



# Condemn Israel's massacre End the siege of Gaza

Dr Hannah Middleton  
CPA General Secretary

**We are appalled, we are outraged, we are grieving. Israeli military forces have not only prevented six ships from taking humanitarian aid to the 1.5 million people in Gaza who are living under an Israeli-imposed siege, but they have killed and wounded dozens of these brave humanitarian activists.**

Commandos trained in lethal force were deliberately used to punish and deter future Gaza aid convoys or flotillas.

Choosing darkness and using electronic jamming technology Israel tried to hide its crimes from the news media.

Israel is calling the men and women on the flotilla "terrorists". The world knows they were peaceful, unarmed, humanitarian activists. Their murder is a breach of international law and flouts all humanitarian norms.

**Israel has shown once again that it is prepared to defy international law and human decency with impunity.**

## Lift the siege of Gaza

Those who were murdered by Israel gave their lives trying to break the illegal and inhuman siege of Gaza.

Nobel Laureates from Nelson Mandela to Jimmy Carter have condemned Israel's brutal action.

World governments have condemned Israel's high seas piracy and murder of peaceful, unarmed humanitarian aid activists from 50 countries comprising lawyers, doctors, journalists, parliamentarians and at least one Jewish Auschwitz survivor.

## Where is the Australian government?

Foreign Minister Stephen Smith's mealy mouthed regret for the loss of life and call for calm is shameful and totally unacceptable.

The Australian government must denounce Israel's crimes and to condemn the siege of Gaza which denies 1.5 million people drugs, wheelchairs, school books, water purification units and building materials.

**The government must act forcefully to get the siege lifted, must break military ties with Israel and stop any military aid going to Israel (arms trade).**

## Deliver the aid

The 10,000 tonnes of aid on the flotilla must be delivered to Gaza.

There must be a transparent investigation into this act of piracy and murder in international waters. And it must be conducted by an international agency, not by Israel itself.

## Take action!

All Communist Party of Australia members and supporters must take action!

Send protest emails to the Australian Foreign Minister and the Israeli Ambassador in Australia.

Stephen.Smith.MP@aph.gov.au and ambassadorsec@canberra.mfa.gov.il

Get your friends, your union, your community organisation and others to do the same.

Attend the protest actions. If there is not a protest near you, organise one.

Turn this article into a leaflet to hand



The flotilla left the coast of Cyprus on Sunday and was due to arrive on Monday. It was carrying 10,000 tonnes of aid, including cement and building materials that Israel bans from Gaza.

out and pin it up on notice boards. Sell the *Guardians* with this on the front page!

**Contact your local MP and Senator about this; put the demands to them and publicise their answers with letters to your local papers.**

**Use talk back radio.**

## Unforgiveable

The Goldstone Report details the cold-blooded killing of unarmed civilians

including children in Gaza, the deliberate bombing of the UN Works and Relief Agency warehouse and the destruction of schools, homes, water purification plants and electricity sub-stations in Operation Cast Lead.

So perhaps we should not be surprised by Monday night's massacre – but we should never excuse it or forgive it. **Such criminal acts cannot be allowed to continue and cannot go unanswered.** ★

# Despite disasters, government approves 31 oil exploration leases

Peter Mac

**Last month, despite recent marine drilling disasters in the Montara field off the Kimberley coast in Western Australia, and off Louisiana in the US, the Rudd government approved 31 new licences to carry out oil exploration within Australian coastal waters.**

One of the sites is only 85 kilometres off the Margaret River outlet in Western Australia, within an area

already earmarked as a potential marine sanctuary. Other sites are within the Carnarvon and Roebuck basins off the WA coast.

The Margaret River proposal has enraged members of WA environmental and community groups, who were anticipating the declaration of a marine park off the Margaret River outlet.

Tim Nichol, the Marine Coordinator of the WA Conservation Council, stated:

"The Conservation Council condemns this move by Martin Ferguson (federal Minister for Energy), and calls on the government to ensure protection of our unique southwest marine life by establishing a network of large marine sanctuaries in Commonwealth waters off our southwest coast".

Using CSIRO wind and wave data and pollution modelling, the Conservation Council has tracked the likely course of oil spill pollution

from the proposed exploration site, and has concluded that it would almost certainly reach the WA coast.

Tim Nichol commented: "Currently, less than one percent of WA's marine life is protected. Marine sanctuaries provide important marine habitats, a buffer from the impacts of smaller oil spills, seismic activity and drilling, and provide a safe haven for our marine life to survive and thrive into the future.

"Up to 90 percent of the marine

life in the southwest is unique, and half the world's whale and dolphin species use the region. This new oil lease in an area that has been identified for its high conservation value puts our unique marine life at risk. For example, if the Montara oil spill had happened in the southwest, we could have seen oil on the beaches from Perth to Margaret River".

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## The Guardian

Issue 1457

June 2, 2010

### The lawless "special relationship"

This week, with the attack on the aid flotilla in the international waters off the coast of Gaza, the world has witnessed once more the Israeli government's brutality and flagrant disregard for international law. Last week, the Australian government was obliged to act and expel an Israeli diplomat involved in the fraudulent misuse of the passports of four Australian citizens. Israeli agents used the documents during an operation ending with the murder of Hamas official Mahmoud al-Mabhouh in a Dubai hotel in January.

The expulsion of the Mossad agent from the embassy was said to be the result of investigations by the Australian Federal Police and ASIO. The Australian government had expressed its anger at the theft of the identity of Australian citizens living in Israel but not the lawless methods of Israel's agents in assassinating a Hamas official in a third country.

Some commentators, like former foreign minister Alexander Downer and current deputy opposition leader Julie Bishop, have described the expulsion as an "overreaction" but, by any measure, the step can be seen as the least disruptive response possible to the "special relationship" between the governments of Israel and Australia.

When news of the diplomatic retaliation was released, Julie Bishop made the (possibly career-changing) observation that the Australian government routinely allows its agents to use forged passports and stolen identities. She is in a position to know. As opposition foreign affairs spokeswoman, she received an intelligence briefing about the passports issue. She quickly withdrew the claim under irresistible pressure for having let a very embarrassing cat out of the bag.

At the time of writing, the Australian government had not made a full official response to the Israeli military's ruthless assault on the aid flotilla bound for Gaza. It is likely that it will be a mild rebuke laced with some "understanding" of the circumstances faced by the perpetrators of the atrocity.

The special relationship between the two governments is based in part in a sharing of distorted values that allows their agents and military to act with impunity under the gaze of the international community. It is disturbing to note that the Rudd government is now pressing for its spy agencies, ASIO and ASIS – which operates abroad – to carry weapons, just like Mossad.

The Australian government must recover its moral compass, and condemn the Israeli government's latest belligerent actions in no uncertain terms. Further, it should cool its current "special relationship" until the Israeli government becomes a law-abiding citizen recognising United Nations resolutions including those regarding its territory and the right of the Palestinian people to an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

### Abbott and asylum seekers

The treatment of asylum seekers arriving by boat off our northern shores violates international conventions to which the Australian government is a signatory. The ban on the processing of the applications for refugee status from Sri Lanka and Afghanistan and the warehousing of desperate people in inappropriate facilities is a throwback to the shameful treatment of refugees in the Howard years. The steps have been taken out of political expedience – to thwart the ambitions of Tony Abbott to become PM at the next federal election.

The suffering resulting from the measures taken by the Rudd government is unacceptable but the toll of an Abbott-inspired regime would be tragic. The opposition leader has vowed to have boats heading towards Australia towed back into international waters. He has made stumbling concessions that the boats would have to be assessed to be seaworthy so that the passengers would not be condemned by his policies to drown shortly after interception. Nevertheless, tough-talking Tony is keen to have it known that the future welfare of any portion of the world's refugee population is of no concern to him.

Of course, the would-be PM talks about defending an "orderly immigration" policy and a generous refugee intake. Those things must be said by any politician seeking to lead an educated electorate shocked by the experience of the Howard's "Pacific Solution".

But Abbott is betting that intolerance towards refugees and sections of Australians immigration intake is growing. Last week the opposition announced it would reintroduce a version of the Temporary Protection Visa that once held asylum seekers in a perilous legal limbo. Refugees would have to work for any benefits received and may only be allowed to stay in Australia for as little as six months. There would be no right to family reunion for successful applicants.

An Abbott government would compound the injustice and lawlessness of Australian refugee policy.

### PRESS FUND

In short trading, speculators borrow money on the expectation that stocks or shares in investments which they then buy at a low price may be sold subsequently for a handsome profit. The practice creates no national economic benefit whatsoever, and has been a major contributor to the ongoing financial crisis. The German government has banned "naked" short trading, which involves trading in non-material investments, but cannot bring itself to ban the practice altogether. In Australia short selling continues unabated. *The Guardian* is committed to expose all such parasitic activities, in the long struggle to abolish capitalism altogether. However, to do this we need your help, by way of contributions to the Press Fund. It's one of the best investments you can make! So please, send in your contribution for the next issue. Many thanks to this week's contributors, as follows:

Anton \$10, "A Pensioner" \$20, R Girvan \$5, Brian Lowe \$20, Peter Reed \$50, "Round Figure" \$15, Mark Window \$30

This week's total: \$150 Progressive total: \$2,210

# Despite disasters, government approves 31 oil exploration leases

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## A blind eye turned towards disaster

The Montara explosion and oil spill disaster off WA's Kimberley coast spread oil over a huge area, inflicting major damage to the surrounding area, which contains vast areas of exquisite coral and marine life. The leaking drill site was plugged with tremendous difficulty, after weeks of discharge. The oil spill narrowly missed the Western Australian coastline and is still a source of concern.

In the US, the oil drilling leak at the BP drilling site off the Louisiana coast has eclipsed the *Exxon Valdez* spill in 1989 as an environmental disaster, and will almost certainly ruin the thriving coastal fishing industry.

Huge tar balls have been rolling up on the Louisiana beaches, and the oil sludge is invading environmentally sensitive coastal marshes. The oil is likely to spread as far as Cuba in the south, and northwards for hundreds of kilometres up the US coast. In areas where chemicals have been used to disperse the sludge, 25 percent of marine life has been killed.

US President Obama and his

predecessors stand accused of ignoring the perils of ocean oil drilling. However, his action in halting all new marine oil drilling is at least a step in dealing with the problem, even if too little too late. The Rudd government, on the other hand, proceeded to grant the 31 new leases for oil exploration in Australian coastal waters, regardless of the Kimberley and Louisiana disasters. The government appears to have taken the view that because the Montara eruption was not a disaster on the same scale as the *Exxon Valdez* spillage, it could be ignored, with "business as usual" the order of the day.

## The larger picture

The marine oil drilling disasters the world is witnessing have resulted partly from the incredible technical difficulties in extracting oil from deep below sea level. However, they also result from the increasing rate of extraction from marine oil deposits, which in turn has resulted from the "peak oil" phenomenon that is afflicting many of the world's great mainland oil deposits.

In any oil field the extraction process eventually results in a loss of subterranean oil pressure, after which pressure has to be applied

from the surface. Eventually, at the "peak oil" limit, extraction becomes economically unfeasible. At this stage the wells are, in effect, exhausted.

Oil is a finite resource that is running low and the combustion of oil in vehicles and industry is also a major contributor to global warming. Therefore, the solution to the oil drilling disasters doesn't lie in overcoming the huge difficulties in safely extracting oil from marine or shale oil deposits, but rather in abandoning oil and utilising renewable energy sources.

However, the oil and mining corporations will fight to block or delay implementation of such policies – even if it increases the rate of marine oil spill disasters. The Rudd government, which has even dropped its pathetically feeble emissions trading scheme, and the Liberal/National opposition parties, whose leaderships are dominated by climate sceptics, serve the interests of those corporations.

