



# Right-wing coup in Honduras

## Army members kidnap president

Lynn Hulm

In a coup d'état the President of Honduras Manuel Zelaya has been kidnapped by members of the army disguised with balaclavas. He has been taken into exile in Costa Rica from where he has stated he is still the legitimate president and has called on the US not to recognise the right wing appointee. News had spread last week that the actions of reactionary forces in Honduras indicated there could be a coup when the army refused to distribute ballots for a national referendum that was to be held on June 28. News has emerged that the ambassadors of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela have been kidnapped along with the Foreign Minister of Honduras. The opposition leader has been made president.

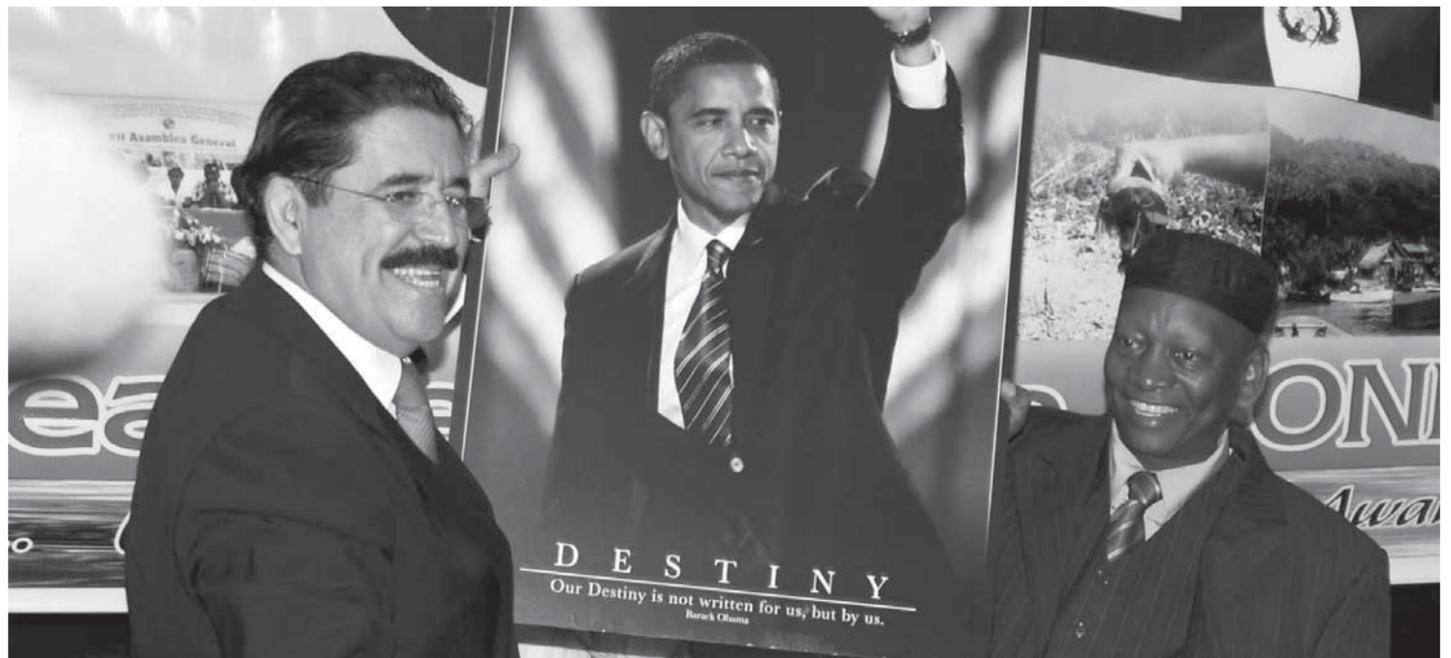
Governments of Central and South America, including Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba, Mexico, Bolivia and Guatemala responded immediately, condemning the coup. US President Obama called it "disturbing".

A positive referendum result would have provided for a "fourth ballot box" at the November elections to elect a national constituent assembly to be set up with the mandate to draft a new constitution with popular characteristics and to craft an electoral system based on direct voter participation in place of the representative democracy the country has now.

Many union and farmer groups supported the referendum action which Zelaya said was aimed at reforming policies that have excluded the nearly three-quarters of Hondurans who live in poverty.

Following the army's refusal to distribute ballots the President led a crowd of supporters to a military base to seize the ballot boxes which he then handed out to supporters, state employees and police to set up the 15,000 survey stations at schools and community buildings across the country. Zelaya has said he considered the refusal of the army to distribute the ballots to be part of a technical coup.

Zelaya's supporters demand the voice of the people must be heard. In the words of one supporter "It's only a vote to allow the public to



Honduran Manuel Zelaya celebrating the election of Barack Obama last year.

cast ballots directly and decide the future of the government, why is that bad?" This movement towards reform has enraged the local bourgeoisie that with US backing tries to prevent the right of the people to exercise their right to a new constitution.

Attempts by the US backed forces to get rid of the progressive government in Honduras must be rejected by the international community which must show its solidarity with the elected government of Manuel Zelaya and the people of Honduras.

The Communist Party of Australia condemns this act of violence that aims to derail the right to self determination for the people of Honduras. The coup is reminiscent of a similar action against the Venezuelan Chavez government in 2002.

These actions are part of successive attempts staged over a number of years against popular and progressive governments in Latin America.

The strategic objective is to put extra pressure on Socialist Cuba, the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela and the governments of Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador and maintain imperialist interests in the region.

Since the 1821 independence from Spain, the Central American provinces have been in the hands of the oligarchies who own the land and resources, using successive governments and state apparatus to benefit from the natural resources, selling off the country to foreign interests mainly those from the United States of America.

In recent times Latin American countries with progressive governments have successfully enacted new constitutions giving greater constitutional powers to popular sectors in society. The current government in Honduras has shown also a will to progressively walk away from traditional power circles that walk hand in glove with the US.

In the 1980's Honduras nicknamed the "Pentagon Republic" hosted the United States anti-Sandinista Contra force during the war against the contras in Nicaragua. The US conducted military exercises involving thousands of United States troops and National Guardsmen and Honduras received almost US\$1.6 billion in United States assistance. Honduras had on its soil 14 US military bases to back the US in their efforts to stop the attempts by the Sandinistas to peacefully develop a fairer society.

With the end to the Contra conflict in Nicaragua and a peace accord in El Salvador, Honduras's relations with the United States have changed considerably with aid levels and military assistance falling. However the United States remains an important trading partner and an important source of foreign investment and this interest continues to be protected by the Honduran oligarchy. ✖

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## The Guardian

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### Rees government shoots itself in the foot

Not to be outdone by the current "Utigate" farce (see page 3) in the federal parliament, the NSW government last week closed parliament down earlier than scheduled, without asking the permission of other MPs or the public.

Upper House MPs found themselves locked out of parliament on Thursday, when they were supposed to be debating the second reading of the government's legislation to privatise the very profitable NSW State Lotteries.

This extraordinary act of political spitefulness followed the emergence of an almost united opposition to the legislation in its first reading in the upper house of parliament.

In the case of the lottery privatisation bill, as in other cases where legislation is opposed by the Greens and the conservative coalition, the government needs the help of the Shooters' Party and/or independent MPs, in order to gain the numbers to force legislation through parliament.

The government had therefore entered into a tacit agreement to support the Shooters' Party's private members bill to allow shooting of wildlife in national parks, and to permit the establishment of private game reserves for professional safari hunters. In exchange for this, the Shooters' Party had agreed to give the lottery privatisation bill its blessing.

However, this amazingly cynical arrangement fell apart when government ministers, including the Deputy Premier Carmel Tebutt and Premier Nathan Rees himself, decided to back off from supporting the shooters bill, in the face of an extremely hostile reaction from the public.

In response, the Shooters' Party MPs have now announced: "We have yet to make up our minds" on the lottery privatisation legislation.

The initial agreement between the government and the Shooters' Party, to back the equally despicable privatisation and wildlife shooting bills, has been widely interpreted as an act of supreme political cynicism.

The government's decision not to back the Shooters' Party bill can at least be said to demonstrate a sense of political reality. However, its subsequent decision to close down parliament on the last day of sitting, which was intended to avoid the defeat of the lotteries privatisation bill in the Upper House, and to give the government time to negotiate another deal with the Shooters' Party over the winter recess, was an act of political suicide.

NSW electors complain about their state MPs, and the level of parliamentary debate. Nevertheless, they jealously guard their right to vote, and they adamantly expect that the elected MPs will do their job.

No government has a mandate from the public to close down the institution of parliament itself, to suit its own political convenience. The sight of opposition MPs banging on the doors of Parliament House in a vain attempt to gain admission has enormous political symbolism. At the next elections NSW voters will surely seek vengeance on the government for such an amazingly arrogant act, but also for its blatant support for privatisation and for the big developers, against the public interest.

The latest opinion poll, which was taken before the lotteries privatisation scandal erupted, and before the parliamentary lock-out, showed the ALP trailing the coalition by 45 to 55 percent. Forty-nine percent of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with Rees as Premier.

The Liberals have shrewdly judged the public's discontent with the Rees government, and have tailored their policies to it. They have, for example, declared that they will terminate that highly unpopular and astronomically expensive "white elephant", the Metro rail network.

The Labor government, on the other hand, seems to be reconciled to losing, and is intent on getting as much of its privatisation and development initiatives into effect before the elections, regardless of the electoral impact.

It is now inconceivable that the NSW Labor government will be returned to office. Maximum support will be required for progressive independents and the Greens, to ensure that neither Labor nor the conservative coalition will enjoy unfettered power after the next state elections.

#### Press Fund

"Why ask questions? You only get answers," declared Bertholdt Brecht. *The Guardian* is dedicated to asking the right questions, and often they're the ones that no one else will ask. For example, in the ongoing "Utigate" controversy, nobody seems to be asking why any of the nation's car dealers should have been getting a nice little handout of the taxpayer's money from the Rudd and Howard governments, as Rudd's friend Mr Grant (and many others) apparently did. If you want us to continue asking the right questions, how about making a contribution to the Press Fund, which helps us to pay *The Guardian's* day-to-day running costs. Many thanks to the following, for their support this week:

Mark Window \$20, NS \$15, "Round Figure" \$15.

This week's total: \$50 Progressive total: \$6,040

# Celebrating 95<sup>th</sup> birthday of Vic Williams, commemorating the life of Joan Williams

A function was held in the Willagee Community Centre in the southern suburbs of Perth where Vic and Joan Williams had spent many of the last 40 years of their socially and politically active lives. Their friends, family and comrades came to share this milestone in the life of this special poet, Communist, writer, political activist and occasional wood turner, and to commemorate the life of his partner and fellow writer, poet, activist and feminist – Joan (Justina) Williams.

MC at the proceedings was long time friend to them both, the indefatigable Sheila Suttner, who introduced the first speaker, Edith Cowan University Associate Professor Glenn Phillips who had met Joan and Vic as members of the Fellowship of Australian Writers in the late 1960's. "In those days Victor would sometimes read from one of his earlier published books of poetry such as, *Harvest Time and Other Poems*, (1946) (recently reprinted) or *Hammers and Seagulls* (1966)." Glenn recalled that he would write or make contributions to a number of other works including the editing of *Eureka and Beyond: Monty Miller, His Own Story* (1988).

Many of the things which characterised Victor Williams' greatest loves can be found in a few lines of the following poem, "I will Make a Bowl" from an anthology of Western Australian poetry, *Margins*:

*I will make a bowl for my love of the warm brown wood, chiselling the heart with care so the strength endures, stroking the curve of grain till it flows in silk...*

*I will make a bowl for my son of the strong red earth, Knuckled by hands hardened by hammer and forge...*

*A bowl is the sign of plenty, the pledge of peace...*

When Victor met Joan he met someone very special with which both shared much in common including a Welsh heritage. They had met in the early 1940's while Vic was in the army and Joan was a journalist for *The West Australian* newspaper.

