



Abortion to remain criminal act in Queensland

Bob Briton

Queensland's parliament and courts have been put in a tight spot; a test of moral courage. The discovery by police of a plastic bag of powder and some empty tablet bubble packaging during a raid on a Cairns apartment on an unrelated matter has ignited a knock-down, drag-out debate about the RU486 ("morning after" abortion pill) and Queensland's dated abortion legislation. Hospitals have stopped performing abortions in even the direst of circumstances for fear of prosecution. The government is trying to rush changes to the current criminal code through the parliament to avoid an ugly confrontation on the issues. In the meantime, women whose health is under threat are crossing the border for the procedure.

The charge of carrying out a self-administered abortion against 19-year-old Tegan Leach was later dropped when the police admitted they had not sent the drugs' packaging away for analysis. She and her boyfriend Sergie Brennan still face a charge of procuring a noxious or poisonous substance to cause a miscarriage. The arguments from the police prosecutor now centre on whether the substances were poisonous.

Part of their case rests on the fact that misoprostol (one of the drugs allegedly used) is only available on prescription. The charge carries a maximum sentence of seven years imprisonment. The public has been given a stunning reminder that abortion is still dealt with under the criminal code and that questions such as when a woman had her last period can still be a matter for the courts.

On crown law advice all Queensland hospitals have stopped performing terminations whether surgical or medical (using drugs). Abortions using the drugs in question are recommended when certain hazards to the mother's health and future pregnancies are present. Medical staff previously thought themselves protected by section 282 of the criminal code, which allows for surgical abortion in cases where the life or health of the mother was in danger. However, medical abortions are not mentioned and the confusion thrown up by Tegan Leach's case has caused medical negligence insurers like Avant Law and the Queensland Government Insurance Fund to threaten to withdraw cover from doctors carrying out any abortions.

Authorities are going to great lengths to downplay the controversy emanating from Queensland. NSW hospitals are tight-lipped

about cases being referred from over the border. Queensland Health Minister Paul Lucas is keen to quash any suggestion that women are exercising normally recognised reproductive rights by travelling interstate. "Whether it's for a termination or for burns victims, it's decided on clinical grounds and generally from clinician to clinician," he said last week.

Lucas and Premier Anna Bligh are also quick to point out that the changes to the criminal code are minimal; limited to allowing medical abortion in the circumstances set down in the current draconian legislation. "We are not looking at changing the law in any way that makes abortion more or less available in Queensland," Lucas said. Bligh is reported to be personally in favour of the decriminalisation of abortion but feels constrained to make minor changes for fear conservative forces would hijack the debate and worsen the present intrusive arrangements.

Anti-abortion group Cherish Life claims the furore sparked by the Tegan Leach investigation is a "contrived campaign" by "pro-abortion doctors" to wring concessions from the government. Police are taking seriously threats made against the lives of Premier Bligh's children. Debate leading to thoroughgoing reform appears to be crippled by fear of rousing

reactionary forces within the community and the parliament.

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists worries that the minor changes being proposed will not satisfy insurers and will leave its members vulnerable. "They can tinker all they like with section 282 of the criminal code but it does not withdraw the threat of criminal prosecutions," college president Ted Warner told *The Australian*. "That is really the bottom line here: we would like doctors to be able to practise without the threat subsequently of having criminal charges laid against them."

The father of Shay, a 24-year-old Brisbane woman, grew tired of the dangerous impasse. His daughter was 19 weeks pregnant with a severely deformed foetus dying in her womb. "Everyone should get off their high horse and get my daughter into theatre. Every day that goes by is a day too long for her," he said last week. He finally ran out of patience. While authorities continued to tiptoe around the sensitivities of the religious right he packed his daughter into a car and drove to the northern NSW city of Lismore. "It was just silly having to drive over a fictitious line in the dirt to get the medical help that she should have been able to get in Brisbane," he said later. ✚



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The Guardian

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Mark Latham and Labor's love-hate relationship with capitalism

Mark Latham could have been Prime Minister of Australia – the country's 26th and the 13th for Labor. As it is, he is a footnote in history; an also ran who missed out on the top post. Like a number of past Labor leaders he appears keen to tell all and to offer advice for his successors and to the rest of the country. His memoirs, *The Latham Diaries*, partially lifted the lid on the can of worms that is the federal parliamentary Labor Party.

He liked to present himself as a straight talker, a battler surrounded by spin doctors, robots, silvertails and phoneyes. He liked lopping tall poppies and identifying with the mass of ordinary Australians living in our big cities' outer suburbs. He used to get stuck into the "Tories" and the unequal social order they have built in Australia. He sympathised with its major victims – the unemployed, Aboriginal Australians and the other marginalised people in the community. Latham was going to do something about it. He and a new generation of social democrat leaders across the planet were going to "civilise global capital", to borrow the title of his 1998 book in which he presented "new thinking for Australian Labor".

All that is in the past. In a piece in *The Australian Financial Review* last week Latham appears to have laid out what he really thinks. The "left" – a grouping that includes anybody with concerns with the direction of the social and economic development of globalised capitalism – is "living in dreamland". This spent force is clinging to populist, "feel-good" notions and plans for "micro-economic reform". Unfortunately for them, according to Latham, the era for such visions has gone. The whole world just wants to shop and get richer. The ideals of collectivism and solidarity are not just passé, they sound like a nightmare to most Australians.

Latham could hardly describe himself as a social democrat any more. "The greatest skill of the social democratic state is wasting money," he notes bitterly. He gives as an example the NSW government's decision to spend \$4.3 million on duplicating the entrance-way to the Mount Annan Botanic Garden. The Botanic Garden itself is a failure; a twisted manifestation of the bad decision-making typical of "anti-market elites". The evidence for this conclusion? The adjacent Flower Power garden centre attracts many more visitors on the weekend. He quotes a local shop owner on the issue, "Around here it's shopping or it's flopping big time."

Latham worries that the current economic downturn has given the "cultural and political elites" of the left a reprieve. Deregulation and privatisation are very worthy objectives according to the former Labor leader but on the nose for the time being. He needn't fret. It's true that while the rhetoric has changed, deregulation and privatisation are not slowing down for anybody. In fact, unprecedented strides are about to be taken in the areas of health and education.

Kevin Rudd, the eventual 13th Labor PM, wrote an essay for February's *Monthly* magazine that attacked "extreme capitalism" and proposed a global cooperative effort to bring the beast to heel but there is little evidence of this in reality. Even the massive stimulus being administered to the economy at the moment is being done in such a way as not to restore the role of public enterprise.

The parallels between Latham's commentary and that of Rudd are worth examining. The current PM used to describe himself as "Christian socialist" until relatively recently. Then he was a "fiscal conservative" and finally, when the global recession began to bite, a "social democrat" once more. It is an interesting question whether Latham was a neo-liberal through-and-through while he was writing his various pieces outlining his "new thinking" about "civilising global capital" or whether his conversion came once he exited the political scene. What does Rudd really think about the "left", capitalism and "the entrenchment of a money-based culture" described by Latham? Will he eventually come clean in his retirement and admit he never believed any of his own "greedy capitalism" eyewash?

Latham is right on one question; Australian parliamentary politics has become a deeply cynical game. He once observed that "the electorate has worked out the artificiality of it all. They can see through the spin doctors, the publicity stunts, the polling and the tricks of marginal-seat campaigning. This is why people now talk about politics with a cool anger. They have a clear feeling that the system is far from genuine. That the robots, in fact, are tin men." They saw through him. They will eventually see through Rudd also but the fact remains that the alternative to this farce has still to be built. The need is urgent.

PRESS FUND

It's Press Fund statistics time! In recent editions the average individual contribution was \$65.60, but, the individual contribution, expressed as a mean of the total, was about \$17. (The mean, or the most common amount, is the figure in the middle of a list of all contributions in order of magnitude). We're grateful for all contributions, but we'd like to get the number of weekly contributions consistently into two-figure territory, and the mean individual contribution into three figures. You can help us do that by sending in a contribution for the next issue. Many thanks to the following supporters, who boosted the figures this week:

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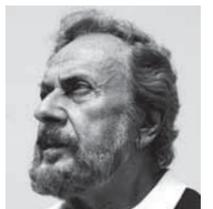
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Yiannis Ritsos – Greek poet and activist

Τεράστιο σέ ποσότητα και πολύ σημαντικό σε ποιότητα είναι το έργο του μεγάλου μας ποιητή Γιάννη Ρίτσου. Θεωρείται ένας από τους καλύτερους εκπροσώπους της νεότερης ελληνικής ποίησης. Πάνω από εκατό ποιητικές συλλογές και συνθέσεις, έννεα πεζογραφήματα (μυθιστορήματα τὰ ὀνομάζει), τέσσερα θεατρικά, ὅπως και μελέτες για ὀμοτέχνους συγκροτοῦν τὸ κύριο σώμα τοῦ ἔργου του. Πολυάριθμες μεταφράσεις, χρονογραφήματα και ἄλλα δημοσιεύματα συμπληρώνουν τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ δημιουργοῦ.

Ὅταν σφίγγουν τὸ χέρι, ὁ ἥλιος εἶναι βέβαιος για τὸν κόσμο
ὅταν χαμογελᾶνε, ἕνα μικρὸ χελιδόνι φεύγει μες ἀπ' τ' ἄγρια γένεα τους
ὅταν κοιμούνται, δώδεκα ἄστρα πέφτουν ἀπ' τὶς ἀδειες τσέπες τους
ὅταν σκοτώνονται, ἡ ζωὴ τραβάει τὴν ἀνηφόρα με σημαίες και με ταμπούρα.



The Greek Community of Melbourne will honour the 100th year from his birthday on Sunday 27 of September at 2:00 pm at the Pallaconian Brotherhood's premises, situated at 253 Albert St. Brunswick. Main speakers will be, Mr. Christos Fifis professor of modern Greek at Latrobe University and Dr. Kostas Vitkos Doctor of philosophy at RMIT University. We hope to see you all there. Admission is free.

Catherine Hill Bay celebrations - with a note of caution

Peter Mac

Last week the NSW Rees government suffered a humiliating defeat when the NSW Land and Environment Court found that prior approval of development at Catherine Hill Bay, south of Newcastle, was illegal.

The development application involved construction by the Rose Group of 600 new houses alongside 60 early 20th-century houses at Catherine Hill Bay, and another 187 houses at nearby Gwandalan. A second application involves further developments at both sites by Coal and Allied Industries. The proposals, which involved rezoning areas of bushland previously reserved for conservation, were bitterly contested by local residents and concerned organisations, including the National Trust of Australia.

Before the Catherine Hill Bay application was considered, the proposed development areas had been rezoned, and the government had accepted an offer of 300 hectares of bushland owned by the Rose Group, for inclusion in the state's national parks. The offer was made in anticipation of the government approving the project, and Justice David Lloyd described the agreement as a "land bribe", which would bias the minister's judgement when considering whether a proposal.

In a particularly stinging summary, the judge commented that "former Minister for planning, Frank Sartor seemed to be enamoured with the whole proposal of a land bribe in exchange for rezoning and associated development; again, it is to be noted, before receiving and considering the

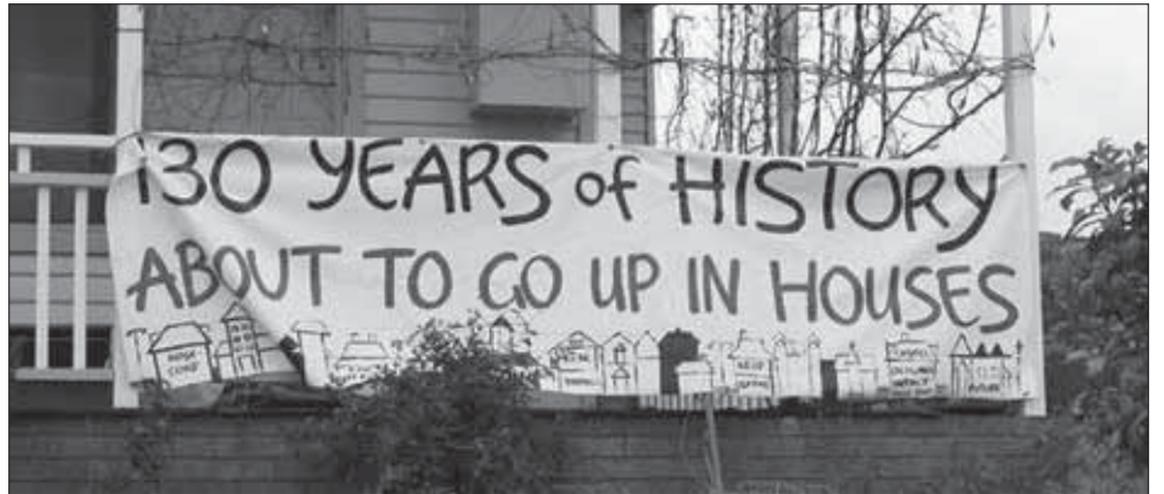
Director-General's report. Far from bringing an impartial mind to his determinations, the minister committed himself to bringing a partial mind to the applications."