When all is said and done, as far as the environment is concerned the major parties really don't give a damn. The Australian people will have to look elsewhere, to left and progressive political forces, to achieve a cleaner and safer world. ✪



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Sydney Film Night

## My Voyage To Italy



One of the most acclaimed directors of our time, Academy Award nominee Martin Scorsese (*Taxi Driver*, *Raging Bull*, *Gangs of New York*) takes the viewer on a fascinating journey highlighting the classics of Italian cinema and the careers of great Italian directors. It is illuminated by insightful movie clips and Scorsese's impassioned commentary.

6 pm Wednesday June 9

CPA offices,  
74 Buckingham Street, Surry Hills  
Inquiries, Tom 02 9699 8844



*Strange Birds in Paradise – A West Papuan Story*, has been accepted into competition at the Sydney Film Festival. This will be the Australian Premiere screening!

6 pm Thursday June 10  
Event Cinema 9  
505-525 George Street,  
Sydney

For bookings: [tix.sff.org.au](http://tix.sff.org.au)

For more info on the film:  
[www.strangebirds.com.au](http://www.strangebirds.com.au)

# Budget 2010-2011 Irresponsible military spending

Dr Hannah Middleton

**The federal government's Defence White Paper released last year began the largest military build-up in Australia since World War II, ultimately costing at least \$310 billion, on top of military spending that year of \$29 billion with a guaranteed annual increase of three percent.**

The 2010-11 federal budget continues this over-the-top irresponsible government spending on the military. Military spending is one of the few areas protected from government spending cuts, although some of the promised massive military capital investment has been delayed to help get the federal budget more quickly back in the black.

The government is forcing the Department of Defence and the ADF to find more than \$1 billion in savings in the coming year. That billion and the \$797 million it says Defence saved over the past year will be reinvested in equipment and operations.

Overall over \$30 billion has been allocated for the military and security in the current financial year, and spending is due to increase again in 2013-14.

The Minister for Defence Materiel and Science, Greg Combet, is quoted in the *Australian Defence Magazine* as saying:

"This year the government has committed to total Defence resourcing of \$30.8 billion in 2010-11.

"This compares to the 2009-10 estimated actual of \$29.4 billion.

"Over the 2010-11 budget year and the three forward estimates years, we will have committed \$122.7 billion to the defence of the nation."

## Afghanistan

In the budget the government has chosen to focus on providing increased protection for troops in Afghanistan with \$1.1 billion earmarked for technology and equipment to protect the troops from rockets and improvised bombs that are the biggest killers of coalition troops in Afghanistan.

The only way to protect the lives of the young Australian men

and women in uniform is to bring them home immediately and to end Australia's military involvement in Afghanistan.

Instead of helping to end this brutal and immoral occupation of Afghanistan, the budget sets aside about \$218 million to buy weapons that are causing massive civilian deaths and fuelling the fury of communities in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The US-built "Shadow" Unmanned Aerial System – a battlefield surveillance drone – will be purchased for the Special Operations Task Group serving in Afghanistan.

The 2010-11 budget allocates \$1.4 billion for operations in Afghanistan, East Timor and the Solomon Islands. \$915 million of this is earmarked for Afghanistan and the Middle East Theatre of Operations.

Defence will also get \$20 million to support the Rudd government's program to increasingly "civilianise" its contribution to the military occupation of Afghanistan.

## More spying

The budget includes funding for a major increase in surveillance across our region.

The government has merged the funding of key agencies into a \$4.3 billion national security budget which will pay for greater powers of agencies including ASIO, the Australian Secret Intelligence Service, and the Defence Signals Directorate, a military agency that uses satellites, ships, submarines and aircraft to sweep up intelligence.

The government says these agencies will increasingly deal with criminal activity rather than direct threats to national security posed by foreign states and their agents.

## Atomic veterans compensated

One positive in the 2010-2011 budget is \$24.4 million allocated to the 2,700 military personnel who survived the atom bomb tests at Maralinga, Emu Field and the Monte Bello Islands and dependants of those who died young as a result of their experience.

## Choices to be made

The budget raises again serious questions about Rudd government priorities.

Australia can have 100 strike fighters and lousy schools. It can have 12 submarines and 3 warships and deteriorating hospitals, it can have drones and a damaged environment.

In reality the majority of Australians would prefer good services, jobs and a flourishing clean environment rather than a beefed up military machine.

Only 30 percent of Australians support increased military spending, according to public opinion polls.

With the federal election only a few months away, we need candidates for a new kind of government that will bring in policies of peace, security and sustainable development instead of Labor's military madness. ☸



# Budget 2010-2011 Warning: National ID card

Anna Pha

**The government plans to begin phasing in E-health patient records in 2012-13 with its initial focus on those with complex or chronic conditions, older people, Indigenous Australians and mothers and their new born. It involves the centralised recording of medical conditions, medications and medical history of individuals in a centralised data base. The government is going to great lengths to reassure the public that it will be a voluntary "opt-in" system with access controlled by the patient.**

It could be highly beneficial for a patient's medications and medical history to be accessible by doctors and other practitioners. Unfortunately, there are also a number of dangers associated with the scheme being introduced.

Firstly, how voluntary is

voluntary and for how long will it be voluntary? The tax file number is voluntary, but if you do not have one you pay the highest marginal rate on all income at the time of receiving it. You cannot do business without one. If you do not have an E-Health card, will you, in a few years time, be able to receive Medicare benefits or a government pension without one?

Secondly, there is no guarantee of patient control or confidentiality. Government bureaucracies are notorious for leaks and mishaps with personal records.

Thirdly, there is no guarantee that further down the track that insurance companies or employers make access to the E-health records a condition of cover or employment. If the data collection is automatically linked to a doctor's computer, then there could be a reluctance to even record information relating to certain conditions such as HIV positive, AIDS or substance abuse.

Under a punitive social security system, which already seeks to control how recipients spend their

income, there is the possibility of withholding payments from people whose medical records reveal substance abuse or other "undeserving" behaviour.

There is a fourth danger – a very real one. The government intends to use the E-Health card as an ID card. The budget papers state: "Medicare Australia is developing the Healthcare Identifier service under contract to the National E-Health Transition Authority. This service will generate health care identifiers for patients, health care providers and health care organisations and is aimed at supporting the development of electronic health records in Australia." At this stage it is not clear whether digital facial recognition, DNA or some other unique identifier will be used.

Subject to legislation being passed, work will officially begin on the national identifier in July 2010. "An operational contract is to be agreed between Medicare Australia and NeHTA for the ongoing delivery of the Healthcare Identifier service." ☸

Pete's Corner



Perth

## 5th Latin American Film Festival in Australia

Presented by the Latin American Embassies

All films screened 7pm Friday evenings until August 6

Next film screening June 11:

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FREE ENTRY

# Angry mine workers take strike action over sacking

**On Sunday May 23 unionists at a major open cut mine near Muswellbrook in the Hunter Valley walked off the job in protest against their employers' actions in sacking a female employee for some trivial reasons. The mine is owned and operated by BHP that some years ago had a steel manufacturing business in Newcastle.**

The "Big Australian" sacked this single mum just days before she had completed her three months probation period after a cold and callous plan hatched by senior mine management and carried out by a couple of "cow-boy" mine production foremen.

The plan to "get rid of that woman at all cost" started after the mine manager spoke to a group of new starters that included the sacked employee in the induction room. The woman

who was fired was suffering from a food allergy and was forced to use dark glasses to protect her eyes from the bright lights in the room, causing the mine manager to assume she was sleeping behind the dark glasses and from that point onward signalled the start of the attack on her.

It is normally the policy of BHP to issue employees with disciplinary notices should they be found to have broken any of the hundreds of company rules but in this case she was sacked instantly when reporting for start of shift on the Friday morning. After the formality of being given the sack the woman was marched to a waiting taxi called by management and escorted off the mine-site. One can only imagine the humiliation that that poor woman must have been feeling at that time.

After several hours of meetings with mine management discussing the incident it was clear to the CFMEU officials that they were wasting their time and called a stop work meeting and told the workforce just what has happened.

After a heated and lively meeting attended by all the mine employees that lasted less than 15 minutes it was decided unanimously that strike action was needed and they immediately walked off the job, closing down the entire mine to the sheer astonishment of senior mine management.

There was a brief discussion following the walk off with mine management as to whether or not the union would supply labour to load some expected coal trains. The mine bosses were told in no uncertain terms what the company could do with their trains. This is the first time in over 18 years that industrial action of this scale has taken place in this mine now owned and operated by the BHP.

It was made apparent to the union officials that the company was not going to reinstate the sacked worker so the stoppage lasted all weekend until a return to work order was obtained from the office of Fair Work Australia. A representative from BHP was present during the application and did their best to get a three month "no action" clause inserted in the order but a legal representative from the



CFMEU was successful in having it reduced to one month. As requested by the order the miners have returned to work but at a much slower pace than usual.

The sacked employee now has taken the unions advice and is taking legal action against the company on a few grounds and if the courts find in her favour it could be said that there will be some interesting

times ahead for those involved in this underhanded, callous attack on a single mum who was doing her job.

One lesson learned by the striking miners is the importance of being in the union and supporting those who are in need of support. For example if this woman worker was not in the union there would be very little that the union could do for her except wish her all the best. ✪

## Sale of ABC centres great for childcare

**Childcare Union LHMU has welcomed the sale of the majority of ABC childcare centres to the new not for profit consortium GoodStart, stating the ABC collapse highlighted both the need for greater regulation of the sector and the determination of childcare professionals to continue to provide first class care in difficult circumstances.**

On May 31 GoodStart officially took control of 570 centres as part of its takeover of former ABC childcare centres. Sue Lines, LHMU assistant national secretary, stated, "We congratulate the thousands of staff at these centres who maintained their first rate standards despite the spectre of the longest running administration in Australian corporate history hanging over them. This highlights the commitment and professionalism these workers bring to their jobs.

"The Rudd government can also take a lot of credit for protecting ABC workers' entitlements and for their role in financing and facilitating the GoodStart takeover."

Ms Lines said the number of people affected by the company's demise is staggering. More than 13,000 workers and 100,000 children were affected by the collapse

of the company. Of the 1,037 centres that went into receivership in November 2008, 81 were either closed or merged with nearby centres.

"The sheer enormity of the collapse of ABC provides solid evidence of the need for greater regulation of this vital service.

"The collapse of ABC is not only a shameful event in Australian history; it is also a stark reminder of the need to properly regulate the childcare sector. Childcare is an essential element of the Australian social and economic fabric and provides an irreplaceable service to millions of Australian families.

"We urge government to take the lessons learned from the ABC debacle and establish regulation that ensures childcare centres are financially viable, maintain the highest standards of care and education and are driven by community needs rather than commercial interests.

"While we welcome GoodStart's entrance into childcare we must remember the lessons learned over the past two years and apply them in a comprehensive review of the regulation and funding of the entire industry," Sue Lines concluded. ✪

## Top level union meetings in Beijing

**Maritime Union of Australia national secretary and International Transport Federation vice president for the Asia Pacific Paddy Crumlin has returned from high-level union meetings in China with ACTU and International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) president Sharan Burrow last week.**

"It was a solidarity meeting," said Paddy Crumlin. "We talked to the Chinese unions about friendship, building relationships and mutual issues.

"The reception with union leaders in the Great Hall of the People – usually reserved for national leaders – is indicative of the respect the ACTU and Australian trade unions are held in China," he said.

Meetings were held with Wang Zhaoguo, member of the Political Bureau of Communist Party of China Central Committee, Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress and Chair of The All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU).

President Wang represents the 230 million Chinese workers who are members of the ACFTU.

Sharan Burrow introduced Paddy Crumlin as leading "one of the smallest but one of the unions that sits at the most powerful heart of our movement.

"There is nothing of significance that we fight for or stand up for that the MUA isn't at the heart of," she said. "And you know they probably started the fight-back on rights at work with the great waterfront dispute that many of your colleagues supported as

indeed did others throughout the Asia Pacific back in 1998."

