

# Rebuilders: How realism is changing culture and politics

19 September 2023

**Liddy**

Today on Rebuilders, we cover a lot of ground.

**Liddy**

In Rebuilders today, we are exploring a new Polarisation as we move out of Grey Zone into a new era.

**Mark**

Yeah. From left to right to something new. And many people, I think, listening to this will see a number of things that they recognise but haven't named. And so I'm excited. I think this is painting the picture of, I think, some of the new trends, the shape of the new era that's emerging. Plus, also, we dig deep into an issue. Not deep, but we do mention an issue that almost tore the Rebuilders team apart. But to hear that, you're going to have to listen.

**Liddy**

Let's get into it. Welcome to rebuilders. My name's Liddy and I'm here with Mark and Daniel. I was about to say Daniel and Mark and then I was like that felt wrong.

**Daniel**

Yes. Hello. Present. We're back.

**Liddy**

We are.

**Mark**

We're back. Yeah.

**Liddy**

How are you both going?

**Mark**

Good. How long has it been?

**Liddy**

Like, over a month.

**Daniel**

It was a month and a half, I think it was like first week of August. We did an episode.



**Liddy**

Yeah.

**Mark**

Wow.

**Liddy**

Well, thanks for your patience with us listeners, but it is good to be back. You know what else is good? The amount of sunshine we're experiencing at the moment, it's pretty glorious.

**Daniel**

Yeah, it is interesting, though, you're seeing our American friends Instagramming, the changing weather.

**Mark**

All you Northern Hemisphere people. We've been watching your Instagram during this summer and you're putting up pictures of your holiday in the sun and you are triggering us. But now the tables are I mean, it's all global warming, but yeah, except were you saying before it's, like 34 yeah, 34 centigrade Celsius in Sydney, which is 93 Fahrenheit, which is ridiculous for this time of year.

**Daniel**

Yeah. Crazy. Yeah.

**Liddy**

Well, I'm glad we've caught up on the weather. I mean, I brought it up.

**Daniel**

We're Australian.

**Mark**

Can I just bring something up? Because people may be wondering why we haven't been around and there's lots of things we've been busy. There's been a conference we've run as a church, but I think they're already covers for a big issue that really emerged over the last little while, which we've worked through. And we're back together, but we were eating at a Korean restaurant about a month ago and I was sitting across from both of you and in the midst of conversation, it was revealed that Daniel has not washed his hair since 2018. It rocked us. It rocked us. There has been much mediation counselling, a lot of shampoo bought, and we're back. So thanks for everyone who was sending in messages of encouragement during this time of great difficulty.

**Daniel**

All right, I need to just clarify, I do wash my hair, but it's probably about twice a year.



**Mark**

With shampoo.

**Daniel**

With shampoo. That is I wash it every other day.

**Liddy**

With water passes over it.

**Daniel**

Correct.

**Liddy**

Yeah.

**Mark**

Yes. And it's clean, is it? The water is sorry, we're not there yet. Bring back the mediators. We're not there yet.

**Daniel**

I will say after that, after that intervention, or whatever that Korean restaurant experience was, I did go home and wash my hair.

**Mark**

Did you? Good.

**Liddy**

Wow. Peer pressure.

**Mark**

Have you booked in in 2024, in August, for your next hair wash?

**Daniel**

I still have the same shampoo from, like, when I first moved into our house six years ago.

**Mark**

That's not something to be proud of. My goodness.

**Liddy**

And what it's like one of those travel wow. Oh, I had forgotten about that. He's thinking about it most evenings.

**Mark**

Yeah.



**Liddy**

Good. What a time. What a time. But we're back. Daniel's hair is slightly cleaner and we've got a bit to talk about. Obviously, after just over a month off, there's a whole bunch of stuff that's been going on in your mind that you're ready to talk about. So we have been talking about moving out of Grey Zone and into a new era. And part of what we'll focus on today is this new level of polarisation or a new type of polarisation that we're experiencing.

**Mark**

Yes. So it's a journey from the old polarisation to a new polarisation. So I'm not proclaiming the polarisation is over, it's just taking a different form. And maybe as we dig deeper into this episode, we'll realise that actually, that new form has actually been an old form and we've misread it.

**Liddy**

Okay, interesting. Well, where would you like to start?

