



# ANDREW ON WEDNESDAY

## Preserving social wellbeing in the current political climate

In the current political climate, I find that it is indeed our duty as academics, and especially in my role as Dean of a Faculty (for Social Wellbeing), to appeal to decency and decorum as we go about debating politics.

This Faculty is grounded in the reality that many still struggle to have a respectable life. In our research and delivery of courses it is becoming increasingly evident that we need to seek to respond to the tragedies of the socially excluded and the marginalised and that is why I feel it is imperative that I voice our apprehension at the deteriorating political discourse being touted when so many are still at the margins.

This Faculty is about sensing the pain and anger of people who have grown progressively disenfranchised notwithstanding the economic growth and they might be quickly losing their trust in the institutions that represent them. There is no other way to say this, but our political climate is tottering and simultaneously our institutions are being doubted for their righteousness and virtue - and that is exceptionally worrying.

When antagonism towards one's opponents gets to a level of personal assaults, we risk turning our political class in an Achilles heel for social wellbeing. Without a sense of legitimacy and rightfulness, we put at stake clarity of thought and the gusto in argumentation.

This Country of ours boasts environmental beauty, delightful citizenship and a sense of community that is still sturdy and noteworthy. With all our possible faults and inadequacies, we remain a country founded on justice and charity, respect and reverence and we need to work hard to keep it that way.

My appeal is that our political class:

- should not lead our citizens into the black hole of antagonism;
- should not revisit blotchy moments in our political history that have stained our communities, might have risked civil war and brought splits in our families;
- should not encourage odium, loathing and detestation in their dialect as this only breeds derision;
- should not entice our communities, our families, our towns and villages to be loyal to red or blue but to each other's wellbeing and to the illustrious values of inclusion and social justice;
- should not sacrifice good economic decisions that are clouded with cynicism and distrust.

Enchanting legislation is not good enough to guarantee success of a Nation. The biggest measure of it all is that of fundamentally learning how to live with one another, to preserve our communities and integrate those who want to make part of it, to give our people the happiness and serenity, in other words the reassurance, that the sun will rise again tomorrow and we will be a bit better than today.

If we aren't vigilant the State's social fabric risks being torn apart by the political divisiveness. The people in this Country are feeling increasingly subjugated and reviled by the semantics and I feel duty-bound to point out our unease.

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keeping its eyes on the ball, thus focusing on the wellbeing of society;

- a political class that stops inflicting hatred through the media;
- a political class that embraces discourses around reconciliation, resolution, compromise, respect and fellowship;
- a political class that makes the difficult choice of living in scarcity, dearth and paucity if necessary, rather than bowing down to the opulent;
- a political class that distributes wealth justly and honourably;
- a political class that burrows up policies that are based on sound ideas of how the excluded can no longer be so, the marginalised exist no more, the poor and the needy are equal citizens, those in pain and fear feel protected.

In other words, we want politics and politicians to remain/become the voice of those people who struggle day-in and day-out to make sense of a life that has in many ways been taken away from them; children who are abused, minorities who are short-changed, women experiencing domestic violence, people in precarious jobs, lack of accessible education, physical pain, relationships that have gone bad, to name just a few.

As a Faculty we will reach out as we have always done. We remain committed to the cause of the marginalised and we will engage wholeheartedly in making sure that we will redress the imbalances in our communities.

What we need is:

- a political class that can stand tall in front of the many virtues who hound our values;
- a political class that can shun away those with no morals, no regret, and no illing but an insatiable lust for power;
- a political class that focuses on

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## Italy mourns murdered statesman

The murdered Italian politician Aldo Moro has been buried after a private funeral service and the Interior Minister, Francesco Cossiga, has resigned.

Italians stopped work to pay tribute to Mr Moro, leader of the ruling Christian Democrat Party who was twice prime minister and considered the chief candidate for

president.

He was also the architect of a plan to include the Communists in government for the first time in Italy's history - a plan which came into being the day after he was captured 55 days ago.

Mr Moro was kidnapped on 16 March after left-wing Red Brigade gunmen ambushed his car killing his chauffeur and five policemen.

For eight weeks, they held him at a secret location in Rome allowing him to send letters to his family and fellow politicians begging the government to negotiate with his captors.

They demanded the release of 13 Red Brigade members. It is reported that in the last few days the kidnappers told Mr Moro's family they would release him if just one of their gang were released.

The government, under President Giulio Andreotti, resolutely refused all pleas from family, friends, even the Pope himself to concede to any demands.

Eight weeks after he was taken, his body was found riddled with bullets in the boot of a red Renault 5 parked strategically behind the headquarters of the ruling Christian Democrat Party and Communist Party HQ in central Rome.

When news of his death broke out, crowds gathered round the car and police had to force their way through to let Mr Cossiga identify the body.

In a public statement, Mr Cossiga then said he was responsible for the decision not to negotiate with the kidnappers and was now stepping down from his post.

About 100,000 people crammed into the St John Lateran square in Rome to protest against the killing holding up banners that read "Murderers" and black-bordered photos of Mr Moro.

The crowd chanted "Moro lives" and union leaders made emotional speeches calling for a united front against terrorism.

Pope Paul VI, a personal friend of Mr Moro who had pleaded with the govern-

ment to negotiate with the Red Brigade, said the murder was "a stain of blood that dishonours our country".

The pontiff was addressing Italy's parliament which today voted in tough new anti-terrorist legislation aimed at the Red Brigade.

The Red Brigade was a left-wing terrorist group formed in 1970 with the sole aim of overthrowing capitalist Italy by violent means. Most of their leading members had been captured and imprisoned by the mid-1980s.

The daring kidnap and murder of such a well-known and respected statesman such as Aldo Moro left the nation in a state of numbed shock. There were some who said police incompetence in finding him and government intransigence were all part of a grand conspiracy.

Francesco Cossiga was not long out of power. The following year he became prime minister and was Italy's president from 1985 to 1992.