To add salt to the wound, the government has been ordered to pay the legal costs of the local community organisation, the Gwandalan Summerland Point Group, which had brought the matter to the court and was represented by the NSW Environmental Defender's Office.

Major ramifications for developers

Not mentioned during the hearing was the persistent issue of donations to the ALP by corporations or individuals who need government approval for major development proposals. The NSW Greens claim to have detected a close correlation between the donations and development approvals over a number of years. The government has, of course, indignantly denied the accusation. Nevertheless, the court's decision will throw into doubt many current or previous development proposals involving the transfer of land to the government prior to consideration of the applications.

With so much hanging over the outcome of the Catherine Hill Bay case, it is entirely possible that the developers will make a new application, which the government will support. Sartor has described the court decision as "perplexing, because the judge found bias in deciding the development applications, but no bias in rezoning the land, which still stands." He also stated that the Planning Act needs to be revised, presumably to permit the government



to approve whatever it likes, without fear of Court intervention.

For her part, the current Minister for Planning, Kristina Keneally, has announced that the government will not appeal the decision, nor will it enact retrospective legislation to permit it to proceed with the previous applications. However, she has also stated that she will not revoke the land rezoning, which had been carried out as part of the development process. This leaves the way open for the Rose Group and Coal and Allied to lodge new development applications, as they are still entitled to do.

The government claims it simply erred in a matter of procedure, and refuses to acknowledge that development approval would have been inappropriate because it would have violated the significance of the tiny, exquisite Catherine Hill Bay village. Last week Keneally declared: "Because the court identified that the MOU (memorandum of

understanding) and deed were invalid we need to look at how far back in the planning process we need to go, in order to redetermine ... these applications."

Another nail for the government's coffin

The Catherine Hill Bay case illustrates just how overconfident the government had become in its entrenched practice of smoothing the way for big developers. Officials and legal advisors had warned the government it might lose the case. In 2007 a lawyer working for the Department warned that "the government should only approve the relevant concept plan on its merits", and that "If the minister's ... grant of approval to a project or a DA (development application) is based on the commercial benefits deliverable by a planning agreement, then this approval can be invalidated by a court."

The government ignored this advice. Since then, Sartor's loud protestations of innocence have only drawn attention to the government's failings, and added to the overwhelming public perception that it is thoroughly corrupt. Moreover, Sartor has most unwisely compared his own actions with those of the Rudd government, asking "Did Kevin Rudd's announcement of the Gorgon gas project in Western Australia bias (Environment Minister) Peter Garret's approval of the project some weeks later?" The answer must surely be "yes"!

In a totally new development, members of the NSW and federal ALP governments are now rumoured to have accepted bribes from business interests, in return for favoured treatment. The Rudd government may be able to shrug off such accusations, but it is impossible to believe that the NSW ALP government will survive the next state elections. ☘

Shooting complex will endanger lives, environment

In the NSW Southern Highlands around 1,000 hectares of national park have been earmarked as a shooting complex, a reflection of the Rees government's reliance on the Shooters' Party to pass legislation. A modification application that has been submitted to the planning minister Kristina Keneally would see the storage of ammunition, firearms and black powder during events there - on a site near the town of Hill Top

- with no permanent security, no perimeter fence and which is located in a bushfire prone area.

The Hill Top Residents Action Group in a protest against the plan listed the dangers of the project:

We the undersigned object to the project application and request that the Department of Planning ... on the basis that the proposed development is ecologically and socially unsound.

a. Contamination: the

topography of the site consists of a number of ridges, which form some of the highest elevations within the surrounding area putting lower lying areas, including creeks and rivers, at risk of lead and other heavy metal pollution through surface water run-off, which is significant during periods of heavy rain. The shotgun range would be a particularly heavy ongoing polluter of surface water.

b. Bushfire hazard: The topography of the site also presents the

worst possible scenario for a bush-fire event with facilities developed on the tops of ridges. Fire fighting facilities appear inadequate, with no significant water supply, no electricity and no landline communication. From the point of view of the villages, increased human activity in this high risk landscape increases the threat of firestorms sweeping down on our communities, fanned by hot Westerly winds, and with no intervening fire breaks.

c. Endangering of flora and fauna: The site forms part of the natural habitat for 108 protected species and 22 threatened species including breeding koalas (according to a recent study undertaken by Koala experts). The clearing of bushland will have serious consequences for many resident species and the ongoing operation of the site will add to the noise, pollution and weed burden of the ecosystem.

d. Noise: The closeness of the proposed development to a large proportion of the Hill Top population is not accurately reflected in the application, where it is shown as 5.5 kilometres from the general store. In fact, the majority of the population is on the north western side of the general store, and as little as 3 kilometres from the proposed site. This means that the village will be significantly impacted by the increasing noise levels from the expanded site just across the valley as well as the impact of the

construction phase through the use of heavy machinery/generators.

e. Traffic: This proposal has the potential to increase traffic through the village of Hill Top by 40 per cent per day and to repeat this over seven days and three nights per week. The present road infrastructure could not safely support this increase as it is hardly adequate for the present level of traffic. The construction phase will also present safety issues through the narrow access to the village and along West Parade/Wattle Ridge road during peak periods of use.

f. The Future: The licensee of the existing site has for many years ignored restrictions on use and it is certain that it will increase in size and usage in years to come, without any need for community or local government consultation.

Given the significant infringements of the private amenity of Hill Top and Balmoral residents as well as recreational users (bushwalkers, birdwatchers etc) of the adjoining World Heritage Area, the inappropriateness of the site and the lack of adequate infrastructure to support this facility we request that the Department of Planning deny approval of this ill conceived application and take this opportunity to maintain the site as a conservation area to be preserved and protected for the peaceful enjoyment of present and future generations of Australians. ☘

Pete's Corner



Time to stop the super rort

Anna Pha

For the second year in a row superannuation funds are reporting heavy losses in members' savings. Depending on the types of investments made, losses range from a few percent to 50 percent or more. But these devastating losses only tell half the story. The \$1 trillion plus in superannuation funds is "a government-mandated river of gold," for the finance industry, *The Weekend Australian Financial Review* (August 29-30-2009) points out.

The finance sector is onto a winner with a continuous flow of gold from nine percent of workers' wages under the compulsory superannuation guarantee scheme. The trouble is, as the latest superannuation reports reveal, there are no guarantees for workers – only guaranteed profits for the finance sector.

In reality, workers have no choice: their savings are managed by the financial institutions. They have little understanding or control over how their savings are invested. Who, for example, would guess that a product called "cash" might involve gambling on movements in interest rates or that something called "Australian shares" might involve short selling on stockmarkets and lending of shares to company directors. Or that the shares being bought and sold by their fund are in the fund's own company, used to manipulate its stockmarket prices.

Workers take all the risk. They have lost hundreds of billions of dollars of retirement savings over the past two years of economic crisis.

It is a scheme made in heaven for the big banks and insurance companies. They take no risks – it is not their own money they are investing or gambling with. They take no responsibility for the results. And they pocket billions of dollars in fees regardless of outcomes.

Private fund rip-off

The private, for-profit sector (retail or commercial) funds, in particular, are stacking up the nuggets from the river of gold. They rake in these profits through layers of fees and through the power they gain having control of such a large amount of capital.

They charge an array of fees. For example:

- Entry and or exit fees based on the value of investments. These could be as high as two percent or more of the amount being deposited in or withdrawn from a fund.
- Financial planner fees – sometimes a flat rate or a percentage of the assets – maybe as high as 0.5 percent or more per annum.
- Fund administration fees – a

flat amount per month and or a percentage of assets.

- Fees or commissions for the custodians and investment managers that place the assets in various products – could be as high as one or two percent (maybe invisible in superannuation reports).
- Other fees and commissions extracted by consultants, the sales people and marketing outfits.

These fees have no relationship to performance. One or two percent might not sound a lot, but it is one or two percent of savings. Take for example a worker who has \$100,000 in a private fund and is paying a total of two percent in various fees (could be much more) – that is \$2,000 a year. This amounts to a huge percentage of income in good years and is nothing short of criminal when the fund is losing the worker's money.

But the private sector rip-off does not stop there. There are strong links between bank and insurance company funds, the products they are deposited in, fund trustees, financial advisers, consultants etc.

Fund trustees and directors are supposed to act in the interests of fund members. The Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA) found that the primary employer of 60 percent of directors of trustee boards of commercial (retail) superannuation funds were either the fund's service provider or the underlying fund manager.

APRA noted that "retail trustee directors may be in a situation where they have to decide whether company shareholder profits or pension fund member benefits should have priority in the direction of executive action."

APRA's response to this situation is hardly reassuring. Instead of looking at how to eradicate the many conflicts of interest in the system, it sees governance of superannuation funds as a question of managing them. Of course, they cannot be removed where the profit motive rules.

Industry funds

The fees charged by industry funds are far lower. Some only charge a small flat monthly rate; others also charge a small percentage, particularly on accounts with low deposits.

They are not-for-profit, half their board membership is usually trade union representatives and their overall losses are not as large those of the private sector funds. Entry and exit fees are usually very small or non-existent.

Even in the not-for-profit, industry funds, conflicts of interest can arise and there is always scope for kick-backs. But the outcomes for workers compared with the private funds are, as already stated, far better. However, the finance sector is still taking its cut – some of them more than one



percent of the sums invested at the product level. These tend not to appear on annual statements sent out to members; they are already included in the results. They also pay advisers from the private sector.

An estimated \$13 billion is presently being ripped out annually from super funds. The amount being poured into funds is around \$50 billion a year (with continuous growth in line with wages growth) – a golden river of cash if ever there was one for the finance sector to pan. Industry forecasts indicate that the fees goldmine could rise to more than \$30 billion annually over the next 14 years.

The extraction of fees compounds over the years. The same issue of the *Financial Review* as quoted above gives estimates of this cumulative loss. It takes the example of \$100,000 invested over ten years, at an average return of five percent. At the end of 20 years the cumulative loss would be almost \$70,000 in a private fund and \$44,000 in an industry fund.

While these figures are not exact – circumstances vary from fund to fund, individual to individual – they are indicative of the huge amounts being siphoned off by the parasitic finance sector. It is money that workers could and should have to enjoy in their retirement.

Perhaps without meaning to, the *Financial Review*, has laid bare with this example the bones of capitalism and its most parasitic and powerful sector – finance capital.

Superannuation has provided the private sector with a never ending stream of capital to invest for profit at workers' expense. That was one of the prime aims of the scheme. The other was to privatise retirement incomes and wind back the age pension.

The Guardian has previously reported on how workers' super

funds were used to prop up the stock market and rescue capitalism from a serious financial and economic crisis (22/07/2009).

How to stop the riff-off

For years, workers had no choice where their superannuation payments were deposited; it was decided by the employer. Banks and insurance companies were in a position to make it very attractive (promise of loans, etc) to companies to use their schemes.

Perhaps one of the few decent things the Howard government did was bring in "choice" of super fund. Workers who were locked into private funds are now free to transfer what's left of their retirement savings to an industry fund. (Howard's intent was the reverse!)

But switching funds is no solution to the super crisis or guarantee of security in retirement.

A scheme is needed which does not place workers' savings at risk.

This means taking it out of the hands of the private, for-profit sector and setting up a democratically run, public scheme.

Investments should be socially responsible, such as public housing, public transport and other public infrastructure and social programs.

Not only would this eliminate the risk factor and end the huge drain of funds from fees and other rorting, it would be of benefit to the community.