Sharan Burrow said Chinese demand for Australian produce had helped us come through the economic crisis very well. "Europe," she said, "could have serious consequences in terms of global trade but during the first wave of economic shock the Chinese economy played a major role. That's why it's really important we do deepen the relationships."

The range of the conversation was from Australia China trade, regional and sub-regional political and economic observations, particularly the Pacific region.

"Larger ACFTU and ACTU exchanges on the international geo politic and economic situation, problems with organising migrant workers from the provinces and multinational companies setting up business in China were also discussed as was the impact and ongoing ramifications of the global financial crisis," said Paddy Crumlin.

"This flowed through to interesting exchanges on the role of government in pump priming economies particularly through infrastructure development and the consequential creation and maintenance of jobs," he said.

The unions also met with Chen Hao, Chairman of Shanghai Trade Union Council and Xu Zhenhuan, Vice Chairman and Member of the Secretariat, ACFTU.

Talks with Vice President Xu and leaders of the Chinese Seamen and Constructive Workers' Union (SUA) also touched on the grounding of the *Sheng Neng 1* on the Barrier Reef in

April and the issue of criminalisation of seafarers involved in such incidents. Discussions also focused on the implementation of the new maritime labour convention, particularly for vessels trading between China and Australia.

Vice President Xu and Comrade Crumlin spoke of the long relationship between the KSU and the MUA and the importance of maintaining that in the interest of Australian and Chinese maritime workers.

"We presented a plaque commemorating this history," said Paddy Crumlin.

The plaque recognises "The courageous role Chinese seafarers stranded in Australia as a result of the outbreak of WWII played in the effort to defend Australia from attack and supply Australian troops operating in South East Asia, PNG and Pacific region.

"The principled stand which those Chinese seafarers took in forming a strong and united trade union to defend their rights.

"The SUA played a vital role in supporting the Chinese Seamen's Union, which became a branch of the SUA.

"That friendship and solidarity marked a new chapter in Australia trade union history and was instrumental in breaking down cultural barriers in the Australian trade union movement."

Both Australian and international union leaders also attended a seminar on trade union work in China and Australia as well as visiting the Assistance Centre for Needy Workers in Putuo District, Shanghai. ✪

Sydney

Worker faces six months in jail

**Solidarity with Ark Tribe**

Assemble behind  
Sydney Trades Hall  
Cnr of Bathurst and  
Dixon Streets, Sydney

12 Noon  
Tuesday June 15

March to the ABCC

[www.rightsonsite.org.au](http://www.rightsonsite.org.au)



# Mining companies cry wolf

Anna Pha

**“In fact, it could be argued that the financial crisis and the subsequent economic downturn was a mere blip on the radar screen of the wealthy,” John Stensholt, wrote in the *Business Review Weekly* (May 27-June 30, 2010 – BRW Rich 200 list issue). The rich are getting richer and no group more so than the mining magnates and the corporations they control.**

The five mining billionaires on the BRW Rich 200 list for 2010 increased their personal wealth by a total of \$6.2 billion last year. They hardly noticed the “blip” but the workers whose labour delivered their riches were not so lucky. During the “blip” the mining industry shed 15.2 percent of its employees, according to Treasury head Ken Henry.

Henry made the point before a Senate Estimates Committee hearing last week. He also said that the resources sector did not save the economy from recession. If every industry had shed labour at the same rate then unemployment would have reached 19 percent. The government’s stimulus package and sacrifices by workers (wage cuts, shorter hours and job losses) did more to prevent a deeper downturn. The quick turnaround, thanks to China, in mining profits inflated the GDP figure, in an economy that is otherwise relatively flat and a “recovery” that has not reached the majority of workers.

The shareholders of BHP Billiton are hardly doing it tough. Their dividend payments have increased by 400 percent over the last five years. Imagine if the workers whose labour created the wealth asked for a 400 percent wage rise!

## Bully boys

Yet BHP, whose profitability is not endangered by the Rudd government’s proposed Resources Super Profit Tax (RSPT), is at the forefront of the dirty industry campaign to block the tax. The tax will not kick in unless the profit rate rises above a certain level – the final details are still being thrashed out in negotiations with the industry. Threats by mining companies not to go ahead with planned and new projects are political.

BHP’s threats include cancelling its \$21 billion expansion of its Olympic Dam mine. The expansion includes increasing the output of uranium oxide from 4,500 tonnes per annum to 19,000 per annum. Hopefully, its threats are genuine and the tax, not the mine expansion, goes ahead. It would not hurt either to suspend for a future date the plunder of some of our non-renewable resources for future generations.

Andrew Forrest, CEO of Fortescue Metals Group, is at the forefront of the attack on the RSPT. His personal fortunes suffered a blip last year, falling to a miserable \$2.38 billion before bouncing back up to \$4.24 billion this year. He has threatened not to go ahead with more than \$15 billion of investments if the government does not back down.

Chris Wallin is another mining magnate who is wallowing in profits. His personal riches shot up from

\$595 million last year to \$2.59 billion this year.

Gina Reinhart, heir to the notorious anti-worker mining magnate Lang Hancock, saw her wealth rise from \$3.47 billion last year to \$4.75 billion this year. She’s not friend of labour either. She recently called on the government to form a special economic zone to allow for overseas workers to be brought in to work on the construction of new coal mining projects, the aim being a low wage, non-union zone with super-exploitation and super profits – and of course no super profit tax.

## A few tax facts

The resource companies receive billions of dollars in tax concessions from the working people of Australia. Although mining companies can produce figures showing they have paid 30 cents in the dollar on profits, the reality is quite different. If the gross operating profit is taken into consideration – before deductions for interest costs, depreciation, losses brought forward from a previous year, etc, etc and other fancy book keeping then the story is very different.

Mining companies receive very generous concessions as well as infrastructure. These include millions of dollars in the diesel fuel rebate from the government – 38.143 cents for every litre and cheaper electricity tariffs because of their high volume usage! There is also the lower tax on superannuation payments and dividend imputation where the tax on income paid to shareholders is effectively refunded to share holders through tax credits.

Treasurer Wayne Swan was not exaggerating when he reported that, “wholly-domestic mining companies paid an effective tax rate of only 17 percent and multinational mining companies paid an effective tax rate of only 13 percent – both dramatically below the headline company tax rate of 30 percent.”

The 40 percent RSPT kicks in when profits (sale price minus costs incurred) reach a certain return on capital. The proposed return is based on the official bond rate, but this is being hotly fought by the corporate sector and the government is likely to capitulate on that.

The RSPT package could actually result in mining corporations paying less tax than they do now. They will receive subsidies (through tax credits) of \$300,000 for every million dollars spent on exploration and a tax credit (i.e. refund) for royalties paid to the states. These royalties are based on the volume of production, which makes it harder to avoid payment. Taxing profits opens up avenues of transfer pricing and other mechanisms to disguise the real profit being extracted from a mining project.

There are other changes related to carrying forward losses and tax credits to future years and the government covering 40 percent of losses where a company gets into trouble.

Australia has large endowments of non-renewable resources, including the world’s largest economically demonstrated reserves of brown coal, lead, mineral sands (rutile and zircon), nickel, silver, uranium and zinc; and



Shareholders of BHP Billiton are hardly doing it tough. Their dividend payments have increased by 400 percent over the last five years. Imagine if the workers whose labour created the wealth asked for a 400 percent wage rise! Pictured here, BHP Billiton Chief Executive Marius Kloppers on the cover of a CEO’s report in 2008.

the second largest reserves of bauxite, copper, gold and iron ore (Geoscience Australia 2009).

## Whose wealth?

The government correctly pointed out that “The Australian community owns the mineral and petroleum resources located in Australia.” It also made the point that “Australia’s substantial endowments of non-renewable resources should be of great benefit to all Australians.” At present the amount of tax it pays does not reflect this.

“Existing resource taxes and royalties have only delivered a small share of the increased value of resource deposits. Resource profits were over \$80 billion higher in 2008-2009 than in 1999-2000, but governments only collected an additional \$9 billion through resource charges,” the government argued.

The government’s arguments are strong, but its policy decisions weak. The introduction of a higher rate of tax or an additional tax on resource companies has the potential to share the wealth amongst the people of Australia. The most effective tax is on production – royalties as paid now to the states. Even more effective and desirable is that the mining companies should be nationalised and then tax would not be an issue, the billions of dividends could flow directly to the public purse.

Additional revenue from taxing super profits, increasing royalty payments or direct public ownership of the mining companies could be used to fund social projects, including higher unemployment benefits and pensions, public housing, education and health services. Then, it could be said that the wealth that is owned by the Australian community really is of great benefit to all Australians. At the same time the original owners of this wealth should not be forgotten; a percentage of all super profit taxes and royalties should be directed to the social and economic needs of Indigenous Australians. ★



Police in Victoria ignored the dying pleas of a man who was being released from custody. The man crawled out of a cell bleeding and doubled up with pain. He was turned out into the street and died in hospital the next day. The story became public when an interpreter rang up a radio station to say that a dog would have been treated more humanely. There will be an investigation into this death and another one which occurred later. An ambulance spokesperson said there did not seem to be any evidence that the police had contributed to the man’s bleeding. Even if his condition was due to pre-existing medical problems it is still not acceptable to treat a human being in such a way.

In the past four years people on high incomes and professionals declared bankruptcies faster than ever – the figures rose by more than a third during this period. In a recent report, “Personal Insolvency in Australia: An Increasingly Middle-Class Phenomenon”, Melbourne University’s Centre for Corporate Law and Securities Regulation focused on middle-class bankruptcy profiles. “One of the biggest findings was that more and more members of the middle class are being claimed by bankruptcy, and to us, it seems a social problem that has escaped notice”, said Professor Ramsay, one of the co-authors of the report. A major cause was due to unsustainable home loans. Excessive use of credit as a cause of bankruptcy has jumped significantly in recent years.

Insulation installers protested in front of Parliament House in Canberra last week demanding a speeding up of compensation for the cancellation of the \$2.5 billion insulation scheme. The program was axed after the death of four installers and 120 house fires. About 30 installers and green loan assessors went to the capital to demand an apology and compensation from Prime Minister Rudd.

The Catholic Archbishop of Adelaide, Philip Wilson, insisted he knew nothing about the sex abuse of children and the cover up by the church during his time as an office-holder in the Maitland-Newcastle diocese. He also insisted he had not been aware that the abuse was taking place in the house where he lived. The victims of the abuse are still angry about the way the church had treated them – “There was more interest in protecting the reputation of the church than protecting children”, as one of the victims pointed out.

The former Australian Prime Minister John Howard is a self-described “cricket tragic”. One of his ambitions was to get a position on the International Cricket Council. Alas, his nomination as president appears to have hit some turbulence as a number of countries block his appointment. He is not the flavour of the month with African delegates to the ICC and India is also against.

## Take Action

# EQUAL PAY DAY

**11 am June 10**

**SYDNEY Town Hall,  
George Street**

**More info:  
[www.payup.org.au](http://www.payup.org.au)**

# The sinking of the *Cheonan*: Another Gulf of Tonkin incident

Stephen Gowans

**While the South Korean [Republic of Korea] government announced on May 20 that it has overwhelming evidence that one of its warships was sunk by a torpedo fired by a North Korean (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) submarine, there is, in fact, no direct link between North Korea and the sunken ship. And it seems very unlikely that North Korea had anything to do with it.**

That's not my conclusion. It's the conclusion of Won See-hoon, director of South Korea's National Intelligence. Won told a South Korean parliamentary committee in early April, less than two weeks after the South Korean warship, the *Cheonan*, sank in waters off Baengnyeong Island, that there was no evidence linking North Korea to the *Cheonan*'s sinking.