"Joan's achievement as a fiction writer was celebrated by the publication of her fine collection of short stories *White River* (1979) which echoed her rural upbringing and her social conscience for the down-trodden, especially the politically oppressed", Glenn recalled of Joan. He continued, "I rate Joan highly as a literary figure for her undoubted



success as a poet, especially a poet of 'causes', like Vic. Her alignment with the left-wing brought to her (and subsequently to her readers) the suffering of the victims of both fascist and capitalist societies.

"She wrote compassionately about children and family life, for she also took those duties seriously as she raised a family in what were often hard times following World War II.

"No better record can be found of the deeply idealistic yet warm, pragmatic and human thoughts and ideas of Joan Williams than her autobiography, *Anger and Love* (1993), which is also one of the most remarkable records of left-wing activism – especially of the Communist Party of Australia. It is a standard reference work.

"Together Joan and Vic Williams are among the really meritorious contributors to writing in Western Australia in the second half of the twentieth century," concluded Glenn.

The next speaker was former Nuclear Disarmament and Greens senator Jo Vallentine who recalled that journalists during World War II were required to comply with the National Security Act which forbade any criticism of the government or any dissemination of information about the Soviet government to which Joan Williams was required to comply as a journalist for the *West Australian*.

"Where stories had been edited out they would not leave blank spaces, but fill them with gardening notes during the war." Jo read from Joan's seminal work on left activism in Australia, reminding the 60 people who had come to share in the celebration that the so called War on Terror and preoccupation with national security had produced a similar disingenuous avoidance of the truth by the corporate media today.

She also recalled Joan's many other social and political activist issues which Joan had participated

in, from the Ribbons for Peace project involving the creation of a ribbon for Palm Sunday peace rallies which would stretch messages of peace around a large area of the city of Perth, recalling a similar ribbon which was used to promote the vote for women in the late 1890's. Joan also campaigned against the presence of the US military base on North West Cape near Exmouth in the 1970's and much later the first Iraq war in 1991, in which her poem, "Not in my name" is an internationally recognised anti-war clarion for peace activists to this day, from which Jo read:

*Not in my name,  
My woman's name,  
Not one drop of blood be shed  
for oil*

*That makes some billionaires and  
sets the Middle East aflame...*

*But in my name,  
In every woman's name send  
home great armies*

*Of the black and dispossessed,  
Warships and bombers turn  
around.*

*Peace in my name.*

Vic had also contributed much to the establishment of the policies for the then budding Greens WA party in the late 1980's and early 1990's for which he was rewarded in their constitution with a Grandfather Clause by being allowed to be a member of both the Greens and the Communist Party.

Margo Boettcher from the Women's Electoral Lobby also spoke of Joan's contribution to the WEL as one of the dozen or so women who helped to found the organisation in the 1960s. Joan was a feminist who fought against violence against women, for the right to have a legal abortion and for equal opportunity. Of the right to abortion Margo recalled Joan, "standing up in front of several thousand people to describe in some detail her own abortion which was very brave." Vic became a feminist recalled Margo "once Joan had explained the origins of the oppression of women in a capitalist society". It had stuck with Vic ever since.

Vic Williams addressed the celebration by acknowledging "the struggle for peace is a vital and essential one" – especially today where peace must not only be with man but also this planet."

Other friends read Joan's poetry and renown local poet Don Wignall concluded proceedings by reading a poem, "Working class hero" and singing a robust socialist song.

WA CPA president Dave Fox acknowledged Vic's continued contribution as an educator. ☺

Sydney Rally

CANCEL  
TALISMAN  
SABRE  
WAR  
GAMES



Saturday 11 July @ 11 am Town Hall Square

# Utegate & democracy

Bob Briton

Parliament is in recess but the storm whipped up over "Utegate" is yet to die down. Police are still investigating the origins of a fake email that sought to link Rudd adviser Andrew Charlton to finance arrangements for Queensland car dealer John Grant – a friend of the Prime Minister and a donor to the major parliamentary parties. Treasurer Wayne Swan has come under pressure about his department's representations in the same matter. The most serious injuries so far in the battle of words appear to have been suffered by Opposition leader Malcolm Turnbull. What seemed to have been a minister or even PM-toppling scandal has backfired on the wealthy would-be Prime Minister with his own record of helping donor "mates" coming under scrutiny.

Utegate – so-called for the donation by John Grant of a second hand utility to Labor's 2007 election campaign – speaks volumes about the current state of Australia's two party political system. A mole or a number of moles leak information to the Opposition to equip it to argue the driest neo-liberal economic line in Parliament. Godwin Grech – the senior public servant whose statements to a Senate inquiry ignited the whole Utegate affair – is believed to have met secretly with Turnbull

and Liberal Senator Eric Abetz before giving his evidence. He worked for Opposition Treasury Spokesman Joe Hockey during the Howard years and describes himself as a "believer in the positive power of the market."

In Treasury Mr Grech oversaw preparations for a scheme known as OzCar – a Commonwealth-backed system of finance for the car industry whose dealers' own credit facilities have failed during the current economic crisis. Clearly, the "positive power of the market" needs the state to step into the role of major risk-taker when the whole system of private profit gets in trouble. Both sides of politics agree and legislation for the \$2 billion OzCar taxpayer-funded scheme was passed last week.

Mr Grant, owner of the struggling car dealership at the centre of the recent turmoil, has shown the sort of generosity that provides the cement for Australia's two party political edifice. He lives in the same street as the PM in the Brisbane suburb of Norman Park. Mr Rudd denies belonging to the exclusive 51 Club but John Grant and up to 20 other members held a dinner in 2002 to raise money to help Rudd pay off a \$32,000 legal bill.

Mr Grant's business partner was controversial property developer George Cheikh. Grant and Cheikh owned a whitegoods importing concern called Aussie Rent. Mr Rudd refused to answer a question

from Opposition frontbencher Tony Abbott about whether he had ever made representations on behalf of Aussie Rent during his trips to China as Labor's foreign affairs spokesman. "All of Mr Rudd's interactions with Mr Grant have been entirely appropriate," was all that a staffer from his office would say on the matter.

Aussie Rent went bust in 2007 and Mr Cheikh was declared bankrupt. The bankruptcy was annulled in early 2008. Shortly after he was initially declared bankrupt, Cheikh was in Brisbane Magistrates Court charged with possessing ecstasy and holding a flick knife to the throat of a nightclub patron. He pleaded guilty to an assault charge this month and was fined \$500 with no conviction recorded.

Mr Cheikh's companies made sizable donations to the Queensland branches of Labor and the Libs in 2003-04 according to Electoral Commission records. Collingswood Park Developments donated \$206,231 to the Liberal Party and Qld Group Ltd gave \$50,000. Collingswood Park gave \$89,500 to Labor and his Haven Road Developments contributed \$50,000. Qld Group kicked in \$12,000.

On the other side of the narrow political divide, Mr Turnbull is being quizzed about a \$10 million grant given to a friend and election campaign donor, Matt Handbury. Turnbull was Environment Minister at



the time of the grant for a rainmaking project that has since been scrapped. The government maintains the amount paid was five times what was recommended by the department and has described the payment as corrupt.

Turnbull and Abetz have both said they will protect their sources during police investigations into the fake email from Rudd's office. This prompted CFMEU national secretary Dave Noonan to point out the hypocrisy of the Liberal heavyweights who both support the coercive powers of the Australian Building and Construction Commission. The construction site Gestapo doesn't even grant building workers the right

to silence about union activity under pain of six months' jail.

It remains to be seen what will come out of the flurry of accusation and counter-accusation and the police investigations underway. A truce might be called on the grounds that each party has equivalent quantities of "dirt" on the other. A judgement may be made on both sides that too many insights are being given to voters about the system of power and influence that keeps the Coalition and Labor as exclusive alternate governments in the service of corporate power. ☛

## Scrymgour's stand wins solid backing Ex-Deputy Leader quits Labor over policy on outstations

Darren Coyne

The bush is backing renegade Northern Territory Indigenous politician Marion Scrymgour. The former deputy chief minister of the Northern Territory government has rocked the balance of power in NT politics by resigning from the Labor Party over its controversial homelands policy.

In its A Working Future policy announced last month, the government decided not to fund the expansion of remote homelands, or outstations, which are home to thousands of Indigenous people.

Instead, it plans to concentrate on the development of 20 larger communities across the NT, leading to fears that people will be forced to move off their homelands to access services.

When Ms Scrymgour learnt the details of the plan she quit, criticising the government over its lack of consultation with Aboriginal Territorians.

Last month, the Full Council of the Northern Land Council backed her to the hilt, and voted

unanimously to condemn the government's new policy.

The Full Council, which consists of more than 80 Traditional Owners, said the government's policy initiative lacked the relevant details so that Aboriginal people could make informed choices and comments about their futures.

It also said the policy failed to recognise the important health and general well-being benefits that homelands provided to Aboriginal people.

NLC Chief Executive Kim Hill said Council members were very angry when they were briefed on the strategy.

"The Full Council support Marion Scrymgour's stand on the lack of consultation on this issue – and they want answers, not a half-baked policy," he said.

"TOs (Traditional Owners) want to know what the details are on the service delivery arrangements for homelands; what the details are for both road and air transport links to major communities; what the details are for the 'growth towns', and what is to

become of all the places in between – basically, their homes."

Meanwhile, TOs in Maningrida in West Arnhem Land have also called on the NT government to review its homelands policy.

"The policy as presently drafted ignores our wishes and also the evidence that homelands are good for people," said Jimmy Pascoe, Traditional Owner and Chairman of regional organisation, Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation.

"We invite Chief Minister Paul Henderson and members of his government to see the homelands for themselves."

Also critical of the NT

government's approach was Indigenous leader Pat Dodson, who led an NT government review of outstations last year.

Mr Dodson described the proposed policy as a "die on the vine" plan that will "slowly but surely" kill Indigenous culture.

Meanwhile, at a ceremony to celebrate the anniversary of last year's Blue Mud Bay decision which gave TOs exclusive rights to waters overlying Aboriginal lands, celebrations turned to protest after Yununmul Munungurr, from the Lhaynapuy Homelands Association, spoke out against the outstations policy.

The ABC reported that more than a dozen people threw paper copies of the NT government's homelands policy on a eucalyptus leaf fire. Another group that backed Ms Scrymgour was the NSW Aboriginal Land Council.

NSWALC Chairperson Bev Manton said the Tiwi Islander should be applauded for her stand.

"It is rare for an elected politician to put their principles ahead of their personal or political interests. This is clearly what Marion has decided to do," Ms Manton said. *The Koori Mail* ☛

Pete's Corner



## Hear Judith LeBlanc

Judith Le Blanc, a member of the indigenous Caddo Tribe from Oklahoma, is the National Organising coordinator of United for Peace and Justice, the largest US national Peace Coalition. She is also the vice-chair of the Communist Party of the USA and a long time activist for social justice. She will be touring Australia for a very short time.



**Sydney:**

Saturday 4th July 7:30pm  
Tom Mann Theatre – 136 Chalmers Street, Surry Hills  
(2 minutes from Devonshire Street exit from Central Railway)  
Enquiries: 0418 290 663 or cpa@cpa.org.au

**Melbourne:**

Sunday 5th July, 4pm  
at the Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church  
110 Grey Street, East Melbourne  
Light food and drinks will be provided by donation  
Confirmation and booking essential  
For booking & further details, contact: Andrew 0419 523 886 or  
Lulu 0421 957 341 or write to: info@latinamericasolidarity.org

# Resolution of ACTU Congress 2009

## Australian Building and Construction Commission

1. Congress calls on the Rudd Labor government to immediately repeal the Building and Construction Industry Improvement Act (the BCII Act) and to abolish the Australian Building and Construction Commission (the ABCC).

2. Congress condemns the Rudd Labor government for maintaining the BCII Act and the ABCC. Congress notes that the continued existence of the BCII Act contravenes Labor Party policy, which affirms that Labor does not support laws that discriminate against workers employed in a particular industry.

3. Congress notes that:

- The ABCC has had a serious negative effect on Occupational Health and Safety in a high-risk industry;

- The ABCC persistently breaches the standards of propriety, honesty, fairness and professionalism expected of government agencies and fails to observe the standards required of a government model litigant. The ABCC has pursued politically motivated investigations and prosecutions against unions and workers and has failed to prosecute one employer for underpayment or non-payment of workers entitlements, despite having the power to do so; and

- On five occasions committees of the International Labor Organisation have stated that the law is inconsistent with Australia's obligations under ILO conventions concerning Collective Bargaining and Freedom of Association.

