

Stirrings



Clifford Harper

A Basilian Peace & Justice Newsletter

Fall 2013

Exciting Days at Elsipogtog

By Bob Holmes CSB

Sunday 13 October

Rose is Acadian. She has lived 60+ years in the Richibucto area on the Atlantic coast of New Brunswick. She picked me up at 9 PM at the Moncton Airport and is driving north and east to the “No Fracking” blockade which is beginning its third week. Red and blue lights flash as we approach, but the RCMP allow us to drive to the Peace Camp in front of the gate beyond which the seismic testing vehicles are blockaded.

The extraction of shale gas by “fracking” carries with it the very real possibility of toxic contamination of the land and the water. The U.N. Declaration of Aboriginal Rights, which Canada signed in 2012, requires states to acquire “free, prior and informed consent” from aboriginal peoples for any project on their traditional land. The Mi’kmaq have not consented to this project. Since June, CPT’s Aboriginal Justice Team has had a presence with the people of Elsipogtog in solidarity with their demand to have their treaty rights honoured.

My CPT teammates, Chris and Carrie, are sitting among the dozen or so folk around a welcoming fire in front of the gate. A van is parked across the gate preventing exit by the trucks in the fenced compound. And just inside the gate is the sacred fire, the centre of a spiritual space for the aboriginal earth protectors. Acadians and Anglos warm themselves at the fire outside the gate together and in solidarity with the Mi’kmaq from the Elsipogtog First Nation.

My teammates sleep in the CPT car. I sleep under the trees in my bivouac sack. It’s already -2 Celsius.



Monday 14 October

Rising early, I am escorted by a warrior on a tour of the fenced compound. We encounter ten company security guards approaching from the far side accompanied by a RCMP officer to relieve those who have been there overnight protecting the “thumper” trucks used in seismic exploration.

SWN Resources, the testing company, secured a court injunction against the blockade, but the RCMP have not enforced it as yet hoping for some peaceful resolution coming from the

negotiations between the Elsipogtog Chief and the Premier of New Brunswick.

At 2 PM we are invited by local settlers (Acadian and Anglo) to a meeting arranged with the RCMP. All are told that the RCMP is taking a “measured” approach to the blockade. Their mandate is to make sure all are safe, both SWN workers and protesters. But that they are also mandated to enforce the law and the blockade is unlawful. Many voices called for the RCMP to protect the environment instead of the corporate profiteers. “Not our mandate!” replied the police.

Tuesday 15 October

An Elsipogtog Band Council Resolution was passed evicting SWN from the Mi’kmaq traditional territory. This territory, which the New Brunswick Government considers “crown” land was never sold or ceded to Canada. Chris, a lawyer in her pre-CPT life, is asked to help draft a statement and media release in preparation for an “Occupy” action by the Mi’kmaq of crown lands.

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Elsipogtog

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It's a gentle day at the blockade. Acadians bringing firewood and splitting it mechanically, Anglos bringing food support, Mi'kmaq women drumming and singing, warriors directing traffic, RCMP officers on the road, polite. I'm sleeping in a tent tonight.

Wednesday 16 October

Lots of tension in the air: warriors saying they're going to step things up; settlers worried, Elsipogtog elders uneasy. At the blockade the elders decide to leave and take the sacred fire to another site. The van blocking the gate is removed. Our Mi'kmaq advisors suggest we should not sleep at the blockade and so we move to a friend's house.

Thursday 17 October

At 6 AM the RCMP come in to break the blockade. Our CPT team arrives there about 9 AM. We hear stories of SWAT style infiltration. Approximately 200 RCMP officers, some heavily armed and in army-style camouflage, raided the encampment at the blockade and met some reported, but unconfirmed, violent resistance by unconfirmed individuals within the compound. Many warriors and nonviolent protectors were arrested – including the Elsipogtog Chief and several councillors. At the established RCMP police line, angry crowds gather and more arrests take place. The RCMP respond with pepper spray and rubber bullets generating more anger and burning of police cars.

Our team issues a statement, "CPT is saddened to see this dissolution of a peaceful, nonviolent protest. However,



the team in no way condones the actions of individuals who set fire to RCMP vehicles or who otherwise engaged in violence and prays that the solidarity and community of the blockade will prevail in the ongoing struggle to end shale gas exploration."

Friday 18 October

We learn that most of the arrested protectors were released overnight. Nine Warriors are to appear in Moncton courts today.