**Mark**

Okay, so the big argument that I'd like to make is that actually we're moving from a left right polarisation is how we tend to think about polarisation. And very much polarisation has been something that has very much defined American politics, but because of Americans influence in the world has spread out across the global digital sphere, influencing not just the digital space, but also the everyday space, political space, social space, cultural space. But it's really interesting. In the last sort of few weeks, in between the many mediation sessions, I was reading political scientist Michael Lind's book, *The New Class War*, and he makes a really interesting argument, which I'm going to sort of bounce off a few different other theories, but he says, basically that the primary division. We misread it. The primary division. And polarisation in culture is not between left and right, but actually between what he sort of calls an overclass and an underclass. That is actually the primary division in culture. And basically he argues that many people misread that.

**Liddy**

Okay, well, perhaps it would be helpful to understand the nuances of what overclass and underclass is.

**Mark**

So basically, what he says is that you see there is a particular overclass in the west, and I would even say parts of the developed world, and that overclass is very much defined by those who have university education. They tend to think very differently about particular issues that if you even look at how our cities are increasingly sort of structured, often people who have high influence, will live in particular kinds of neighbourhoods, often very close to the urban core. I know it's a bit different in America, but I think if you look at Europe or Australia or New Zealand, you have sort of in an urban elite class who tends to have a lot of social capital, there are often people who tend to have more



money and more social influence. And then you have often on the outskirts, in the Exurbs or in the outer suburbs, you have people who often are more likely to be involved in industries which are more around manufacturing production. They're less likely to have a university education. So in some ways it's a little bit like the old working class white collar, blue collar thing. But actually I think there's a little bit of difference which may sort of come out as we sort of talk. And it's been really interesting because class, which is really what this discussion is about, is one of the great, isms that no one talks about when it comes to prejudice. And I think there's a reason for that that'll become apparent as we sort of move through this. But he argues that actually that sort of class dynamic between that sort of overclass and underclass is really something that drives now many people listening will think, well, I'm definitely not part of the overclass. And probably with Lynn's sort of argument, probably many rebuilders listeners would be more likely to be in the overclass than the underclass. To dig into this, we sort of have to go back a little bit in history and we have to go back to a period which very much changed this understanding of, I guess of class. So if you go back before in the sort of industrial revolution right up into the 20th century, you very much had so much of what's seen as the social engine was the battle between working class people and sort of the upper class people. And this was because the economy moved very much to an industrial base and there was a huge amount of manufacturing in the so, you know, Labour like if you think of the Labour Parties parties like the Labour Party. In Britain, the Labour party in Australia, the Labour party in New Zealand, the democrat party in the United States were very much parties of working labour unions. Organisation came together and that was a lot of people talked about class. But then we sort of got to that period, which we talk about a lot on this podcast of the fall of the Soviet Union and that sort of Cold War dynamic, which had driven as well as sort of the end of manufacturing in the west. As globalisation took off, a lot of manufacturing was offshored to countries like China. And so in a sense, you had a lot of decimation of the industrial working class in the west and a lot of that sort know, went overseas and you had this moment. Know John Mearsheimer, who's the sort of realist international relations thinker, would say that we entered into a period of what he calls liberal hegemony. So when you are dealing in a Cold War situation, your foreign policy has to be what he would call realist. Like you've got to deal with the world as it really is, but all of a sudden you have this moment where the west, liberal democratic west, seems to have triumphed over the communist world and all of a sudden you have a unipolar moment. What that means is you have one country ruling the world and that's America. So because America is not got a sort of power competition with other countries, it becomes hugely idealistic. And so you have this idea that then it has this crusade that it goes on almost like a missionary endeavour to export democracy and ideas of human rights and liberalism to other countries. And famously we see this in the Middle East and George Bush sort of trumpeting sort of like wars in Iraq, wars in Afghanistan as needing to be parts of the war on terror, but also needing to be parts of spreading this sort of gospel of liberal democracy across the world. And this sort of expands into multiple things. This is not just on the right. You'd argue that the Republicans on the