Very few workers want a lump sum to manage and risk in retirement. Most want a secure and adequate income. The age pension should provide that with superannuation as additional income that improves quality of life.

The Communist Party of Australia supports a national public superannuation fund which workers could transfer their existing savings to and join on a voluntary basis. ☘

New alliance seeks action on gender pay gap

A woman starting work today will retire having earned \$1 million less than a man doing the same job. Launching an alliance of 135 organisations to mark Equal Pay Day, Australian Council of Trade Unions president Sharan Burrow said: "It is unacceptable that working women are still being short-changed in their pay packets. Many Australians believe women won equal pay in the 1970s - but they are wrong."

It is almost 40 years since Australian women were officially granted equal pay for equal work. Yet women still earn 17 percent less than men or \$1 million less over a lifetime.

On average, it takes women 14 months to earn the same amount that men earn in 12 months. "Our labour market and social structures continue to discriminate against women in employment," Ms Burrow said.

"On one hand, women have access to unprecedented levels of education and employment. Yet women continue to shoulder most of the unpaid housework and care of children."

A critical lack of childcare options and inflexible work practices are also stopping them from successfully combining work and caring responsibilities.

While women are now more likely to have a tertiary qualification than men, women graduates will earn \$2,000 less than male graduates and \$7,400 less by the fifth year after graduation;

Women retire with less than half the amount of savings in their superannuation accounts compared with men.

And, it is predicted that rather than improving, the gender pay gap between women and men's earnings is set to increase over the upcoming years.

A broad coalition of organisations has been formed to campaign to close the pay gap between men and women.

The Equal Pay Alliance includes a diverse range of organisations including community, business and welfare peak bodies who are pledging to promote equal pay and employment opportunity for all Australians. ☘

NOTICE OF EXHIBITION REMEMBERING PINE GAP

An exhibition of banners, posters, photographs and archival material from the Women's Peace Camp at Pine Gap in 1983 will be on display at NSW Parliament House until 24 September.

The Jessie Street National Women's Library, which holds this collection, would like to send invitations to anyone interested, especially women who were there in 1983. Please give us your contact details.

For further information about the exhibition email info@nationalwomenslibrary.org.au, phone 95715359 or fax 95715714.

Vietnamese films for peace

Le Phong Lan, one of Ho Chi Minh City's few women documentary makers, has devoted her life to capturing history and society on camera. Most critics agree that if Lan is involved, a documentary's quality is guaranteed. A skilled scriptwriter and director, Lan used to work for the state-owned Nguyen Dinh Chieu Film Studio and has collaborated with many private studios and television stations. Though her works focus mostly on historical characters, they also include romantic scenes from daily life. She discusses her work and plans for more on wars in Vietnam with Anh Thu.

Anh Thu: Many Vietnamese, particularly youth, are indifferent to documentaries because they want something more entertaining. Some of your works are an exception. What is the key to your success?

Le Phong Lan: My job is very different from that of my colleagues working in film and television. My work is about portraying, not just filming. I would be nothing without real stories and real people from the past, present, and future.

Making a documentary is like growing a tree – both are the results of hard work and are useful for the younger generations. A quality film will improve the minds and knowledge of the youth, while a small tree today will become a big tree tomorrow and play a key role in invigorating our environment.

But young people mostly see beautiful flowers as being much more valuable than trees, because of their rough shape.

I'm lucky because my partners, including cameramen, sound and light technicians, and local and foreign history and culture researchers I interviewed during filming, are skilled and passionate. All of us share a love for making documentaries.

Anh Thu: Like Huyen Thoai Ve Tuong Tinh Bao Pham Xuan An [about legendary Major General/spy Pham Xuan An] your previous films were also very successful in attracting television viewers. What are the key factors that attract the public?

Le Phong Lan: Just the facts. All my works are based on facts I discover, research, and feel. A documentary filmmaker should select the facts carefully and in detail and put them into his/her work in the most simple and direct way.

In my documentary about the life

and revolutionary activities of General Pham Xuan An, who worked as an intelligence agent for our country during the Vietnam War and a reporter for the US media, my staff and I tried our best to understand the history and depict it realistically.

During filming, we unearthed facts and myths that shed light on personalities and the silent contributions of the General, who died in 2006, and other Communist Party members.

Before making the documentary, I had little knowledge about war or politics. I spent two years writing the script, reading many Vietnamese and foreign books, newspapers, and documents related to events during the 1950s and 1970s, particularly after the Americans came to Vietnam.

Anh Thu: Do you have any advice for young documentary filmmakers?

Le Phong Lan: My 12-part series *Legendary Major General-Spy Pham Xuan An* was broadcast on Ho Chi Minh City's Television Channel HTV9 in late 2007. Though I began work on the film in early 2004, I had dreamed about making a movie on An four years previously. I faced many challenges but I didn't give up my dream.

I think only your love for documentary making would help you produce quality films.

Some of my friends and audiences asked me: "We saw your talents in documentaries featuring war. Why do you enjoy the topic so much?" I answered simply: "Because in war, you see love."

I want audiences to care more for life and peace. I want youth to feel scared and say "no" to war after watching my works. Audiences enjoyed my film and shared my success. It's quite enough for me.

To create a quality documentary, filmmakers should work professionally and constantly spend time on improving themselves. They also need to consider the facts and people from many perspectives.

Anh Thu: Some people complain that many talented directors care more about earning money from movies than producing documentaries. What's your view?

Le Phong Lan: I don't think money is a problem in this field. I also love making movies because the job is a result of creativity, imagination, and romance. I chose to become a documentary maker because I discovered myself through the work.

We should not care about a filmmaker's way of creating something, but we should be concerned about how their product attracts and influences audiences. In my view, a useful work should live for a long time in the minds of audiences.

Anh Thu: What do you think about young directors? If you have a message for your younger colleagues, what would it be?

Le Phong Lan: Younger directors are luckier than my generation, because they have more opportunities to improve their knowledge and filming skills.

Documentary filmmakers like me should not ask audiences to value our works, if we give them poor quality.

Anh Thu: So how can we develop and support documentary film making?

Le Phong Lan: Human resources. We need active people, who have good minds and knowledge, and professional skills.

They must be open-minded and skilful in foreign languages, so that they can obtain new information and adopt modern technologies from developed countries. Our industry doesn't need authorities and artists who work in a conservative fashion.

I notice some state-owned film companies produce documentary films every year but do nothing to market their works. They should remedy this.

Anh Thu: Can you outline your upcoming projects?

Le Phong Lan: I quit Nguyen Dinh Chieu Film Studio and am now the director of the Movie, Culture, Sports and Tourism Centre's southern office.

In my new job, I'm primarily involved in managing a new field. I'm working on three documentaries – on wars in Vietnam, of course, but from different times in history.

One is a long TV series on the Dong Khoi revolutionary movement among the southern people, centred in Ben Tre province in late 1959 and early 1960.

This month I'll travel to the US and meet some historians involved in researching the movement.

I have also worked with Ben Tre Radio and Television Station to prepare for filming.

Anh Thu: How do you strike a balance between your work and family?

Le Phong Lan: Please ask my husband and two daughters.
Vietnam News Service ☛



A still from *Huyen Thoai Ve Tuong Tinh Bao Pham Xuan An* – a film about legendary Major General/spy Pham Xuan An.



The City of Sydney Council has wisely voted down a CCTV policy which would have allowed agencies "other than police" to track individuals. Under the policy the cameras could have been used for "general intelligence gathering" and the footage passed to the media. The council vote against was unanimous. Most councillors didn't like the idea of the council becoming an arm of the police. One noted that the policy would have turned a system installed to prevent muggings into a spy network. The construction union, the CFMEU, also voiced concern saying that workers were worried that footage could be passed on to the building industry police body, the Australian Building and Construction Commission.

They could afford to quit: fourteen chief executives who left the top 100 listed companies last year received an average \$5.7 million in termination payments, a total of \$80 million.

Redneck dept. The NSW Rees government's reliance on the Shooters' Party to pass legislation manifests itself in many ways. The latest is a demand to amend firearms legislation to allow the hunting of animals in national parks. Now it has tabled amendments to remove the need to register air rifles and BB guns as well as allow children under 12 to use them at shooting ranges. They also want a five-year moratorium on the declaration of more marine parks: huntin' and fishin', get it? Previously the government backed moves to make it easier for unlicensed people to gain access to and use guns at shooting clubs; weakened penalties for breaching firearms laws; made it easier for perpetrators of domestic violence who are subject to an apprehended violence order to regain their firearms. They are also pushing for shooters to be exempt from new laws about the use of lasers because some rifles have laser target finders.

Like his Workplace Relations Minister Julia Gillard, PM Kevin Rudd refuses to guarantee that no worker will be worse off under the government's award changes. Last week the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, which has been charged with doing the government's dirty work of gutting and cutting the number of awards, said unequivocally that workers *will* be worse off.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is United Water. The South Australian government is suing one of the country's biggest water companies for tens of millions of dollars, saying that taxpayers have forked out excessive amounts to United Water International, which maintains Adelaide's water infrastructure. The company is a subsidiary of French infrastructure giant Veolia. It was given a 15-year contract in 1996. The government claims that United Water misled it in contract negotiations in 2001. The company wanted more dough because it wasn't making enough profits: 1.2 percent instead of the promised 15 percent.



Join the International Community

Rally to free 5 Cuban men. The Cuban 5 have been sentenced to four life terms and 75 years in United States prisons, falsely charged with espionage conspiracy. Their real "crime"? They were peacefully defending Cuba from US – backed terrorist groups based in Miami.

Rally For Justice

Stirling Gardens
Saturday Sept 12th @ 12 noon

Info: acfsperth@gmail.com or
phone 0421113343

Film Review by Andy Alcock

Balibo

The film *Balibo* has taken Australia by storm. For several weeks from late July to mid August, it was the subject of lively discussion on many radio and TV programs and received much coverage in the daily press. *Balibo* depicts the events in East Timor in the early days of the Indonesian invasion of that country. It could be described as a political and historical thriller.

The story is based largely on the book *Cover-Up: The Inside Story of the Balibo Five*, by Australian journalist Jill Jolliffe who has covered many stories on Timor for over three decades and has written several books on the subject.

The film traces the progress of Roger East (Anthony LaPaglia), an Australian journalist, as he treks towards the tiny town of Balibo. The purpose of his visit is to investigate the cause of the deaths of five young, Australian-based media workers who were brutally murdered by the Indonesian military (TNI). This tragedy occurred on October 16, 1975, on the second day of its covert invasion of what was then known as Portuguese Timor.

At each stage of his journey, the filmmakers flash back to a crucial stage in the story of the disappeared journalists.

East was originally persuaded to go to East Timor by a very youthful Timorese journalist and member of the newly formed Timorese administration, Jose Ramos-Horta (Oscar Isaac), who wanted him to head-up a media organisation, the East Timor News Agency.

Balibo shows Ramos-Horta accompanying East to Balibo. When they arrive, they find the grim signs of what occurred to the five journalists there. Later, after being attacked by an Indonesian helicopter, Ramos-Horta decides to take East, who was wounded, to a nearby village for assistance. On reaching it, they discover that the TNI has already been there and carried out a massacre of many of the villagers.

The remainder of the film follows Roger East as he gets his story together about the Balibo 5 and other events as the TNI continues its covert invasion until December 7, 1975, when Indonesia dropped all pretences and began its full scale invasion. Finally, it depicts the very brutal murder of East along with scores of Timorese on the Dili wharf.

This is witnessed by Julia (Bea Viegas) an eight year old girl whom East had befriended at the Turismo Hotel and who later comes forward to recount her story to the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR).

The film takes a great deal of poetic licence with history – Roger East never visited Balibo, for example. However, it has great authenticity. It is based on many of the stories told to the CAVR by about 8,000 Timorese; key parts of the film are set at the actual sights where the events occurred in Balibo and Dili and many East Timorese participated in the production. President Jose Ramos-Horta was also consulted in the writing of the film and is very pleased with the outcome.

The journalists killed at Balibo were Brian

Peters, Malcolm Rennie, Greg Shackleton, Gary Cunningham and Tony Stewart, who over time have become known as the *Balibo 5*. In actual history, most people have almost forgotten the role played by Roger East in the Timor disaster, but we have been frequently reminded of the Balibo 5 via the mainstream media. Throughout the years since their deaths, one role of the East Timor solidarity movement has been to keep his name alive. I think that Robert Connolly's film has effectively revived the great contribution of Roger.