Today is also the day for the court hearing on extending the injunction against any interference with SWN seismic exploration. CPT travels to Moncton for court support and joins a large solidarity demonstration in front of the court house.

Both courtrooms were packed with Elsipogtog supporters. In courtroom #11 we find the Province of New Brunswick has joined the case, in support of SWN, as a third party intervener. SWN has asked the court to "indefinitely" extend the injunction because wording in the court order addresses sites other than the Rexton compound. Two of the women protectors, named in the injunction, speak strongly against the extension. The court will issue a decision Monday, 21 October.

In courtroom #6 the nine warriors are read the many charges against them. Three are released with a court date and six are remanded until a bail hearing on Monday.

In the meantime we learn that the Chief has travelled to Fredericton and has released a statement as he prepared to meet with the Premier. "Thursday 17 October was an ugly day in the history of the province of New Brunswick. Chief and Council of the

Elsipogtog First Nation wish to state clearly that guns and bombs, if any, have no place in our peaceful efforts. The destruction of police vehicles was unfortunate and unnecessary.



Mi'kmaq Chief (centre) and Councillors arrested

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A project of the Basilian Centre for Peace & Justice

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A peaceful path forward still exists, but the situation is extremely volatile.”

The day was a win for SWN Resources Canada and the Province of New Brunswick as the liberated trucks drove out. Ironically, solidarity support for the protectors was shown in demonstrations happening today all across Canada – Victoria, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax – and even in New York City.

Saturday 19 October

We thought it might be quiet today, but not to be. The Elsibpogtog protectors return en masse to the blockade site joined by supporters from all across New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. About noon several hundred protectors occupy highway 11. The RCMP closes off that section of the highway and remains out of sight. After 2 hours the whole crowd moves back to the blockade site.

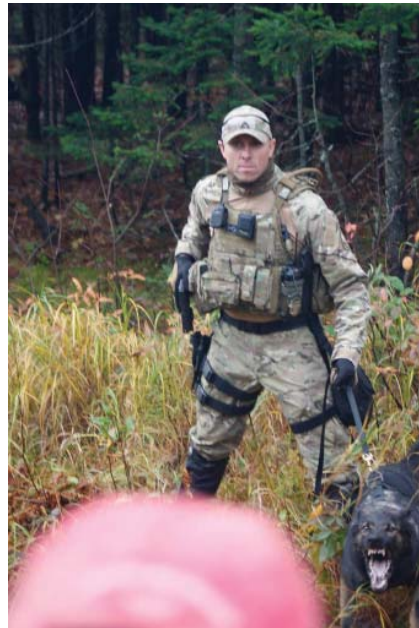
There is much singing, drumming and praying followed by a talking



circle in which Mi'kmaq elders, women and youth as well as Acadian and Anglophone folk speak of the need for a unified, coordinated, continued resistance. Plans are made for a meeting tomorrow at Elsipogtog for all concerned.

Sunday 20 October

300 people attend the meeting at the Elsipogtog Community Centre – standing room only. An eagle feather is placed on the table at the front and anyone wishing to speak is asked to come forward and pick it up. Many, present during the raid, tell of their traumatic experience. Mi'kmaq, Acadian and Anglo phone speakers all



call for unity and continued nonviolent resistance to the fracking. There are two highlights for me.

On Saturday, a group of angry warriors blockaded a CTV van because of the negative coverage of the blockade. At the meeting the community apologizes to CTV and the reporter involved has tears in her eyes as she is hugged by the Mi'kmaq women.

When the Chief arrives he is given a standing ovation with joyous drumming and singing – all recorded (and reported) well by the media. The media is asked to leave while the Chief addresses the community.



He speaks of three immediate goals: healing for the community from the trauma experienced during the raid of the blockade; healing of the relationship between the community and the RCMP; and developing legal strategies to continue the struggle against fracking. The Grand Chief of the Manitoba is here to express solidarity of the western First Nations with the Mi'kmaq.

It has been a rainy day which fits in well with the dampened spirits of those coming to the meeting. When we leave there was a magnificent rainbow promising hope to those going forward.

Monday 21 October

Another day of court support in Moncton. At the request of the defense lawyers the bail hearings for six warriors is held over once more. But the hearing to extend the injunction against protesting the fracking provides a huge surprise. The judge decides that he cannot speculate on what might happen in the future and therefore ends the injunction. There is a great celebration in front of the courthouse – again well recorded by the media.

