

Dates for your diary

June 7th	'Our Greatest Opportunity and Our Greatest Threat - the Church and the New Migration' Talk by Francis Davis at Harmony House
June 20 th	Refugee Week
July 1 st	Day for Life
July 8 th	Sea Sunday
July 20 th -22 nd	National Justice and Peace Conference. 'Called to be Peacemakers'
Sept 9th	Racial Justice Sunday
Oct 17th	'Twinning Project' talk by Father Gerald Gostling
Oct 21st-28th	One World Week
Oct 21st-28th	Interfaith Week of Prayer for Peace

**We warmly welcome contributions for Just Time.
Please post them to Cathedral House or email
cjsr@dioceseofbrentwood.org.**

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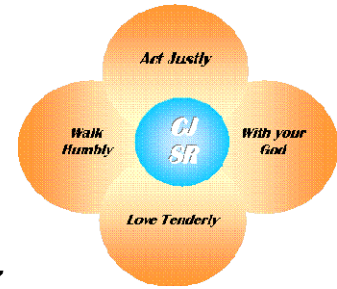
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Just Time

Issue 3 June 2007



In this issue...

Mass at Westminster Cathedral in support of Migrant Workers

Typically, it was a May Bank Holiday and it rained. But this did little to dampen the spirits of the thousands of people who stood side by side in Westminster Cathedral

read Phil Butcher's full report on page 4



One World - One People

This heading fills me with such a conflicting array of emotions, ranging from hope to sheer despair. It encompasses so much in our world that is good but an awful lot that is unjust.

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Global Warming - Today's Challenge

'An Inconvenient Truth', the scientific consensus that global warming is taking place and that humanity is largely responsible; the time to act is NOW.

Can we make a difference? see page 13

"The Very First Music, The Very Last Music"

The very first music that anyone heard Was the song of a bird. (Which of course is absurd — For nobody heard the song of that bird For nobody yet had occurred).

Richard Stilgoe read his poem is on page 10

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Foreword

In April this year, along with a number of pilgrims, I was fortunate enough to visit Assisi. Like many of us, St Francis holds a very special place in our hearts for his care towards not only his fellow man and but also the environment. He understood the human spirit as well as the wonder of the nature all around him.



While walking around the various sites I was intrigued by literally hundreds of artificial white doves, suspended and apparently flying from the church steeples and windows. I discovered that the doves are known as *Peacey – la Colomba della Pace (The Dove of Peace)*. We all understand that the dove is a symbol of peace but here, the message is spreading

across the world from this centre of peace in this corner of Italy. Peacey has begun to spread his message to a number of countries, including for example Darfur, where we truly hope the message will be heard.

No matter who I talk to regarding what really is important to them, from whichever part of the world, the consistent theme is that we all, generally, seek the same things, peace in our hearts and in our homes and a peaceful and more stable world for our children and

eastern Europeans, Roma, Bulgarians, Romanians and Lithuanians.

Another key aspect of our front line service delivery is our children and families project. We work specifically with 5-13 year old refugee and asylum seeker children. For many being the child of a refugee or asylum seeker can force them to grow up way too quickly and some become pseudo carers for their parents, often interpreting and translating complex documents for their carers and parents. The Children and families project seeks to make sure that these children get a chance to act like children, and are as importantly able to access education facilities locally. Our children’s participation forum is popular, and supports a number of arts and craft activities.

And finally, we also have a role to play with smaller refugee and migrant organisations, helping them to develop as self help support groups and provide peer support. We advise on governance structure, fundraising and for those slightly larger on employment matters. Package all of this within the current wave of hostility and prejudice surrounding refugees, asylum seekers and migrants and you can see why we have our work cut out. A small team of eight staff and 14 volunteers at the moment, we are always on the lookout for more volunteers, especially those willing to train as casework advisors for immigration, as well as financial and in kind contributions for our emergency food service.

Working with refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants in the current climate of blatant prejudice and discrimination, and within an environment that is home to 13 elected BNP councillors is a challenge, but it is also a pleasure. A pleasure that can sometimes be an enigma, wrapped inside a puzzle, but the wonder of which resolving allows for a lasting legacy and contributes to making a real difference to individual lives.