East to East: Timor's history

It should be noted that the *East Timor News Agency* (ETNA) did not die with East. For several years after the Indonesian invasion, Denis Freney edited a broadsheet, *East Timor News* (ETN) that was published occasionally carrying news about events in Timor and support activities around the world. It always acknowledged Roger East as the founder of ETNA.

ETN had to rely on a clandestine radio link between Australia and the Timorese resistance (FRETILIN/FALANTIL) that was established by Freney along with reports from the few people who were able to enter and leave the country while the TNI held it under extremely tight security.

With the support of several Australians and East Timorese, the solidarity movement maintained a transmitter in a remote part of the Northern Territory. Though harassed by Australian intelligence, Telecom and police, this vital contact survived on and off for about three years until Alarico Fernandes, the FRETILIN Minister for Information surrendered to the TNI.

The Fraser government confiscated the radio on at least two occasions. Two others who played a vital role in the radio link were Rob Wesley-Smith, the key Timor activist in Darwin, and Brian Manning. I enlisted two friends from Adelaide to work on the radio and actually purchased two radios to replace those that were confiscated.

Freney was a remarkable activist. He made a great contribution to the East Timor solidarity movement in Australia. Before the invasion, he organised a visit to East Timor by union and community representatives and wrote a book, *East Timor – Freedom Caught Between the Powers*.

A former teacher, he became a journalist with *Tribune*, the newspaper of the original Communist Party of Australia. Freney also founded the *Campaign for an Independent East Timor* which became established in several centres around Australia. He also prepared a broadsheet *Seli Hoo*, supporting Vanuatu's independence and always promoted the cause of solidarity with West Papua or Papua Barat (formerly called Irian Jaya by the Indonesian occupiers).

Almost until he died in 1995, Denis co-ordinated National East Timor Activists conferences – at first annually and then biennially. He also obtained support for East Timor from Pacific leaders.



Anthony LaPaglia as Roger East

Although the film depicts him as being reluctant to go to Portuguese Timor, Roger East was very committed to finding out about what happened to the *Balibo 5*, but he also knew that the Timorese people had been betrayed and he wanted to ensure that the world knew about what was happening there.

Before East had gone to Timor, he had had a long and varied career as a journalist. He set up a newspaper in Spain while it was still under the iron rule of General Franco, covered the Suez Crisis, worked in Britain, China, Vietnam and in Cyprus for the UN. He worked in Australia for a Country Party MP and the Darwin Reconstruction Board.

Those who knew him describe him as having progressive politics. East hated repression and was a strong supporter of Palestinian human rights and was a supporter of a republican Australia. In fact, an amusing scene in the film between East and Julia alludes to this fact.

East was able to despatch a few reports about the impending invasion to the outside world. He was urged to leave Dili with FRETILIN forces on the day of the full scale invasion of Timor on December 7, 1975 so that he could cover the war from the mountains. However, he wanted to send one last report as the TNI had taken the Dili Airport. This was probably his undoing and he did not give himself enough time to escape.

A Timorese patrol was sent to get him out safely, but they were killed by Indonesian soldiers. Roger East was a very courageous man who gave his life while trying to ensure that the world knew what was happening in Timor. On what appears to be a WW2 pill box near the beach at Dili, there is a small remembrance plaque to him placed by his family and friends.

Anthony LaPaglia gives a brilliant

performance as Roger East as do Oscar Isaac as Jose Ramos Horta and Damon Gameau as Greg Shackleton. I think Isaac bears an incredible likeness to the very young Ramos-Horta, to whom I was initially introduced to in September in 1978 by Denis Freney. Isaac was born Oscar Isaac Hernandez in Guatemala to a Cuban father and a Guatemalan mother and was raised in Miami, Florida. He also has French, Israeli and other European descent.

As a person who showed a film about East Timor, *Timor – Island of Fear, Island of Hope*, on numerous occasions in the early years of the occupation, I saw the very moving last report that Shackleton made before his murder. Damon Gameau captures this scene superbly.

Bea Viegas, who had not acted before, plays the role of the mature Julia very well. She came to Australia from Timor as a one-year old with her family in 1975. She graduated with a Bachelor of Asian Studies from Curtin University of Technology. In 2003/2004 she returned to East Timor as a translator/interpreter and also worked as an English and Tetum language teacher for the Australian Army.

Many who have seen the film have commented that *Balibo* does not include mention of the disgraceful performance of Australian security organisations in response to these events. My understanding is that scenes were filmed depicting this betrayal for the final production, but that it made the movie far too long for commercial use.

Our security services knew of Indonesia's intentions and the location of the journalists in Balibo, but no effort was made to warn them. Australians want to know why we have security services if they are not going to protect citizens in imminent danger.

This is a subject that could be the basis of another film. Hamish McDonald and Desmond Ball in their book, *Deaths in Balibo – Lies in Canberra*, go into some depth about this shameful episode in Australia's history.

On the morning after the murder of the Balibo 5, John Bennetts, a senior Joint Intelligence Organisation (JIO) officer ordered that all copies of the report of events in Balibo that had been distributed be collected. They were destroyed.

Further, in 1978 Captain John Florent of the Office of National Assessment (ONA) led a team of personnel to scour documents held by the agency for any reference to Balibo so that they could be destroyed.

For years, there has been some debate about the wisdom of the *Balibo 5* being where they were when the TNI attacked Balibo. These men were not experienced in reporting from war zones and had mostly covered big city stories. They were not given adequate briefing of the situation nor the barbaric behaviour of the TNI during the seizure of power by Suharto in Indonesia in 1965 and the crimes committed against the West Papuans going back to 1962.



Damon Gameau as Greg Shackleton.



Book Review by Tony Pecinovsky

Idiot America: How Stupidity Became a Virtue in the Land of the Free

by Charles P Pierce

If you've ever wondered how the right wing has been so successful at manufacturing perceived truths, Charles P Pierce's new book *Idiot America: How Stupidity Became a Virtue in the Land of the Free* is a must read.

The old saying, "It would be funny if it wasn't true," applies perfectly to the ideas discussed in this book. Some parts of "Idiot America" made me want to laugh out loud, while others made me cringe and wonder how so many people can be so fooled so often by craziness.

For example, Pierce starts off the book with a story about a trip to a Tennessee amusement park called Creation Museum where statue dinosaurs wear saddles and wait patiently in line as Noah herds them into the Ark. Park-goers fork out almost \$150 per-head to hear sermons about how "dinosaurs co-existed with humans (hence the saddles)..."

Ken Ham, the park's mastermind and founder of an organization called Answers in Genesis, tells participants, "We are taking the dinosaurs back from the evolutionists!"

According to Pierce, right-wing nuts (Glenn Beck, Michael Savage, et al) gain their credibility by adhering to "The Three Great Premises." "The First Great Premise: any theory is valid if it sells enough books, soaks up ratings, or otherwise moves units," writes Pierce. "The crank then becomes simply someone with another product to sell within the unimaginative parameters of the marketplace; his views are just another impulse buy, like the potato chips near the cash register."

Hence, Ken Ham's Creation Museum is a commercial success where hundreds and hundreds, if not thousands of kids are brought by their parents, schools and churches to be indoctrinated, challenging a whole generation to disbelieve established scientific fact, evolution.

"The Second Great Premise: anything can be true if someone says it loudly enough." Again, Glenn Beck and Michael Savage (radio and television shock jocks) come to mind. How many times have they hammered away, yelling and interrupting condescendingly as guests sincerely try to make points and honestly provide answers to complex questions? This is their method. They thrive off anger and cynicism. And rile people up without providing answers to anything.

"Idiocy can come to the nation wholly and at once and, because idiocy is almost always good television," writes Pierce, "it can remain a viable product long after the available evidence and common sense has revealed it to be what it is." Idiocy!

Even worse, "Get your ideas on television – or, even better, onto its precocious great-grandchild, the Internet, where television's automatic validation of an idea can be instant and vast – and it will circulate forever, invulnerable and undying. The ideas will exist in the air," writes Pierce. "They will be 'out there,' and therefore they will be real, no matter what reality itself may be."

"The Third Great Premise: fact is that which enough people believe," writes Pierce. "Truth is determined by how fervently they believe it."

"Under The Third Great Premise, respect for the effort required to develop and promulgate nonsense somehow bleeds into a respect

I find it amazing that the very politicians and diplomats who lacked the moral courage to protest to the Indonesian government about their deaths and who attempted to cover up the crimes have the gall to question the motives and courage of these men. Hopefully, *Balibo* will help expose some of these individuals as they have contributed to the suffering of the people of Timor and the families and friends of the murdered Australian journalists. They have also brought great shame to this country. And of course, they are still cheating Timor Leste out of profits from their oil at a time when they are still rebuilding their shattered nation.

So many people who have been to Timor Leste become very emotionally involved with the people. The country has had so many problems and yet its people who have very little are very welcoming. *Balibo* writer/director Robert Connolly had this to say about his experiences during the making of the film:

"There are few equivalent events in Australia's history that so clearly illustrate the clash between principle and pragmatic foreign policy – the abandonment of human rights for short-term political gain. In the face of such pragmatic decision-making and blind eye turning, *Balibo* looks at the role of those courageous enough to seek out the truth and to maintain the belief for an independent East Timor.

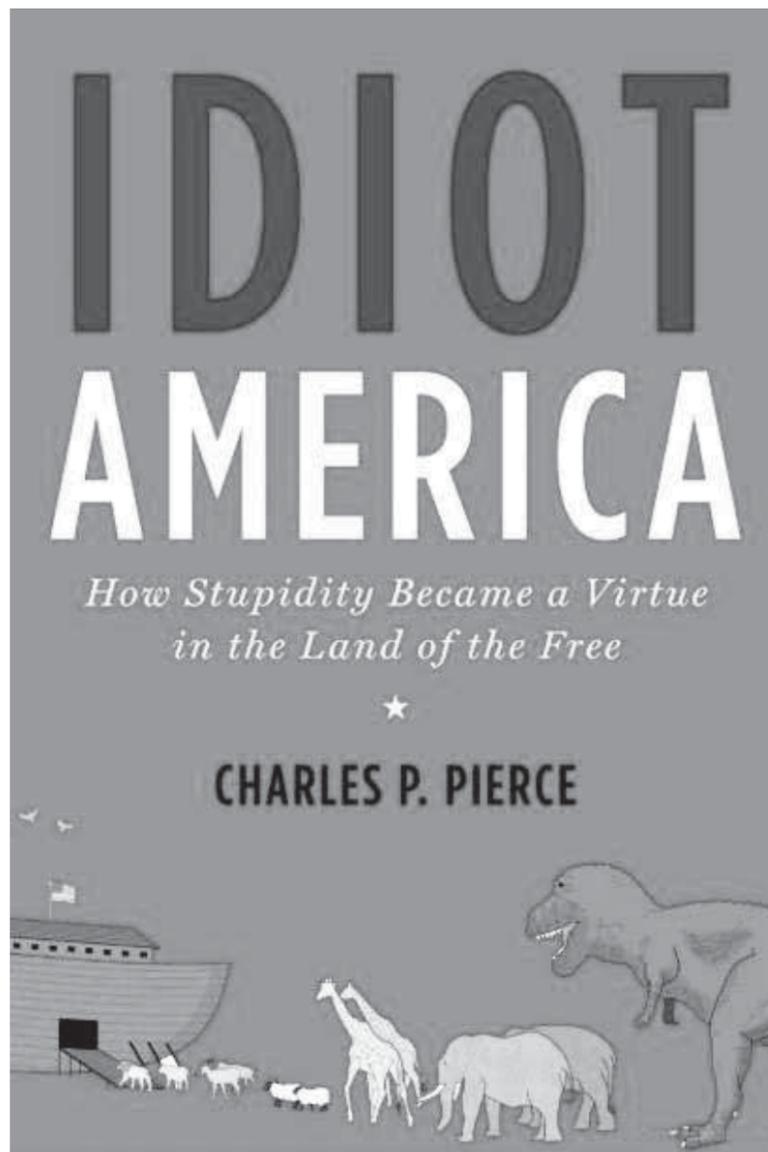
"Travelling to East Timor to make the film was certainly one of the most extraordinary experiences for all involved, with the East Timorese welcoming us to their country and working in every area of production to assist with achieving this re-telling of their nation's tragic history. Recreating in *Balibo* the footage that the *Balibo 5* were most likely murdered for capturing gave those sequences a tough veracity we would otherwise have struggled to achieve in any other location.