Tuesday 22 October

I head to the Moncton airport and home after exiting days at Elsipogtog.



Stirring: (adjective) exciting, arousing, awakening, animating, quickening

WHERE IS MY SPIRIT?

Is it running through my veins;
 pumped by my heart?
 ... Does it trickle out and enter the world when I'm wounded?

Where is my soul?

Is it in my brain?
 Does it relate more to math or to dance?
 What then does it do when I can't equate, or can't keep time
 when sense just doesn't make sense?

Is it in my eyes,
 that label you;
 create you;
 admire you;
 distort you and destroy you?

If so, can my spirit see yours
 when we gaze
 face to face
 eye for eye
 other to other?

If so, how could a blind child see so clearly
 the souls she greets?

Where is your spirit?

Is it in your fingers;
 the same ones that wrap themselves so warmly in mine;
 the same ones that hold the spark and pull the trigger?

Is your spirit in your arms,
 that knead the dough you bake,
 the bread you break,
 the life you pass,
 to me ...
 ... a piece of your life, feeding mine?

How about our mouths?
 Do our spirits twist around in our tongues?
 To bless,
 or poison?

When we share a kiss,
 do our spirits align?

Or is the tongue, the lips, a smile
 just skin, just an organ?
 Are we just organs?

Our feet.
 How about our feet?
 Does the spirit lead the body,
 Or does it merely follow, trapped?

They are inseparable friends, intimate lovers, clashing enemies;
 bound and conflicted -
 not fully one - yet united.

... it is so weak ...
 Yet
 so strong -
 enough to change the world -
 for better,
 or for worse.

When my hand strikes your cheek,
 do I miss your soul?
 Where does it end and flesh begin?
 We embrace a piece of God
 with one touch
 and deny her with the next.

We feed one another -
 - our harvest is for body and soul:
 consuming and producing
 life ...

... Connect,
 for you are connected;
 for better,
 or for worse.

We are connected;
 for better,
 or for worse.

Your spirit gives and takes,
 builds and destroys;

with your heart,
 with your thoughts,
 your eyes,
 your work,
 your touch,
 lips,
 ears,
 feet,

Etc.

Let it live,
 let it give.

Find,
 and use,
 your soul
 for better,
 or for worse ...
 ...?



By Carolyn Gray
From People of Peace 2012:
Lessons for Here From the Middle East
<http://www.people-of-peace.blogspot.ca/>

‘Shock Doctrine’ Americana

Endless War as the Ultimate Business Model

by William Astore

There is a new normal in America: our government may shut down, but our wars continue. Congress may not be able to pass a budget, but the U.S. military can still launch commando raids in Libya and Somalia, the Afghan War can still be prosecuted.

In the halls of Congress and the Pentagon, it's business as usual, if your definition of "business" is the power and profits you get from constantly preparing for and prosecuting wars around the world. "War is a racket," General Smedley Butler famously declared in 1935, and even now it's hard to disagree with a man who had two Congressional Medals of Honor to his credit and was intimately familiar with American imperialism.

War Is Politics, Right?

Carl von Clausewitz defined war as a continuation of politics by other means. Perhaps another "Carl" might lend a hand when it comes to helping Americans understand what war is really all about.

I'm referring to Karl Marx. For Marx, war is not just an extreme exercise of politics, but also a continuation of exploitative commerce by other means. Combat as commerce: there's more in that than simple alliteration.

In the history of war, such commercial transactions took many forms, whether as territory conquered, spoils carted away, raw materials appropriated, or market share gained. Consider American wars. The War of 1812 is sometimes portrayed as a minor dust-up with Britain, involving the temporary occupation and burning of our capital, but it really was about crushing Indians on the frontier and grabbing their land. The Mexican-American War was another land grab, this time for the benefit of slaveholders.

In societal calamities like war, there will always be winners and losers. But the clearest winners are often companies like Boeing and Dow Chemical, which provided B-52 bombers and Agent Orange, respectively, to the U.S. military in Vietnam. Such "arms merchants" -- an older, more honest term than today's "defense contractor" -- don't have to pursue the hard sell, not when war and preparations for it have become so permanently, inseparably intertwined with the American economy, foreign policy, and our

nation's identity as a rugged land of "warriors" and "heroes."

War as Disaster Capitalism

Consider one more definition of war: not as politics or even as commerce, but as societal catastrophe. Thinking this way, we can apply Naomi Klein's concepts of the "shock doctrine" and "disaster capitalism" to it. When such disasters occur, there are always those who seek to turn a profit.