For more information about the work of the forum, to make a referral or to find out how you can help, contact Rita Chadha on 0208 478 4513 or email rchadharr@yahoo.co.uk

Rita Chadha

Redbridge Refugee Forum

Diocesan Twinning Project

It is with much sadness that we learnt from Fr Gerald Gostling that the Hospice, at the Duduza Care Centre (which is part of the Maria Ratschitz Mission) was burnt down recently. Four of the seven patients died, together with Sister Anne who tried to rescue them. Two other Sister's were also injured.

Please pray for them, their families and the community.

The Refugee and Migrant Forum of East London

Formerly known as Redbridge Refugee Forum, it is a local charity working across east London. Our remit is simple to help refugees, asylum seekers and migrants settle and integrate in the various communities with East London.

At our most basic level, we provide immigration advice, advocacy and representation, (we are one of only two generic, not for profit advisors, accredited at OISC Level 3 –Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner) within a 50 mile radius of Ilford. We can deal with the simplest of enquires all the way to fighting for clients needs at immigration tribunals.

However we are also well aware that once clients have gained their status, there is still a great deal of work still to be done, most notably with regards to helping them access employment and or benefits. For these people are caught in the bureaucracy of the Immigration and Nationality Directorate, i.e. awaiting status and not yet entitled to access any public funds, we provide weekly emergency rations, and clothes. We are fortunate to be supported in our emergency food service by 11 local churches, and a team of dedicated volunteers, without whom the service would simply not exist. At the time of writing we have over 38 adults and 42 children on the emergency food list. For us the list never seems to shrink, all that changes are the faces. At the moment for example we are seeing a high number of

families. It is interesting to note that birds have no concept of borders and, hopefully, the message of peace will similarly transcend any barriers.

At a recent talk I was introduced to the concept of borders being either “faces”, “fences” or “filters. How we treat people crossing a border, entering a country, can show a true face of what we really feel about them. How we operate a border can also show a great deal about us as a community. Do we build a higher fence to keep everyone out or apply a sensible approach to make sure we do not allow danger in. Whilst this applies to our national borders we are also often drawn into creating our own borders and, sometimes unintentionally, exclude or filter our contact with others. How we welcome people, into our country, into our church and even into our homes can be a direct reflection of how we understand the message of the Gospel (*...for I was a stranger and you welcomed me... Matt. 25:35*). It is often said the “charity begins at home”. If we cannot recognise and welcome the stranger in our midst, how can we hope to connect with and welcome others from across the world? Each time at Mass, when we share a sign of peace with our neighbours we are connected to the whole church and the world as a single and profound desire that the Peace of Christ will be with us all. This one connection with our companions has led to many and lasting changes of heart. Let us all pray that, through the Holy Spirit, this gesture will continue to be a real and meaningful linkage of all peoples across this One World in the peace and knowledge of our One God.

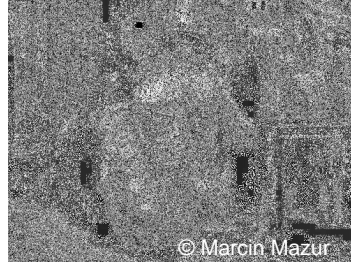


Phil Butcher

Strangers or Friends?

Typically, it was a May Bank Holiday and it rained. But this did little to dampen the spirits of the thousands of people who stood side by side in Westminster Cathedral and then walked to Trafalgar Square. The occasion was to celebrate the contribution that migrant workers and their families make to the British economy and to reinforce the Cardinal's call to regularise their position.

Many of these workers are "irregular" or as the French would say "*sans papiers*". This "regularisation" is not a new idea and since 1981 France, Belgium, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal and Spain have all benefited from a sensible and humane approach to this issue.



Clearly, this is a contentious issue and one in which many myths abound. The facts are that many of these people and their families have been victims of exploitation and live under what amounts to modern day slavery. The programme seeks to regularise those people who fit a strict and controlled criteria. For example if they have been here for four years or more, they will be able to apply for a two year work permit, at the end of which they could be given leave to remain – provided that they have no convictions and good references from employers. During this period they will be unable to claim housing or job seeker benefits. So, anyone seeking to come to Britain for its welfare benefits would have to wait at least 6 years, assuming they were successful.

