

## **ABC Radio Adelaide**

### **Evenings with Peter Goers, Monday 29 March 2021**

Goers

Let's talk about immigration with Dr David Evans. Welcome, David.

Evans

Thank you.

Goers

I have known you and your wife, Topsy, of course, with your work at the Quaker shop, and you are Quakers.

Evans

That's right.

Goers

What does that mean to you? What does being a Quaker mean to your life, David?

Evans

Well, let me tell you that I was drafted by the commonwealth government to Hobart and we looked for a place to send our children to school and we sent them to The Friends' School.

Goers

It's a very famous school, The Friends' School.

Evans

A very famous school, and it worked out well. What we really liked was the community of Quakers down there, so we decided we would join. That was about 1970.

Goers

The Quakers have a wonderful social conscience and sense of social justice, always have. The Quakers stand for peace, and through the efforts of that shop, a vast amount of money—hundreds of thousands of dollars—has been made over more than 50 years now, which has been sent all round the world, helping people, hasn't it?

Evans

That's right.

Goers

You were working in public health too in Hobart?

Evans

I was a pathologist and, as an extra, I did sexual health medicine, so I belonged to two colleges.

Goers

And you were working at the time of the AIDS crisis.

Evans

I was the chairman of the HIV AIDS committee in Tasmania.

Goers

We've forgotten a lot about that plague, haven't we?

Evans

Yes.

Goers

There's been a marvellous television show, on Netflix, I think, called *It's a Sin*, which has reminded us of a lot of the issues that people went through at that time. It was a terrible time for a lot of people, wasn't it, David?

Evans

Yes, but do you know what's so relevant now? The origin of the AIDS virus was a long, long story that went from this theory to that theory to this theory to that theory, and we should review it, because it would have applications for the COVID.

Goers

Sure. Now, your interest at the moment is immigration and refugees.

Evans

My prime interest is global refugees, but I got involved in the local issue and wrote to the Prime Minister of New Zealand, who passed it on to the immigration minister, who ignored my question and wrote back saying they were affirming their offer. I felt it was just right to try and take this up any way I could.

Goers

This is if people are coming by boat to Australia?

Evans

No.

Goers

Explain what the issue is, please.

Evans

So people who are here, those in detention now.

Goers

I see, who might go to New Zealand. New Zealand is offering to take them—

Evans  
Yes.

Goers  
—but Australia won't let them go to New Zealand.

Evans  
Yes. Can I read you something from Peter Dutton today that came to my attention?

Goers  
Yes, sure.

Evans  
'Transitory persons are encouraged to engage in third country resettlement options and take steps to start the next phase of their lives.' Do you know what's missing? Enterprise from the refugees. I sketched out, a refugee might write to UNESCO or New Zealand and say, 'I wish to accept a place in New Zealand. Please advise me on the necessary procedure.' That's just never talked about.

Goers  
So they can, from detention centres here.

Evans  
Peter Dutton has said they are encouraged to engage in third country resettlement options.

Goers  
But New Zealand has taken a lot of our refugees, hasn't it?

Evans  
Of our refugees?

Goers  
Yes, they have been disallowed. Remember the Tampa? New Zealand stepped in and took quite a few refugees that we wouldn't take from the Tampa. Similarly, they have taken refugees from Nauru that we didn't want, and so forth. If New Zealand is willing to take them, why shouldn't they go?

Evans  
Well, the minister has affirmed they are willing to take 150 a year.

Goers  
Of the refugees that we have in detention?

Evans  
Well, the ones that are suitably screened by UNHCR and have no reason why they shouldn't.

Goers

Will Australia not send them?

Evans

Yes. Here's another thing, from: 'Australia appreciates the offer from the New Zealand government to resettle refugees under regional processing arrangements. However, we remain focused on maximising opportunities under the much larger resettlement arrangement with the US.' This is a way of saying no, ever since 2013, continuing the no from 2013.

Goers

You've had a response from the minister for immigration, population, cities, urban infrastructure, citizenship, migrant services and multicultural affairs—he's got a lot on his plate—Alan Tudge, and he has reaffirmed the government's position: 'Australia's border protection policies are clear. No individual who seeks to enter Australia illegally by boat will be permanently resettled in Australia.' Are they illegal?

Evans

Well, that's beyond my expertise. I think working out the best options for people in detention should accept the government's pledge at the moment not to take more boat people, but if you want me to enlarge on that, Indonesia has got the examples. There were 300 Rohingya refugees on a boat not allowed to land anywhere, and Indonesia took them. Indonesia has 11 refugee camps, and this is what I'm so keen on. I mentioned Cisarua Learning and it's a wonderful enterprise, getting people, developing their education.

Goers

Sierra Leone?

Evans

Cisarua

Goers

Where's that?