Most Americans are, however, discouraged from thinking about war this way thanks to the power of

what we call "patriotism." During wars, we're told to "support our troops," to wave the flag, to put country first, to respect the patriotic ideal of selfless service and redemptive sacrifice. We're discouraged from reflecting on the uncomfortable fact that, as "our" troops sacrifice and suffer, others in society are profiting big time. Such

thoughts are considered unseemly and unpatriotic. Pay no attention to the war profiteers, who pass as perfectly respectable companies. After all, any price is worth paying to contain the enemy -- not so long ago, the red menace, but in the twenty-first century, the murderous terrorist.

Forever war is forever profitable. It also represents the eternal marriage of combat and commerce. If that doesn't catch all of what war is about, it should at least remind us of the degree to which war as disaster capitalism is driven by profit and power.

For a synthesis, we need only turn from Carl or Karl to Cal -- President Calvin Coolidge, that is. "The business of America is business," he declared in the Roaring Twenties. Almost a century later, the business of America is war, even if today's presidents are too polite to mention that the business is booming.

No wonder our leaders tell us not to worry our little heads about our wars -- just support those troops, go shopping, and keep waving that flag.

Published on Monday, October 21, 2013 by TomDispatch.com. William J. Astore, a retired lieutenant colonel (USAF) and professor of history, is a TomDispatch regular.



The Empire Divide, Constantinian Judaism,

By Marc Ellis



Jewish theologian Marc H. Ellis has been a leading thinker on Israel/Palestine and his work challenging the Jewish community and Constantinian Judaism has never been as vital as it is today.

The Empire Divide

Jews have always been on both sides of what I call the “empire divide.” You can see it clearly in the Bible. According to the Biblical narrative, the Israelites were slaves in the land of Egypt. Yahweh, the unspeakable and unpronounceable God of Israel, reappears to liberate the Israelite slaves from bondage in Egypt’s empire. The drama is palpable.

Already, the prophetic combination of God’s power and justice is in place. Once freed from slavery and empire, God promises the Israelites a destiny in the land of Canaan. First, though, the Israelites have to travel out of Egypt’s empire and trek through the desert where they are tested for endurance and steadfastness. Only then is Israel allowed to enter the land. What test does God set before the Israelites in the land? The Israelites are commanded to create a new kind of society, one based on equality and justice. Freed from empire, the Israelites are to create a society unlike the one they left in Egypt.

This quest for a just society is also represented in the Biblical discussion of earthly kingship. The Bible represents God as opposing earthly kingship because of its tendency to promote the same kind of empire God delivered the Israelites from. When

Israel chooses earthly kingship, empire is already on the horizon. The Biblical prophets are commissioned by God and warn Israel that injustice carries with it dire consequences. First and foremost, injustice leads one away from God. In fact, injustice is worshiping power, status and money like a God. The Bible defines this as idolatry.

In ancient Israel, idolatry is the last straw. Adopting empire in the land, Israel forsakes its destiny to be a light unto the nations. The prophets are clear: returning to God is returning to justice; abandoning justice is abandoning God. Abandoning justice and God means that Israel is turning away from its destiny. What follows is exile. In the Bible, exile is life without destiny and without God.

The empire leanings of contemporary Jewry are understandable. With six million Jews slaughtered in Europe, abandoned by the world and by God, why shouldn’t Jews seek empowerment in the state of Israel and America without thinking about the consequences for others? Against the odds, though, there is now a renewal of the prophetic within the Jewish world. Especially in America and Israel where the great majority of the world’s Jewish population resides, the contemporary form of the prophetic, embodied by Jews of Conscience, is exploding.



Constantinian Judaism

A Jewish theology of liberation calls Jews away from the Constantinian formation of Judaism in our time. By Constantinianism, I mean the embedding of religion within empire. In the Constantinian formation, the state blesses religion with status, acceptance and affluence. In turn, religion blesses the state and its policies as somehow attached to a transcendent power and purpose. The direct reference of Constantinianism is to the Emperor Constantine who in the 4th century made Christianity, then still a minor and

outcast sect, the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Constantinianism comes in many forms beyond Constantinian Christianity. Constantinian Judaism and Constantinian Islam are the most obvious to mention. There is a Constantinian Buddhism, a Constantinian Hinduism and, of course, a Constantinian secularism that sees modernity as the only path to progress in the world. Though seemingly divided by religious and national loyalties, Constantinians of all stripes inhabit the same orbit of ideas, values and politics.