4. Congress rejects proposals to create a separate inspectorate within Fair Work Australia, and to retain coercive interview powers as inconsistent with fairness, Labor policy and ILO conventions.

5. Congress maintains that:

- No group of workers should be subject to discriminatory laws;
- Coercive interrogation powers have no role in industrial relations and must not be inserted into the Fair Work Act;

- Workers should have a right to confidential communications with their union and colleagues regarding industrial matters and to representation by the lawyer of their choice; and
- Any regulator dealing with industrial matters should be even-handed, transparent and professional in its conduct and ensure procedural and substantive fairness to all parties.

6. Congress calls for the immediate removal of those provisions of the Building Industry Code and Guidelines that are aimed at

weakening workers' rights and union organisation.

7. Congress calls on unions affiliated to the ALP to support the principles of this resolution in all forums of the party, including the 2009 ALP National Conference.

8. Congress condemns the prosecution of workers for alleged refusal to participate in compulsory ABCC interrogations, particularly the current prosecution of Ark Tribe. Congress affirms its support for any worker who is prosecuted for non-compliance with coercive interviews. Congress authorises the ACTU Executive to co-ordinate a campaign of protest and industrial action against this prosecution and, if necessary, support for any worker who is prosecuted or jailed for non-compliance.

**The above resolution was unanimously adopted by the ACTU at its triennial Congress in Brisbane in June 2009. The ACTU and the building industry trade unions in particular, have the full support of the Communist Party of Australia in seeing this resolution implemented.** ✪



**PUT HOWARD'S  
IR LAWS WHERE  
THEY BELONG.**

## Rig workers say no to second rate agreement

**An employer has failed to bypass the union and introduce a sub-standard non-union agreement to cover rig workers. Rig workers on the DP Drilling Rig Enesco 7500 off Barrow Island in Western Australia rejected a non-union agreement after meeting with Maritime Union of Australia and Australian Workers' Union (MUA/AWU) alliance organiser Glen Williams on June 22.**

During a rig inspection Glen got to meet with rig workers to discuss Enesco's proposed Non Union Employee Collective Agreement. The company had put the agreement out to a vote without any prior discussion or negotiations with the workers.

One group of workers reported that at the end of their last hitch on the rig they arrived at Perth Airport to be met by a company representative. They were then whisked off in a bus to a nearby hotel where a lawyer was waiting with a copy of the agreement for them to sign.

The contract locked workers into very poor terms and conditions of employment for five years. It gave Enesco the right to review salaries annually and without negotiation decide to forgo any pay rise. The agreement also included four weeks hitches and a clause that allowed Enesco to stand down

workers on no pay whenever they felt it necessary.

"But the workers all stood together, united and refused to sign this second rate agreement," said Glen Williams. "They all joined the AWU/MUA Alliance along with most of their workmates."

Another worker reported that on the tow over from South Africa they went 14 days over their hitch. They were all given \$100 per day on top of their wages in compensation for not being home with their families.

"This is totally unacceptable and well below what overcycle payments are across the industry," said Glen Williams.

*The workforce voted NO and rejected the agreement.*

The MUA-AWU Alliance will be taking these matters up with Enesco, seeking fair payment for ALL workers on Enesco 7500. The Alliance has contacted Enesco seeking a meeting to talk through many of the issues on the rig and to engage in negotiations towards getting a collective agreement that reflects the standards enjoyed by every other sector of the offshore oil and gas industry.

The Enesco 7500 workers have united together to fight for a fairer go and improved terms and conditions of employment on their rig. ✪

## Chemists face last gasp WorkChoices contracts

**Thousands of qualified pharmacists and shop assistants working in chemists face being locked into a WorkChoices-style job contract for five years and missing out on an award pay rise worth thousands of dollars a year.**

The move by the NSW Pharmacy Guild would effectively cut the pay and conditions and rights of thousands of workers in the industry, including many young people working in local chemists.

Compared to the new modern award for the industry, a typical pharmacist would be almost \$2,500 a year worse off under the proposed contract due to reduced penalty rates and the loss of some allowances.

It is a further sign of an unethical push by major employers, including in the hotels and mining sectors, to take advantage of the last gasp of WorkChoices before the new Fair Work Act takes effect on July 1, says the ACTU.

"The attempt by the NSW Pharmacy Guild to impose a five-year agreement on pharmacists is a stark example of unscrupulous employers that are trying to squeeze the last bitter drops out of the WorkChoices lemon before new laws come into operation," said ACTU secretary Jeff Lawrence.

"Some extreme elements of the business community – including the Pharmacy Guild – are also running misleading scare campaigns about award modernisation, including false claims about the impact on jobs.

The employer-group, NSW Pharmacy Guild, is pushing workers to approve the new job contract, the Multi Business Agreement (MBA), which attempts to avoid paying improved benefits available under a new award that will soon apply to the industry.

Chris Walton, the CEO of pharmacists' union, the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers, Australia, said the Guild's proposed job contract would leave NSW pharmacists trailing behind their counterparts in Victoria.

He said they should vote no to the agreement and seek professional advice about any attempts by their employer to alter their terms of employment so close to the introduction of a new award. ✪

## Funding says it all Federal budget allocations 2009-2010

Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC)

Office of the ABCC to persecute workers and unions – \$33.4 million.

Comcare responsible for workplace safety & rehabilitation \$5 million.

Australian Human Rights Commission – \$13 million.

Federal Magistrates Court of Australia – \$28 million.

High Court of Australia – \$16 million.

Australian Crime Commission – \$95 million.

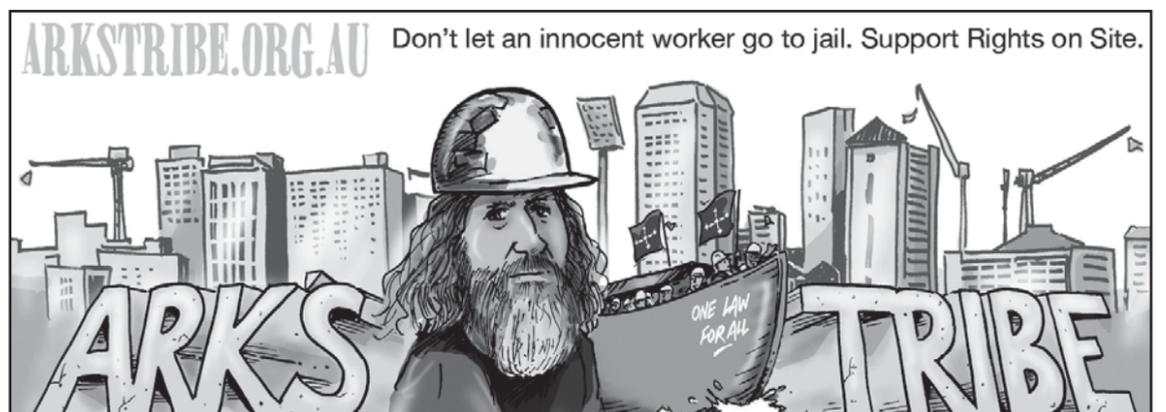
Australian Prudential Regulation Authority protecting savings of Australians from real sharks – \$23 million.

"If I could send a memo to the razor gang working on next year's budget, it would say to save the people of Australia \$33 million and axe the Australian Building and Construction Commission:" South Australian Labor MP Julia Irwin (*Hansard*, house of Representatives, May 25, 2009), whose statistics are quoted above. ✪

Official blog of the

CPA South Australia

cpasa.blogspot.com



# Australia's pro-Israel policies, pro-Palestine public

Peter Manning

**Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard have made no secret of their love for Israel.**

Rudd formally congratulated Israel in the Parliament on reaching 60 years of statehood in 2008. He forgot to mention the fact that Palestinians lost 78 percent of their land in 1948, millions have been refugees for the 60 years since and the rest live under Israel's military occupation.

Gillard excused Israel's massive attack on the Gaza Strip last January by pointing to the rockets Hamas had fired into Israel, killing fewer than 10 Israelis. She forgot to mention the fact that Israel, the US, the EU and the UN had decided to respond to Hamas' democratic election victory as the Palestinians' government by imposing a siege on the whole population, depriving them of fuel for cars, hospitals and heating and cutting back on food supplies. And she ignored the fact, Australia unlike even the British government, watched without complaint as Israel went on to slaughter 1,400 Palestinian civilians, including 400 children.

And now Gillard is in Israel leading a bevy of Australian business, media, political and cultural leaders to Israel in an official "cultural exchange!" I thought she ran the twin, heavyweight portfolios of industrial relations and education, not arts?

## What's happening, and why?

Well, Australia is sucking up to Israel once again, just like former prime ministers John Howard (Liberal) and Bob Hawke (Labor) did.

Certainly, this one-sided policy is not represented in Labor platform policy which is much more even-handed, committing the party to a two-state solution. Although it's interesting that in the last four years of the Rudd ascendancy all reference to the original UN resolutions that defined Labor policy since 1948 – guaranteeing an end to the 1967 occupation and right of return of the 1948 refugees or compensation – have been quietly deleted.

But the last prime minister to ever have an even-handed policy on this issue was Gough Whitlam (1972-75), a fact that annoyed the local Israeli lobby to no end when the 1973 Arab-Israeli war occurred.

So why the one-sidedness, ignoring the platform and the Gough legacy?

To find out one possible answer, the little Sydney-based pro-Palestine lobby group which I chair called Coalition for Justice and Peace in Palestine decided we would commission a high class, well-known,



opinion poll company to test whether the Labor machine or politicians knew something we didn't – for example, that their one-sidedness reflected "the will of the people."

Were Palestine and Palestinians so on the nose – as Muslims, as Arabs, as "terrorists," pick your nightmare – that showing government sympathy towards them would hurt you electorally?

We chose the Roy Morgan Research company and they agreed to do an arm's length national, representative survey asking five crucial questions about awareness and knowledge, about overall sympathies, about the Gaza military action in January and about perceptions of the Rudd government's attitudes.

The results were a big surprise. They are the epitome of even-handedness, with a bit of a tilt in overall sympathies toward the Palestinians. And on Gaza, many more Australians found the Israeli military action in Gaza unjustified (42 percent) than justified (29 percent).

So Labor's cuddle-up to Israel does not fit with Australians' views.

Interestingly, the survey also found that many Australians don't in fact see the Rudd government as one-sided (42 percent) though of the 20 percent who do, 19 percent think it is tilted towards Israel.

There are two other points to make.

First, if you break the national figures down to Sydney figures, a bias towards the Palestinians comes through clearer. This could be a result of the big Australian Arab and Muslim populations in Sydney. But, in any case, the sympathy towards Palestine is stronger and the condemnation of the Gaza war much stronger (49 percent thought it was unjustified, only 24 percent justified).

So Sydney is a pro-Palestine bastion.

Second, Morgan asked

respondents whether they felt they knew "a lot," "a fair amount," "not very much," "nothing at all" or "can't say" about what happened in Gaza. If you group "a lot" and "fair amount" – in other words, those who felt they knew at least a fair amount or more about what happened – and break them down into their sympathies for the Israelis or the Palestinians, the bias towards the Palestinians is quite marked (29.7 percent for Israelis, 44.5 for Palestinians).

I take from that that the more you know about the Israel-Palestine situation, the more your sympathies lie with the Palestinians.

Where does this leave the Labor Party? Or the opposition Liberals for that matter?

It means they have to re-align themselves with their electorates. It means the National Australian Labor Party Conference next month should ignore Kevin Rudd's obsequious attitude to everything Israeli – did he really say "Israel is in my DNA!" at a Jewish community function? – and get on with strengthening its adherence to peace and justice in the region.

Julia Gillard should also cancel her tour of Israel – how many days is she spending in the Occupied Palestinian Territories with Palestinian guides? – and plead "pressure of work." Or a more believable reason would be: do as Obama says and end settlement-building and I'll come and see you.