right who are sort of pursuing that it would be more on the right, but you also see it on the left. You see an expansion around human rights, of issues, around equity and equality and inclusion, become very normative in society. And we sort of almost moved from liberalism to almost this hyper liberal moment. So this has very much defined the last 30 years. And what you have is you have an overclass which came of age in that period. So they're defined by this unipolar moment, they're defined by liberal hegemony. And what liberal hegemony means is that hegemony is the dominant force in the world, the sort of dominant ideology is one which is around liberalism, the rights of the individual, the rights of human rights and of democracy and equality and fairness and so on. But what's happening is that what's happened, I think really since 2016, part of the change that happened in the world is that the world is moving away from that unipolar moment and things are shifting. And so very much when you had the unipolar liberal hegemony moment, what you had was liberalism going forward. And that was happening internally in places like America and Australia or many countries around the world. And really the great argument was about polarisation within cultures because it was how far are we going to take liberalism? And conservatism was putting the brakes on, but we are shifting and a number of things have changed and it'd be good to talk about this, but just before we get into how this has changed, I just want to just define how Lind would say that we're in this sort of overclass versus underclass moment. Now, what he says is interesting, and this is really fascinating, because people would be hearing this and going, yeah, but there's still lots of left and right battles, there seems to be lots of polarisation happening. So Lind would actually argue that the overclass has its own left centre right spectrum and the underclass has its own left centre right spectrum.

**Liddy**

Yeah, that makes sense.

**Mark**

So he says this one way to understand these results is to recognise that in the United States and similar Western democracies, there are two political spectrums. One for college educated, managerial, professional overclass minority, and one for the non college educated, working class majority of all races. So it's another point that he makes there, that the overclass is a minority, which is really, really interesting. And he also makes this point, which is fascinating. He says the overclass tends to be left. I'll actually just write read the quote. Put another way, the centre of gravity of the overclass is centre right pro market on economic issues and centre left antitraditional on social issues. In comparison, the centre of gravity of the much larger working class is centre left on economic issues and centre right on social issues. So you still have these left right things going on, but actually what you have is them happening in these spectrums. And almost you've got these two classes who aren't talking to each other.

**Liddy**



Yeah.

**Mark**

So he would argue, say, in the American overclass, you'd have someone like Bush, you know, who would be on the right, and he still has influence. Obama would be on the left. But what's fascinating is you've seen how they've become like buddies, because Lind would argue they have more in common with each other than they do with the underclass.

**Liddy**

If that makes yeah, so something you mentioned earlier was that likely the majority of our listeners would be considered in the overclass. How do we kind of grapple with that and see ourselves within that as we're kind of navigating this conversation?

**Mark**

Yeah, I could be wrong. So that's just me guessing. I think one of the fascinating things is that what marks the particular overclass at the moment, because it's come of age in that 30 years of equality and inclusion and diversity and all these values, is that means that it doesn't like to think of itself being in the overclass. Whereas if you went to the 19th century, the Gilded Age, that people understood that they were very different from working class people and they distanced from them and they would sort of look down on them and you could imagine yourself riding through a carriage in 19th century London. It's very clear that you're above the majority people on the street. So one of the ways that I think that this world has been shaped is and this is why I think people struggle to see this, but we'll get to a point in a second is I think it's beginning to change. So there may be some people here in the overclass who are being pushed into the underclass. We'll get to that in a second. But I think one of the things that marks particular elites at the moment is that they don't see themselves as being elites, because that seems to go against the very liberal hegemonic values that they had of human rights. This sort of analysis is quite provocative for people.

**Liddy**

Sure.

**Mark**

It's interesting too, because what's happening this means that in this new polarisation, issues will come across, and they may be issues which are distinctive in of themselves and really important into themselves, but they're fed into this battleground between this new polarisation and they're polarised in that way. So an example we have in our country at the moment is we have a referendum coming up, which is basically where everyone in Australia has to vote on a particular change to our constitution, which would recognise indigenous Australians and give them a particular voice to Parliament, an advisory voice on particular issues. And so this has been floated for some time, but it's



been notable to see how as the election campaign campaigning and what is it on? The vote is on the 15th or 16th? 14th.

### **Liddy**

25 days away, I believe.