The Catholic Church is now facing one of its biggest challenges for many years. Many of the workers in this position sit in the pews each Sunday and find haven in the common worship we share as the universal church. At every crossroads there are choices and this is

no exception. We could try to send every undocumented worker back – at enormous cost and probably with limited effect, or we could recognise that these people, often at huge personal cost, have chosen to make their home



ROOM TO SPARE?

Are you able to offer shelter to a stranger who has no home?

Spare Room is seeking to recruit hosts for forced migrants who have no tolerable legal means of support. Hosts are asked to provide room and support for forced migrants for a time limited period. If you are interested in being a host, you will be assessed by experienced workers who will then support you as a host.

All potential guests are assessed and are accepted if they meet Spare Room's criteria. We do not offer hospitality to those who have engaged in or actively supported violence.

Spare Room seeks to match guests with hosts so both are able to live in the same home together in reasonable harmony.

If you would like to be assessed as a host please contact: Spare Room, c/o The Friends Meeting House, Bush Road, Wanstead, London E11 3UA. Tel. 07739 906710

Spare Room Aims are to:

- Provide safe accommodation for non-violent forced migrants who do not have other legal means of obtaining tolerable homes.
- Enable those moved by compassion and a sense of justice to want to provide shelter for forced migrants to do so.
- Enable all members to develop their potential.
- To respect the humanity of all
- To advocate the rights of forced migrants, working with other organisations where appropriate.

to us as she has no permission to be in this country except as the dependent of her husband. She has three small boys and no support or accommodation. We help her find a good solicitor so that she can try and get her papers in order. We cannot provide any accommodation but try to refer her to Social Services because there are three children needing shelter. Eventually they provide bed and breakfast for her for a few days to assess her case.

In the afternoon we go off to Yarlswood Detention Centre to see one of our Clients, KS, who taken there the previous day. Six immigration officers had picked her and her two year old daughter up at 6.00am on the previous day. They had taken her to Becket House and then to Yarlswood Detention Centre. KS is a sick woman from Uganda and was to have had a operation on her kidney that very week. We arrive in Yarlswood and after the formality of forms and searches are allowed to see her. She is traumatised and cannot understand why she is imprisoned and treated as a criminal. She said she had been in this country for seven years and had thought she was going to be allowed to stay. She is very anxious to have the operation as it has taken six years to discover what is really wrong with her kidney. We stayed a couple of hours with her listening and promising to get help from her solicitor and MP.

We leave her feeling depressed and upset by the whole visit but realise that our feelings of helplessness are nothing compared to her trauma and depression.

If you feel you would like to help or support us in any way please don't hesitate to call me at RAMP 020 8221 9200 or at home 020 8472 2859

* The Refugee and Migrant Project (RAMP) is a voluntary organisation offering good services to asylum seekers and refugees in the London Borough of Newham.

** NASS is the National Asylum Seekers Support that provides accommodation and benefit for those claiming asylum. Asylum Seekers are not allowed to work and when /if they are refused Refugee status are destitute and homeless.

Sister Mary Barrow

here and seriously can and want to contribute to the economy.

The campaign has now become a movement. Talk to those around you; ask the difficult questions, doing nothing is no longer an option.

To find out more visit www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk/ or email cjsr@dioceseofbrentwood.org

Phil Butcher

'God it is who sees justice done for the orphan and widow, who loves the stranger and gives him food and clothing. Love the stranger then for you were once strangers in Egypt.'

Deuteronomy 10:18-20

'Remember always to welcome strangers, for by doing this you may be entertaining angels without knowing it.'

Hebrews 13:1-2

'In the Church no one is a stranger and the Church is not foreign to anyone, anywhere.The Church is the place where illegal immigrants are also recognised and welcomed as brothers and sisters.'

Pope John Paul II, 1993 Message for World Immigrants Day

'We are happy that you are here. We are grateful for the vital role that you play in our economy. We want you to play as full a role as possible in the life of our Church. We want our Catholic people to see in you the face of Christ. We want you to be welcomed such that you are strangers no longer. Your work is precious, as your lives are precious. And though you may be far from your homes, we want you to know that here, in the church in London, you have a home.'

Cardinal Cormack Murphy-O'Connor,
Mass in support of Migrant Workers 91 May 2006)

'Migrant Workers are not aliens but assets, not ghosts but guests, let us turn strangers into citizens.'