"*Balibo* is a story that demands to be told. The eventual winning of independence for East Timor in 1999 is a modern miracle; a triumph for the determined population of a tiny nation lead by charismatic leaders."

I agree with Shirley Shackleton that Robert Connolly should be saluted for producing a film of such quality. In addition, I would salute the cast and all who contributed to the production which has done so much to make Australians and the world more aware of the terrible events that occurred in East Timor during the early days of the Indonesian invasion.

I also hope that this will spur politicians in Australia, Indonesia and other countries around the world to bring the perpetrators of the war crimes in East Timor including the *Balibo 5* and Roger East to justice.

Andy Alcock is Information Officer, Australian East Timor Friendship Association SA Inc (formerly Campaign for an Independent East Timor SA Inc) ✪



that validates the nonsense itself," writes Pierce.

To illustrate his point, Pierce cites Daniel Patrick Moynihan in writing about the JFK assassination. Moynihan wrote, "a solid 70 percent of the American people did not believe the conclusion of the Warren Commission... This percentage has not changed substantially since ... the commission first published its findings" in the 1960's."

However, "the revelation of an actual conspiracy – the Iran-Contra matter, say – has come to have a rather deadening effect on American politics and culture," writes Pierce. Unfortunately, Pierce continues, "then the whole thing just dies in banality..." it is "commonplace and boring." It's not exciting. It doesn't sell. It isn't believed fervently.

"Iran-Contra should have immunised the American public forever against wishful fact-free adventurism..." writes Pierce.

Ultimately though, nonsense promulgated by pundits, politicians and presidents alike (President Bush anyone? Weapons of mass destruction? Iraq?) continues to impact the body-politic.

How many times have we heard the tea-baggers, militias and racists – all funded by right-wing health care industry lobbyists – yell at the top of their lungs: President

Obama wants to kill my grandma. A health care public option will create rationing. Etc. It doesn't matter that it isn't true. Glenn Beck believes it. A lot of people watch Glenn Beck. He moves units, therefore he must know what he's talking about. Additionally, he's loud and yells a lot. And he works hard spreading nonsense. He believes fervently in his nonsense, therefore, according to The Great Premises, it must be true.

Is this what right-wing political discourse has come down to? It's an insult to the American people!

While "Idiot America" is generally a good, hilarious and scary book, outlining how the right wing has claimed the soundbite in the war on ideas, Pierce seems to have too little faith in the American people. His only shortcoming is in not acknowledging two simple facts: first, ordinary people don't expect to be lied to every time they turn on the TV, read the paper, or check their favourite websites. Second, most Americans – working two, three jobs, taking care of the kids, the mortgage, etc. – don't have the time to really investigate and challenge the daily dose of nonsense being spoon-fed to them.

Nonetheless, "Idiot America" is an important contribution.

People's Weekly World ✪

Geoengineering – a dangerous climate fairytale

The idea of re-engineering the entire planet (geoengineering) used to be the stuff of science fiction, but in the past few years a small group of geoengineering backers has worked hard to give it a veneer of respectability. On September 1, they succeeded in getting the world's oldest scientific academy, Britain's Royal Society, to legitimise dangerous planet-tinkering schemes.

Geoengineering involves the intentional, large-scale manipulation of the environment by humans to bring about environmental change, particularly to counteract the undesired side-effects of other human activities such as climate change.

Geoengineering is deadly serious business. Under consideration are such techniques as sulphate injections in the stratosphere and cloud-whitening to reflect sunlight away from the earth, fertilisation of the oceans with iron nano-particles to try to increase their carbon-carrying capacity – all with the intent of modifying global weather patterns.

Until recently, the stuff of fairytales, these techniques are garnering credibility from a number of institutions, the press, politicians and policy makers. Geoengineering is being presented as a technological silver bullet to address climate change, a means of avoiding serious and immediate measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

"Seen in the light of Realpolitik, the report's explicit endorsement of geoengineering research and real-life experimentation – and its unwillingness to reject even the most outlandish schemes – is deeply troubling," said the ETC Group commenting on the Royal Society's report.

"If you are a member of the G-8 – and especially if you are the G-8 member who launched the Industrial Revolution that is causing climate change – you could have some confidence that geoengineering is your kind of fix," the ETC Group said.

"Only the world's richest

countries can really muster the hardware and software necessary to rearrange the climate and reset the thermostat. You can also have some hope that the cost of geoengineering will be much less than the 2% of global GDP per year that reducing greenhouse gas emissions around the world is conservatively expected to cost."

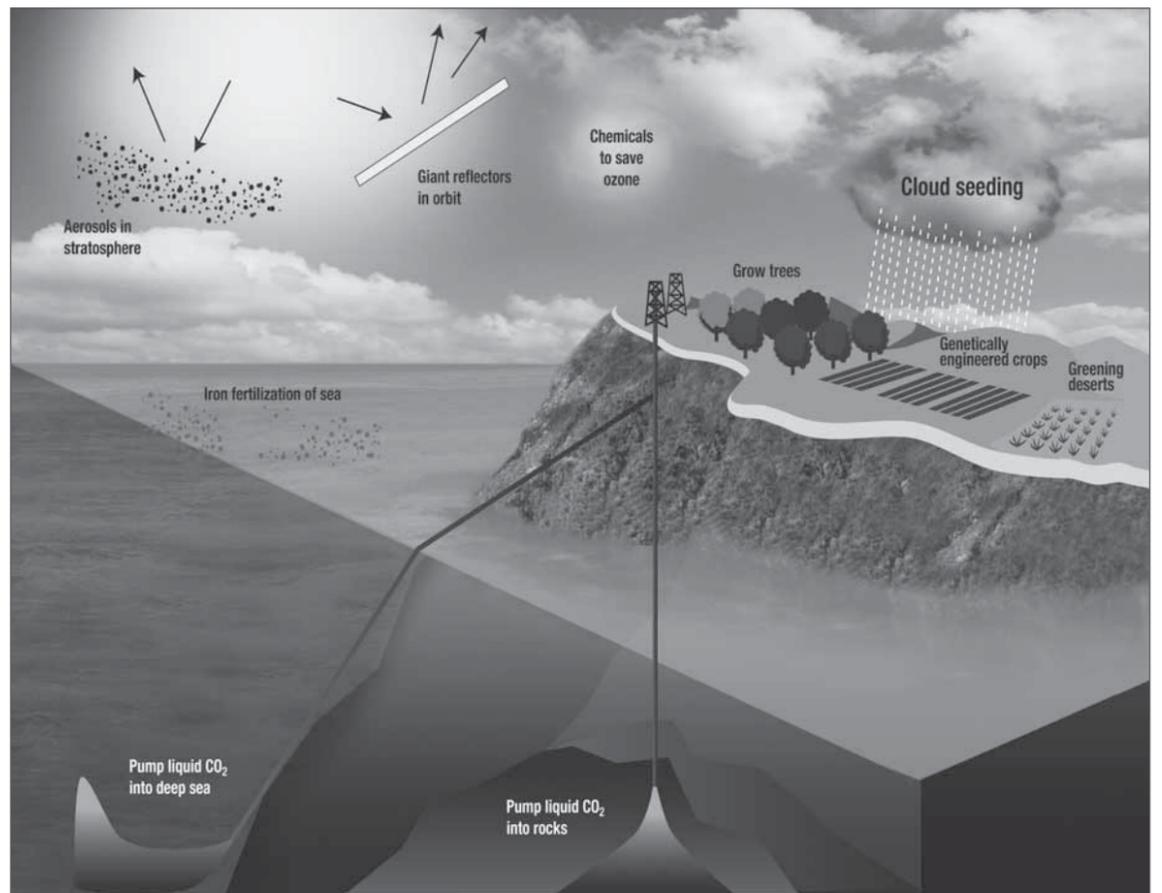
Institutions involved include NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the National Academies, the Carnegie Institute, the American Ecological Society, the Council on Foreign Relations, the American Meteorological Society, Novim Group. The World Bank is also in the game.

There is also a large group of conservative think tanks with strong links to big oil that have abandoned the old tactic of denying climate change and joined the chorus in favour of a techno-fix, including the Copenhagen Consensus Center, the Heartland Institute, the American Enterprise Institute, the Cato Institute, the Hoover Institution, the Hudson Institute and the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

The report acknowledges that there are many ways to geoengineer the planet and admits we know little about social and environmental impacts.

Projects that alter the stratosphere or the oceans will not only have unknown implications, the ETC Group notes. "The long-term costs are liable to be much higher, particularly if a large-scale intervention causes unpredictable consequences. We know that rainfall patterns could react unexpectedly to aerosol injections; ocean acidification will worsen as more carbon absorption is masked by tinkering with the global thermostat, and a host of other side effects could be extraordinarily costly to repair. That geoengineering is cheap is speculation, not science."

The only parties happy with the



Royal Society's report are the scientists undertaking geoengineering research already, the industries that can profit from experimentation and deployment, and the governments and corporations that hope this silver bullet will let them dodge the bullet of public criticism in Copenhagen in December.

These groups only needed the Royal Society to flash governments a "yellow light" favouring more research and experimentation. They know that geoengineering is going to be a very tough sell with the public who already distrust industry and their governments on climate change. They are convinced that a failure in Copenhagen will lead the world to

their doorstep. Perhaps quite unintentionally, the Royal Society has played into their hands

The ETC Group opposes geoengineering and warns that devoting resources for research and experimentation will put us on a dangerous path.

"Seen alongside the full set of possible and urgent responses to anthropogenic climate change, we regard geoengineering as the wrong avenue, towards which further political will and resources will only be squandered.

"Our research shows that all geoengineering technologies, by virtue of being large-scale, highly centralised and having commercial applications as well as latent military

uses, will always deliver inequitable outcomes.

"We further believe that the illusion of a 'techno-fix' serves as an all too convenient excuse for the powerful to drag their heels and further refrain from making the urgent changes required to reverse the climate's trajectory. In a sane and sensible world, the geoengineering option would not be on the table at all, and nobody in their right mind would be agitating for experiments." *The ETC Group is an Ottawa-based civil society organisation monitoring new technologies. For more information visit: www.etcgroup.org ✪

Summit yields unified response to US bases

WT Whitney

The presidents of 12 South American nations held a special Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) summit meeting in Bariloche, Argentina to deal with the United States having gained access to and use of seven military bases in Colombia.

One of several organisations espousing Latin American integration, the Union of South American Nations, was launched in May 2008 to promote "a new model of integration" favouring "more equitable, harmonious, and unifying development." Projects have included investigation of a peasant massacre last September in Pando, Bolivia and, at its third summit on August 11 in Quito, condemnation of the coup removing Honduran President Manuel Zelaya.

UNASUR represents the great majority of South American nations and peoples, including Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Paraguay, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela, with a total population more than

370 million, compared to the US population of 300 million.

Welcoming the delegates, host President Cristina Fernández of Argentina urged the development of rules for dealing with the installation of foreign military bases in member states. "We don't need high decibel speeches obscuring the facts we have to deal with here," she cautioned.

At day's end, divisions cropped up between moderate forces content with devising long-term solutions and advocates for immediate steps, represented by the presidents of Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela.

An initial statement called for mutual trust among member states, respect for national sovereignty, the virtues of regional integration and peaceful solutions, and protection of national resources. It suggested South American nations themselves should deal with transnational crime, drug trafficking, and "actions by armed groups at the margin of the law."

Among five specific points, one identified South America as a "zone of peace" and another warned

against foreign military forces threatening the sovereignty of individual nations. The Declaration instructed ministers of defence and foreign relations to meet in September to "design measures to promote confidence and security, including concrete means for implementation." It also instructed the UNASUR defence council to study national borders and the US "Aerial Mobility Command White Paper" (see below), and its drug trafficking council to develop a regional strategy.

Demands surfaced, however, for forthright action, and for condemnations of the US and Colombian governments. A majority sought details of the US-Colombian agreement on military bases. They backed a proposal for meeting with US President Barack Obama, proposed by Brazilian President Luis Inacio Lula da Silva.