South Korea's Defence Minister Kim Tae-young backed him up, pointing out that the *Cheonan*'s crew had not detected a torpedo while Lee Ki-sik, head of the marine operations office at the South Korean joint chiefs of staff agreed that "No North Korean warships have been detected ... (in) the waters where the accident took place."

Notice he said "accident."

## South rules out Northern sub

Soon after the sinking of the South Korean warship, the *Cheonan*, Defence Minister Kim Tae-young ruled out a North Korean torpedo attack, noting that a torpedo would have been spotted, and no torpedo had been spotted. Intelligence chief Won See-hoon, said there was no evidence linking North Korea to the *Cheonan*'s sinking.

Defence Ministry officials added that they had not detected any North Korean submarines in the area at the time of the incident. According to Lee, "We didn't detect any movement by North Korean submarines near" the area where the *Cheonan* went down.

When speculation persisted that the *Cheonan* had been sunk by a North Korean torpedo, the Defence Ministry called another press conference to reiterate "there was no unusual North Korean activities detected at the time of the disaster."

A ministry spokesman, Won Tae-jae, told reporters that "With regard to this case, no particular activities by North Korean submarines or semi-submarines ... have been verified. I am saying again that there were no activities that could be directly linked to" the *Cheonan*'s sinking.

Rear Admiral Lee, the head of the marine operations office, added that, "We closely watched the movement of the North's vessels, including submarines and semi-submersibles, at the time of the sinking. But military did not detect any North Korean submarines near the country's western sea border."

North Korea has vehemently denied any involvement in the sinking.

So, a North Korean submarine is now said to have fired a torpedo which sank the *Cheonan*, but in the immediate aftermath of the sinking the South Korean navy detected no North Korean

naval vessels, including submarines, in the area. Indeed, immediately following the incident defence minister Lee ruled out a North Korean torpedo attack, noting that a torpedo would have been spotted, and no torpedo had been spotted.

The case gets weaker still.

## Torpedo ruled out

It's unlikely that a single torpedo could split a 1,200 tonne warship in two. Baek Seung-joo, an analyst with the Korea Institute for Defense Analysis says that "If a single torpedo or floating mine causes a naval patrol vessel to split in half and sink, we will have to rewrite our military doctrine."

The *Cheonan* sank in shallow, rapidly running, waters, in which it's virtually impossible for submarines to operate. "Some people are pointing the finger at North Korea," notes Song Young-moo, a former South Korean navy chief of staff, "but anyone with knowledge about the waters where the shipwreck occurred would not draw that conclusion so easily."

Contrary to what looks like an improbable North-Korea-torpedo-hypothesis, the evidence points to the *Cheonan* splitting in two and sinking because it ran aground upon a reef, a real possibility given the shallow waters in which the warship was operating. According to Go Yeong-jae, the South Korean Coast Guard captain who rescued 56 of the stricken warship's crew, he "received an order ... that a naval patrol vessel had run aground in the waters 1.2 miles to the southwest of Baengnyeong Island, and that we were to move there quickly to rescue them."

Some members of South Korea's opposition parties – which have been highly critical of the government for blaming North Korea for the disaster – "contend that the boat was sunk either by a 'friendly fire' torpedo during a training exercise or that it broke apart while trying to get off a reef." Whatever the cause, they don't believe the findings of the official inquiry.

So how is it that what looked like no North Korean involvement in the *Cheonan*'s sinking, according to the South Korean military in the days immediately following the incident, has now become, one and half months later, an open and shut case of North Korean aggression, according to government-appointed investigators?

## Elections in South

The answer has much to do with the electoral fortunes of South Korea's ruling Grand National Party, and the party's need to marshal support for a tougher stance on the North. Lurking in the wings are US arms manufacturers who stand to profit if South Korean president Lee Myung-bak wins public backing for beefed up spending on sonar equipment and warships to deter a North Korean threat – all the more likely with the *Cheonan* incident chalked up to North Korean aggression.

South Korean president Lee Myung-bak is a North Korea-phobe who prefers a confrontational stance toward his neighbour to the north to the policy of peaceful coexistence and growing cooperation favoured by his recent predecessors. This is also the approach favoured

by Pyongyang. President Lee's foreign policy rests on the goal of forcing the collapse of North Korea.

(It's worth mentioning that North Korea supports a policy of peace and cooperation. South Korea, under its hawkish president, does not.) Fabricating a case against the North serves Lee in a number of ways. If voters in the South can be persuaded that the North is indeed a menace – and it looks like this is exactly what is happening – Lee's hawkish policies will be embraced as the right ones for present circumstances. This will prove immeasurably helpful in upcoming mayoral and gubernatorial elections in June.

## Seeking confrontation with North

What's more, Lee's foreign policy rests on the goal of forcing the collapse of North Korea. When he took office in February 2008, he set about reversing a 10-year-old policy of unconditional aid to the North. He has also refused to move ahead on cross-border economic projects. Lee's goal, as Selig Harrison, the US establishment's foremost liberal expert on Korea describes it, is to "once again [seek] the collapse of the North and its absorption by the South." Forcing the collapse of North Korea was the main policy of past right-wing and military governments to which Lee's government is historically linked.

The claim that the sinking of the *Cheonan* is due to an unprovoked North Korean torpedo attack makes it easier for Lee to drum up support for his confrontational stance.

But it does more than that. It also helps Lee move ahead with his goal of re-unifying the Korean peninsula by engineering the collapse of the North. Lee has used the *Cheonan* incident to: cut off trade with the North; block the North's use of the South's shipping lanes; argue for stepped up international sanctions against Pyongyang; call for the beefing up of the South's military; and issue a virtual declaration of war, branding North Korea the South's principal foe and announcing that "It is now time for the North Korean regime to change."

## US-South Korean militarism

Seoul already spends US\$20 billion per year on its armed forces, almost three times more than the US\$7 billion Pyongyang allocates to military spending. South Korea has one of the most miserly social welfare systems in the industrialised world, in part because it spends so much on defence. Only 28 percent of the South's working population is covered by a government pension plan, a state of affairs that has given rise to "silver" job fairs, established to find jobs for people aged 60 and over.

Even so, the South's military spending as a percentage of its GDP is a drop in the bucket compared to the North's. With a smaller economy, North Korea struggles (and fails) to keep up with its more formidably armed neighbour, channelling a crushingly large percentage of its GDP into defence. It is caught in a difficult bind in which it not only has to defend its borders against South Korea, but

against the 30,000 US troops stationed on the Korean peninsula and twice as many more in nearby Japan.

By expanding the South's military budget, and using the *Cheonan* affair to put the country on a virtual war footing, Lee forces the North to either divert even more of its limited resources to its military – a reaction which will ratchet up the misery factor inside the North as guns take even more of a precedence over butter – or leave itself inadequately equipped to defend itself.

This meshes well with calls from the RAND Corporation for South Korea to buy sensors to detect North Korean submarines and more warships to intercept North Korean naval vessels. An unequivocal US-lackey – protestors have called the security perimeter around Lee's office "the U.S. state of South Korea" – Lee would be pleased to hand US corporations fat contracts to furnish the South Korean military with more hardware.

Lee's right-wing party and US military contractors win, while North Koreans and the bulk of Koreans of the south are sacrificed on the altar of South Korean militarism.

## US bases

The United States, too, has motivations to fabricate a case against North Korea. One is to justify the continued presence, 65 years after the end of WW2, of US troops on Japanese soil. Many Japanese bristle at what is effectively a permanent occupation of their country by more than a token contingent of US troops. There are 60,000 US soldiers, airmen and sailors in Japan. Washington, and the Japanese government – which, when it isn't willingly collaborating with its own occupiers, is forced into submission by the considerable leverage Washington exercises – justifies the US troop presence through the sheer sophistry of presenting North Korea as an ongoing threat.

The claim that North Korea sunk the *Cheonan* in an unprovoked attack strengthens Washington's case for occupation. Not surprisingly, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has seized on the *Cheonan* incident to underline "the importance of the America-Japanese alliance, and the presence of American troops on Japanese soil."

Given these political realities, it comes as no surprise that from the start members of Lee's party blamed the sinking of the *Cheonan* on a North Korean torpedo, just as members of the Bush administration immediately blamed 9/11 on Saddam Hussein, and then proceeded to look for evidence to substantiate their case, in the hope of justifying an already planned invasion. (Later, the Bush administration fabricated an intelligence dossier on Iraq's banned weapons.)

In fact, the reason the ministry of defence felt the need to reiterate there was no evidence of a North Korean link was the persistent speculation of GNP politicians that North Korea was the culprit. Lee himself, ever hostile to his northern neighbour, said his "intuition" told him that North Korea was to blame.

Today, opposition parties accuse Lee of using "red scare" tactics to garner support as the June 2 elections draw near. And leaders of South Korea's four main opposition parties, as well as a number of civil groups, have issued a joint statement denouncing the government's findings as untrustworthy. Woo Sang-ho, a spokesman for South Korea's Democratic Party has called the probe results "insufficient proof and questioned whether the North was involved at all."

## Conclusions drawn before probe

Lee announced, even before the inquiry rendered its findings, that a task force will be launched to overhaul the national security system and bulk up the military to prepare itself for threats from North Korea. He even prepared a package of sanctions against the North in the event the inquiry confirmed what his intuition told him. No wonder civil society groups denounced the inquiry's findings, arguing that

**South Korean and US military authorities confirmed several times that there had been no sign of North Korean infiltration in the area in which the *Cheonan* went down.**

# 35 years after war's end, Vietnam pushes friendship

Dan Margolis

**I never had the chance to meet Danny Manzano, my father's best friend and whose name I bear. Manzano, a corporal in the 3rd battalion, 7th Marines, killed at age 21 in what is now Quang Nam province in the US aggression against Vietnam. He should have been home when the bullet took his life, but he was still fighting in Vietnam; his tour of duty had been extended.**

My father, of course, was devastated when he learned of the loss of his friend. He didn't serve in that war, because of a trick knee. He felt, perhaps still feels, a sense of guilt over this. Though he harboured no resentment against the Vietnamese, he didn't feel that it was right that so many of his friends were dying overseas while he was stateside (though, of course, my family was and is glad his knee wasn't up to military par). The loss of his best friend only compounded the guilt.

Though Manzano was killed well before I was born in 1976, some of my earliest memories involve him. I remember my father showing me, as a child, the last letters Manzano had sent. The brightly coloured envelopes had "air mail" written repeatedly in human script on their front and back. I was told that the soldiers fighting were so desperate to keep in touch with friends and family back home that they went to great lengths to ensure that letters sent were received. A few years later, in the early 1980s, a moving Vietnam War memorial came through Worcester, Massachusetts, my hometown. My family went downtown and found Danny's name written on it.

The way the war was taught to me as a child was abstract: there were battles and they were particularly violent. Innocent people were being killed everywhere. But what the war was about really was never entirely clear. Perhaps no one in the family was really sure. There were two sides, but I had no idea what each side stood for. Back then, I never thought to ask. The war was a fact, as is water and the sky, and there seemed to be no reason to question why it was there.

In one of those strange twists of fate, this past weekend, 35 years after the end of that horrible war, which we all now know was a vicious attack by US imperialism on a nation simply trying to free itself from colonial chains, I escorted Vietnam's deputy ambassador to the United States around the 29th Convention of the Communist Party USA.

When he was a child, Ambassador Minh T Nguyen had to leave his village several times because of American air raids, and he surely knew many people, friends, who were killed in the atrocities. Yet here he is today, in the United States, bringing and advocating friendship and always better ties. In private, and in reading official greetings from the Communist Party of Vietnam, he spoke not about the horrors that the US imposed on his country, but of pushing forward and building closer friendship between not just our two parties, but the whole of the American and the Vietnamese peoples.

What he said is wholly representative of today's Vietnam. In fact, while the fight against US imperialism was heroic and inspiring, Vietnam's leadership in the push for peace and solidarity and forgiveness is no less inspiring or heroic.

