

A Daughter of the Regiment says it all

The Australian ANZACS

“We who are left how shall we look again
Happily on the sun or feel the rain
Without remembering how they who went
Ungrudgingly and spent
Their lives for us loved, too, the sun and rain?”
~Wilfred Wilson Gibson

AND SO WHO WILL REMEMBER THEM WHEN THEY HAVE GONE?

Who will march in their memory and in their place?
Is this how Australia will now treat its former sons?
Is this how the RSL would strip away the dignity and human rights of those elderly who remain?
This is THEIR day!

The Human Rights of the Elderly:

“The human right to full and active participation in all aspects of political, economic, social and cultural life of society
The human right to full and effective participation in decision-making concerning their well-being.
The human right to freedom from discrimination based on age or any other status
The human right to be treated with dignity.

This unapologetic stripping away of the human rights of our older diggers highlights a blatant hypocrisy on the part of the organisers within the RSL whose stated position for units with declining numbers was to encourage them to establish relationships with families and serving units but who are now demanding they move either to the back of the bus amongst a consolidated mass of rabble, or even better, don't go!

Is it that Victoria cares less about their elderly veterans than other states? Is it that our Melbourne RSL has less concern for basic human rights disguised under a smoke-screen of caring?

Is it a fear that our most sacred national day will be considered an inappropriate expression of nationalism?

Or is it complete contempt for the dead (and in consequence their descendants) because they can no longer be seen or speak out? No lip service to duty of care or un-vocalised concerns about litigation under OHS legislation can excuse this denial.

Anzac Day was originally conceived for the nation to express their respect for those who served, and are serving. From its very inauguration schoolchildren and family members of both the living and the dead marched in solidarity behind the Unit Banners watched by an appreciative nation on the streets and the television screens. As time went by the survivors of each successive war grew old but still they marched, albeit some now crookedly and out of step; and watching those old men march accompanied by young Australians year after year filled those who watched with gratitude and frequently brought us to tears.

This is not jingoistic nationalism as some shallow thinkers have postulated. This is not a celebration of war most soldiers will tell you passionately that they hate war this is a pride in the spirit of our young men and women, a respect for their effort and endurance, a celebration of our identity and solidarity as a young and proud nation.

Australian Governor-General Quentin Bryce stated that love was at the heart of Anzac Day - "love of every kind, love of nation, love of service, love of family... Love gave meaning to human triumph and defeat, to forgive and learn from successes and failures. It reminds us of why we must never forget, (never) let go of Anzac Day," Ms Bryce said.

That the RSL are worried about these men dropping dead on the march to the Shrine is really a load of baloney at least for the reasons given! Those men who are unable to walk are wheeled or helped along by their loved ones. They are proud of having defended their country and should be allowed to show this for as long as they wish and as long as they feel they can. The march behind their own Unit Banner with their remaining comrades (who were forged in the fires of war to be closer to them than brothers) is the thing they look forward to each year and such pride as they have is so well deserved. Although numbers are thinning more rapidly each year they have proud children and grandchildren marching along beside them as a mark of pride and respect. Is this what the RSL would strip them of in their twilight? Is this how we teach our younger generation about our diggers, so that they grow up and tell their own children? They are part of history. Are our future generations to be ashamed of them? Give our veterans the choice themselves!

Tasmanians at least are proud of the growing involvement in the Anzac March. Recently, after the largest Dawn Service and Parade in 30 years, the Hobart RSL Branch president stated: "The Australian public has matured and grown up. Now, they are telling the veteran community: 'This is our day, we also had grandfathers and uncles and aunts in the war'. They want to take part in Anzac Day and so they damn well should. The same thing will happen over there (the mainland) as what's happening in Tasmania - more and more people wanting to be a part of Anzac Day." He also described the participation by the young people as tremendous. Well RSL? Why not leave open the option of vehicles as previously but, for those who want to be behind their banners, let there be family and volunteers with wheelchairs; umbrellas against rain or sun, water available at intervals (as in fun-runs), St John's along the way. Our fathers would turn in their graves. They marched under their unit banner every year, dawn service and day service right up until the year they passed away; now we, their children choose to march for them, under their banner as a mark of love and

respect, and our grandchildren along with us. Will the Korean and Vietnam veterans be next? Will our serving forces be so disregarded in the future? It is not the provenance of the RSL to affront the very people it purports to serve. Â Once upon a time these marchers actually WERE the RSL. Now the RSL insults us all and brings a stain of dishonour to a once revered badge. Dylan Thomas could well have written his most famous poem for our old soldiers as Anzac day approaches once again in the city of Melbourne.

DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rage at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Â Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light. And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light. Submitted by Â Heather, Daughter of the late Â Sergeant Gordon (Dobbin) Rowe
TX511 (In it from the very beginning and through to the end)