Those who exercise conscience in all religions are also linked by their

Jews of Conscience and the New Diaspora

political, economic, and ecological practice. People of Conscience who embody their traditions of justice are in conflict with the mainstream of their community. For all, conscience applied means exile.

Jews of Conscience

The contemporary explosion of the Jewish prophetic is embodied by Jews of Conscience. Despite this explosion, the prophetic within the larger Jewish world is atrophying. The Jewish prophetic is being persecuted by the Constantinian Jewish establishment. Like all Constantinianisms, the Jewish establishment wants to hide the prophetic from the world. Jews of Conscience are in exile from the mainstream Jewish community. I envision Jews of Conscience carrying the Jewish covenant into exile with them.

The primary issue is the state of Israel and what Jews in Israel – with the enablement of the American Jewish establishment – are doing to the Palestinian people.

From the origins of the state of Israel in 1948, Palestinians have been wronged. In the years surrounding the birth of Israel, more than 750,000 Palestinians were cleansed from Palestine to create room for a Jewish state.

The expansion of Israel continues apace today in settlements in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Various peace process efforts have served as smoke-screens for Israel's continued expansion. Israeli expansion continues under the latest peace effort sponsored by the United States.

The Two-State option for Israel

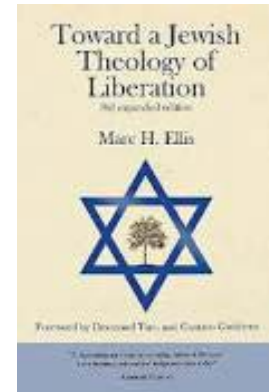
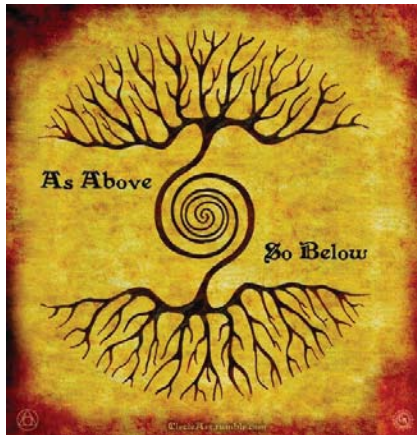
and Palestine has been eclipsed by Israel's expansion. Left is some form of autonomy for Palestinians surrounded by Israeli power. Jews in Israel and around the world need to confess injustice done to Palestinians so that justice and reconciliation can evolve between Jews and Palestinians in the future. Jews can only overcome this history of injustice by working with Palestinians toward a full and inclusive equality.

The New Diaspora

Jews of Conscience have reached the point of no return. The Jewish tradition has a long history of exile and return. But for the first time in two thousand years, Jews whose grandparents and parents did return to the land are leaving Israel. Some Jewish Israelis of Conscience have given up.

What is important about these Still/Former Jewish/Israelis is that, unlike American Jews who support Israel from a safe distance, they have been the Jewish boots on the ground. They have experienced and perpetrated Israeli policies against Palestinians. They have come to the conclusion that the injustice is too much. They are unable any longer to commit to these policies or benefit from them.

Exile and the prophetic is the only option but the impulse of both is to join with others of like mind in the New Diaspora. There, these Still/Former Jewish/Israelis often find Palestinians of Conscience who have either been driven out of the land by Israel or can no longer take the limited vision



and corruption of their own Palestinian establishment. Like the Israelis who leave Israel, the Palestinians who leave Palestine form their own particular diaspora. At the same time, they often find themselves coming together in the Jewish/Palestinian Diaspora that is evolving in our time.

There will always be empire. The prophetic voice will never die. The battle is joined in every generation, everywhere. Rooted in the prophetic, Jews of Conscience press forward. But Jews of Conscience can only press forward with others of different faiths – Christians, Muslims, Buddhists and others of conscience – who likewise press forward. In the end, though obstacles remain, the convergence of the prophetic in the New Diaspora is well on its way. With climate change and the various justice issues around the world, the stakes have never been higher. More and more people have entered exile on behalf of conscience. The question remains as to whether the prophetic or empire will win the day. The Jewish empire divide is a universal problematic.