### **Mark**

25 days away, actually, on the day of our national the second day, yeah, second day of a national conference for 24/7 for 24/7 prayer Australia. And in Australia, voting is compulsory, so everyone has to vote. So what's happened is, and look, you've had this issue all of a sudden, people sort of been talking about it, but as the campaign's begun, you can see how it's been polarised. And even when you look at a lot of the data around it, very much that the polarisation of this sort of overclass underclass. So the majority of indigenous Australians support the voice, is what the data is telling us. But then you get outside of indigenous Australians, it's very much become an overclass, underclass issue, and particularly against the background of cost of living. So you see this as well. In New Zealand we talked about several episodes ago, the sort of fall of Jacinda Arden's prime ministership and Chippy Hipkins, his nickname came in and was almost apologetic. So the Labour leader was almost apologetic to New Zealand, basically saying, we went too fast. Really interesting. I'm just going to read some quotes from Canada and I've forgotten which paper this was in, but I can tell you in a second. No, I won't. I think it was in a Toronto paper, I can't remember which one. But basically it talked about how Justin Trudeau, who very much would embody the sort of liberal hegemonic sort of overclass values, he swept, sort of won in 2015 election victory, had a lot of millennials vote for him. They said this younger people who were key to Trudeau's 2015 election victory have now broken for the Conservatives at rates that have not been seen since the 1980s. A new Abacus Data survey found that Millennials were nearly twice as likely to vote Conservative as Liberal. Really interesting, because that's not how it's seen. And the Tories, which is the Conservative Party, even led among younger Generation Z or Generation Z, Canadians aged 18 to 27 favoured the Conservatives at a rate of 32% against the 24% for the Liberals. So something has profoundly shifted since 2015. Really, really fascinating. And what you're seeing is this dynamic playing out. So even these people who perhaps you would have thought that the classic story that I guess the Liberal West tells about itself is that as people get older, they're inevitably going to get progressive. And as time pass, we'll all end up progressive. But something very different is happening here. Let me read on from this paper from Toronto. Was it the National Post? National post. Yeah. There you go. Well, fact checked, the reason for the shift is pretty simple. Canadians are getting pummeling by unaffordable housing and rising cost of living, and they trust the Conservatives to solve this more than the Liberal incumbents. And the Abacus Data poll found that the rising cost of living was by far the number one issue for Canadians under 40. Now, I found this bit really fascinating. Environment and climate change. Top millennial issues when the Liberals took office in 2015 are now rapidly receding into the background. Just 23%





of millennials name climate change as one of the top three political issues, the lowest result among any age demographic. So certain issues which were seen, what, 80 years ago as the top issues, are no longer seen as the top issues. Because all of a sudden, we're moving from an age of high idealism in the unipolar moment. And I think you could argue that the unipolar moment takes a fatal blow in 2016, or the idealistic Liberal Hegemonic moment. And actually what's happening now is that we're moving from an idealistic world into a much more realistic world. In an idealistic world, you act as how you want things to be. That's what politically, corporate campaigns, all of that, we're now moving into a world where you act as the world is, which is realism. Now, not everyone has caught up with this. We're in a significant change moment. What this does is that the overclass is struggling with three things. So, sadly, full disclosure, I think the voice is I'm pro voice in recognition of indigenous voice to Parliament. That's my particular personal opinion. But what you can see is that this issue now is being placed in this spectrum, in this battle, which is really about a larger battle that's happening across the world as things are being seen, as they become issues or banners for, in a sense, underclass protest. So there's tremendous frustration in the underclass that issues around. So for the voice. You're hearing protests like, well, why are we talking about this and changing the constitution when I can't even pay my bills?

**Liddy**

Sure.

**Mark**

So this is the tension that these issues in multiple countries are experiencing at the same time. So this is where populism comes from, so populism makes more sense. So one of the stories almost told about Populism in this sort of moment is things were going fine and we had lovely centrists and the world was sort of like, good. And then all of a sudden it was Russia or it was the Internet or something happened, and all of a sudden things just went crazy in 2016. How on earth did that happen? Yeah, what I like about, I think, this analysis is that actually it has a much longer story. And this is where we connect with the story of neoliberalism.

**Liddy**

Sure.

**Mark**

As we've been telling that a real project begins in the 1980s and takes real, ascendancies at the beginning of the 1990s, of globalisation, which was moving large amounts of working class jobs offshore and getting China to build lots of things for us at a cheap price. All of a sudden, that's done two things, so it's created increased disenfranchisement amongst working class people. Secondly, we borrowed lots of money to do this because we were in what the former head of the bank of England, Mervyn King, called the Nice era. No interest rates, continual expansion, that's now over. With the