That's the kind of relationship the United States is forging right now with Israel. Maybe Rudd and Gillard, who seem to have trouble listening to what their own electorate thinks of Israel, need to pick up the phone to Obama for instructions.

Peter Manning is Convenor of Coalition for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Adjunct Professor of Journalism at University of Technology, Sydney.

*The Electronic Intifada* ✪



Microbiologist Shiv Chopra, a fellow of the World Health Organisation, a former senior scientific adviser to Health Canada and the author of *Corrupt to the Core: Memoirs of a Health Canada Whistleblower*, is currently in Australia to promote his book. As you may have guessed, he was sacked by the Canadian government for ringing out warnings about food additives. He says that if Australians want to eat right we need to ban the five major contaminants of modern industrial food production: growth hormones, antibiotics, slaughterhouse wastes, genetically modified organisms and pesticides. Speaking in Sydney last week Dr Chopra said, "The onus should be on the government and big business to prove that these substances are not harmful because they are the ones who are making money from them. Unless they can prove that these substances aren't harmful we should be telling our governments that we don't want them in our food supply." You can see why they sacked him.

Eddy Groves, he of the collapsed ABC Learning Centres childcare debacle who made millions from government fee relief and by exploiting childcare workers and the children in their care, is going to court in an attempt to stop his passport being seized and his assets frozen. The Australian Securities and Investments Commission has applied in the Federal Court to prevent Groves doing a runner by confiscating his passport. The Commission also wants to freeze the assets of Groves' wife. But get this: the Commission wants to allow them to draw a \$10,000 a week allowance for "ordinary living expenses".

The ludicrous set up that allowed the federal government to charge asylum seekers locked up under mandatory detention laws for the cost of their detention has finally been scrapped. The inhumane treatment of those seeking protection was made all the more odious because of the charges. Almost \$9 million of debt will be lifted from 474 refugees.

Public institutions relying on the philanthropic generosity of big business are finding that the funds are drying up in the current economic climate. Government funding to universities was so wound back by the former Howard government that they are now fairly heavily dependent on the begging bowls placed before big business. The likes of Monash University, University of Sydney and University of Melbourne have seen big falls in company largess, adding to the massive write-downs on the value of their endowment portfolios as a result of the global financial crisis. That's what happens when you throw your country's institutions of higher learning to the wolves of the free market.

**CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK:** is Eastern Star Gas. The big gas exploration company destroyed the annual Murray cod breeding season when masses of fish eggs and fish fry were killed after a seismic survey carried out by the company. The owners of one of the biggest fish hatcheries, Namoi Valley Aquafarming, are suing the company for \$1 million in a NSW test case that seismic vibrations can seriously affect fish reproduction.

## Sydney

### *Farewell Dinner with Judith LeBlanc*

6:30pm, Monday 13 July

Al-Oumara Lebanese Restaurant

11 Amy St, Regents Park (next to station)

Purchase own meal & drinks at restaurant

# From their own mouths

## Kevin Andrews 2005

**Liberal Party Workplace Relations Minister in his second reading speech to the Building and Construction Industry Improvement Bill 2005 (BCII Bill) which established the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC).**

*"This bill is a specifically targeted legislative measure to address the unlawful conduct of unions."*

*"... industrial action taken by unions to pursue the early negotiation of new agreements would not only be unprotected but also unlawful."*

*"This bill seeks to implement a framework where unlawful industrial action is not tolerated and those taking such action are brought to account for their lawlessness."*

In addition to fines of \$22,000 for workers and \$110,000 for unions, "parties who take unlawful action may be ordered by a court to pay substantial uncapped compensation to any person affected by the unlawful industrial action."

## Kevin Andrews 2003

**Liberal Party Workplace Relations Minister, moving a similar bill which was defeated.**

The bill "represents a unique opportunity to implement lasting cultural reform in this industry, and the case for reform is compelling."

*"At the core of the [Cole] Royal Commission's findings about the building and construction industry is an entrenched culture of lawlessness, coupled with widespread inappropriate practices that act against choice, productivity and safety."*

## Julia Gillard 2009

**Labor Workplace Relations Minister giving second reading speech to her bill amending the BCII Act and transferring the ABCC to Fair Work Australia**

*"I am ... disappointed that there are still pockets of the industry where people think they are above the law, where people engage in intimidation and violence."*

*"There is a clear and immediate need to drive cultural change in some key areas of the industry."*

*"... ensuring that the resources of the ABCC and from 1 February 2010 the building inspectorate are focused on those areas that have a demonstrated culture of unlawful behaviour."*

*"it meets our election promise to keep a strong cop on the beat for the benefit of the industry and the economy."*

*"I am satisfied there is still such a level of industrial unlawfulness in the building and construction ..., that it would be inadvisable not to empower the [Specialist Division] to undertake compulsory interrogation. The reality is that, without such a power, some types of contravention would be almost impossible to prove."*

## Penny Wong 2005

**Labor MP on BCII Bill**

*"Criminal matters ought to be investigated by the police."*

*"The bill places further restrictions upon employees and their unions from exercising their right to strike, which brings Australia into further breach of the relevant International Labour Organisation convention."*

*"This bill potentially puts the health and safety of employees in this industry at risk by imposing financial penalties upon employees who cease to work in what they regard as an unsafe environment."*

*"... we do not support the denial of civil liberties to innocent Australians simply because they work in the building industry and simply because this government wants to target these workers."*

*"This bill will enable the ABCC to use coercive powers in investigating any breach of the Workplace Relations Act, award or*

*agreement, including investigating ordinary industrial activities of unions, such as meetings with members, not just investigating alleged criminal activity."*

Come 2009, and Penny Wong stands firmly behind Gillard's bill which addresses none of important issues she legitimately raised in 2005.

## Greg Combet 2006

**ACTU Secretary addressing ACTU Congress**

*"We are fighting for the future of our democracy, we are fighting for the future of our kids, we are fighting for a fair and just Australian society."*

*"And fight we will."*

*"We will not be intimidated by the Howard government, or their friends in the business community. And we will fight until we win. We will see these laws repealed. We will see John Howard off..."*

*"We are clear about our values, and what we stand for. Our values define who we are and what we are fighting for."*

Come 2009, Labor parliamentary secretary Greg Combet backs the Gillard legislation telling unions to be "pragmatic".

## Simon Crean 2005

**Labor MP, former ACTU president, during debate of BCII Bill**

*"The legislation is driven by ideology... The legislation takes away the right to collectively bargain and the right to strike. It effectively ensures that industrial action in the building and construction industry is unlawful..."*

Come 2009, and now Trade Minister Crean accused unions of pursuing a narrow agenda [the interests of the working class! - Ed.] and opposed their call to wind back the powers of the ABCC. The government "cannot condone violence, and nor should it."

## Rachel Siewert 2005

**Australian Greens Senator - Second reading speech of BCII Bill**

*"This bill singles out a group of people - one class of citizens; in this case, our building and construction workers - and then systematically undermines and removes their rights. Their right to silence, their freedom of speech, their right to privacy, their right to take considered industrial action and their right to be treated as innocent until proven guilty are all undermined or removed by this bill."*

*"Why is the government singling out and demonising one particular group of workers? Why is one set of citizens having its rights removed? We all know the government's agenda - it is embarking on a concerted attack on unions. It has begun this attack by singling out one of the strongest unions. In this case, it is attacking a union that has a history of showing solidarity with other workers and ensuring that support for safety and collective bargaining in their workplace is strong. It is designed to slow down, frustrate and disempower a group of workers that it knows will oppose its wider anti-worker agenda."*

The Australian Greens moved a bill to repeal the BCII Act and restore workplace rights in 2008. Needless to say, it did not receive the support of Labor or the Coalition.

Come 2009, the Greens retain their principled stand in defence of trade union rights and workers' interests.

## Master Builders Association 2008

Victorian executive director Brian Welch, speaking on behalf of the building industry employers.

*"The commission has delivered a golden era for the Australian construction industry." \**



# No major crisis in the industry

During the debate in 2005 on the Howard government's legislation to establish the ABCC, Labor MP and former ACTU president Martin Ferguson spoke strongly in defence of building trade unions and what they had achieved through years of struggle on building sites. His father was a building worker and staunch unionist involved in the struggles in the 1950s through to the 1990s. The following are extracts from his speech:

The bill was clearly born out of a political exercise. That political exercise was the Royal Commission headed by Justice Cole [in 2002 -Ed].

The facts show that at that time there was no major crisis in the building and construction industry. No one asked for the inquiry - not the unions, the industry, the clients or the workers. Building activity investment at the time was robust.

I suggest to the House that this government has never been about cleaning up the building industry. Its real goal has been, and always will be, to smash the union movement and hand power back to employers who have no regard for the welfare of building workers and their families.

I saw directly in my own household the sacrifices my parents made in just trying to make ends meet, because of the lack of decent working conditions for building workers in the post-Second World War period.

The struggle commenced on building sites. Yes, it was a struggle, and we are not ashamed of

the fact that it was a struggle. It was about bringing to building workers a sense of decency and dignity at work.

The Cole Royal Commission did not uncover the so-called endemic corruption or criminality by union officials, which the government used as an excuse to set up the Commission.

It is also worthwhile reminding the House that this government spent \$60 million [on the Cole Commission] to set up a framework to erode the rights of building workers, to reduce their wages and conditions of employment, while spending only \$30 million inquiring into the HIH [insurance company] collapse, where there was real corruption.

The effect of this bill is to try and ensure that building workers will be second-class citizens with weaker awards, less access to unions and a reduced right to protect their rights through industrial action.

I want to take people back to the 1950s... You were hired for the time of the job.... There was no guarantee of 52 weeks of employment a year.... When it rained there was no pay. There was no wet pay, there was no sick pay and, in most instances, little attention was paid to issues of health and safety in the building industry. So we actually achieved through the '50s and the '60s the right of building workers to wet pay and sick pay.

With regard to annual leave, we had to set up

# Repeal the Act, dismantle the ABCC

Anna Pha

**The Rudd/Gillard Labor government's amendments to the Building Construction Industry Improvement Act 2005 (BCII Act) and its other legislation leave in tact the most coercive and anti-union provisions of the Howard government's WorkChoices regime – the effective outlawing of industrial action, the targeting of a group of workers for special treatment, the coercive interrogation powers of the Australian Building and Construction Industry Commission (renamed as Building Industry Inspectorate) and the threat of imprisonment for exercising the right to silence and refusing to inform on fellow workers.**

The quotes from Liberal and Labor politicians on the page opposite illustrate alarming similarity in the positions of the Howard and Rudd governments – not just in the content of their anti-union legislation but in the slanderous attacks on building workers and their unions to try to justify such laws.

Former minister Kevin Andrews refers to “unlawful union demands”, “an entrenched culture of lawlessness”, “unlawful industrial action”, “a unique opportunity to implement lasting cultural reform”.

Gillard talks about a “culture of unlawful behaviour”, “the need to drive cultural change”, “industrial unlawfulness”, and accuses some of engaging in “intimidation and violence”.

She talks about benefiting “industry and the economy”. No mention of benefiting workers. Andrews speaks in terms of “productivity”. Both mean boosting corporate profits at the expense of workers.

## Pro-employer

Andrews is upfront in admitting the legislation is “specifically targeted” to address the “unlawful conduct of unions”. Gillard also makes it clear that the target is trade unions but includes the odd reference to other players in the industry to sound even handed. The content of the bill is pro-employer.

Labor's amendments to the *BCII Act*, presently before Parliament retain the main thrust of the

Howard government's legislation. (See *Guardian* June 24, 2009 for details of modifications.) In particular, the following features remain:

- the targeting of workers and union in one industry for special treatment;
- the outlawing of industrial action with heavy fines and the threat to individual workers and trade unions and their officials of multi-million dollar uncapped damage claims by employers;
- the right of entry restricted, inhibiting unions from carrying out their functions;
- the coercive interrogation process – compulsory attendance at interrogation sessions, now quaintly called “examinations”;
- denial of the basic right to remain silent during interrogation.

The ABCC's record confirms that its target, as Andrews pointed out, is the trade unions, nothing in the Rudd/Gillard bill changes this.