Austen Iveriegh—
Organiser of the Strangers into Citizens Campaign.
7th May 2007—Trafalgar Square rally

'One World, One People'

This heading fills me with such a conflicting array of emotions, ranging from hope to sheer despair. It encompasses so much in our world that is good but an awful lot that is unjust.

When I came to write this article I thought mainly of the effects of war on people in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Sudan. But, then I began to think of the injustices actually being lived out every day in the UK, which either do not feature at all in the media or, as in the case of refugees and asylum seekers, reporting is factually wrong.

Human Trafficking in the UK – The legal definition of trafficking is the “*forced or coerced movement of a person in order to exploit that person, especially in order to force them to work*”. It includes situations where a man, woman or child is either tricked into leaving their home, or where the victim is simply kidnapped and violently forced to leave. Victims of trafficking often have their documents seized by their traffickers, and are forced to do some kind of labour. This might be agricultural labour, forced domestic labour, industrial work or prostitution. The UK is primarily a destination country for human trafficking. Home Office research, shortly to be published, estimates that the size of the UK market, for human trafficking for sexual exploitation, was up to £275 million in 2003. The research also estimates that in 2003 there were up to 4,000 women in the UK that had been trafficked for sexual exploitation. The good news is that the UK has signed the European Convention Against Trafficking – we now need to urge our Government to ratify the agreement and encourage other Council of Europe States to do likewise.

IRREGULAR MIGRANTS:

“Strangers into Citizens” is a campaign by The Citizens Organising Foundation (COF) who believes the case for “undocumented migrants” who have made new lives in the UK must be regularised by the Government, on humanitarian, economic, fiscal and administrative grounds. They are campaigning for the

A typical day in the life of RAMP *

A load of food arrives from a church that is contributing food each week as part of their Lenten Alms. We all go eagerly to empty the car.

LD arrives first at 9.30. She comes each week to volunteer with us. She has been in this country for about seven years and has refugee status and now is a British Citizen. She knows what a struggle it is to begin here in this country and is happy to be a volunteer with us for a few hours each week while her three children are at school. She is attending a course in child care and hopes eventually to get a job in that field. She organises our food cupboard for us.

TZ arrives early, too, for a food parcel. She is in her sixties and is from Angola. She does not get any support or benefit and sleeps on the floor of someone from her church. She has bronchitis and is quite sick. She asks if I will write again to her MP who is trying to help her. I write the letter for her and sit a chat with her for a while. She goes away with her bag of food.

NM arrives. He is from the Congo. He is very tall and full of nervous energy. He has been here for ten years. He is married with two small boys. He is not allowed to work but is being supported by NASS** but the long wait for a decision from the Home Office has made him very depressed. There is little I can do except listen to him and encourage him to go on hoping. This takes some time but in the end he goes saying, “God bless you” and “thank you for listening to me.”

The phone rings. It is MA. Can she come in to see us? She has been here many years and has her family with her. She is from Somalia. She has full status now and she has set up a group for Somali women in order to help them settle here and use their gifts. She wants to make an appointment to come and see us and show us the constitution that she has written for her group. She is a very impressive lady.

YA arrives. She has been referred to us by another organisation as she is suffering from Domestic Violence. She has decided to leave her husband and find somewhere else to live. She has been referred

In the light of such awareness, it is clear that concern for the Earth is shared by all Christians and members of other Faiths. At a recent event, the Mayor of London stressed the immense difference Faith Communities could make if they strove to be more truly "green". In September there is to be a week-end entitled "Sound of Many Waters" at Clifton Catholic Cathedral to launch "the first Catholicism and the Environment event to be held in the UK." This is seen as an opportunity to re-awaken awareness within the Catholic Church of the sacredness of all creation and to enable "many people from an array of backgrounds (to) come together to explore faith and the natural world".

Behind all the efforts to transform our everyday lives, must needs lie this search for a new understanding of the sacredness of the entire web of creation of which we are a part.