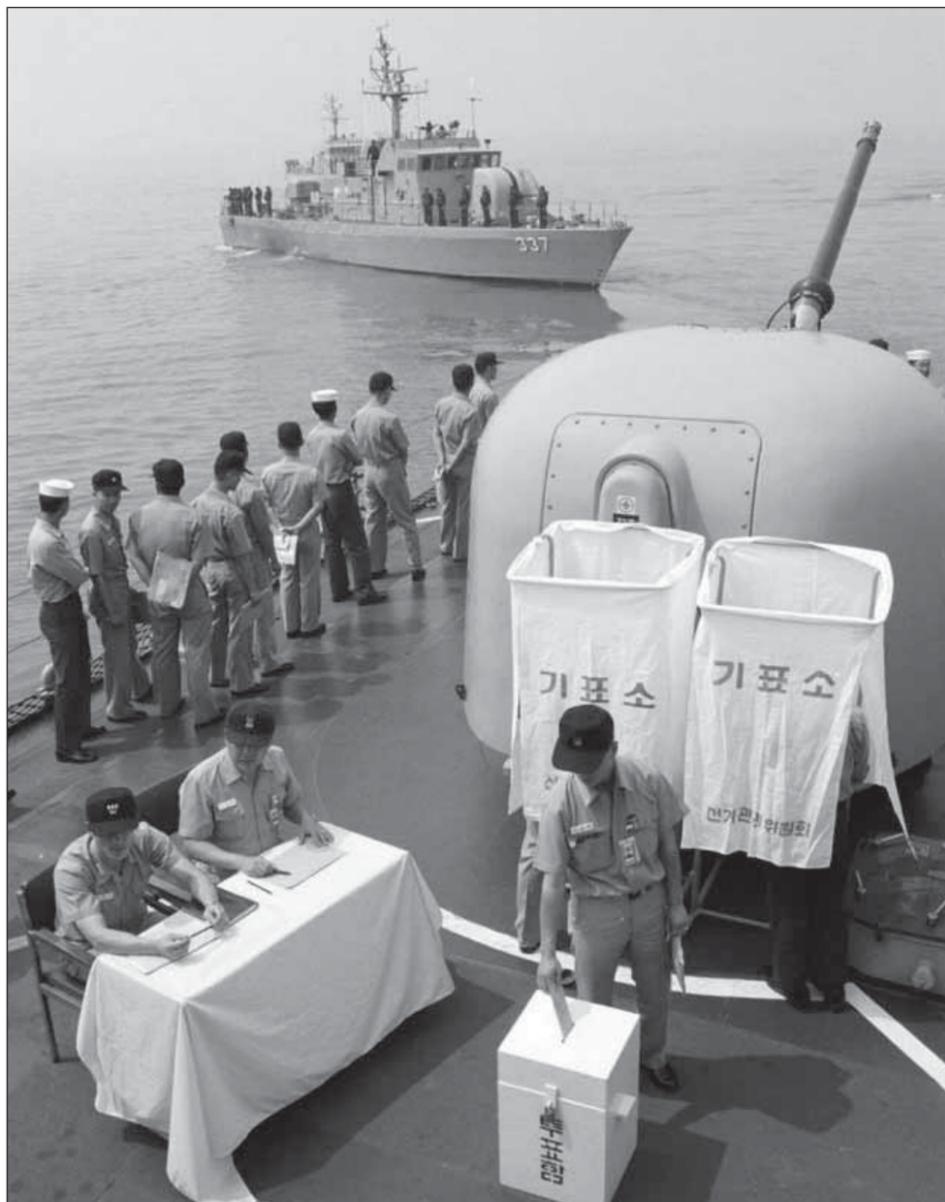
While working to build their socialist society and to develop the country, they have eschewed the anti-US rhetoric of a number of states that have been in conflict with the US. Instead, they've chosen the path of cooperation and, in the 1990s, the two nations normalised relations to such an extent that trade between Vietnam and the US is now equal to trade between Vietnam and China.

Our two nations never should have been enemies. The Vietnamese resistance fighters, including and especially Ho Chi Minh, born 120 years ago, drew inspiration from the ideals of the American Revolution. In fact, 65 years ago, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam's independence, opening his speech with the second paragraph of our own Declaration of Independence.

While the Communist Party USA's National Convention was going on, tens of thousands of US veterans of the war gathered in Lambeau Stadium in Green Bay. The main message on display was simple: war is hell. This is something to which both the Vietnamese people and American soldiers can attest.

Animosities are now fading into the past, and it is to the great credit of the Vietnamese people that they are actively working to bury them for good. We in the US should continue to take up this cause of friendship and peace. We can start by working to ensure that our government does its part in aiding all the victims of Agent Orange, Vietnamese and American.

People's World ✪



Navy men cast absentee ballots before a provincial election on the *Cheonan* naval ship near an island patrolling off Incheon, west of Seoul, June 20, 1995.

"The probe started after the conclusions had already been drawn."

Jung Sung-ki, a staff reporter for *The Korean Times*, has raised a number of questions about the inquiry's findings. The inquiry concluded that "two North Korean submarines, one 300-tonne Sango class and the other 130-tonne Yeono class, were involved in the attack. Under the cover of the Sango class, the midget Yeono class submarine approached the *Cheonan* and launched the CHT-02D torpedo manufactured by North Korea." But "Sango class submarines ... do not have an advanced system to guide homing weapons," an expert at a missile manufacturer told *The Korea Times* on condition of anonymity. "If a smaller class submarine was involved, there is a bigger question mark."

"Rear Adm. Moon Byung-ok, spokesman for [the official inquiry] told reporters, 'We confirmed that two submarines left their base two or three days prior to the attack and returned to the port two or three days after the assault.'" But earlier South Korean and US military authorities confirmed several times that there had been no sign of North Korean infiltration in the area in which the *Cheonan* went down.

"In addition, Moon's team reversed its position on whether or not there was a column of water following an air bubble effect" (caused by an underwater explosion.) "Earlier, the team said there were no sailors who had witnessed a column of water. But during [a] briefing session, the team said a soldier onshore at Baengnyeong Island witnessed 'an approximately 100-meter-high pillar of white,' adding that the phenomenon was consistent with a shockwave and bubble effect."

The inquiry produced a torpedo propeller recovered by fishing vessels that it said perfectly

matches the schematics of a North Korean torpedo. "But it seemed that the collected parts had been corroding at least for several months."

Finally, the investigators "claim the Korean word written on the driving shaft of the propeller parts was same as that seen on a North Korean torpedo discovered by the South ... seven years ago." But the "'word is not inscribed on the part but written on it,' an analyst said, adding that "'the lettering issue is dubious.'"

## Gulf of Tonkin over again

On August 2, 1964, the United States announced that three North Vietnamese torpedo boats had launched an unprovoked attack on the *USS Maddox*, a US Navy destroyer, in the Gulf of Tonkin. The incident handed US president Lyndon Johnson the Congressional support he needed to step up military intervention in Vietnam. In 1971, the *New York Times* reported that the *Pentagon Papers*, a secret Pentagon report, revealed that the incident had been faked to provide a pretext for escalated military intervention. There had been no attack.

The *Cheonan* incident has all the markings of another Gulf of Tonkin incident. And as usual, the aggressor is accusing the intended victim of an unprovoked attack to justify a policy of aggression under the pretext of self-defence.

Acknowledgements:  
gowans.wordpress.com/2010/05/20/the-sinking-of-the-Cheonan-another-gulf-of-tonkin-incident  
(All quotes are referenced on this site.)  
Further reference source: Tim Beal's DPRK- North Korea website, [vuw.ac.nz/~caplab/dprk/](http://vuw.ac.nz/~caplab/dprk/), an invaluable resource for anyone interested in Korea. ✪



Dan Margolis (author of this article) with Ambassador Minh T Nguyen.

# Groundswell for peaceful solutions grows in Colombia

Vinnie Molina

*This the second part of last week's article on Colombia*

**Organisations such as FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) and ELN (National Liberation Army) must again be granted belligerent status and be removed from the terrorist list so they can sit at the negotiating table to address the causes of the conflict and find ways to resolve it. This requires political will by the government because what we are seeing is the exacerbation of the class struggle in Colombia.**

This conflict has a number of players; the national oligarchy who have appropriated the wealth, the army or the state that defends their interests, the paramilitary who act outside the law with the sanction of the government, the US who have enormous economic interests in the country, the Colombian people who have been robbed, mass organisations and the resistance movement fighting for revolutionary social change.

Most recently the US has reached a military agreement with the Uribe administration for access and control over seven new military bases. This is a strategic military plan for the area that compliments the reestablishment of the forth fleet in the Caribbean as a military threat to democratic governments in Latin America.

Despite this, sectors of the civil society have begun to organise for peace. As an example an organisation led by Liberal Senator Piedad Cordova, Colombians for Peace, (Colombianas y Colombianos por La Paz) have made an enormous contribution to the liberation of several prisoners held by FARC.

The mass media avidly covers these stories and tries to utilise them to demonise the FARC and garner support for a military solution, this is in contrast to the limited media coverage of the stories of the political prisoners. Senator Cordova's serious

attempts for peace have gained her international recognition. In her recent visit to Europe she rallied for international support for a humanitarian exchange as the only way to achieve peace in her country.

Cordova, a victim of violence herself, lived in exile in Canada for a short period following her release after being kidnapped by a paramilitary group led by Carlos Castano. She has since returned to Colombia with the support of many of her country men and women. However she is also a victim of a media campaign that portrays her as a supporter of FARC.

She is one of 12 high profile intellectuals, journalists, human rights campaigners and members of parliament named and charged by the Uribe administration of the so-called FARC-Politics. As yet only one of the 12, trade unionist Liliyany Obando, has been arrested and although two years have passed without a conviction she continues to be held in custody.

The process of FARC-Politics is to link people to the FARC based on evidence from computer files illegally obtained from slain FARC commander Raul Reyes on March 1, 2008 in Ecuador. The data from the captured computers was accessed without proper forensic supervision leading Interpol to state that the validity of the data could not be verified as legitimate. They could not rule out that evidence had not been manipulated or fabricated.

In the recent Colombian parliamentary elections held just a few months ago Cordova received an overwhelming percentage of the vote. Her popularity has been strengthened by her efforts for peace and her belief that it is possible to end the armed conflict by political means.

She is now facing charges of treason brought about by the reactionary office of the Attorney General but at the same time there is a groundswell of support from a massive popular campaign.

It is widely recognised by all sectors affected by the internal conflict



An organisation led by Liberal Senator Piedad Cordova, Colombians for Peace, (Colombianas y Colombianos por La Paz) have made an enormous contribution to the liberation of several prisoners held by FARC.

that it is possible to find a solution by political means. The humanitarian exchange of prisoners is a well supported demand with supporters inside and outside Colombia.

In support of peace and in solidarity with Colombian political prisoners, solidarity organisations in Australia, Canada, Colombia, US and the UK came together in December 2009 to form an International Network in Solidarity with all Colombian Political Prisoners, INSPP. The network encourages peace and supports a humanitarian exchange of prisoners

as a first step in the political solution to the conflict in Colombia.

I encourage our readers to join the thousands of others calling for humanitarian exchange of prisoners in Colombia. Please contact your federal member of parliament to ask that they lobby the Australian government to join other countries fostering a peace deal.

Send letters to the Colombian Embassy calling on the Colombian government to recognise that social fighters are not terrorists, they are genuine members of society forced to

use arms to strive for the elimination of the inequality and lack of political conditions to participate freely without the fear of being killed that lies behind the deep social and armed conflict.