During the debate on the Howard government's *BCII Bill* Labor MPs spoke strongly against its draconian anti-union, anti-worker provisions. They now defend the very same provisions in the Bill transferring the ABCC to the Fair Work Australia umbrella. The right-wing, led by Kevin Rudd, have a tight grip over the parliamentary Labor Party.

Several Labor MPs, including former ACTU president Jennie George and former union leader Doug Cameron expressed opposition to Gillard's bill. They are not the only Labor MPs to be shocked by the bill. As yet no Labor MP has indicated their preparedness to stand up and be counted.

Unions, workers and many others in the community are shocked by the failure of Labor to meet their expectations. Even more so because of the large number of former trade union leaders who are now turning their backs on the working class of Australia. They include former ACTU presidents Martin Ferguson and Simon Crean, former ACTU secretary Greg Combet, former ACTU assistant secretary Richard Marles, Bill Shorten and Mark Butler.

## Labor or labour?

There is a history of union officials entering Parliament as Labor MPs and forgetting the

working class. Even the left and other democratically minded Labor MPs become prisoners of the Right as Labor MPs.

The electorate of Australia threw out the Howard government, seeking real change, in particular the repeal of the repressive anti-union laws referred to as WorkChoices. The Labor government has no intention of restoring workers' rights or standing up to employer demands.

The federal elections will be held within the next six to 18 months. Who will the people of Australia turn to then? Will they keep Labor? Will they let the Coalition back in or open the door to even more extreme right-wing forces?

Or can the left, progressive and democratic forces organise and offer the people of Australia a genuine alternative, one that recognises trade union rights and protects the wages, working conditions and health and safety of workers?

Trade unions poured millions of dollars into throwing out the Howard government. No way will their now angry and disappointed members cop similar expenditure in the next elections to keep Labor in. Many would, however, be prepared to support and campaign for the election of trade unionists as independent MPs, not bound by Labor caucus, but free to represent the interests of the working class.

They could be joined by other candidates such as from the Greens who have consistently taken a principled stand, progressive organisations and the Communist Alliance which will be standing in the next federal elections.

They could be backed by other candidates such as from the Greens who have consistently taken a principled stand, the Communist Alliance which will be standing and progressive organisations.

Such a grouping of MPs could form the basis for a government of a new type, a government of people's unity, that not only defends workers but stands up for the environment, health, education, and for the rights of women, Indigenous Australians and migrants.

For further information on the ongoing campaign to dismantle the ABCC and support Ark Tribe visit [www.rightsonsite.org.au](http://www.rightsonsite.org.au) ✪

# Who protects workers?

Anna Pha

**“CFMEU wins \$1.2m backpay” ran a news story in September 2007, and a headline familiar to many workers over years of trade union struggles. But who has seen a headline declaring, “ABCC wins backpay for workers”?** No one. Winning back wages from unscrupulous and corrupt employers is not what the Howard government's Australian Building and Construction Commission does, nor what it was intended to do.

The ABCC cannot be accused of inactivity. Its political police force can be seen snooping around major construction sites, spying on and harassing workers, laying charges, summoning innocent workers to secret interrogations sessions. The ABCC's inspectorate moves swiftly in response to employer calls to remove trade union officials from workplaces. They have even been seen running around construction sites pulling down Eureka flags and removing union stickers and posters.

In an industry riddled with corporate corruption, underpayment of workers, theft of workers' entitlements and serious breaches of occupational health and safety regulations, the ABCC has not managed to bring charges against, let alone gain a conviction against, a single employer! With a budget of \$30 million last year an amazing lack of achievement by anyone's standards.

Employers have gone on the offensive making the most of the ABCC and accompanying legislation to shut trade unions out of the workplace and rob workers of their legal entitlements. As a consequence building sites have become more dangerous under its watch.

The ABCC is not to be seen when trade unions

raise safety issues. Take the case of Ark Tribe, a construction worker in South Australia, who faces a jail sentence for allegedly failing to turn up to a compulsory interrogation session with the ABCC. There was a dispute over safety breaches at the Flinders University site where he worked. The union called in Safework SA which issued prohibition notices and the company was then forced to address these issues.

Only after the dispute was over, when conditions were safer, only then did the ABCC make its appearance. It ignored employer breaches of the law, and set about an inquisition of union members on the site. This is classic ABCC behaviour. Ark is just the latest in a long line of trade unionists to be attacked and intimidated by the ABCC. He is an innocent, hard working, rigger, who had the audacity to belong to a trade union and now the courage to stand up for his rights.

“It's a shameful reflection on this Labor government that an ordinary construction worker now faces the possibility of six months imprisonment today because the government has not removed the most extreme laws left behind by John Howard,” CFMEU SA secretary Martin O'Malley said. Ark and the CFMEU have the full support of the trade union movement. Labor's amendments to the BCII Act leave Ark and tens of thousands of other building and construction workers as exposed as ever to the coercive interrogation powers of the ABCC (to be renamed Building Industry Inspectorate).

One of its most publicised exercises was in West Australia where 107 Leighton's workers employed on the Perth to Mandurah railway project faced fines of \$22,000 or more when the ABCC brought charges against them for taking “unlawful industrial action”. Their “unlawful behaviour”? Standing up

for the rights of a union safety delegate who had been sacked.

The ABCC has spent millions of dollars in the courts. Even when their hollow, politically driven cases are thrown out of the court, they persist, hoping to drain union resources and intimidate and punish innocent workers for being trade unionists.

In one case, where the ABCC was seeking financial penalties against the plumbers' union and a Queensland union official Federal Court judge Jeffrey Spender said the company's bogus employment arrangements were an “example of dishonest or fraudulent financial engineering”, a “dishonest attempt” to evade payment to the Australian Taxation Office, as well as its obligation to pay superannuation to the workers. Justice Spender said the case pursued by the ABCC “should not have been brought”. The ABCC should have, and had the power to, bring charges against the employer, but chose instead to hound the union and its officials – in effect protecting the employer.

Dave Noonan, the national secretary of the Construction Division of the CFMEU said, “as long these laws remain, the era of WorkChoices continues. We find it amazing that the Rudd Labor government, elected to restore Australian's rights at work, should care so little about the rights of construction workers.”

Unions have vowed to step-up their campaign against the ABCC and will take their fight to the Labor Party's national conference which begins on July 31. The ABCC is not protecting workers. The new Building Inspectorate will not protect workers.

It is the trade unions that protect workers. The ABCC and the laws that outlaw industrial action that must be repealed for trade unions to be able to do their job. ✪

# Africa-Israel under scrutiny for settlement construction

Adri Nieuwhof

**Africa-Israel is the latest target of a boycott campaign by Palestine solidarity activists because of the company's involvement in the illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank. American and European financial institutions hold a substantial stake in Africa-Israel Investment, investigations reveal.**

Africa-Israel Investment is an international holding and investment company based in Israel whose subsidiary, Danya Cebus, has been deeply involved in the construction of illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). According to research by the Israeli Coalition of Women for Peace, the company executed construction projects in the Israeli settlements of Modi'in Illit, Ma'ale Adumim, Har Homa and Adam. In addition, Africa-Israel offers apartments and houses in various settlements in the West Bank through the Israeli franchise of its real estate agency, Anglo Saxon, which has a branch in the Ma'ale Adumim settlement.

Diamond mogul Lev Leviev is chairman of the Africa-Israel Investment Board of Directors, and holds roughly 75 percent of the company. On March 8, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* reported that Lev Leviev does not have a problem with building in the OPT "if the State of Israel grants permits legally."

Leviev and his brother-in-law Daviv Eliashov own the company Leader Management and Development (LMD). According to the Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem, LMD requested and was granted approval to expand the Zufim settlement with approximately 1,400 housing units. The company has begun construction and in the process, orchards and agricultural lands belonging to the Palestinian village of Jayyus have been bulldozed, and their water wells and greenhouses confiscated.

Israeli settlements in the OPT are illegal under international law. This has been confirmed by numerous UN resolutions and the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on Israel's wall in the West Bank. The settlements violate Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which states that "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies." The construction of settlements also violates Article 53 prohibiting the destruction of property.

Recently, the Norwegian State Pension Fund came under pressure after Norwegian watchdog Norwatch revealed the pension fund had invested US\$850,000 in Africa-Israel Investment Ltd. According to the research of the authoritative financial source Capital IQ, with its investment, the Norwegian State Pension Fund became the fifth-largest investor in the company. Prior to a visit to the pension fund's ethics committee, a delegation of the Norwegian Socialist Left Party travelled to the West Bank and Gaza Strip to learn about the Israeli occupation of Palestine. In a May 15 interview with the Ma'an News Agency, the party's parliamentarian and spokesperson on foreign affairs, Aringot Valle, stated that "No doubt we as a party cannot support investment in a company that violates human rights, contributes to an occupation and war." Valle added that if the Norwegian State Pension Fund considers investing in Africa-Israel "then the ethics guidelines must be re-written."

Norwatch also revealed that private Norwegian banks were involved in Africa-Israel. Banks offered customers the possibility to invest in BlackRock Emerging Europe Fund (EEF), which invests in Africa-Israel.

One of these Norwegian banks, Storebrand, made clear to BlackRock that its investments in Africa-Israel are in contradiction with its ethical guidelines during meetings with the company in April and May. However,



A Danya Cebus settlement crowns a hill in the occupied West Bank.

Christine Torklep Meisingset, head of Responsible Investments at Storebrand, told *The Electronic Intifada* that the bank decided not to divest from BlackRock EEF. Although she would not provide any information on the discussion, she indicated that Storebrand considered BlackRock's response satisfactory. However, BlackRock refuses to comment publicly on the discussions.

On June 12, BlackRock announced its purchase of Barclays Global Investors, a subsidiary of Barclays Bank. Capital IQ lists Barclays Global Fund Advisors as the second-largest investor in Africa-Israel Investments after Lev Leviev. Based on Capital IQ's most recent information for this year, BlackRock is mentioned as the seventh-largest holder of Africa-Israel shares. After purchasing Barclays, BlackRock is

now the second-largest investor in the company after Leviev.

The fourth-largest investor is the Vanguard Group. Vanguard has been the target of a campaign calling for divesting from companies investing in Sudan, because of companies' alleged complicity in the genocide in Darfur. In sixth place is the US Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association College Retirement Equities Fund. According to Capital IQ, rounding out the top 10 investors in Africa-Israel are Danish fund managers Investeringforeningen Sydinvest and Swedish AP1 pension fund, which are the eighth and tenth largest, respectively.

As corporations that abet or

profit from Israel's human rights violations come under further scrutiny, financial institutions and their investors face increasing pressure to drop these companies from their portfolios. Most recently, the Swedish pension fund AP7 excluded the French transportation company Alstom because of its involvement in the Israeli tramway project that runs on Palestinian land, and the Belgian-French financial group Dexia announced it will no longer finance illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank.

Adri Nieuwhof is a consultant and human rights advocate based in Switzerland.

*The Electronic Intifada* ☪

## Iraq violence: effort to derail pullout

Susan Webb

**A string of deadly bombings has hit Baghdad and other areas as the US prepares to pull out of Iraqi cities and towns. A car bomb at a bus station in a Shiite neighbourhood in southwest Baghdad last week killed at least seven people and wounded 31 others, police said. A massive motorbike bomb explosion killed 78 people and wounded more than 100 in an open-air market in Baghdad's densely populated Shiite Sadr City.**

Most of the attacks so far have targeted Shiites or communities with predominantly Shiite populations, according to Associated Press reporter Patrick Quinn.

The killing spree began on June 20 with a series of car bombings and other attacks in several cities, including a massive suicide truck bombing that killed 82 people in a mainly Shiite town near the

northern city of Kirkuk, a scene of ongoing ethnic strife. It was the deadliest bombing so far this year.

More than 160 people have died in bombings over the past five days.

Under the security agreement signed by the US and Iraq last December, all US combat troops must leave Iraqi cities and towns on June 30. They must pull out of Iraq completely by the end of 2011.