Bolivian President Evo Morales took the lead in calling – in vain – for a document signed by all presidents declaring foreign bases as unacceptable in South American nations. Recalling a history "full of

political and military interventions by the United States," he accused Washington of creating "distrust among heads of state working for unity among the Latin American peoples."

Rafael Correa, president of Ecuador, pointed out that Colombian internal conflict victimises neighbouring countries. He designated South American nations as primarily responsible for combating international drug trafficking. Citing data from experience with the US base in Manta, he suggested that verification and control of activities at US bases was impossible.

President Hugo Chávez regarded the US bases in Colombia as part of "the strategy for global domination by the United States [rather than] helping Colombia combat narco-terrorism." He pointed to the US "Air Mobility Command White Paper" accessible at www.amc.af.mil. One section reads in part: "USSOUTHCOM has identified Palanquero, Colombia ... as a cooperative security location (CSL). From this location, nearly half of the continent can be covered by a C-17

without refuelling." Once refuelled, "a C-17 could cover the entire continent" except for Cape Horn.

Chávez suggested that the Palanquero base, with long runways, would facilitate the US military's air access to Africa and use of nuclear-armed aircraft in South America.

Colombian President Uribe was isolated like "a fly in a glass of milk," President Morales observed. Such was Uribe's discomfiture, that, according to Carlos Lozano, the editor of *Voz*, the newspaper of the Colombian Communist Party, he committed "the discourteous act of not wanting to pose for the official photograph." Lozano added, "Uribe is a poor peon of the empire and nothing more." More bad news descended upon Uribe when, back in Bogota, he was diagnosed with H1N1 influenza.

For Carlos Lozano, "the great loser [at the summit] was the empire and its politics," which he and others attributed to Latin America's unified response to imperialist schemes, a new phenomenon. *People's Weekly World* ✪

Bilin's next generation

Jody McIntyre

Every Friday, Palestinian residents of the West Bank village of Bilin march to Israel's apartheid wall, which has stolen more than half their land. But this day was a Wednesday, and the kids' turn to demonstrate. It was a beautiful morning, the perfect time to add a new element to the non-violent resistance in Bilin. While the Israeli army kidnaps their fathers, their brothers and their cousins, the resistance lives on through the next generation.

When I asked Iyad Burnat, member of the Bilin Popular Committee, who would be leading us to the wall today, he said, "Our children are strong! After all, who will be making the demonstrations when we are all in jail?" I could tell that he was only half joking.

We gathered in the middle of the village as usual, a familiar setting with an unfamiliar crowd. It must be the first demonstration I've been to where the average age was in the single digits. Their messages were clear and written on the home-made signs they proudly held in the air: "We Want To Sleep!"

During the last couple of months, the people of Bilin have been victims of constant night raids by the Israeli military, in an obvious attempt to crush the non-violent resistance which the village has so proudly sustained for five years now. Of course, as so often is the case with incidents of injustice and collective punishment, it is the children who suffer the most.

But the children of Bilin refuse to suffer in silence. They had resistance in their blood and souls from the moment they were born. And they know what their people are fighting for: freedom.

As we walked down the historic path from the village to the wall, I saw a few kids peeling away from the

demonstration, unwilling to continue any further. It was understandable; even the bravest child would be intimidated by the sight of soldiers readying their weapons.

They've seen uncles die, and friends arrested and kept in jail for six months. They don't want to be the next martyrs, however noble the cause.

It was strange to arrive at the wall so few in number, in comparison to the usual weekly demonstrations, the ground still stinking of the sewage water they sprayed us with on the previous Friday. For the children, I suspect it was a welcome release from the unimaginable frustration of living under occupation.

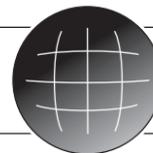
But for Nashmi, 15, the wait for the demonstration was too long. To venture near land that he has every right to, was something he couldn't wait for. On Saturday afternoon, Nashmi was walking and playing with some friends near the wall when he was attacked by soldiers and taken away. "Arrested," as the occupying forces would term it, but "kidnapped" being a more appropriate description. The soldiers were sitting under a nearby olive tree, waiting to ambush the teenagers.

With this memory fresh in their minds, the chanting was impassioned: "FREE! FREE! NASHMI!"

With the gate that separated us from the wall opened, two brave young boys began to cautiously approach, one of them (at that moment, a spitting image of his father) with a loudspeaker in hand, chanting proudly. However, the waving guns prevented them from continuing.

But despite the threatening gestures, no shots were fired. Instead, the Israeli soldiers physically confronted us on foot, forced the children back behind the gate, and re-closed that ugly symbol of oppression. A big yellow gate that separates Palestinians from their land and their freedom.

The children of Bilin refuse to suffer in silence.



Global Briefs

POLAND: Local media reports that the US government will likely relocate long-range interceptor missiles planned for Poland to the Balkans, the Middle East, or placement upon naval vessels. The change affects radar installations intended for the Czech Republic. The UPI report cited as one news source the Missile Defence Advocacy Alliance, a US lobbying group. The move is seen as part of the Obama administration's efforts to rectify US-Russian relations marred by Kremlin suspicions that missiles in Eastern Europe would serve NATO objectives of eastward expansion rather than, as advertised, defence against "rogue states".

MEXICO: World Bank data indicate that 4.2 million more Mexicans have fallen into poverty so far this year. Latin America and Caribbean totals for the newly poor are 8.3 million people, 3.6 million of them living in extreme poverty. Mexico's poor now number 54.8 million, 51 percent of the population. Increased dependence on imported grains and meat contributed to the trend, reported *La Jornada*, especially as food costs rise worldwide.

KENYA: Visiting regional ally Kenya last week, AFRICOM head General William Ward indicated that US aircraft would be patrolling over Seychelles territorial waters near Madagascar, also that unmanned aircraft would eventually be used. Without specifying objectives, an AFRICOM spokesperson announced the imminent dispatch of US military "experts" to eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. For Ward, radical Islam's arrival in Somalia "makes East Africa a central focus of the US military on the continent." These activities of AFRICOM, the continent-wide joint US military command activated last year, represent "the Pentagon's first direct military intervention in Africa". US military personnel had earlier joined British counterparts in training Rwandan soldiers, some of them prone to incursions inside mineral-rich eastern Congo.

INDIA: Drought-caused food shortages presently threaten 700 million people. Food prices are up 10 percent. Agricultural Minister Sharad Pawar described the situation as "grim" for "providing drinking water, livelihood and food, particularly for the small and marginal farmers and landless labourers." On August 26 the Communist Party of India (Marxist) held a "National Convention on the Right to Food and Against Price Rise." General Secretary Prakash Karat called for a "people's movement," national food self-sufficiency, and blanket application of the Public Distribution System rather than targeted allocations. He dismissed proposed Congress Party food security legislation as "retrograde." He declared, "Every citizen should have the right to food."

CUBA: Joined by nine state officials and businesspersons, New Mexico governor Bill Richardson spent last week in Havana promoting exports of his state's beef, corn, wheat, potatoes and apples. Since 2001, Cuba's food importing company Alimport has bought US\$4.4 billion worth of US food. Richardson conferred with Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez, Parliament president Ricardo Alarcon, and Pedro Alvarez, Cuban chamber of commerce president and head of Alimport. As emissary in 1996 for then-US President Bill Clinton, Richardson, a fluent Spanish speaker, talked at length with former Cuban President Fidel Castro, raising speculation as to a future role in inter-government mediation. Richardson called for an end to the US travel ban.

Japan's voters sweep out ruling party

Teresa Albano

The Japanese Communist Party (JCP) maintained its nine seats in the Diet (upper and lower house) after the historic elections on August 30 that swept the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) from power. For a half a century the LDP has ruled Japan.

With a record voter turnout, the Democratic Party of Japan won 308 seats promising a new direction for Japan. Growing poverty, a stagnant economy and a younger generation with a dimmer future were all forces that fuelled voter anger and desire for change.

Part of that change was electing more women. A record 54 women were elected, or 11.3 percent of the total, exceeding 10 percent for the first time.

At a news conference in Nagano City, days before the election, JCP Chair Shii Kazuo said voters overwhelmingly reject the LDP policies, but they don't wholeheartedly support the DPJ policies and its political line and don't expect to see big changes with a DPJ-led government.

"This is the important point to consider," he said, as reported in *Akahata* and *Japan Press Service*.

"In one poll, regarding DPJ policies, 55 percent of the respondents said they do not support the proposal for child allowances, and 67 percent said making the nation's expressways toll free is not a good idea.

"What is more, 83 percent said DPJ policies are not convincing because of the uncertainty about its sourcing of fiscal resources," he said. The DPJ has no plans to tax the super-rich and corporations to pay for its proposals, so the burden will fall on working-class families, the JCP charges.

"The DPJ's call for Japan-US free trade agreement (FTA) talks to be promoted and for the number of proportional representation seats in the House of Representatives to be reduced is also causing concern among the public," Shii said.

The JCP will do all that it can to prevent the signing of an FTA between Japan and the US, Shii said. He argued that the agreement would likely cause a lot of pain to Japan's industry, and in particular, the agriculture sector. "By some estimates," he said, "rice farmers could see their business decline by 82 percent."

Before the election, the JCP declared itself a "constructive opposition party" that will co-operate

with a DPJ-led government in implementing policies in the public interest and will oppose policies that are not in the public interest, Shii said.

For example, Shii said, "In a debate of party leaders, I said that the Japan-US secret agreement on the handling of nuclear weapons should be disclosed and abrogated. In response, DPJ President Hatoyama Yukio said he will negotiate with the US in order to prohibit the US from bringing nuclear weapons into Japan. This is how we are already playing our part as a constructive opposition party."

Furthermore, Shii said, the JCP's vision, which includes an economy governed by rules to protect the people's livelihoods and a peace-oriented foreign policy and adherence to Article 9 of the constitution, are key alternatives with growing support among the people.

The JCP has seen its popularity rise over the last year amid the growing crisis of capitalism, especially the global recession and skyrocketing unemployment, fuelled by the financial meltdown.

* Under article 9 Japan will not maintain armed forces with war potential.

People's Weekly World ♣

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

email: tpearson@cpa.org.au



Putting the party line above principle

As a long-time anti-nuclear and anti-uranium campaigner, former member of MAUM, former State Coordinator of the Nuclear Disarmament Party (Tasmania) and other organisations, I write to publicly express my utter disgust with Peter Garrett's and the Australian government's decision to open a new uranium mine in SA. I wish to add my voice to those who have criticised this action, which promotes a very dangerous industry and the world nuclear arms trade.

I do not accept Minister Garrett's lame excuses about adherence to the party line, after the ALP discarded its no new mines policy. While Mr Garrett says he "remains opposed to uranium mining", he is part of a government and system that encourages it.

Sounds like an extremely

hypocritical position to me. Just because he has joined a conservative party like the ALP in the vain hope of changing it, does not mean he has to stick with it as it continues its increasing right-wing shift. As with all of us he makes moral choices everyday. He has willingly chosen the party over principle. Sadly, like most politicians Mr Garrett has put loyalty to the party above principle and duty to the people and the environment. People rightly feel let down by his sell-out.

Unlike Garrett, I and many other hundreds of thousands of Australians still oppose the menace of nuclear weapons, nuclear power and uranium mining. There are just too many serious dangers involved in the uranium trade. If Garrett were genuine about his opposition to uranium, he'd be striving to close mines down, not open new ones. As one of Midnight Oils songs, *Dead Heart* rightly said, "Companies...Got more say than people." They certainly have with this pathetic government. We, the people, need to change that, as there is no semblance of hope that Garrett and the ALP ever will.

Steven Katsineris,
Victoria

A call to end wars

The time has come for the peoples of the world to come together and endorse the statement below and to unequivocally support it. We

are left with no time to discuss or amend it if we wish to consider the future of all peoples and their children – indeed, all life on this planet.

We have addressed this statement particularly to heads of state of the Non-Aligned Movement and of the new flourishing socialist states, indeed, to all states without exception to carry out the submitted plan with confidence and solidarity to achieve it. All nations to publicly endorse their desire to end war now, thus providing a "win win" situation for all and not disadvantaging any one state or nation. Should, by any chance, any nation reject this cause, it be branded as a "Rogue Country" and be exposed to the full opprobrium of united peoples, be denied all dialogue with the rest of the world and endure massive sanctions applied universally on them.