Elizabeth Rendall

LiveSimply

How do we proceed as carers of the earth, then? What do we learn from the Risen Christ of how we exercise our call to be at the service of the planet? What do we learn from the first witnesses to the resurrection of how to live our lives fully and responsibly? Quite simply, we must learn to live simply. By living simply we will do all that our Easter faith demands of us. We will serve our neighbour in the name of love and justice, we will serve our planet in the name of all generations to come, we will serve the Lord in honour of the name God has given us – the name of sons and of daughters. (*Cardinal Keith Patrick O'Brien, Easter Sunday, 8 April 2007*)

Government to implement a one-off "earned amnesty" as part of its overhaul of the UK's immigrant policy. There are between 300,000 and 500,000 irregular migrants in the UK – a combination of refused asylum seekers and visa overstayers. Many of them are here to stay, either because they are afraid to go back, or do not want to go back because they have jobs and livelihoods in the UK. Many use false documents – they pay taxes and contribute to economic growth, or they are asylum seekers prevented from working who are asking for the dignity of being allowed to do so. Please support their campaign by visiting their website www.strangersintocitizens.org.uk

Another obstacle faced by people who are in the UK without proper documentation, concerns those who wish to marry in the Catholic Church. For reasons mentioned above, they are unable to produce the "Certificate of Approval", issued by the Home Office, which gives a Catholic Priest the authority to marry them. I recently spoke to several embassies here to establish their position on this point. I was told that unless these people had the necessary papers from the Home Office, the embassy could do nothing to help them. However, I have since learnt that the Filipino embassy is more sympathetic to this cause and has provided some individuals with the papers necessary to obtain the "Certificate" from the Home Office. It is interesting to note that the Church of England is not bound by this regulation!

The above are just a small dip into the mighty ocean of injustices in our country. It concerns me that I haven't given space to the homeless and those many single parents and families who live below the poverty line, and for whom our Catholic Social Teaching demands that "every human being possesses a basic dignity that comes from God, and by poverty they are excluded from the community and have little freedom".

But I am the eternal optimist and I have to focus on the good work that is going on around us: London Citizen's fighting for the underpaid and succeeding; many "homeless" groups in our diocese (CHESS, in Chelmsford, Emmaus in Colchester and Serving the Homeless in Leigh). The many agencies caring and supporting

refugees (Harmony House, Redbridge Refugee Forum) and, above all our Catholic churches which are so often the one place of safety and love where not only refugees, but many homeless and troubled individuals, will go and find refuge .

Davina Bolt

Acknowledgements: Amnesty International; the Home Office; The Common Good; The Citizen's Organising Foundation

Refugee Week at Harmony House – 2007

Refugee Week is a fairly recent event founded to welcome the large numbers of people who have come to this country seeking a safe haven. In addition Refugee Week aims at celebrating the rich contribution Refugees make to our society. It has now become a national event, which takes place annually in June.

This year the theme for Refugee Week is “a Space of Encounters”. At Harmony House we will reflect this theme through a programme of activities related to those people who have found themselves a new life in Barking and Dagenham.



The official launch of Refugee week is Wednesday 20th June. This will include speakers from the Diocese of Brentwood, The United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the Red Cross, and a dramatic interaction presentation of the theme, “a Space of Encounters”.

As in previous years pupils from local schools play their part with music, song and dance, providing entertainment drawn from various cultures.

This is a special day when we welcome many of our senior citizens who support the work of Harmony House throughout the year. On this occasion too we show our gratitude to those kind people from

Global Warming - Today's Challenge

In a local bookshop window there is Paul Brown's "Global Warning. The Last Chance of Change" (2006). Inside the cover the message is spelt out and it echoes that of Al Gore's "An Inconvenient Truth" (now available on DVD): the scientific consensus that global warming is taking place and that humanity is largely responsible; the time to act is NOW and that, if we do so, then the greatest disasters can yet be averted. In this each of us has a part to play.

It is already clear that it is the poorest nations that will suffer the most devastating effects of this climate change. However, so interdependent is the whole Earth that any change has ripple effects literally on a global scale: witness the flooding likely to be the outcome of the melting of glaciers and the ice mountains in the Arctic and Antarctic. All this is being vividly depicted in the media - almost on a daily basis. Here too we find countless suggestions, information, encouragement to help us transform our homes, our public buildings - including churches, our whole way of living within a limited planet. We know that our children's lives are at stake and that poverty will never be history without dramatic changes everywhere. We must indeed learn to live simply that others may simply live.