Iraqi Vice President Tareq al-Hashemi, a Sunni from the Iraqi Islamic Party, said that the attacks aim to delay or hamper the US withdrawal from Iraqi cities by the end of June, according to a statement posted on his website, the *Aswat al-Iraq* (Voices of Iraq) news agency reported.

The Iraqi Communist Party said the attacks serve to disrupt the withdrawal timetable and prolong the US occupation.

The "new wave of violence and terrorism is aiming, among other

things, to drag the country once again to the brink of sectarian strife, spread a climate of fear and terror in the hearts of citizens, destroy the signs of security improvement that the country had started to experience during recent months and destabilise the relative political stability," the Iraqi Communists said in a recent statement.

"Contrary to what the planners and perpetrators of these acts have claimed, the recent wave of bombings serve, ultimately, to obstruct the restoration of Iraq's full sovereignty and independence, and the implementation of the timetable for withdrawing foreign forces, thus prolonging the presence of occupation forces."

The party said the wave of violence also seeks to influence the referendum on the Iraq-US agreement that is currently set for late July.

*People's Weekly World* ☪

## Greenland left secures poll victory

**The left-wing Inuit Ataqatigiit party has won parliamentary elections in Greenland, ousting the long-governing social democrats.**

Inuit Ataqatigiit (IA), which means Community of the People, took 43.7 percent of the vote - doubling its standing in the last election in 2005.

The ruling Siumut party won only 26.5 percent of votes - 3.9 percent less than the last election.

Addressing celebrating supporters in Nuuk, IA leader Kuupik Kleist said: "Greenland deserves this. Now we can lead this country forward into a new era." Prime Minister Hans Enoksen called the snap election after Greenlanders decided in a November referendum to loosen ties with Denmark, which has controlled the island since the 18th century.

The next government will be the first to lead the semi-autonomous territory under an expanded home rule agreement that takes effect on June 21.

The new arrangement will make Greenlandic, an Inuit tongue,

the official language and gradually shift control over the local police force, courts and the coastguard to Greenland's government.

The plan also sets out new rules for splitting potential oil revenue with Denmark - a key issue in a region where new natural resources could be exposed by melting sea ice and glaciers.

Copenhagen, whose subsidies account for two-thirds of the island's economy, will still control defence and foreign policy and Danish monarch Queen Margrethe remains the head of state.

More than 70 percent of the 40,000 eligible voters turned out for the election, which was dominated by allegations of nepotism and misuse of public funds.

Several politicians, including top Siumut members, have been found guilty of trousering public money.

Greenland became a colony of Denmark in 1775 and was a Danish province from 1953 until 1979, when it was granted home rule. ☪

# No peace, no silence in Colombia

WT Whitney

**New documentation is available on the precariousness of life and pall of terror weighing upon Colombia. Why has deadly conflict persisted for decades? Why have rich nations turned a blind eye, or lent a hand?**

Britain's Colombia Solidarity Campaign joined a multinational delegation in February to Arauca department in solidarity with oil workers there. A report appearing on the group's web site provides background for a wave of murders there.

Arauca, located along the Venezuelan border, came under military control last September as a "zone of consolidation and rehabilitation." Colombia's interior minister characterised the oil-producing state as a "laboratory of war."

Disappearances, killing, and displacement are routine. Paramilitaries and the army have joined in massacres. Roadblocks cause food shortages. Displacement aggravates malnutrition and sickness. Social services are nearly absent due to government neglect. Members of teacher, oil worker, health worker, peasant, and public employee unions are punished.

A tally of recent deaths provided by colombiaindymedia.org includes these victims:

- Hector Parra Suarez, cattle ranch worker, June 15, Fortul;
- Ramiro Castellanos Mantilla, June 12, Saravena;
- Alexis Moreno Merchan, June 12, Barrio Las Flores;
- Gorge Humberto Echeverri, teacher, unionist, community leader, June 11 Arauquita;
- Pablo Rodriguez Garavito, teacher, unionist, June 9, Puerto Rondo;
- Jairo Pinto, farm worker, June 9, Puerto Rondo;
- Linderman German Farias, indigenous, June 8, Tame.

Others, all killed in Arauquita, were: Luis Eduardo Leon Moreno, June 6; Wilman Navarro, June 5;

Ana Leon Morena, May 16; and Milton Blanco, teacher and unionist April 24. For some, occupations were unspecified.

In a just-released report, the International Trade Union Confederation listed 76 unionists killed worldwide last year, 49 of them Colombian – a 25 percent hike in one year.

Philip Alston, special UN rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, conducted a 10-day investigation in Colombia in June. He focused on killings of thousands of civilians by the military over six years, carried out to provide bodies that, dressed in guerrilla uniforms, could be presented as insurgent casualties. The military wanted to advertise victories. Murderers gained extra pay.

In a preliminary report available on the reliefweb.int web site, Alston noted that the killings "disproportionately affect rural and poor populations, indigenous people, Afro-Colombians, trade unionists, human rights defenders and community leaders." The known victims represent "the tip of the iceberg." He implicated ostensibly demobilised paramilitaries.

Data on divisions within Colombian society suggest class conflict as central to out-of-bounds warfare directed at the many.

Poverty is variously estimated at 50 to 60 percent, with a 60 percent-40 percent rural-urban differential. Extreme poverty afflicts almost one quarter of rural Colombians. Some 13 percent of young children suffer from acute malnutrition and almost 30 percent from chronic malnutrition. The probability of Colombians dying under age 40 approaches 10 percent.

Wealth is concentrated: 1.4 percent of landowners hold 65 per cent of Colombian land and 0.4 percent of them own 61 percent of the farm land. Peasants fleeing conflict have abandoned 15 million acres, mostly to agribusiness and extractive industries. The internally displaced exceed 4 million, almost half living in households headed by women.



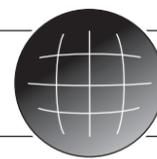
A banner protesting the assassination of three trade union leaders from Nestlé.

Based on its Gini coefficient – a measure of wealth distribution – Colombia is Latin America's second-most unequal country, after Brazil. Ten percent of the country's wealthy earn 30 times more than the poorest 10 percent. Overall, 5 percent of the population controls over 90 percent of Colombian property.

Class division long ago induced the poor to join in defending themselves for the sake of survival. The rich and powerful took fright, magnifying the fears of others and exploiting divisions. Their tool was and is the bogeyman of a communist menace. Guerrilla insurgencies, continuing over decades, have served as foil. Peaceful conflict resolution remains a distant dream. War and militarization continue.

The United States, bloated on anti-communism and anti-terrorism, brought Colombia into the cold war. Since 2000 the country has received over \$5 billion in US military aid, spent largely on fomenting terror. Now the US and Canadian governments, alert to business profits, move toward free trade agreements with Colombia. In May, the Pentagon asked Congress for \$46 million to develop a new military base in Palanquero, Colombia, condemned by the Fellowship of Reconciliation as "giving the United States military increased capacity for intervention throughout most of Latin America."

People's Weekly World ✪



## Global Briefs

**LITHUANIA:** Parliament last week banned discussion of homosexuality in schools and in literature available to children. Viewing the legislation as discriminatory, gay rights and human rights groups including Amnesty International launched a campaign mediated through the European Parliament and EU leaders to urge the government to revise the new policies. Local gay rights groups attribute passage of the law to the influence of a "homophobic society strongly influenced by [the] Catholic Church." Experts say economic dislocation has fuelled animus against gays, which is rife throughout Eastern Europe, as well as attacks against immigrants and Roma people.

**CHINA:** The Communist Party last month authorised a restructuring of the *People's Daily* newspaper. Reporters worldwide will work in new branch offices. Expansion from 16 to 20 pages will enhance coverage of "international news, social construction news and theories, literature and art reviews." According to its web site, the news service intends "to show the characteristics of the era" to party members and a "vast number of readers." Guiding the change will be the "Three Closeness[es]: close to reality, close to life and close to the masses."

**UGANDA:** The 2008 State of Environment Report, released on June 17 and reported on the New Vision web site, indicates that "The entire forest eco-system has disappeared in 23 districts," also that 3 million acres – 30 percent of the country's forest cover – were lost between 1990 and 2005. The National Environment Management Authority predicts deforestation and near-desertification will be almost total by 2050. Contributing factors include a growing population's use of wood and charcoal, bush burning, and diversion of land to agricultural, construction and industrial uses. Overgrazing, the melting of ice on Mount Ruwenzori, and agricultural and housing encroachment on wetlands have led to decreased availability of water, manifested by declining biodiversity of wetland species and rivers that disappear.

**GLOBAL:** One billion people, including 642 million living in the Asia-Pacific region, are hungry, according to a report released on June 19 by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The record high includes 100 million people added last year through rising unemployment and falling income attributed to the world financial crisis. Food prices rose 24 percent from 2006 through 2008. FAO spokesman Kostas Stamoulis highlighted as a contradiction that "a lot of the world is very rich despite the economic crisis." The BBC also quoted FAO Director General Jacques Diouf who warned that hunger affecting one-sixth of the world population "poses a serious risk for world peace and security." He urged governments to provide agricultural support, particularly for small farmers.

**IRAQ:** Snakes have descended upon southern Iraq. A medical administrator in Dhi Qar Province reported six deaths. Experts see heat and dryness as causes. Severe drought has prevailed for four years, and Tigris and Euphrates River flow has dropped 75 percent over 10 years. Dams in Turkey and Syria permit diversion of water for irrigation. Almost half the agricultural land that once made Iraq a cereal exporter has been lost to desertification.

## Message of Solidarity to the Iranian Working Class

**The Communist Party of Ireland expresses its solidarity with the democratic forces of Iran in their continuing struggle to bring about radical social and economic change. We express our solidarity with our comrades in the Tudeh Party of Iran and with all working-class and popular forces who valiantly struggle to assert the genuine demands for democracy and to offer an anti-imperialist direction to the struggles of the Iranian people.**

The theocratic Islamic regime of the mullahs/ayatollahs has, over the last thirty years, brought great hardship upon the people, sown great division, and inflicted mass repression, using extreme violence and torture to maintain its grip on power. They thwarted the aspirations of the masses for democracy,

economic and social justice flowing from the revolutionary uprising of the Iranian people when they overthrew the American puppet regime of the Shah.

Today the ruling class of Iran, which has used religion as a mask to hide its real intentions, is divided about its relationship to imperialism, while imperialist forces from the United States, Britain and the European Union continue to interfere, with the aim of replacing the present regime with one that better serves their interests and preventing the genuine demands of the masses for democratic change from being achieved.

The Irish people have bitter experience of the manipulation of people's sincere religious beliefs by the ruling class in the South of Ireland, by the unionist clique

in the North of Ireland, and by British imperialism, which fostered and nurtured religious divisions to secure its own imperialist interests.

This interference by imperialism and the carnival of reaction that it promoted and encouraged has left a deep legacy, which has hampered progressive forces for many decades here in Ireland. The imperial powers, when it suits them, can also ally themselves with the most obscurantist and backward forces in the Muslim world while at the same time fomenting anti-Islamic religious hatred.

The democratic advance of the Iranian people has been frustrated, once by the imposition of the Shah and secondly by the regime of the ayatollahs.

Eugene Mc Cartan  
General Secretary ✪

Letters to the Editor  
The Guardian  
74 Buckingham Street  
Surry Hills NSW 2010



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

## Time for independent stand

The ACTU Congress was a disgrace to the workers of Australia when a so called workers party, the ALP, was allowed to attack the CFME. These combined unions have their members in four of the most dangerous occupations in the world.

And for the peak union body of this land not to have tarred and feathered Gillard and run her out of the hall on a rail shows that the hands of time have been turned back a 100 years and we must start to fight for our rights once again.

The first thing to do is for workers in each work place and each union member to demand that none of their union dues go into ALP coffers. At the moment if a unionist pays \$1,500 per year in dues, \$150 of that goes to the ALP.

State and federal union organisers are against this as they are waiting to warm their bottoms on the green leather in Macquarie St or in Canberra.

Noel Wilson  
Cootamundra

## Schoolyard antics

The current bun fight about the ute, fake e-mails and everything else that the government and the opposition are throwing at each other is disgusting. Here we have adults who are in charge of the country (the government) and those who want to be in charge of the country (the opposition).