Evans

Near the capital.

Goers

Oh, in Indonesia?

Evans

Cisarua Learning is the prime example, but there are 11 other camps. These people are allowed to merge with locals, but they don't have citizens' rights.

Goers

Now. They will eventually get them.

Evans

Well, when they marry and children are born and that sort of thing.

Goers

What other countries are doing this, and what other countries could use refugees?

Evans

That's the point. I wrote—this is a year I've been going at this. I first wrote to South Australian senators. I didn't want to go to just one MP or whatever, so I wrote to them, talking about a global workforce and functional countries. I see it as a wonderful source of workers around the world.

Goers

Do you get responses from the senators?

Evans

Ah, two or three did. Birmingham—I had an interview with him.

Goers

Who, David?

Evans

Sorry?

Goers

Who did you have an interview with?

Evans

Birmingham.

Goers

You were on Q and A?

Evans

I was on Q and A with what's-his-name. Steve Georganas organised it.

Goers

Georganas, yes.

Evans

It was Q and A, with a Labor MP.

Goers

We invited Steve to come on tonight, but he's not available. Similarly, we asked James Stevens, the Liberal member for Sturt, who did not respond to our invitation.

Evans  
Okay.

Goers  
Are you hopeful, David?

Evans  
I got another email today from the Council of Churches, and they are doing all the right things. They have a lovely taskforce working at all the things I'm working at, except I am putting up what I think is a new idea. I am writing to Quakers, can you get somebody from every electorate to send an email and respond to it or go and see them and say, 'Will you support New Zealand being one of the options that our people in detention could use?'

Goers  
Well, it seems easy. If New Zealand will accept people in detention, why aren't they sent? We are fond of sending New Zealand miscreants back to New Zealand, much to the horror of the New Zealanders, people who have been here forever, who may be New Zealand born. If they commit a crime, we are sending them back.

Evans  
There's one other thing I must mention. I noticed a couple of years ago that an employer in Sydney, a successful tradesman, hired directly from refugee camps in Syria refugees, and the government—minister Tudge—has agreed to a pilot survey of 100 people to come in that way, direct recruiting from refugee camps. When I went to my local state MP, David Pisoni, he said, 'Find me the employer.' Now, that's a bit of a problem. There is a worldwide scheme of putting employees and refugees together. Talent beyond Borders it's called.

Goers  
Talent beyond Borders. I didn't know. That's very interesting, isn't it? And then that creates—because people are going to a job then.

Evans  
That's right, yes. That's the way these people came. They were hired from overseas in refugee camps.

Goers  
What motivates this work for you, Dr David Evans?

Evans  
For me? Well, I like to philosophise a bit. In 2015, my old friend Robert Douglas is the shaker mover of the organisation called Australia 21. Have you heard of it?

Goers  
No.

Evans

They take up social issues. They get the experts from wherever they can and put together a book on each social issue. I love this story; pardon me if it sounds like bragging. They did one on refugees. Then I wrote down my thoughts, and Bob said, 'I like this,' and he put it in the next publication.

Goers

Good.

Evans

This is the idea of functional countries, that the identity of everybody has to be recognised, by UN, through UNHCR. If they've got an identity they can get a work visa.

Goers

You're having a go as a citizen and a man with an understanding of social justice.

Evans

Yes. I did a PhD in humanities in retirement on romance tragedy in India and Nepal, which is free on the net.

Goers

Yes, I saw the title. It's called, 'Romance tragedy of "Romeo and Juliet" style: a study in qualitative research with special focus on India and Nepal in the time period 1993-2013'.

Evans

What happened, in 1993, I read in *The Guardian*, I think it was, of a man who hanged his son in public in an Indian village because of marrying. It was in 1993 when these came to world attention. I had a wonderful research assistant in India, a senior bureaucrat there, and he would give me the daily cuttings of the cases, and I put together this collection of stories and tried to take what morals I could out of it. It led to community responses in India, which are continuing, so they have safe houses for eloping couples.

Goers

Good.

Evans

I was delighted the other day to be put in contact with an author in Malaysia who is talking about eloping couples and their problems.

Goers

Dr David Evans is my guest here. You worked in Nepal and East Timor.

Evans

For short periods.

Goers  
As a pathologist?

Evans  
Yes.

Goers  
What was it like?

Evans  
I just loved the different culture. The sewage is awful, a lot of things are awful, but I just love different cultures.

Goers  
I love the Quakers. I'd be a Quaker, except the Quakers are not big on personal adornment, are they?

Evans  
They don't object.

Goers  
They're not the showiest people, the Quakers, but I have enormous admiration for the Quakers. David, thank you for your thoughts, and I wish you well with your campaign. You're doing what citizens should do. All the best to you and Topsy. Thank you.