return of interest rates rising, we have a more realistic economy versus an idealistic economy. And China, which was tried to be brought into the sort of economic order of the west, or the economic order driven by the west, has all of a sudden, what that's done is enabled it to become a peer competitor to the United States. So the United States is no longer in a unipolar moment. It's now in a multipolar moment. And you have powers like China as its main peer competitor. But then, you know, all of these different countries, india out there is that this world is disappearing and things are changing. So this has created resentment. And so what you have is you have populist figures who understand that the underclass is a very potent voting bloc, because the underclass don't necessarily have cultural power per se, but they have voting power in democracies. Yes. And so they see increasingly and Michael Moore did a video, the filmmaker, just before the 2016 election. He was one of the few people who thought that Trump will get in because he said people live in this world where, in a sense, the overclass are determining the sort of cultural landscape. And as soon as you get in that voting booth where no one can see what you're voting, that's your moment to protest. And so figures and it's interesting, a lot of the populist figures are actually from the overclass. Donald Trump is a billionaire property owner, someone like, you know, in Britain who's behind the Brexit campaign. These are people who are from the overclass. There are some populist figures who come from the underclass, but often what they try and do is they see that the underclass is a political block that they're able to get votes from and use that. So there is this element that there is this tremendous internal pressure on the overclass. I can talk about that in a second. So the overclass is finding itself at a real moment of crisis. But I'll just pause if you've got any reflections or questions.

**Liddy**

I guess not entirely sure how to articulate this question, but thinking the way that you were talking about the underclass just then sounded like, and forgive me if I'm wrong sounded like it was okay, first you talked about it being sort of left. There's a left and right to both the underclass and the overclass. By the way. You were just talking about the underclass, then suggested that collectively, the underclass, in the case of voting, vote similarly. But that doesn't necessarily take into account that left and right.

**Mark**

Yes, great question.

**Liddy**

Sway so what's going on there?

**Mark**

One thing I found fascinating, which was not well explained, is the two classic election examples of the protest that happened in 2016 is Brexit and the US election, which elected Donald Trump. Very few people explained why many people who voted for Obama then voted for Trump, and why many



who were voting for Bernie Sanders. And when Bernie Sanders, who's probably the furthest left candidate when he didn't get in, a number of those people switched to Trump. Very few people explained that. Very few people explained why Brexit, which was seen as a right wing issue, was voted for by numerous people who were traditional Labour voters. So what's going on there? So I think what your question is getting at is, and Lynn makes the point that the underclass is not trying to build anything, it's trying to protest. It's a counterculture. The overclass is an institutional culture. It has taken control of various institutions and it's changing them to its moral vision. But at the same time, there's less of a desire to actually build something as there is to tear something down, because there's a tremendous frustration and resentment. It's more resentment driven. And that resentment is uniting people.

### **Liddy**

Yes. Okay.

### **Mark**

So the Canadian data, I think, is what's going on there. So one of the great pressures that's coming on the overclass is that during the period of low interest rates and quantity of easing printing of money, you could just continually do big projects. You could fund things right. And the economy was kept at this level where you could buy cheap stuff. There's the famous article I think we've referenced on here before, the Derek Thompson article in The Atlantic called The Millennial Life Subsidy, that, yeah, you could live in San Francisco and interest rates were low and Uber was cheap and your peloton you could hire and blah, blah, blah. All of that's coming to an end because interest rates have risen and that's affecting everything from homeownership rentals to even stuff like Uber is going up. And so all of a sudden, economic pressures are returning people to normal. So Peter Turchen wrote another book, which has got another interesting angle on he wrote a book, he's just got a new book out, but this is part of his theories. He's written a new book. End Times Elites, counter Elites and the Path of Political Disintegration. And he looks at, historically, this trend. He says this trend is not just something which is happening now, something very similar. He's got some differences with Lind, but I think they're hitting at the same thing, that basically what you have is you have elites come in and there's inevitably a point where the elites shift things in their favour to where income inequality grows. And as soon as income inequality grows, that's when you're in trouble. So, for example, in Australia, five, six, eight years ago, a lot of Australia is a wealthy country and we have a lot of benefits and we have a capitalist economy alongside a very strong safety net. So you get the best of both worlds. And eight, nine years ago, it wasn't shocking for Australians, even middle and lower class, to go on a holiday overseas regularly. Now, I was on the train the other day and I overheard two young women, probably in their early 20s, late teens, early 20s, high school finishes, and they were saying, I can't go see, it's just too expensive now. Like, I can't afford my friends are going to want to go. We can't afford to do it anymore. I was sitting across another couple of girls a little while later in a cafe. They looked



the same as these girls, yet these were planning their European holiday. These two girls still, all of a sudden, that opens up a gap between those two groups of people that wasn't there previous. So fault lines and fractures that were not there when income inequality wasn't as expansive, and some of the things that are papered over income inequality wasn't there, that those fractures become keener. We're even seeing here in Melbourne that people just presumed in the past that if you could move into one of our cooler neighbourhoods and you sort of do that and maybe get a dingier place, we're seeing people can't afford that now and ending up in neighbourhoods that aren't cool because that's all they can afford. And so all of a sudden, this starts to create divide. So one of the great things that the overclass has to deal with is when there is income equality, there's greater resentment and it changes the dynamic and it creates resentment.