If I am to take their opinion of each other at face value, then what we have here is a bunch of not very nice people, to put it mildly carrying on with schoolyard antics. They're not suited to run a chook raffle, let alone the country. One would think that with the many challenges facing the world today and with Australia as part of it, the leaders of the country at least should try to rise to the occasion and start dealing with serious questions.

If they are only interested in their own jobs and inflated egos, let them go and fight it out somewhere else. I know they were elected but I think there should be some mechanism introduced to help them on the way out if they do not do their work properly. They do not hesitate to introduce draconian laws against workers – why should they be exempt from the same laws?

Mati English  
Sydney

## On Freda Brown

The Guardian tribute to Freda Brown (June 17) is a fitting article about Freda Brown, a remarkable Australian and world leader. Freda's first job was in a Jam

(Preserved Fruit) factory where she was paid 94 cents a week, no sick leave, overtime and work on Saturday morning.

This pittance pay was part of Judge Higgins findings in the Harvester case was a \$2 wage for working men and 54 percent of that for women.

Higgins likened the \$2 a week for men to that of hiring a horse before motorised transport. Both man and horse needed food, shelter and water. Women according to Higgins needed 54 percent of the male wage as they only had themselves to clothe, eat and shelter. The young Freda Lewis became a spokesperson for equal pay. She spoke to trade unions, the NSW Trade and Labour Council, joined workers on strike or on picket lines, and became a leading advocate for women's rights.

As a worker for women's rights Freda Brown knew women would be goaded into action as part of the working class and people's movement for equal pay and status.

Freda worked with women like Dame Mary Gilmore who wrote a series of articles for the Communist press, *The Workers' Weekly*, feminist Jessie Street.

However, the prime work for Freda was for world peace, following the bombing of Hiroshima.

All these movements led in 1975 to Freda being elected as President of the Women's International Democratic Federation.

This Freda did with honour for Australia and the world movement for peace and socialism.

Phyllis Johnson  
Sydney

## 50th Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution



Saturday 18th of July 2009 from 6pm  
Granville Youth & Community Recreation Centre – Hall  
3A Memorial Drive, Granville

The world salutes 50 years of the Cuban Revolution. 50 years of struggle, resistance and dreams converted into realities and victories, example of dignity and courage. Celebrate with us the revolution that has shown that a different world is possible. One of justice, solidarity and dignity.

Food & drinks • Video • Music • Artistic groups

Organised by: Committee in Solidarity with Cuba Western Suburbs

## Help and advice

In response to letters to the editor "Work for the Dole – Injured for Life" (June 10) I would like to raise that there are a number of funded support organisations people like Jillian Marchant injured in the course of work can turn to for help.

- Disability Rights Service, Level 1, Chalmers Street, Surry Hills, ph (02) 9318 0144, email nsw@flasn.au.
- The Law Society of NSW,

Community Assistance  
Department Solicitor Referral Service, 170 Phillip Street, Sydney, ph (02) 9926 0300 or 1800 422 713,  
www.lawsocnsw.asn.au/legalhelp  
If Jillian and others have any problems with these services please feel free to contact me through the CPA office (02) 9699 8844.

Allan Hamilton  
Cootamundra  
NSW

# Culture & Life

by

Rob Gowland

## An anniversary worth remembering!

The beginning of July is the anniversary of the greatest tank battle of WW2, a titanic yet short-lived affair that sealed the fate of Hitler's Germany once and for all: the *Battle of Kursk*, a battle that is usually ignored or belittled by capitalism's historians, but which was and is of decisive importance.

In the [northern] Summer of 1943, the front line between the forces of Nazi Germany and those of the Soviet Union had a massive bulge in it. In the vicinity of Kursk, the Soviet forces had punched a dent that extended far to the west. This strategic bulge, or salient, was hemmed in by Hitlerite forces on the North, West and South.

The Nazi High Command saw the possibility that, if they could attack the base of the bulge, at its narrowest point, with sufficient force they might cut it off, surround and destroy the Soviet forces trapped within it, and surge through the resultant gap to destroy the Soviet South-Western Front.

From there the Wehrmacht would head north east and threaten Moscow with encirclement. Simultaneously, the bulk of Germany's other forces in

Russia would move north and overrun Leningrad.

It was an ambitious plan, and meticulous preparations were made for its execution. But the possibilities inherent in the Kursk Salient were also obvious to the Soviet Supreme Command, and they too made plans to deal with them.

The Nazis christened the coming battle "Operation Citadel", and committed to it a staggering force: fifty full strength divisions, including sixteen panzer and motorised divisions, with what the Nazi leaders thought would be an over whelming quantity of heavy guns, tanks and planes.

The attack began on the July 5 against Soviet troops commanded by General Rokossovsky. On his sector of the front alone, the Soviet army was assailed by Nazi forces totalling 460,000 officers and men, with about 6,000 guns and mortars and around 1,200 tanks and assault guns. Large formations of Nazi bombers attacked overhead in successive waves.

The German plan was to commence the attack at 3am and take the Soviet side by surprise. However, learning of the time of the planned attack from scouts, the Soviet Command launched their own mini counter-offensive at 2.30am, with a massive artillery barrage and aerial bombardment of the German assembly areas.

The resultant losses and chaos forced the Nazi side to postpone their attack until dawn, to the advantage of Soviet gunners.

In the course of some five assaults during July 5, the Nazis managed to force Rokossovsky's forward defence line back some six to eight kilometres, but this was not enough to bring victory.

Nor did the Germans fare any better on the southern flank of the Kursk Bulge, despite stubborn fighting for several days. The German forces were able to advance only some ten to eighteen kilometres.

Meanwhile, overhead, intense air battles took place. Soviet historian



A German supply column goes up in smoke after attacks by Soviet planes – *Battle of Kursk*.

Boris Solovyov notes in *The Battle of the Kursk Salient* that "over 2,000 aircraft were in action in an area measuring 20 kilometres by 60 kilometres. Quite often from 100 to 150 aircraft were simultaneously engaged in battles over this area."

On July 12 the Wehrmacht launched a massive attack on Kursk from the south, the biggest tank battle of WW2, fought near Prokhorovka. "A total of up to 1,200 Soviet and German tanks and self-propelled guns came to grips in an extremely ferocious battle embracing a wide variety of forms of combat" notes Solovyov.

When it was over, the Germans had lost nearly 400 tanks and sustained heavy losses in manpower. The West German historian Walter Görlitz wrote of it: "The last units capable of offensive operations burned down to a cinder. The backbone of the German armoured forces was broken."

The failure of the Prokhorovka

assault marked the effective end of the *Battle of Kursk* for the Nazis. By the July 23, much diminished in men, materiel and morale, they were back where they had been before the battle began.

Let us never forget that, in the period from June 22, 1941, when the Nazis invaded the USSR, to Victory Day on May 9, 1945, a total of 607 Nazi divisions were destroyed or captured on the Eastern Front.

This is *three and a half times more* than the Nazis lost on all the other war fronts – in North Africa, Italy and Western Europe.

The last word on Kursk belongs to Marshall of the Soviet Union Alexander Vasilevsky: "Reading what several bourgeois authors have written about the Second World War, I could not help noticing that they do all they can to belittle the role of the Red Army's victory in the summer of 1943.

"They seek to persuade the reader that the *Battle of Kursk* was only a minor episode in the Second World War. To this end, they either keep silent about the *Battle of Kursk* or give a very brief account of it.

"In such books I seldom found a true appraisal of Hitler's plan for revenge in the summer of 1943 as an adventurist plan, or any recognition of the bankruptcy of the Nazi generals' strategy. But, as the saying goes, deeds are stronger than words.

"Here I would like to quote the following elementary fact. When the *Battle of Kursk* reached its climax our allies landed in Sicily and on August 17 moved from there to Italy. Would they have managed to execute this operation, if they had been opposed by half the force we faced in the summer of 1943?

"I think the answer to this question is clear enough." ☼



Sun 5 July –  
Sat 11 July

Whatever else this week's episode of *Agatha Christie's Miss Marple* (ABC1 Sunday July 5 at 8.30pm) might be, an adventure of Mrs Christie's elderly sleuth it is definitely not.

The original Christie novel from which it is adapted (*Why Didn't They Ask Evans?*) was first published in 1934. The detectives in the book are Robert "Bobby" Jones – son of the Vicar of Marchmolt – and the beautiful and titled Lady Frances "Frankie" Derwent. They are clones of another pair of Christie's amateur sleuths: Tommy and Tuppence.

Isaac Anderson in *The New York Times Book Review* of September 18, 1935 commented that "Frankie and Bobby are not nearly so brilliant as amateur detectives usually are in books, but you are sure to like them, and you may even be able to forgive Agatha Christie for leaving out Hercule Poirot just this once."

Milward Kennedy in his review in the British *Guardian* of September 21, 1934 described them as "a young man and a young woman who blend charm and irresponsibility with shrewdness and good luck" and commented that they "contrive amusingly and successfully to usurp the functions of the police".

Unfortunately, Anderson and Kennedy's opinion is apparently not shared by the present owners of the Christie copyrights who seem to think viewers will not watch their television adaptations unless they have the magic name of Miss Marple or Hercule Poirot attached to them. Since Mrs Christie did not limit herself to writing about those two characters alone, the producers have had to wreak havoc with the original stories in order to force them into the moulds the producers obviously believe will bring them the best return on their investment.

It is ironic that this cavalier treatment of her work would only have confirmed Agatha Christie in the poor opinion she had of television (in one live 1949 adaptation – of *And Then There Were None* – one of the dead bodies, believing he was safely out of shot, had got up and walked off the set in full view of the camera).

As a consequence, for years she refused to grant television rights to any of her works. Only after her death did her daughter agree to a new adaptation, by London Weekend Television, in 1980 of the same story as this week's *Miss Marple: Why Didn't They Ask Evans?*

A later *Miss Marple*, Joan Hickson, had a minor role in *Evans*. But the character of Miss Marple did not appear, since she was not in Christie's story at all. And she's not the only one: the producers appear to have introduced some other characters into this week's TV "adaptation" – "the eccentric Claud Evans with his hothouse full of exotic orchids" and Wilson, "Sylvia's solemn, ever-present butler", do not appear in my list of characters from *Why Didn't They Ask Evans?*

I have made it clear previously that I do not particularly like Agatha Christie's novels, but I do think that if you are going to adapt her works



Rhys Ifans – *Six Days One June* – *Last Word Monologues* (ABC1 Fridays beginning July 10 at 10.05pm).

– and trade on her name – then you should at the very least treat her work with a little respect.

I find much of the *Time Team* programs on ABC TV to be fascinating, but I am constantly infuriated by the silliness of their self-imposed three day time limit for their archaeological digs. Surely what interests the viewer is what the team finds, not whether it took them three days or three weeks or three months to find it?

Now Tony Robinson from *Time Team* fronts an Australian archaeological program that I actually turned off: *Ned Kelly Uncovered* (ABC1 Thursday July 9 at 8.30pm). One of the "experts" advising the team clearly had his own agenda: he seemed determined at every opportunity to put down Ned Kelly's reputation, even to the extent of stupidly denying that the

Kelly gang had any popular support among the people of the district! Like other bushrangers, they could not have survived at all if it had not been for the tacit (and often explicit) support of the local populace.

When the program began asking the police for an expert assessment of Ned and his gang I gave up on it.

It could be summed up I think as "historically extremely shallow".

Superstition is superstition, whether it is in a remote corner of Sicily or the southwest corner of Australia. Falling stones cannot pass through the roofs and canvas tents without making holes.

To believe otherwise is to pass into the realm of fantasy, to cease to believe in the scientific basis of the universe.

For many middle-class intellectuals, however, it is only too easy to believe in metaphysics, to give credibility to the "paranormal", and to allow their "tolerance" of other people's superstition to mask their own unscientific gullibility.

This is particularly so when they are dealing with traditional beliefs of indigenous people: to maintain a scientific viewpoint then is somehow tantamount to waging cultural imperialism.