Unfortunately there are few informative sites on the web in English but I recommend to *Guardian* readers wanting to know more the book "Revolutionary Social Change in Colombia" by Canadian researcher James J Brittain recently released by Pluto Press and available through Amazon books. ☘

## Black unionists say no to Arizona hate law

John Rummel

**DETROIT: Forty years ago the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) "woke up" the trade union movement to the importance of struggles for justice and peace, and this year's convention shows they aren't stopping yet.**

Calling the recently passed Arizona anti-immigrant law a "most dreadful piece of legislation" and likening it to apartheid South Africa's passbook program, CBTU President Bill Lucy told the 700 delegates and guests at the organisation's 39th convention here that the CBTU would be moving its 2011 convention from its scheduled location in Phoenix.

"We have to join in that fight," said Lucy, even though his organisation may face severe penalties for breaking its hotel contract.

Lucy, who is also secretary-treasurer of the 1.6-million-member American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, elaborated further on why Black

trade unionists were taking this stand, saying the law targets immigrants who "have as much right to be here as any other nationality."

"People want a decent job and better life and there is absolutely nothing wrong with that," he said. "We need an immigration law to bring 12 million people out of the shadows and give them legitimacy. Yes we can!"

Lucy spoke of the victories that have been won and those still left on the table. "Forty years ago it was inconceivable that a man of colour would occupy the White House," he said. 2008 witnessed a political movement that inspired the dreams of people of good will, workers, young people, who all came together to work toward creating a level playing field for the average person, he added.

"President Obama is our friend; we want to be seen with him day and night. He's our best chance," said Lucy.

That does not mean the president is above any criticism, Lucy

said. He told the convention he had personally written a letter to President Obama voicing opposition to the "insane position" taken by Obama's secretary of education in supporting the firing of teachers in Central Falls, Rhode Island.

But he reminded everyone that President Obama inherited the greatest mess since FD Roosevelt. Our economy was "going down the sewer" until this president came into office, Lucy noted. Obama has the sensibilities and program to reclaim this country for regular people, he said, but he warned that "Republicans will never vote for anything that allows him to claim success bringing this country back."

Detroit Metro AFL-CIO President Sandra Williams welcomed the delegates and spoke about two campaigns the Detroit Labor Council is involved in. One is a campaign by the building trades unions against Michigan-based non-union Pulte Homes, known for both its shoddy

construction and its unfair treatment of its workers. The second campaign is to counter a nationwide attack on public workers who are "under siege, doing more work with fewer people", Williams said. She announced an upcoming labour summit to map out a plan of action and mobilisation.

Sitting at the St Louis CBTU table outside the meeting hall were Odie Gibbs, Leon Smith and Carline Lang-Smith, all members of the Machinists union.

All three said jobs were the important issue facing people in their city. Gibbs said both Chrysler and Ford have closed plants and GM has downsized, "St Louis was really hit," she said.

Frank Woods, president of the Detroit CBTU chapter, spoke to this reporter about his chapter's campaign around "project labour agreements". These are construction agreements with municipalities to build things like schools or hospitals. "It has been a

discriminatory process for years," he explained.

Detroit has several large projects looming. One is a US\$500 million school construction project.

"It's an 11,000-job project just for schools," Woods said. "New hospital construction in the city could result in another 7,000 to 9,000 jobs. Over the next three, four, five years you are talking about 20,000 jobs."

Woods said the problem has been that the city residency requirement was lowered from six months to 30 days. This has made it harder to get local residents trained for these shovel-ready jobs.

The local chapter was not giving up, he said. "We've taken it to the state Legislature and we've gotten a resolution passed in the City Council to take a look at the project labour agreement to see if it can be changed."

"It will be Detroiters' money and Detroiters should get the jobs or at least first chance at the jobs." *People's World* ☘

# Boycott BP

Why? Because BP must pay. Eleven oil workers are dead. One of the largest oil spills in US history continues to worsen. BP's oil gusher at the floor of the Gulf of Mexico may be 100 times worse than BP first estimated (and 20 times worse than the company presently claims). 100 times! BP's oil gusher is now threatening coastal lands in Louisiana and is almost certain to destroy fisheries and the livelihoods of people who fish and shrimp in the Gulf, or rely on the Gulf for tourism business.

The giant plumes of oil deep underwater will exact an unknown toll on sea life. And the spreading oil may even wind up in currents that eventually take it to the US eastern shores. BP CEO Tony Hayward is sanguine about the whole problem. The *Financial Times* quotes him saying, "I think the environmental impact of this disaster is likely to have been very, very modest."

A boycott will send a message to BP that its shoddy oversight of this project and its history of environmental and worker safety violations is unforgivable. Take the BP Boycott Pledge, and commit not to buy gas from BP for at least three months.

BP cares desperately about its public image. This is the company that has sought to rebrand itself as "Beyond Petroleum." *Business Week* estimates the BP brand as worth US\$3.9 billion – the highest among oil companies. "Not even an Alaskan oil spill or an explosion at a Texas refinery has put a dent in BP's strong [brand] performance," said *Business Week* in 2006.

This time must be different. A boycott will express the organised consumer anger that BP so fears.

Deepwater Horizon oil rig burning after the deadly explosion that killed 11 oil workers.



This is a company that should fear the public's wrath, for the Deepwater Horizon blowout was a preventable disaster. While much remains unknown, there is mounting evidence that BP could have averted the catastrophe. BP made a conscious decision not to install a US\$500,000 safety device that could have prevented the blowout.

There is good reason to believe BP's contractors on the Deepwater Horizon made multiple mistakes leading up to the disaster, but it is ultimately BP's job to make sure its contractors are exercising sufficient care. And Mike Williams, the chief electronics technician on the Deepwater Horizon, told *60 Minutes*

that BP pressured its contractors to skirt other safety measures that might have prevented the disaster.

All this from a company that made US\$14 billion in profits in 2009 – a bad year. First quarter profits in 2010 were over US\$6 billion. After the explosion on the Deepwater Horizon, Tony Hayward reportedly asked why bad things keep happening to BP.

But this is not a case of bad things happening to good people. BP has one of the worst environmental and safety records of any oil company operating in the United States. BP has pled guilty in just the last few years to two crimes and paid more than US\$730 million in fines, penalties and

settlements for environmental crimes, wilful disregard for workplace safety and energy market manipulation.

BP sometimes says it will pay for the harms caused by the spill, but at other times hedges what it may be willing to do. There will be litigation and fines, and BP won't have the final say on what it wants to pay. In any case, cash compensation for economic harms caused – while necessary – doesn't bring back destroyed ecosystems and does little to mitigate the company's culpability for not preventing the blowout in the first place.

The only good that can come out of the BP disaster is if it forces the United States to fundamentally

reorient energy policy. As a matter of simple common sense, the Obama administration should reverse its new policy and stop offshore drilling expansion. More fundamentally, BP's oil gusher is yet another reminder of the need for a massive shift away from fossil fuels and to investments in efficiency and renewable energy.

The disaster also emphasises how crucial it is to hold Big Oil accountable. The BP boycott is a way to start. There are no "good" oil companies, but BP is a particularly bad and irresponsible actor. Consumers should make it pay.

**Robert Weissman**  
President Public Citizen ☘

## Unholy alliance: Israel, apartheid South Africa and nukes

WT Whitney

**"We stand for Christian Nationalism which is an ally of National Socialism [Nazism]," John Vorster said in 1942. But when the South African Prime Minister visited the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum in Israel on April 9, 1976, he laid a wreath and said a prayer in Afrikaans in memory of Nazi victims. It was an anomalous situation for the state of Israel, founded on socialist and communitarian values, and as refuge for victims of racial oppression, to have welcomed this top-level proponent of apartheid racism.**

A rationale became clear

earlier this month with the publication on May 25 of Sasha Polakow-Suransky's book "Unspoken Alliance: Israel's Secret Relationship with Apartheid South Africa."

Chris McGreal, reporting for the UK *Guardian*, surveyed revelations in the book, written by a US scholar and child of anti-apartheid South African exiles. Polakow-Suransky based his conclusions on interviews and on perusal of 700 declassified documents, released by the current South African government.

According to McGreal, the once secret papers provide "the first official documentary evidence of

the [Israeli] state's possession of nuclear weapons."

The revelations came about just as United Nations discussions were beginning on nuclear non-proliferation, with a special focus on the Middle East. Israeli spokespersons have denied charges of Israeli nuclear cooperation with apartheid South Africa.

In his book's preface, Polakow-Suransky provides an explanation for rapprochement, coming about after years of Israeli support for liberation struggles in Africa. "Material interests gave birth to an alliance that greatly benefited the Israeli economy and enhanced the security of South Africa's white minority regime," he writes. Ideology was operating too, he contends. Both the Israeli and apartheid state projected a racist image of a minority people "under siege".

Israel was looking primarily for a reliable source of yellow cake uranium and, less crucially, for military weapons buyers. South African military leaders, seeking to develop missile capabilities, specifically with nuclear warheads, needed hardware and technical expertise.

South Africa's offer to buy nuclear armed missiles from Israel, and Israeli officials' willingness to sell, never resulted in actual transfer of nuclear material. Polakow-Suransky speculates that South

Africa had hopes of adapting their own nuclear weaponry to missile use, thereby saving money.

The main point, however, is that bilateral approval was secured for the deal, and it could have been consummated.

Interviewed by Amy Goodman on "Democracy Now", the author discussed key documents. One describes Israeli and South African defence officials agreeing on March 31, 1975, on the transfer of nuclear-armed Jericho missiles to South Africa. A document from later that day has one of South African military participants in the talks extolling to superiors the security benefits of nuclear armed missiles headed presumably to South Africa. Polakow-Suransky referred to another document from a few days later, the only one with signatures, demonstrating that the two countries' defence ministers, Shimon Peres and PW Botha, had agreed on secrecy. Lastly, documents are presented showing South Africa interested in Israeli missiles, only if they were nuclear equipped.

Delving below the "tip of the iceberg," Polakow-Suransky told Goodman, "Throughout the late '70s and the mid-1980s, these two countries were cooperating in South Africa on building missile technology that the South Africans intended to use for a second generation of their nuclear weapons."

Another important revelation had to do with yellow cake uranium, which South Africa had supplied Israel since 1961. The two nations had agreed that South Africa was providing the material exclusively for domestic use. In 1976, South African Prime Minister Vorster instructed Minister of Mines Fanie Botha "to release the safeguards on the uranium", freeing it up for nuclear weapons use.

Polakow-Suransky read from an interview with the now elderly Botha: "I didn't sell it to them. I didn't give it to them. But when I became minister, they had it. They couldn't use it unless South Africa lifted them, the safeguards, so that's what I did."

Israel's role as arms supplier to apartheid South Africa played out as the nation was becoming, as of three years ago, the world's fourth largest arms purveyor, accounting for 10 percent of all arms exports.

From the 1960s on, there were notable human rights abusers among the weaponry buyers including the Pinochet and Somoza regimes in Chile and Nicaragua, along with El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. Oil-rich Angola and Nigeria are Israel's top African arms buyers now, with Kenya, worried about Somalia, getting in line this year.

*People's World* ☘

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



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

## More on the super profits tax

**There have been a few articles in *The Guardian* lately regarding the Resources Super Profits Tax. These have clearly indicated that while this tax is not a major overhaul of the taxation system, it is a step in the right direction. To date, Australian mineral resources have been up for grabs at discount rates to international investors. Record profits are leaving Australian shores.**

The best example of this is to outline the current system in reference to recent events within the mining industry. Currently royalties – at a fixed rate – are applied to minerals per tonne. So that when BHP and Rio Tinto successfully trebled (slightly more than trebled) the price of iron ore per tonne to China over an 18 month period (2007-2008) these companies continued to pay the same amount of tax, because it is a fixed rate per tonne regardless of profit.