### **Liddy**

So would it be fair to say that in very simplistic terms, the overclass kind of hold an idealistic view of the world or espouse ideals. That we can all live up to because they have the benefit of financial power, perhaps, and can set a cultural agenda, whereas the underclass don't have that same power. So they live more in the realistic space. They are affected and are going to be impacted by the nature of the reality that's going on, not necessarily the ideals and cultural ideology at the yes.

### **Mark**

And so what I've just talked about there is the internal pressures that are coming on this system, particularly against the upper class, the overclass. But also what is happening is and look, this goes back to continual themes in this theory of complexity and systems that these countries, whether you're in Canada, New Zealand, whatever, they're not existing in isolation. That we live in a complex world and pardon me, it's a connected world. And so you have these external pressures. So just overnight, story broke in Canada that a Sikh dissident, who is a proponent of the Sikh separate state, Khalistan, so there's a Sikh minority, they live in the Punjab region of India, borders Pakistan, and they want their own state, a Sikh state. And there's protest movements, there's been protest movements here in Melbourne and Canada has one of the largest Sikh populations outside of India, and a dissident was killed and the Canadian government had come out and they've made hints that possibly the Indian intelligence services executed someone. I think it was it in Ontario, I can't remember where it was now. What's going to happen to not so much the US. The US is a big beast, but for countries like Australia, New Zealand, Canada, European countries, Scandinavian countries, even countries like Germany, Great Britain, all of a sudden you now have in the world the peer competitors to America who are really big. So China, India is really big. If this isn't true, and it's alleged, we don't know if India now feels because of its own and we've talked about civilizational states before, it's got a Hindu nationalist civilizational state template that is playing in the world. If India feels that it can now kill someone on Canadian soil, it does not respect Canadian sovereignty that much. And there's even talk that we've had people killed in Australia by foreign security services. What happens to the liberal



hegemonized states, particularly the Western ones, that are not America, when all of a sudden they're not the big boys? And you've got countries like China, India, Russia, even Poland is getting more and more powerful that creates this imbalance, where so much of the liberal Hegemony thing is based on hegemonic hegemony that you're in control when you're not in control and you're not the biggest in the world. And you've got far bigger countries that previously you thought of as developing but are now bigger than you and have more influence. That's a really interesting dynamic that you're going to struggle with going forward in the future. The second thing too is so much of the overclasses legitimacy is based on how you manage. We learned through neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is the science of management. So much of it managing the economy, managing the free markets, and we've seen multiple crises come across our sort of dashboard from COVID the environment, economic crises. And so for that sort of overclass who still have the value of liberal hegemony, how do you do that when you're facing a world of complexity and cascading crises is rocking their legitimacy? So COVID's rocked the legitimacy, the economic, global financial crisis rocked legitimacy. And this is why you see things. So in Australia at the moment, we've got a bill that's possibly coming before us, a misinformation bill, where the Australian government wants to define certain things. And some of this come out of COVID and other sort of things. But how do you do this? Because digital tech is benefiting in some ways, it benefits both the overclass and the underclass, but also it creates a lot of loud what do you call those things that project your voice? Megaphones. Megaphones. Megaphones for that sort of underclass dynamic. So I think what we're seeing is a slow return of realism. The overclass are finding it harder to deal with the return of realism than the underclass as well.

### **Liddy**

Okay, so you've explored this new polarisation, one of the, I guess, potentially defining features of a new era that we're moving into. So what does this new era look like for us as leaders or as people of faith, people who maybe work in churches? Our listeners have many and varied. What can we kind of take away or glean from this, from today?