Portions of this article by Marc Ellis were given as part of the panel "A Faith-based Response to the Crisis of Imperial Capitalism" during the Peace for Life 3rd People's Forum, October 23-27, 2013, Jeju Island, South Korea. To read more visit <http://mondoweiss.net/exile-and-the-prophetic>

Segregation and Religiously Sanctioned Subservience in the Movies

By Neil Hibberd CSB

12 Years a Slave is a powerfully significant, wonderfully acted movie which tells the story of a black man born free and living free in early 19th century upstate New York. Solomon Northrup is a respected gentleman and a talented musician, with a family and a home. He is lured away by the promise of a lucrative stint playing his fiddle in a traveling circus. Duped and drugged, he awakens in chains to the horror of being sold into slavery and the drudgery of crushing, cruel plantation life, with little hope of ever again seeing his beloved wife and children. This is his story, based on Northrup's actual memoirs.

It is an extremely violent film, unrelenting in its portrayal of the savagery imposed on slaves. I found it difficult to look at. The physical punishment, as horrendous as it is, does not approach the degradation, the spirit-crushing intolerance and the personal diminution of soul, visited on the slaves. No horror is spared. Perhaps such a movie needed to be made.

The Butler is a cakewalk compared to *12 Years a Slave*, a pleasing Hollywood movie which applies all the standard Hollywood sleight of hand and polish; it does have merit as an historical survey of the beginning of slavery through segregation into the election of President Obama. The butler, Cecil Gaines, well-acted by Forest Whitaker, serves eight presidents in the White House. One of the kicks is recognizing and rating the performance of the well-known actors who take on the roles of various presidents. It's fun. Much of *The Butler* is quite predictable. It's Hollywood smooth and it hits all the notes of the expected emotional scale. I found the footage from the historical events of the Civil Rights move-



Wadjda is wonderful. A movie from Saudi Arabia, a rarity in itself, tells the story of a 10 year-old girl living in a suburb of Riyadh, the Capital, in an extremely conservative world, in which the religiously sanctioned subservience of women is enforced. Such a world is a mystery and challenge to any who live in cultures in which women have a growing equality with men, are treated with respect and encouraged to become educated and develop their talents. *Wadjda* is fun-loving, clever, high-spirited, entrepreneurial and always pushing the boundaries of what she can get away with. She sees and desires a green bicycle which no 'respectable' girl in Riyadh would even consider riding. Refusing to be crushed or even contained by the restrictive customs and

One critic described it as, "glorious in its brutality, required viewing for all Americans and a vital, universal lesson about man's inhumanity to man. It stands a good chance of being the definitive American film about slavery." I'm not sure I agree.



Chiwetel Ejiofor is superb as Solomon Northrup; it is he, "bewildered, sorely tested, morally towering, whose staggering dignity anchors the film." The slave owners are so deeply enmired in ignorance and privilege that no evil act is beyond them. Solomon Northrup towers over them in every capacity, courage, intelligence, endurance, and the ability to love. If you decide to go, be warned that, it is an uncompromising vision of the Deep South, a visceral glimpse into the wickedness of slavery and racial politics just prior to the Civil War, brilliant and horrible at the same time, perhaps to a fault.

ment, Vietnam War, assassinations of the Kennedys and Martin Luther King and others to be touching. The movie makes clever and effective use of these clips. Many were heard weeping at times. It is *The Butler's* family life which gives the story character and some weight, especially his relationship with his son, an activist in the advancement of civil rights, who is ashamed of his father's work for the white establishment. There is a final scene between them, which, though typically tinged with Hollywood trumpery, nevertheless is a tribute to all who have laboured for the freedom of all people. It's very safe to see this movie; it shouldn't hold any aspirations to being great, but it is nicely entertaining.

rules of her society, she schemes to get the money to purchase the bicycle and, slyly bowing temporarily to the rigidity trying to stifle her, enters the school Koran Recitation competition, hoping to win the prize money. Her mother is at first too distracted and preoccupied with convincing her husband not to take a second wife, to realize what is going on. *Wadjda* is supported and abetted by her friend, Abdullah. Their relationship lends a gem-like beauty to this extraordinary movie, extraordinary in its sweet simplicity, its portrayal of a spirit triumphing over enforced subservience. It leaves the audience with hope, in the face of the stubborn, mean-spirited demeaning of women by religious sanction. The triumph of the human spirit in a 10 year old girl who will not be crushed. See it. It is a small, beautiful gift to all.

Stirring: (noun) the act of moving or putting into motion, activity