*Spirit Stones* (ABC1 Thursday July 9 at 9.30pm) uses accounts

of curious phenomena from the 1940s and '50s involving stones falling from the sky on Aboriginal settlements, which could have made an interesting scientific investigation, and over lays it with so much metaphysical nonsense (showers of stones fell but never hit anyone, fell through roofs without leaving holes, etc) that it becomes simply incredible.

Television, on which a close-up is virtually life-size, is peculiarly suited to filmed monologues. Staring this week, we have three such: the *Last Word Monologues* (ABC1 Fridays beginning July 10 at 10.05pm).

The first, *Six Days One June*, stars Rhys Ifans, Hugh Grant's Welsh lodger in *Notting Hill*, as a 40-year-old farmer, henpecked by his mother, looking for love – or escape, at any rate.

In a series of disjointed straight-to-camera monologues, he bares his soul and ultimately more besides, as the dangers inherent in a local hallucinogenic fungus are revealed to be well known to the people of the district.

Next week it's Sheila Hancock and the last in the series is Bob Hoskins. All are written, produced and directed by Hugo Blick, and a damn good job he makes of it too. ☺



*Harvest Time*  
and other poems  
by Vic Williams

## Harvest Time and other poems

### Vic Williams

\$12.50 (p&p \$2.50)

Vic Williams was brought up on a farm. As a boy, he enjoyed working with his father, blowing the forge, harnessing and feeding horses. With his dog he hunted and trapped rabbits, and roamed the bush. His father gave him books of Australian bush poets writing at the time, Lawson, Ogilvie, Patterson and he felt that poetry was close to the life he led.

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# POLITICS

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**Clean Coal, Emissions Trading – False Claims or Real Policy?**  
Richard Dennis, Director, The Australia Institute  
Iain MacGill, Dr, Joint Director, UNSW Centre for Energy and Environmental Markets

**July 10**  
**The Refugee Crisis – Promoting Humanity or Re-igniting Fear?**  
Mary Crock, Prof, International Law, University of Sydney  
David Bitel, Specialist Immigration Lawyer

**July 17**  
**THE GREENS – PROTEST PARTY OR MAINSTREAM POLITICAL FORCE?**  
Geoff Hawker, Senior Lecturer in Politics, Macquarie University  
David Shoebridge, convenor NSW Greens, Woollahra Greens Councillor

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# Pacific trade and the impact on health services

## ANF fact sheet

Everyone has a right to better health and appropriate health care. Around the Pacific, governments should provide services for the immediate and long-term care of citizens (e.g. vaccine programs; public health efforts against malaria or dengue; safe housing; clean water supply, hospitals and health clinics and other services). But access to essential service like health is affected by the trade policies of the government of the day.

Australia, New Zealand and Pacific member states of the Pacific Islands Forum are preparing to negotiate a regional free trade agreement, through the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER). Regional free trade agreements like PACER-Plus focus not only on trade in manufactured or agricultural goods, but also trade in services like health or education.

What will this agreement mean for people living in the Pacific, when it comes to their health?

**Why?** A key issue for the PACER-Plus trade negotiations will be whether Pacific island governments can ensure that all citizens have adequate and equitable access to health care. Governments must not trade away control of key service sectors including health, education, land, tourism and intellectual property.

**Who?** International trade agreements like the World Trade Organisation (WTO) General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) include labour mobility as a service, calling it "the temporary movement of natural persons". Including labour mobility as a service in free trade agreements will affect the number of skilled health workers who leave their country to work overseas, through temporary labour mobility programs as well as permanent migration.

**Where?** Developed countries like Australia and New Zealand have shortages of trained health professionals like doctors and nurses. With increased labour mobility, Pacific countries can lose their skilled health workers overseas.

Better health is central to human happiness and well-being. It also makes an important contribution to economic development, as healthy populations live longer, are more productive, and save more. Many factors influence health status and a country's ability to provide quality health services. One key factor in ensuring that health services meet the needs of the people is whether the government can set the rules for the entire health system.

### Gov't responsibility

The provision and maintenance of health services is the overall responsibility of government. Health care advances are invariably products of government policy, regulation and action.

Governments should supply the health training of nurses and doctors, basic infrastructure like hospitals and clinics. Investments in roads can improve access to health services; inflation targets can constrain health spending, especially in rural areas or outlying islands.

Accordingly all countries should guard against trade agreements that may undermine and restrict a democratically elected government's capacity to develop policies which are in the best interests of the people it serves.

The PACER-Plus agreement is intended to liberalise trade in goods and services, reduce trade barriers (like tariffs or import duties) and require governments to enter into binding and enforceable trade agreements.

While the future benefits arising from

PACER-Plus are uncertain, what is clear is that PACER-Plus will restrict a government's ability to provide public services, including health care.

### Trade and health services

PIC governments fund and provide the largest part of their country's health services (normally around 80 to 90 percent). Governments generally fund these public services by through taxes and aid programs.

FTAs often reduce the ability of governments to raise revenue.

Recent reports such as a 2007 study by Nathan Associates for the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat found that some Pacific countries may lose tens of millions of dollars each year from the reduction of tariffs or import duties. For example, Vanuatu stands to lose around 17 percent of its annual government revenue, as does Tonga, while Samoa and Kiribati stand to lose around 14 percent of their revenue. Even bigger countries like Fiji and PNG stand to lose more than \$10 million each year.

### Trade and public health

Trade policy can clash with public health policies. One example is the way some Pacific governments have mounted public health campaigns against poor nutrition, attempting to combat the increasing rates of diabetes, hypertension and other health impacts from obesity.

In its 2000 budget, the Fiji government led by the then Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry imposed a ban on imported mutton flaps through a prohibition order issued under s.102 of the Fair Trading Decree (1992), to address its concerns about the health consequences of poor quality sheep meat imports.

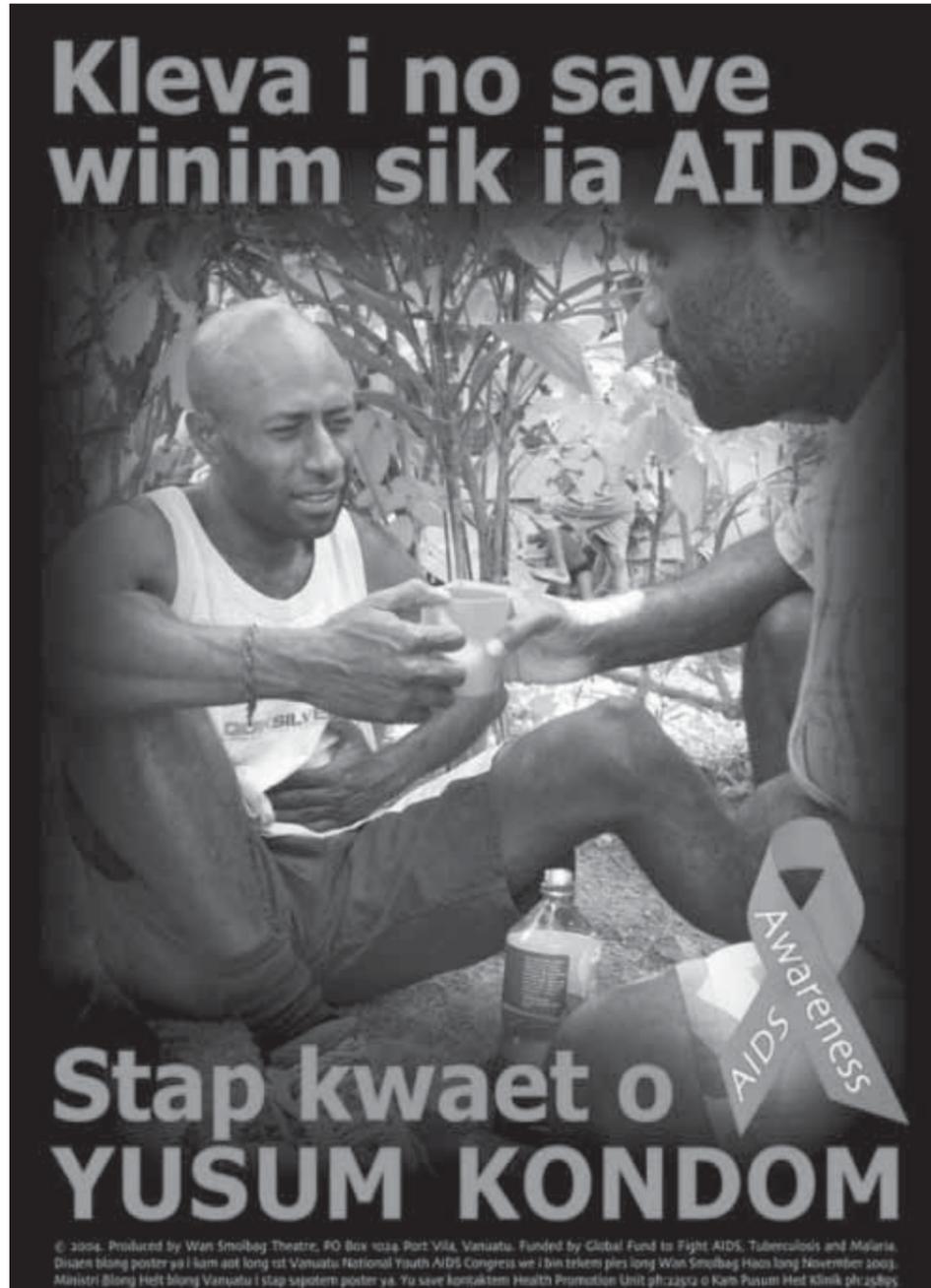
However, New Zealand threatened to take Fiji to the WTO disputes process, arguing that a ban on NZ products could be seen as effective trade discrimination in favour of the US, which also exports junk meat to Fiji.

Some FTAs allow countries to claim a trade restriction necessary to protect human health. But countries must prove that no other measures are possible and that the regulations do not constitute a "disguised restriction on international trade". Pacific island nations do not have the human or financial resources to use the WTO disputes procedure, and will be under significant pressure under PACER-Plus not to use measures that will hinder Australian and New Zealand based exporters. For this reason, governments cannot easily use trade and taxation policy to protect public health, as noted in a study in the *Bulletin of the World Health Organisation*:

"Given recent initiatives towards trade liberalisation and the creation of the World Trade Organisation, tariffs or import bans may not serve as alternative measures to control consumption [of poor quality food]. This presents significant challenges to health policy-makers serving economically marginal populations and suggests that some population health concerns cannot be adequately addressed without awareness of the effects of global trade".

### Privatisation

A principle goal of FTAs is to require PICs to open up their service sectors, including health care, to foreign competition. Unless countries can negotiate restrictions for key public services, FTAs provide foreign firms with the same access and treatment as domestic firms and the government. While PACER-Plus promotes free market principles including enhanced market



access by the private sector, it is unlikely that private sector interests will provide the full range of public health services that Pacific countries require, especially for rural populations.

Even where the private sector does invest in health care, it will only be those parts that deliver immediate and sustained profits. Such investment may have little concern for the health care needs of all members of the community, especially poor people living in the squatter settlements or villages. Overseas investors will prefer to provide services in the major urban centres, but will be less likely to invest in programs for the vast majority of people who live in outlying rural areas or outer islands.

### Labour mobility

Skilled health professionals are very mobile and move from country to country. Whether on a temporary or permanent basis, nurses, doctors and health technicians move in search of career opportunities, training, higher wages or better employment conditions.

There is an international shortage of nurses and other health professionals, with many developed countries scanning the globe for potential

employees. For example, in 2006 there were 652 doctors born in the Pacific working in Australia and New Zealand as well as 3,467 nurses and midwives from the Pacific.

While the benefits of remittances from overseas workers cannot be ignored, any increase in the "brain drain" of health professionals from Pacific countries to developed countries like Australia and New Zealand will worsen the shortages of health workers, with the consequent impact on the provision of care.

Find out more:

Joel Negin: "Australia and New Zealand's contribution to Pacific Island worker brain drain", *Australia and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 32 (6) 2008.

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M Evans et al: "Globalisation, Diet, and Health: An Example from Tonga", *Bulletin of the World Health Organisation* 79:9 2001.

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