### **Mark**

Yeah, well, I think what you're going to see is you're going to see, as I sort of outlined, a shift from idealism to realism, but idealism is not going to go away easily, and I think you're going to almost see increasing also. I mean, you could add another polarisation, I'd argue, between the idealists and the realists as well. You're going to see increased frustration, I think, particularly as I think economic issues become returned to the forefront. Really interesting. I think that we have a potentially very large auto worker, automotive industry worker strike in the United States. Possibly one of the biggest ones, I think eighty S. I think it's the biggest one ever or something. Yeah. Wow. And that was sort of stuff which people thought had gone away. And you have this sense that in many ways, the area that we're looking forward to looks a lot like the 1970s, where you had sort of low growth, high interest



rates, you had this sort of sense of nihilism about the culture. And actually, it was really interesting. I was listening to a podcast the other day, actually, These Times with Helen Thompson and Tom Tugenhart, which actually one of my favourite podcasts. I really like Helen Thompson's analysis. I think she's professor of history at Cambridge. And they had on the historian Damien Sandbrook, who many people might know from the other podcast called The Rest Is History. And he's written a number of books. I've almost read all of them on Britain in the 1970s. And one of his sorry, I enjoy that. You've read those books that are great. They're really good. It's like they're big, thick monsters. I only got one to go 60s into the 82. And really interesting I forget which one is maybe State of Emergency. He begins by telling the story of that sort of decline period in Great Britain where the power was only on three days a week and there was strikes and garbage piling up on the pavements and stuff like this. And he starts by telling the story of Star Wars being produced in London. And basically George Lucas produced Star Wars because it was so cheap to make it in England. And George Lucas' wife is bored and sitting at home and they get burgled and she hates it, and the actors are, like, going to the pub and the pubs are shutting early. And like, what is this? And what's really interesting is they asked Damien Sandbrook, they said, Are we in the 70s again? And he sort of said, look, there's a lot of similarities. But what's different about the 70s was that in the 1970s, there was this explosion in Britain, at least around the world, of creativity. This is when punk and so much contemporary music emerges. Hip hop and coming from very much from the street up, you think punk comes from the street in Britain and in New York and hip hop in the Bronx and Brooklyn, all these places, this huge burst of like there were all these collectives started and there was a sense of imagination. People were almost like, we've got nothing to lose. The order's falling down. Let's build something new. And he said, that's not happening now. Yeah, I thought, that's really interesting, that there's a lack of creativity, a lack of birth at this moment. I actually found that quite sad. But then I thought, Hang on, okay, it's not coming from the culture so much. And so much of culture is just in this recurring retro moment, like endless Marvel movies and endless resurrections of past musical. There was an interesting article, I think it was in Billboard magazine recently, of how the music industry is struggling to break new artists like Taylor Swift's making gazillions of dollars and propping up the US economy. But she's racing towards middle aged and it's really hard to break new artists. So there's a sadness that we're stuck in a nihilistic, unvirtuous circle. But then I thought, what are the scriptures about? The Scriptures story is that when there's often sort of breakdown, that with a God, new creation can begin. And I thought, what if actually in this moment that we're moving into this new time, there's an element where we have an idealism that has a basis. It's not an idealism as much as it is faith, because it's based in the resurrected Jesus that enables us to look at the world through realistic eyes. And the scriptures are completely attuned to economic inequality and the scriptures are very much attuned to the heart and the pain of people who often find themselves at the very bottom of society and often through economic exploitation. And what if at this moment, that the creativity again came from the church? And what if the culture is not going to deliver it? And we're not going to have a



rebirth of a new punk or a new art school or a new film movement or a new political vision? What if actually, this time, where after all that we've been through in all these crises in the last few years, what if actually part of this renewal movement that we've been talking about, that God is birthing something new? And so I wonder if at this time of nihilism and hopelessness and defeatedness, which I think may grow, I don't see a lot of the governments that we have in left nor right able to solve some of the great issues that are arising that we've spoken about today. What if actually, at this moment, that hope came from the church and the people of God? So I'm excited about that possibility.

**Liddy**

You have just answered the question that I was going to ask, which was just looking at moving from idealism to realism. Idealism is so often associated with hope and a bright future and realism is often so associated with just seeing glass half empty. Yes. But we, as followers of Jesus, as people of faith, our hope is found in him. Yeah, it's good. Well, we will be back soon for another episode. Thank you for joining us today. Are we recording subscriber chats after this?

**Mark**

Sure, yeah.

**Liddy**

Great. Okay, so if you want to grab a copy of Subscriber Chats, which you don't really do because it's going to be on via an email, you can subscribe to our mailing list by heading to Rebuilders Co and registering there.

**Mark**

And if you would like to send donations of shampoo to Daniel, please send them to PO box Dirty Hair, Melbourne 3000.

**Liddy**

We'll see you next time.

