union withdrew its forces, so that Afghanistan became a flourishing pro-Western state. That would have prevented any scope for the Taliban and Osama bin Laden to take root.

Third, many of the erstwhile "militaristic" segments of society are less militaristic. Anzac Day memorials are attracting large numbers of people, not least young people. But the activities are not a glorification of



war, more a regret at the tragic loss of life.

It seems that the grave loss of life of young people in April 1915 resonates with the fears of young people about their own future and how a group of old men can still ruin lives.

Meanwhile, military institutions are reinventing themselves. For example, the Imperial War Museum in London on Remembrance Day last year hosted the Nobel Peace Prize winner Sir Joseph Rotblat, who spoke on "A world without war. Is it desirable?"

And fourth, in Australia at least, the Defence Force now enjoys the highest level of public support since World War II. In particular, its peacekeeping operation in East Timor is seen by peace activists as redeeming Australia's tarnished image – an image created by pro-Jakarta Australian Governments from that of Gough Whitlam onwards.

Thus, peace activists have had to re-evaluate their own attitudes towards the military and recognise it has an important role in the new era of peacekeeping.

Therefore, there is a greater sense of "peace" among the previously differing segments of society and a greater willingness to work together. The old feuds between "warmongers" and "peaceniks" no longer make sense. The new era of warfare requires new ways of thinking.

Warfare used to be international and conventional. Now, it is increasingly internal and guerrilla. Large fighting formations no longer bring lasting peace (as both the Soviets and the Americans have found in Afghanistan).

Instead, military operations have to be seen in the broader context of not only winning the war but also winning the peace. This means co-operating with international relief organisations and non-governmental organisations.

It also means trying to find other ways of settling disputes. We are all "peace activists" now.

## About Keith Suter, PhD

Professional fellow of the Futures Foundation, Australia.

The Consultant on Social Policy at Wesley Mission Sydney. He is also a Senior Fellow with the Global Business Network Australia, Consultant to Aged and Community Services (NSW), Health Services Association (NSW), and the Conflict Resolution Network.

His first doctorate was in the international law of guerrilla warfare and his second in the economic and social consequences of the arms race.

He is:

Chairperson, Environment Committee, Australian Institute of Company Directors Chairperson, International Humanitarian Law Committee of Australian Red Cross (NSW) Vice-President, International Commission of Jurists (NSW)

Director of Studies, International Law Association (Australian Branch)

From 1991-1998, he was President of the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Sydney.

Between 1979 and 1999 he was at various times the national and state presidents (NSW and WA) of the United Nations Association of Australia. In 1999 he was made a Life Member of the UN Association.

His teaching positions include part-time lecturer in the Department of Social Work, University of New South Wales (in the Masters of International Social Work), where he teaches the introductory course on international organization.

His latest book is *In Defence of Globalization* (University of New South Wales Press, 2001).

In 1986: International Year of Peace, he was awarded the Australian Government's Peace Medal. In 1994, he was voted "Australian Communicator of the Year".

Author of Keith Suter Comments, a weekly news commentary, broadcast on 2GB.

Books by Keith Suter

The last Ongo-Bongo upload was on January 30

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