The result was an extraordinary acceleration of mineral exports, and correspondingly record profits entering bank accounts of foreign investors. At the same time, the rapid expanse of this industry (including a large number of “cowboy” investors

and quickly grouped and poorly planned mining ventures) lead Labor and Liberal-National state governments and industry to lobby the federal government to invest more tax payers’ money to build infrastructure to support this industry – in which even more profits could be made for multinational corporations.

The benefit to Australian workers, according to all these noble interests, was that more workers would be employed in the industry and satellite businesses and would therefore benefit them directly. A very small number did, but for the rest of us rents and mortgages quadrupled in mining towns about the Pilbara in Western Australia, and were raised at different rates in other centres (but raised substantially). For most, super profits resulted in super rents and unreachably high bank loans to buy homes, with few benefits flowing from the industry.

The 40% resource super profits tax introduces a simpler and more equitable tax system for the mining industry. “You make more money, you pay more tax”; a principle that applies to all Australian workers. This will not reform taxation for most of us. Much of the new tax revenue gained in super profits is earmarked for infrastructure development (notably in the Pilbara), and assistance packages for smaller miners.

It is really a pro-mining tax. It is true that some investors (those who previously enjoyed shamefully reduced rates of taxation) will be expected to pay a little more (but only for those whose profits are substantial), so naturally they are resisting strenuously. But after all their tantrums it is unlikely to have a major impact on business. Some readjustment will occur. Some businesses

may feel anxious for a period. But no great devastation is about to unfold in their industry.

Many commentators have stated that the Rudd government does not understand business or how the economy works. In this instance, evidence is to the contrary. Rudd is not slashing tax for Australian workers; he is making tax more equitable between competitors within the minerals industry. The consequence, however, is that a small portion of the profits that would have otherwise gone overseas, will now be invested in Australia. A small step in the right direction.

Robin Spencer  
Perth

## Again on Foyle’s War

**Congratulations to Rob Gowland for his incisive critique of the first episode of the new series of *Foyle’s War* (*The Guardian* May 12). A not so subtle attempt to rewrite the outcome of the Second World War.**

Progressive people everywhere will see through this falsehood especially those of us who are old enough to have come through those terrible times and remember the unparalleled sacrifice of the Soviet people who were led by the great Uncle Joe, as J Stalin was called by the media at the time.

Horowitz has obviously joined the ranks of the hack writers and journalists who do the dirty work for the exploiting class. However, those who see through the lies will undoubtedly dub the new series Foyle’s Cold War.

In equine parlance a hack is a broken down horse that anyone can ride.

Les Purkis  
SA

## History and anti-communism

**I wish to reject the anti-communist, anti-Soviet pointes raised by Russell Smith (*The Guardian* 19.5.2010) on the equally anti-communist episode of *Foyle’s War*, which Comrade Rob Gowland’s article exposed.**

The letter was more subtle than others who slander and attack the earth-shaking achievements of the mighty Soviet Union, and in particular their single-handed crushing of capitalism’s armed thugs, ie, the Nazi Fascist beasts. Yet it’s anti-communism is evident from its claim that Soviet traitors who fought with blood-thirsty Nazi barbarians were somehow rebelling against cruel Soviet “occupation” of their country, a claim totally at odds with the unified, harmonious nature of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics where no one country dominated another, but allowed each nation to flourish and prosper, working toward a common socialist goal, putting an end to fratricidal warfare, this whole concept obviously foreign to the bourgeois-minded.

The main gist of the letter was that these captured traitors were to be sent back to the Soviet Union and straight to execution, deprived of a trial, right of defence, etc. What a tired, old anti-Soviet slur. After all these years that’s the best they can come up with? Smith admits these scum were guilty of war crimes and treason, yet still wishes to attack the Soviet Union as an undemocratic bastion of tyranny.

The whole undemocratic, arbitrary execution bit brings to mind the response to the execution of the Soviet traitors such as Zinoviev, Kamenev,

Bukharin, Rykov, with all the class enemies’ vitriol and slander heaped upon that great defender of the Soviet and international proletariat, and the unyielding enemy of revisionism and opportunism, Comrade Josef Stalin. Smith’s letter seems to suggest the same old anti-communist line of Comrade Stalin’s mythical tyranny.

M Window  
SA

## Need for writers from a socialist perspective

**I started reading a book called *Red Letter Days* back in 1979 and I have only just got round to finishing it.**

It detailed the work of Alan Marshall, Frank Hardy, Judah Waten and some of the works of Mary Gilmore. It also gave a very interesting account of the work of the Old Australasian Book Society.

While reading it, I felt that it is rather sad that there are no Communist writers about today of the calibre of the three mentioned.

Although some of Hardy’s work is questionable, particularly from his anti-Soviet period, I found his book *But the Dead are Many* the most depressing book I have ever read.

None the less he is still considered an outstanding Communist writer.

Surely there is enough scope in the present political scene for more books to be written that promote the cause of socialism. I wonder if Rob Gowland could expand on this in the “Culture and Life” column.

Ron Barrett  
Mt Druitt NSW

# Culture & Life

by

Rob Gowland

## The rich get richer, and the poor get ...

**While living conditions decline – often catastrophically – for working people and their families, the rich do what they have always done: get richer and luxuriate in the fruits of their labour (although they get other people to actually do the work).**

To cater to the “needs” of the super rich, a German company, Ex Oriente Lux, has come up with a machine to dispense some 320 different items of genuine gold, ranging from gold bars to customised gold coins. Naturally, these luxury ATMs (marketed under the catchy name “Gold To Go”) are gold plated.

The machine’s computer link updates the price of gold “in accordance with the market” every ten minutes.

The first of these cash machines for the ultra rich was installed, inevitably, in the Emirates Palace Hotel in Abu Dhabi, for the use of oil-rich sheiks and other billionaires.

Referring to the hotel’s gold-coated ceilings and other signifiers of “classy” style and taste, the creator of

“Gold To Go”, German entrepreneur Thomas Geissler said: “The reason we chose Emirates Palace is because it [his gold-plated ATM] really fits with the surroundings here.”

While one or two of the locals may earn a minimum amount of the local dirham currency in return for polishing the outside of the gold-plated case of this service device of the filthy rich, the bulk of the population are certainly not intended to become familiar with it.

That ordinary people might have access to gold-dispensing machines would be the stuff of capitalist nightmares.

Of course, capitalists are probably prone to nightmares these days, what with the New York stock market’s Dow Jones index dropping almost 1,000 points one day in May for no apparent reason. The plunge was eventually ascribed, none too convincingly, to “fat finger” syndrome, and a Stock Exchange staffer who supposedly hit the wrong button by mistake.

That excuse was embarrassing if true, considering the losses that had been incurred during the temporary debacle, or piss-weak if false. Exchange staffers and US media commentators preferred a host of outlandish alternative theories, including action by space aliens or a cyber attack by North Korea!

They seek some one or something to blame that is as far away as possible from the ludicrous capitalist system itself, which every one knows couldn’t be responsible. Could it? No, of course not. What an absurd idea.

While the oil sheiks, financiers and the other well-dressed thieves who carry the banner of capitalism before them are indulging in gold-plated machines to dispense gold directly into their grasping palms, the children of working people even

In two predominantly working class districts of Brisbane half of the students went to school each day inadequately fed. And this in Australia, a country with plenty of food.



in developed capitalist countries are becoming poorer. And the phenomenon is becoming more evident every month.

In May, a survey of 23,000 children in two predominantly working class districts of southern Brisbane, elicited the information that half of them went to school each day inadequately fed. Some had no breakfast, some brought no lunch; none of them were well fed.

And this in Australia, a country with plenty of food.

This is not peculiar to Australia, however: it is, in fact, common to capitalism. In Britain, the Education Department provides free lunch-time meals for primary school children whose parents cannot afford to feed them. The eligibility of children to receive the free meals is determined by means testing, depending on the income of the child’s parents.

As the capitalist recession pushes more families into poverty, rising numbers of children are becoming eligible for the free school meals. In fact, so far this year, an additional

60,000 children have fallen below the threshold, as poverty grows in Britain.

Today in England, once the heart of an empire “on which the sun never set”, over 18 percent of primary school children are from families whose incomes are so low they qualify for the free school dinners. Meanwhile the Tories decry the supposed horrors of what they are wont to call “the nanny state”, including of course government help for the poor.

The opportunistic alliance of Nick Clegg’s Lib-Dems with Cameron’s Tories will do nothing to help the people of Britain, and in the long term will probably condemn the Lib-Dems to the wilderness indefinitely. Already, people who had seen them as an alternative to both the major parties are asking hard questions, expressive of their disappointment.

A correspondent writing to *The New Worker* said of the coalition between the Lib-Dems and the Tories: “For those of us who hoped that the Lib-Dems would act with integrity against the arms trade, against nuclear weapons, and against the

war in Afghanistan, it is a bitter pill to swallow.

“What happened to the pledge to halt the Trident missile program? What happened to the exit strategy from Afghanistan?”

What indeed? I think the answer is the temptation to tread the corridors of power, to see oneself as a major player. It was the same tactic that was used all those years ago to bring some left-wing unions on board with the Accord with the Hawke Labor government in the 1980s.

Others have fallen into this trap before: the Communist Party of France did itself enormous damage by going into an alliance as junior partners with the Christian Democrats, and saw themselves blamed for all the anti-people measures that government enacted, even though as junior partners there was little they could do to stop them. They should never have entered such a coalition.

The Liberal Democrats have made an unprincipled decision and will almost certainly reap a harsh reward. ☹



Sun 6 June –  
Sat 12 June

Agatha Christie's smug Belgian detective Hercule Poirot returns this week in a new series of *Poirot* (ABC1 Sundays from June 6 at 8.35 pm). David Suchet, who has been playing Poirot now for 21 years, returns in the titular role.

Made in 2009, this new series has been updated to the mid to late 1930s, allowing the growing menace of the Nazis to be brought into the tales. The story itself has been changed in numerous ways, none of them very substantial, unlike the treatment of some of the stories in the sister series *Marple*, several of which were "adapted" from Christie stories in which Miss Marple did not even appear!

No such major reconstruction was required for *Poirot*. The first episode is based on Christie's story *The Clocks*, in which Lieutenant Colin Race of Naval Intelligence (Tom Burke) challenges Poirot to solve the case without once viewing the crime scene or interviewing any of the witnesses, relying instead on the reports of others and pure cerebral deduction.

The TV version dispenses with this challenge and Poirot views and interviews to his heart's content. The

other changes are relatively minor – characters amalgamated, scenes moved, etc.

ITV and Agatha Christie Ltd have been making these programs for a long time now and it is only to be expected that they have got better at it. Nevertheless, one must say that this latest series is very stylishly presented, even if it doesn't come alive very often.

To play Poirot, David Suchet has to wear "this huge padding and moustache, which limits the movement of my top lip", so it is perhaps not surprising that his performance can seem stiff. It is certainly mannered. But he is now irrevocably identified with the role.

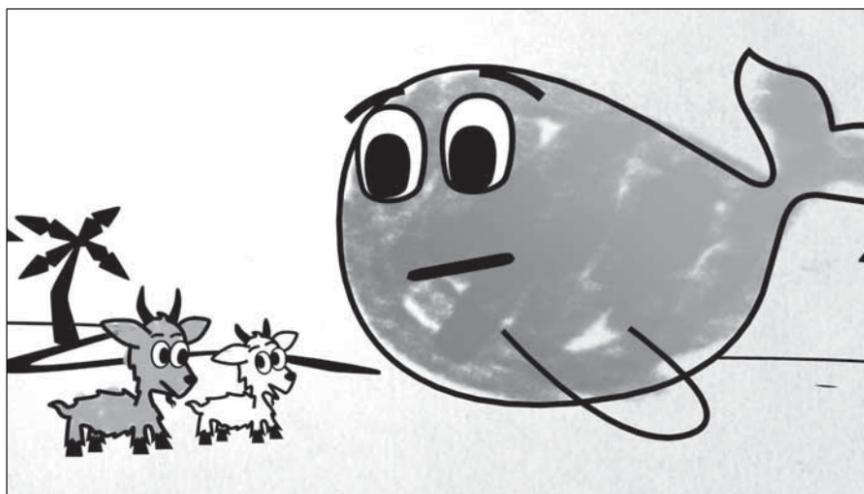
The recent episode about Saturn on *Voyage To The Planets* (ABC1 Thursdays at 8.30 pm) was utterly fascinating and looked like a hard act to follow, but this week's program looking at Venus and Mercury is almost as enthralling.