1. The plan for all nations to publicly reject war or threats of war or any hostile act, for they would lose all credibility before the World's peoples.
2. All army personnel presently engaged in war to be returned to their home bases and the same for naval and air force personnel, thus letting each country free to enjoy its own sovereignty.
3. All bases to be closed and the personnel returned to their own territories.
4. For all nations without qualification to instigate necessary steps to ensure that

Sydney Book Launch

Slipped Through the Net The Story of Melrose Desmond Donley by Elly Inta

will be launched by

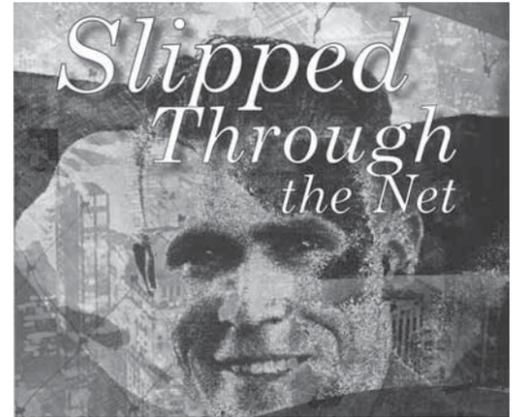
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Thursday 22
October 5pm

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Sydney

RSVP: Elly on 02 9879 3921 or
Email: e_inta@bigpond.com

"Sometimes I feel like a bridge. I know what it is to be Koori and I also know what it is to be white, like, you know." Des Donley



their peoples are adequately fed, adequately housed, adequately clothed and have full access to all help available.

Is this possible to achieve? Of course it is, provided people draw on their unity and, in so doing, dispense with any uncertainty to fulfil this plan. There must be no recriminations

placed upon them. There will be no more killings for there have been more than enough and if we fail to do this, we shall fail our endeavours. This will require the greatest responsibility in our undertakings but the goal demands we do so.

Frank Wilson
Frankston Vic

Culture & Life

by Rob Gowland

Against the rewriting and distortion of history!

From the first moment that Red revolution swept imperial Russia, the propagandists of capitalism sought to mislead the world's people as to the nature of that revolution. They represented Lenin and the Bolsheviks as a gang of German agents (WW1 was still raging at the time, remember), as spies and assassins.

When the British Embassy in Petrograd became the organising centre for counter-revolution in Russia, under the notorious agent Sydney Reilly, the Petrograd Soviet of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies sent its security force, the Cheka, to the Embassy to arrest Reilly. Very undiplomatically, the Embassy personnel fired on the Chekists and in the ensuing gun battle the Ambassador was killed.

The British capitalist media reported in gruesome and colourful detail that the dastardly Reds had displayed the Ambassador's body in the window of the Embassy for days afterwards! Such fictions made good copy, and also good propaganda.

No calumny was too great if it was being applied to Bolsheviks and other leftist riffraff. Although capitalism has modified its stance in the intervening decades depending on the prevailing circumstances and capitalism's own needs, its underlying position and approach has not changed in essence.

Even during WW2, at a time when the capitalist powers needed the Soviet Union, and were dependant on the Soviet Army for the defeat of their common enemy, Hitlerite Germany, influential segments of capitalism used their media (notably the *Readers' Digest*) to spread outrageous anti-Soviet lies and vilification.

Prominent Trotskyists in the USA and Britain eagerly lent their names to these anti-Soviet campaigns, both before, during and after the War.

These campaigns came in waves, but always angled to harm the Soviet Union and the workers' movement. In the 1930s, the capitalist media suddenly discovered that Stalin was "betraying the Revolution". (As if they would care about that!)

When the imperialist powers refused to establish collective security in the face of German aggression, and instead sought a non-aggression pact between Britain and Germany, they were clearly manoeuvring to get the USSR to fight Germany alone. They greeted the USSR's masterful counter-stroke (the Russo-German Non-Aggression Treaty) with howls of betrayal and the revived accusation that the Treaty proved Communists and Nazis were just the same.

That lying equation has been the dominant theme of anti-Soviet and anti-Communist propaganda ever since. In one of his poems, Bertolt Brecht points out that Communism is simple, it's understandable and it makes sense. To attack it head on is to focus attention on it, and that is unlikely to succeed, for the reasons Brecht noted.

So the propagandists of imperialism attack Communism obliquely, taking one of two complementary approaches: the "boots and all" approach equates Communism with the abhorrent, totally anti-democratic system of fascism. This approach assumes that all the proof you need is the fact that the assertion has been made.

The more subtle approach is to acknowledge some of the benefits of socialism but to then accuse it of not being democratic. This approach does not compare the very real participatory democracy of socialism with the purely token democracy of capitalism,

but relies instead on the absence of the trappings of bourgeois democracy to "prove" the lack of democracy under socialism.

As more of the world is turning to the Left, as more governments are formed containing Communists, the forces of global reaction, the more aggressive sections of big capital, are becoming agitated, and fearful.

Desperate to halt this trend, they have discovered to their dismay that the old technique of eliminating progressive regimes with a military coup is no longer simple, or even so likely to actually succeed. The coup in Venezuela failed and that in Honduras has met no end of problems.

Reaction needs a different approach, and has chosen to revive a well-tried technique that has a proven track-record: equating Communism with fascism. After all, the US has been plugging this line for at least six decades: it's practically pre-sold.

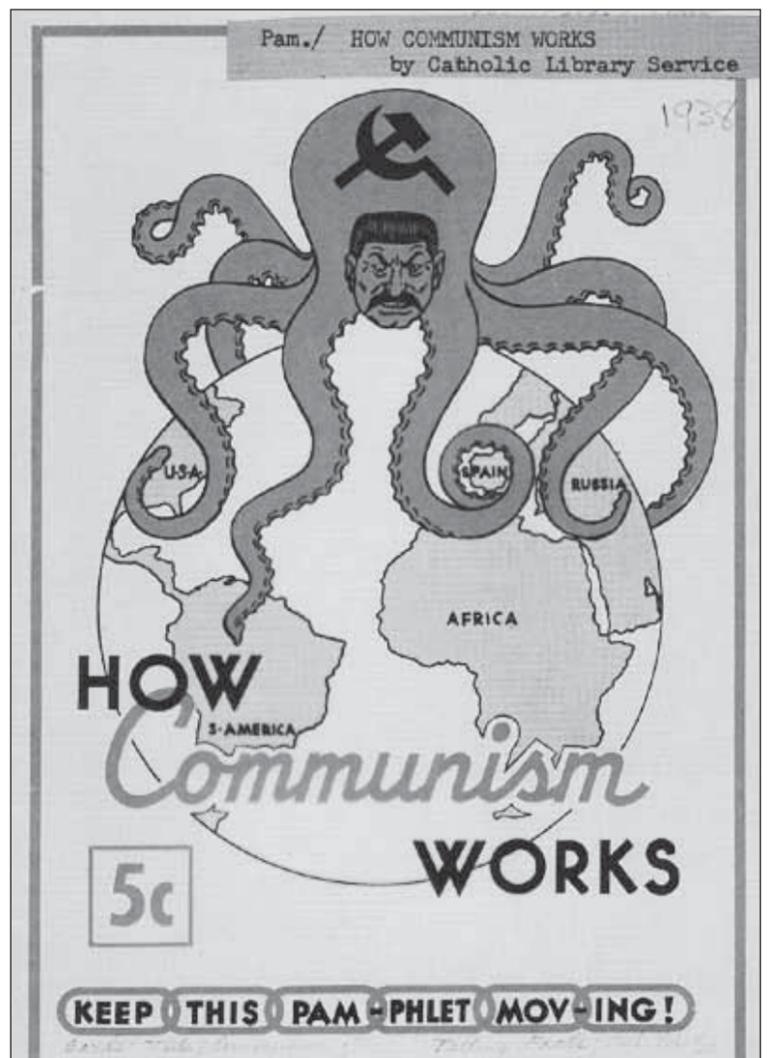
And there is the fact that, after the overthrow of socialism in the USSR and Eastern Europe, several former socialist countries succumbed to counter-revolution so totally that they actually installed neo-fascist governments: Croatia, Lithuania, Estonia, Georgia to name only a few.

As reported in *The Guardian* last week, the Lithuanian government is seeking to change its laws to make it an offence to denigrate the traitors who fought on the Nazi side in WW2 and equally an offence to oppose claims that Soviet Lithuania engaged in genocide.

This move, however, is not restricted to Lithuania. The entire European Union is the scene of an ideological struggle by the Right to try to get a resolution adopted proclaiming the August 23, the day the Russo-German non-aggression pact was signed, as the "day of remembrance of the victims of Communism and Fascism".

As a Statement by the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) says: "This history-distorting effort has the support of political forces serving capital and has manifested itself in various ways over recent years, including resolutions of various international bodies and parliamentary institutions.

"Having first renamed the 9th of



May from Day of the Peoples' Victory into 'Day of Europe' in order to write off the picture of the Red Flag waving over the Reichstag, they now seek to equate the victim with the victimiser.

"They aim at concealing the imperialist, class character of Nazism-fascism. They want to withhold the fact that the Victory of the People in WW2 bears the indelible seal of the Soviet Union, of the Red Army and the partisan movements, in which the communists had been at the forefront all over the world.

"They seek to whitewash imperialism, which bred fascism, and which today, 20 years after the counter-revolution, is once again engaged

in slaughtering people around the world.

"They aspire to hit politically and ideologically all those that struggle against class exploitation and injustice, that resist the barbarous attack on the social, labour and democratic rights of the people unleashed in conditions of capitalist global economic crisis."

The KKE calls on the people to "mobilise vigorously" against the re-writing and falsification of history, and to "defend intransigently the struggle against imperialism, for another society, without wars, unemployment, poverty and exploitation. For Socialism." ☺



Sun 13 Sept –
Sat 19 Sept

Much to talk about this week, so I will be brief. A credit at the start of the 11-part series of short programs *The Urban Monkey* (ABC2 Mondays at 8.55pm from September 14) assures us that it was made in 1987, promptly lost and recently re-discovered in a garage in suburban Melbourne.

This may be a bizarre publicity ploy to arouse interest in a spectacularly poor series of mock educational talks, or, perversely, it may be true, in which case the series was not so much lost as hidden in embarrassment.

When I was a kid, we all went to the local picture theatre on Saturday afternoons for the “special children’s matinee” – the latest episode of three concurrently-running serials, several cartoons and a feature film. We liked all cartoons – whether Mickey Mouse or Mighty Mouse, Hekel & Jekyl or Woody Woodpecker.

There was one cartoon character however who was greeted with groans of dismay: Caspar the Friendly Ghost. His character always gave the impression it had been dreamed up by parents, worried that comics and cartoons were too full of violence for dear little children.

As a consequence he was boring, and so goody-goody. Well, now he

is on television, in *Caspar’s Scare School* (ABC1 at 4.25pm on weekdays from Tuesday September 15).

Fortunately, he is now surrounded by a host of other juvenile spooky characters (zombies, werewolves, vampires, etc) in a rather well-drawn series that may well appeal to small children. I found it watch-able enough, but it’s a while since I was a pre-schooler.

Episode two of *Fear, Stress And Anger* (ABC1 Tuesdays at 9.25pm) is not as funny as the first episode, but its two stars (Peter Davison and Pippa Haywood) excel at showing that middle-aged people can still be in love while aggravating the hell out of each other.

As their best friends (Duncan and his wife Sarah who likes to sleep with Duncan’s friends), Jeff Rawle and Suzanne Burden are excellent: very credible, real and normal.

To my mind, however, the actor who stands out in this ensemble is Pippa Haywood as Julie, wife of unemployed ad-man Martin (Davison). Within the restricted confines of the sit-com script, she manages to make her character multifaceted, strong yet vulnerable, stressed yet loving, fierce yet funny.

Last week’s episode of *The Wild West* (ABC1 Tuesdays at 8.30pm) dealt with General George Custer who got a well-deserved comeuppance at the hands of the Sioux in the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

This week, this BBC/Discovery Channel co-production examines the case of Billy The Kid, who was only 21 years old when he died, but he had already killed six men.

The chief claim against Billy was that he killed a sheriff in cold blood, but the sheriff in question was in fact little better than a gangster with a badge, in league with a local bigwig and a murderer to boot.