Today, attention is focusing not only on the Earth as we know it today in all wondrous diversity but on the whole sweep of cosmic history extending back some 15 billion years. This is a story in which God's "imperishable Spirit is in all things" (Wisdom 12:1) and in which human beings emerged only in the latter stages. As Sean McDonagh SSC in "The Death of Life" (2004) writes : "In the human species the earth and all the cosmos has become aware of itself in the thoughts, feeling and imagination of individual human beings... The challenge facing this generation of humans...is to take decisive action to stave off the extinction of species which could sterilize the planet" and which no future generation could undo. He concludes: "Now the evolutionary future of the planet is quite simply in the hands of this generation."

(In the real street outside no-one dared take a breath)
But he never went out — it was not bright and clean
Like the primary colours he saw on his screen.
The black sky outside let in no glimpse of heaven —
So what? He was hot — he had got level seven!
Who cared that the air was all laden with grot?
The screen said "Mankind — you're a genius — not!"

And the birds tried to sing through the oil on their beaks
But oil, as is well known, is there to stop squeaks
And the very last music
Which nobody heard
Was the song of the very last bird.

© RICHARD STILGOE 1993



You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't save the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking. So that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us, it's in everyone. And as we let our light shine we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear. Our presence automatically liberates others. (*Nelson Mandela, Inaugural speech, 1994*)

surrounding parishes who generously support Harmony House in a variety of ways.

During the course of Refugee Week celebrations there are a series of exhibitions throughout the building all telling the story of Refugees the past and present. The people who use the services of Harmony House will have their own photographic exhibition, together with items of pottery and art. This year we are delighted to put on show the paintings of Barking Arts Society.

Every year we are fortunate to have the support of Council Members, Local MPs and Church Ministers. We are always happy to welcome our friends and neighbours of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham who have shown friendliness and interest towards all that Harmony House stands for.

During the course of the week guests are warmly welcomed to view the exhibitions and to taste some of our multicultural cuisine.

Sister Margaret Gallagher

We pray that all who long for a just world that together we may strive to live simply, sustainably and in solidarity with people who are poor, so human dignity may be respected and everyone may reach their God-given potential. (*CaFOD*)



Love of neighbour, grounded in love of God, is first and foremost a responsibility for each individual member of the faithful, but it is also a responsibility for the entire ecclesial community at every level. (*Deus Caritas Pope Benedict XVI*)

“The Very First Music, The Very Last Music”

The very first music that anyone heard
Was the song of a bird.
(Which of course is absurd —
For nobody heard the song of that bird
For nobody yet had occurred).

But then man came along
And he heard the birds' song
And he got it all wrong.
For he took a bamboo
And he blew, and he blew
And the air went straight through.

So he took a firm grip
And he tightened his lip
And the bamboo let rip
Soon he found that the sound
Could be ordered around
If he made his lip tighter
The note grew in height —
If he made a few holes
He could play barcarolles
Pretty preludes as well —
Any tune you could want
Like Moonlight in Vermont
Or the Liberty Bell.

So the very next music was played on his flute —
It was nice. It was cute.
So he then followed suit
With the brass and the strings
And more intricate things.
And the music that followed
Was innocent, free,
And chirpy and cheerful
And mostly in C.

Man got clever — his hand
Tired of working the land —
He learned how to make steam
And he started to dream
Of beam engines and schemes
Where he dammed all the streams,
Bent the world to his will.
And he built the first mill —
It belched smoke and power —
(Black dirt and white flour)
And his ambition grew every hour.

He picked up the world and he ground it to powder
And so the next music was grander and louder,
More capable, complex — less folksy and pretty
With less of the countryside, more of the city.
With more of the metal and less of the wood
Man thought the next music was pretty damn' good.

He dug the world's coal, and he set it on fire.
He drilled the world's oil and the fire burned higher.
He muddied the clouds and he crudded the ground
And he studded the sea with the blackened and drowned.

He fashioned the train, and created the car,
The tractor, the toaster, the home whirlpool spa,
And this genius, at last, in a final crescendo
Gave civilisation the Super Nintendo.

Now Mario's were super, and hedgehogs were sonic
And bleepers and bloopers sang songs electronic
Their drumkits went pish and their pixels went pip
For the very next music was sung by a chip.

Outside the sea blackened, and all nature died
But man didn't care — he was safely inside.
Day in and day out ev'ry day he would bend o-
Ver Gameboy, Sega and the faithful Nintendo.
He spun, flew and kicked each street fighter to death.