The program presents itself in the



Billy The Kid played by David Leon *The Wild West* (ABC1 Tuesdays at 8.30pm)

form of a re-enactment (starring David Leon as Billy) for an investigation by three experts. Their conclusion: that Billy was effectively double-crossed by the authorities during a time of frontier wars over cattle ranges and that he deserves a posthumous pardon.

What emerges most clearly is that the so-called lawlessness of the “Wild West” was in fact the lawlessness of rampant capitalism on the make, using its wealth to buy gunfighters to enforce its seizure of gold, cattle and profits.

And that the standard accounts of Billy the Kid’s career and fate, written largely by the man who shot him, Pat Garrett, are seriously flawed.

This is a well-made, well researched series, but a reference

in this episode to whether the Kid “will be” pardoned in 2007 not only dates it but leaves viewers wondering whether in fact the present Governor did or did not pardon him. Couldn’t the ABC have checked and inserted a title telling us what eventuated?

The title of *Skippy: Australia’s First Superstar* (ABC1 on Thursday September 17 at 8.30pm) is surely a misnomer. Our first superstar would have to be Nellie Melba. Even on screen, Skippy was preceded by swimming sensation Annette Kellerman.

The *Skippy* series was simply a copy of the American series *Flipper*, with a kangaroo substituted for that show’s dolphin. Nevertheless, even if it was not an original idea, at least it was a local production, as opposed to just running the American original.

The new documentary has lots of interesting inside dope on the series’ production, and is never boring, but whoever had the bright idea of letting the program’s narrator Magda Szubanski pretend to “interview” Skippy, and to cut these segments into the program at intervals, should not have been allowed to have any say in the production.

The second series of *Torchwood* (ABC2 Fridays from September 18 at 8.30pm) gets off to a loud, frantic and somewhat

disappointing start this week. The episode, *Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang*, introduces a rogue Time Agent, Captain John Hart (James Marsters), and is certainly not short on incident: Captain Jack dies (yet again) and Gwen is fatally poisoned.

But it’s all very uninviting: there is insufficient build-up, little if any plot development, ineffective catharsis and an unsatisfying dénouement. Otherwise, it’s all fine.

It was all so silly, it left me cold, wondering whether to be bothered with any more of the series. I just hope it picks up again soon.

The second episode of *Heart And Soul* (ABC1 Saturdays at 7.30pm) is better than the first, and looks like being a very satisfying bucolic light drama. Its church setting should not put you off: it is basically a north of England soap opera with choir singing, and its heart is very definitely in the right place.

Michael (Neil Pearson), the choir master, is a real twit and one wonders whether his estranged wife getting him back would actually be a happy ending. We shall see.

Cold Blood (ABC1 Saturdays at 9.15pm) is now confirmed as a serial rather than a series. The depravity at its core is nicely held in check and the tension slowly mounts. This is becoming addictive. ✪

THE BRISBANE LINE - A REAPPRAISAL

by Drew Cottle

\$25(p&p \$2.50)

In late 1941 and early 1942 a Japanese invasion of Australia seemed imminent. One potential solution to this threat was the establishment of a military line across Australia from Brisbane to Adelaide. Territory south of this line would be defended - the rest of the country would be abandoned. Although never implemented the Brisbane line remains to this day a controversial and sensitive topic, with any suggestion of treachery vehemently refuted.

Cottle’s book is the result of patient historical detective work. Apart from drawing on a huge body of secondary material, he has deeply immersed himself in the murky world of Australian security and intelligence records, interviewed key players, trawled private papers where available, along with the records of business and private organisations.



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POLITICS

in the pub

September 11
DOES THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS MARK THE END OF NEO-LIBERALISM?
 Graham Larcombe, economic consultant Strategic Economics
 Damien Cahill, Dept. Political Economy, Uni. of Sydney

September 18
OVERSEAS STUDENTS – DUTY OF CARE OR DERELICTION OF DUTY?
 Bob Kinnaid, immigration & labour market consultant
 David Barrow, Pres. National Union of Students, UTS

September 25
POLICE POWERS OUT OF CONTROL: BIKIES, TASERS, TELEPHONE TAPS, COVERT ‘SECURITY’ WARRANTS
 Nicholas Cowdery, NSW Director Public Prosecutions (DPP)
 Cameron Murphy, President NSW Council of Civil Liberties

October 2
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 www.politicsinthepub.org.au

Harry Black – Unwavering commitment to his class

Jim Donovan, former Sydney Branch secretary of the Maritime Union and member of Maritime Branch of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) has known and worked with veteran communist Harry Black for 45 years. "Harry Black is a most remarkable person who has lived a most remarkable life," Jim told the large gathering of Harry's family, comrades and friends at his 90th birthday celebration last month in Sydney. Jim spoke with warmth and humour of Harry's remarkable life.

The following are edited extracts from Jim's speech:

One of 11 children born at Rylstone, his father was a butcher. As a teenager he grew up in the Depression and left school at 14 to work in a shop. Just out of his teens Harry signed up and saw action. He fought against fascism in the Middle East, Palestine and Syria, was injured and repatriated to Australia. After recovering, he returned to the battle-front in Borneo and New Guinea and again was wounded and then repatriated to Australia.

After the war, he worked at Grace Brothers. Could you just imagine Harry asking: "Are you being served?" He also tried his hand at selling some insurance and drove a truck for the Department of Housing. Then came a monumental change in his life, he joined the Waterside Workers' Federation* (WWF) and became a wharfie in 1951.

What a time to join the WWF! The leadership in Sydney was Tom Nelson, Stan Moran, Matty Monro, Ivo Barrett and Dutchy Young. Jim Healy was General Secretary.

After 18 months, he made another momentous decision; he joined the CPA and became a member of the Street Branch.

The Cold War was in full swing, orchestrated by such people as Menzies, Churchill and the full might of the USA and imperialism. Its aim was the Soviet Union and socialist countries. If anyone or any organisation such as the union or the Party spoke about peace they were branded communist. It was pretty hard when you went out collecting peace signatures. You'd have people harassing you: "You're a commo, you're a commo." People like Menzies were winning the propaganda war.

Harry saw the waterfront turned upside down – from third world working conditions to the foremost conditions enjoyed today by MUA. The nationalisation of both the stevedoring and shipping industries was his goal.

Harry participated in the many campaigns instigated by the WWF and the Party: against the anti-communist bill; the infamous Crimes Act; the New Zealand waterfront lockout; US attempts to deport Harry Bridges due to his suspected membership of the Communist Party of the USA.

Harry was a supporter of Paul Robeson and his right to be given a passport which had been withdrawn because he went to the Soviet

Union on one occasion. There was the Petrov Commission, another communist witch hunt and the execution of the Rosenbergs [in the USA] for alleged espionage.

Harry had seen first hand the horrors of war and has a strong love of the peace movement. I don't think Harry has missed one Hiroshima Day since its inception.

His stand against nuclear weapons, his support for the Palestinian people, Libya, Chile, South Africa, Latin America, Aboriginal rights and land rights – these were many of the issues that Harry took up.

Educator

Harry was elected vice president of the WWF in 1970 and national councillor in 1971 and held those positions until his retirement in 1981. He was the only rank and file national councillor that the wharfies ever had.

Harry would have to be the most popular delegate on the waterfront. He was a great educator with young people and gave them great assistance. I will never forget what he said to me in 1968: "You're the delegate and you will address the men at smoko on the latest developments on the Patrick's company committee".

Well I'd never before addressed any kind of gathering except in the pub where you'd a bit of Dutch courage, you'd had a couple of beers and held forth. I didn't know what to do or say. Harry called all the gangs onto the wharf and said I'd give the latest information and to give the young bloke a fair go.

I stood there stuttering, knees shaking and knocking and I gave it my best and was still shaking some hours later. On later reflection, it started me on taking on the role of a delegate and other positions.

Harry was part of the WWF Sydney Branch cultural revolution. There was the film unit, a library, art lessons, the mural was being painted; they used to bring the kids in on a Saturday morning to have classes on art and dancing. Saturday night the hall was used for a few drinks and songs. Harry was the MC at those particular ventures during the 1950s and the '60s before the advent of clubs. It was a good place to go, let me tell you.

Harry was also a gifted orator and honed his skills in the Domain on the party stump. And he passed many of them on to those who followed.

Black by name ...

I want you to imagine Harry working on the waterfront. Now he is a very dapper sort of bloke, he dresses always immaculately. Could you imagine Harry down below on dirty cargo – lamp black. This was the stuff that they blackened the tyres with. If it got into your skin, it would be there for a week or a fortnight.

I'll never forget this day, working down somewhere in Darling Harbour, loading lamp black. You had to really pick this stuff up carefully, if you just put it down it would come flying up at you. So, one day, they all waited for Harry to put one bag down and then came over at the same time and just went bang. All this lamp black went into the air and let me tell you, Harry was certainly Harry black!

After many years, many years of struggle we finally got overalls, we got neck scarves, we got hats, we got masks, and we even got barrier cream.

Permanency

Permanency in 1967 on the waterfront was not only an industrial nightmare – it was also a political decision of which Harry was at the forefront. The Party called for a "Yes" vote on permanency and it took two stop work meetings before it was carried. His gang 505 volunteered to go to what we called then, "the friendly firm", Patrick.

On the 9th of October 1967, we went from total casual to permanent.

We had to give up some conditions to get permanency but one of those great things that came out of permanency of course was the pension scheme. Without a shadow of doubt, in my opinion, other than the permanent job itself, [the most important thing was] the pension and in 1970, the setting up of the credit union.

Once permanency was introduced, the Party and the WWF leadership of Tom Nelson said, let's start to claw some of these things back that we gave in that period of time.

Gang 505 was to the forefront. Within a few days Harry's gang had refused to back up on an afternoon shift after finishing a midnight shift in the morning. The gang was disciplined and the refusal led to the abolition of that requirement.

Gang 505 was without doubt the most militant gang on the waterfront. The gang leader was Tony Peck, commonly called Von Peck because he ran the gang like a regiment. Also involved were Ralph Sawyer, Gus McKeown, Dave Wager, Mick Kennedy, Hec Cooke, Nookey Brennen, Jim Walshe and John Keelan.

Vietnam

It was a Party gang. It was Party policy not to give any support to the war in Vietnam. The seamen had already carried out that decision by refusing to man the *Boonaroo* which was taking arms to use against the heroic Vietnamese people.

Harry raised this with the WWF



Harry Black

Sydney Branch executive but it wasn't Federation policy. So, he alone, moved at a stopwork meeting the now famous resolution to stop loading war supplies to Vietnam aboard the *Jeparit*. The Sydney officials including Tom Nelson opposed the resolution but by a near unanimous vote the stopwork meeting supported Harry's resolution.

It was now Branch policy. Harry was not the most popular member of the Branch executive. He informed me that it was Tas Bull who seconded his resolution.

When Harry's and two other gangs were allocated to work the *Jeparit*, they refused. Australia ultimately withdrew its troops in 1973 with the election of the Whitlam government.

Harry continued his love for the peace movement and the struggle in other areas of the peace movement.

Unifier

A lot of friendships and comradeships had been born during the '50s and '60s. When the split [in the CPA] came in 1969-70, a lot of comrades who we associated with remained in the CPA. It was a very hard period. There were very sharp divisions. Harry was involved in the forming of the Socialist Party of Australia

(SPA). He had no hesitation in leaving the CPA in 1969-70. The SPA later became the Communist Party of Australia again. It was inevitable that the [former] Communist Party would not last because of the position they had adopted.

But Harry was one that never let that get in the way of work because of the importance of unity. He played a major part in the healing of those wounds. He's a great listener, has great patience, a guiding light in enabling people to work together.

There was another split in the 1980s. It is very pleasing to see that some of the people we argued with in that period are here today to celebrate Harry's 90th birthday.

When Harry retired in 1981, he immediately joined the Retired Members, becoming its secretary in '83. He still plays an active role today. The Retired Members is a very vibrant organisation. It attracts 60-70 people to its meetings.

Harry has no enemies except the boss. When you think of it, you go through life, 90 years of age and nobody dislikes Harry. Everyone loves him and likes him. That in itself is remarkable.

* The WWF and Seamen's Union of Australia amalgamated in 1993 to form the MUA. ☆



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