It also gives more acknowledgement of the achievements of the Soviet space program than we are used to hearing in these NASA-dominated days, and that is also refreshing.

The examination of Venus, once the sister planet of Earth, gives scope for some timely warnings about global warming, with Venus held up as the awful example of what Earth can expect to look like if the greenhouse effect is not moderated.

The silly conceit of pretending the viewers are intending tourists packing for a space holiday continues to disfigure the series annoyingly, but the material itself is so interesting that you can forgive the presentation, with blank-eyed children staring at overlapping and essentially meaningless digital images – anything apparently to avoid shots of talking heads (but the talking heads have some of the most interesting information to impart).

The humour is generally witty and clever – *Beached Az* (ABC2 Thursdays at 9.29 pm from June 10, repeated on ABC1 Fridays at 10.05 pm from June 11).



For all its faults, this is a truly fascinating piece of television.

*Beached Az* (ABC2 Thursdays at 9.29 pm from June 10, repeated on ABC1 Fridays at 10.05 pm from June 11) is the second series of these very short animated films – they run about one minute each – from Nick Boshier, Jarod Green and Anthony MacFarlane.

The situation is very simple: a whale, stranded on a New Zealand beach, has encounters and conversations with a variety of creatures who come by. They're very short films, so there is no time for plot, just the sketchiest situations and characterisation.

The New Zealand accents are very strong (it comes over as "Beached Iz") but the humour is generally witty and clever. They are certainly good fun.

After a long wait, it looks like the ABC might be going to air the second series of *Being Human*, the excellent drama series from 2007 about a vampire, a werewolf and a ghost who share a house. This week they are running *Being Human Unearthed* (ABC2 Friday June 11 at 8.30 pm) which is an unashamed

piece of promotional publicity for the first series masquerading as a "one hour special".

It is possible of course that the ABC is simply planning to repeat the first series on ABC2, but those of us who think that quality programming should be aired in preference to rubbish, have been waiting impatiently for series two of *Being Human*. So come on, guys: when are we going to see it?

From Zapruder's Other Films comes the new six-part comedy-drama *:30 seconds* (ABC1 Fridays from June 11 at 10.05 pm). Set in the world of advertising, it stars Joel Tobeck as Martin Manning, Creative Director of ad agency BND Worldwide.

Martin's been in the game so long he finds that he is constantly having flashbacks of past "creative" efforts. Meanwhile his life is actually going down the toilet.

Advertising is an easy target, of course, but being genuinely funny about it requires intelligent writing, and – based on the first episode at least – *:30 seconds* has it.

It's certainly a nightmare world:

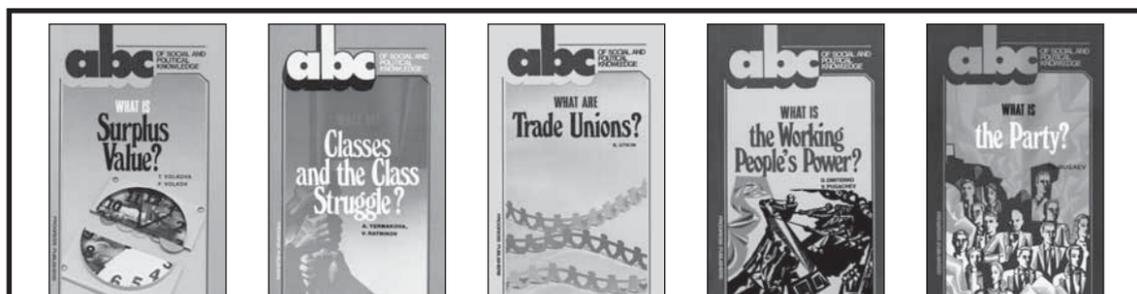
imagine having to spend your days thinking up ways to persuade people that banks care.

The new series of *Doc Martin* starts this week (ABC1 Saturdays from June 12 at 7.30 pm) and would you believe it's just like the last series? You would? Amazing.

Martin Clunes continues to play the rude and self-centred Dr Martin Ellingham, reduced by an unfortunate blood phobia from being a successful London surgeon to being a lowly GP in the bucolic Cornish village of Portwenn. His patients, the locals, continue to infuriate him, and in the last series he broke up with Louisa, the local headmistress.

In the best traditions of the lightly comic soap opera, the relationships between the numerous characters in *Doc Martin* interweave, twist and turn and spiral out of control. But the tone remains light, despite all.

Martin's complete lack of a sense of humour makes his character even more two dimensional than any of the others in the show, and makes his romance with Louisa a lot less sympathetic than it could be. ☹



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**The Guardian**

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74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010  
Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833  
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Published by  
Guardian Publications  
Australia Ltd  
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010

Printed by Spotpress  
24-26 Lilian Fowler Place  
Marrickville 2204

Responsibility for electoral comment  
is taken by T Pearson,  
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010

Sydney  
**POLITICS**  
*in the pub*

June 4  
**THE NEW COMMONWEALTH/STATES HEALTH DEAL – GOOD DEAL, BAD DEAL? FOR WHOM?**

Ian Hickie, Prof, Brain Mind Institute, Uni. of Sydney;  
Gawaine Powell Davies, A/Prof, CEO, UNSW Research Centre Primary Health Care & Equity

June 11  
**NO MEETING**  
Long weekend

June 18  
**PROSPECTS FOR NON-NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION & DISARMAMENT**

Rory Medcalf, Convenor Nuclear Policy, Lowy Institute;  
Sue Wareham, President MAPW

June 25  
**IS EQUALITY STILL A PRIORITY?**

Julian Disney, Director Social Justice Project UNSW;  
Frank Stilwell, Prof, Political Economy, Uni of Sydney

July 2  
**PALESTINE – AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT COWARDICE**  
Jake Lynch, Dr, Director Centre Peace & Conflict Studies;  
Rihab Charida, television journalist

July 9  
**GILLARDS'S MYSCHOOL**  
Angelo Gavrielatos, Dep Pres Aust Education Union, Sen VP NSW Teachers Federation;  
Jane Caro, social commentator, co-author *A Stupid Country – How We Dismantle Public Education*

July 16  
**HENRY TAX REVIEW WHO BENEFITS, WHO LOSES**  
Peter Davidson, Senior Policy advisor, ACOSS;  
Michael Janda, ABC Online Business Reporter

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Book Review by Peter Andrew

# Our Corrupt Legal System

by Evan Whitton

Not long ago, a former NSW Labor Premier, Bob Carr, in defending his opposition to a Bill of Rights said that we have a robust system of common law which has served Australia well. This is a view that many, including Evan Whitton – five times winner of the Walkley Award and journalist of the year in 1983 – would find difficult to share. Many? According to Whitton “everyone is a victim ... except rich criminals” and the reason for this can be understood upon examining the history of the adversarial system of justice.

The author chronicles the evolution of “significant” developments in the history of law including Egyptian, Greek, Roman and medieval law. The English (judge made) common law system emerged in 1166, 84 years after the beginning of the British Empire, “a criminal enterprise based on theft of land and later of human beings”. The common law was not based on a “search for the truth”. Moreover it allowed untrained British judges and lawyers to take control of the civil process in the 17th century and the criminal process early in the 19th century. All of this occurred “in a culture of trickle-down extortion in the public sector (forming) a cartel to maximise profits and protect their interests”.

He goes on to include a list of 24 “anti-truth devices” seven of which involve ways to conceal evidence. Others include improper use of presumption of innocence, precedent; plea bargaining, preliminary hearings, cross examination and delay. Delay equals increased costs. Charles Dickens observed “The one great principle of the English Law is to make business for itself”.

Is it therefore realistic to expect judges, as former lawyers, to shed the connections or the odium that accrues from exposure to an environment that involves representing the

interests of commercial enterprises, tax evaders and racketeers? Harvard ethics professor Arthur Applbaum in *Harvard Law Review* 1995 said, “lawyers might accurately be described as serial liars because they repeatedly try to induce others to believe the truth of propositions, or the validity of arguments they believe to be false.”

Law professor Harry Whitmore, in a leading article in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 6, 1981, “Justice Denied by an Outdated Legal System”, called for a massive overhaul of the Australian adversary system. He said, “... it is a process which is [as] likely to distort the truth as to reveal it. The technique is often a charade – which is only supported by the coaching of witnesses outside the courtroom – leading to tactics and deliberate or accidental manufacture, or suppression of evidence. It is, a procedure which results in bullying, role playing, absurd tactical manoeuvring and denial of justice”.

US Chief Justice (1969-86) Warren Burger told the American Bar Association in 1984: “Trials by the adversary contest must in time go by way of the ancient battle by blood. Our system is too costly, too painful, too destructive, too inefficient for a truly civilised people”.

Professor David Luban (Lawyers and Justice an ethical study) of Harvard said: “The OJ Simpson trial has persuaded most Americans that the adversary system is at best grotesque”.

Whitton comments that the grotesquerie is caused by “a cartel of lawyers and judges (who) run the system as a business; the system does not seek the truth; trial lawyers i.e. trained liars are in charge of evidence; judges are untrained former trial lawyers. As a consequence too many innocent people go to prison; too many criminals get off; civil hearings take too long”.

Whitton says the alternative is the investigative system, as practised in Europe, with some modifications. “There is no cartel”. In Europe judges are not political appointees



or recruited from the ranks of senior counsel. They are trained to be judges at university. “The judge sits without a jury and does not conceal evidence from himself. France in common with other civil law countries does not have any exclusionary rules of evidence”. The cost of litigation is significantly less in Germany and France, the former being the preferred choice for some English companies with European connections.

The author notes that *Our Corrupt Legal System* is an updated and restructured version of *Serial Liars* published in 2005. This work is a carefully crafted and more detailed examination of the historical background to the British legal system. The book is fully indexed with a bibliography referring to 58 publications and includes a list of definitions.

Evan Whitton was editor of the *National Times*, Chief Reporter at *The Sydney Morning Herald* and Reader in Journalism at Queensland University. In 1983 he was voted Journalist of the Year for “courage and innovation” in reporting an inquiry into judicial corruption. He is also a contributor to the legal journal *Justinian* published by Richard Ackland. *Our Corrupt Legal System*, his eighth book, is occasionally humorous, essentially serious and ultimately profoundly disturbing.

Available Angus & Robertson, Glee Books, Glebe.

Peter Andrew, committee Flac (For Legally Abused Citizens). ★

## Rise in young people in detention

A review of juvenile justice in NSW has revealed a dramatic increase in juvenile incarceration over the past decade. The government has sought to manage the increase by committing \$348.4 million to building more detention centres. The report was critical of this approach, suggesting radical changes in the criminal justice system's priorities should see a reinvestment of this money in community projects that would enhance justice for young people.

The number of juveniles in detention centres has increased by approximately 50% between 2003-2004 to 2008-2009. The great majority of young people in detention are on remand – having been refused bail before their trial. 78.3% of young people on remand did not go on to receive a sentenced detention order within twelve months. The report also found that Indigenous young people make up 48.5% percent of the sentenced detention population. They also comprise 35.8% of those remanded in custody. Indigenous young

people are therefore heavily over-represented in the juvenile justice system as they only comprise 2.2% of the total NSW population.

### Reasons for increasing incarceration

The report identified the law and order approach of the government as largely responsible for the increase in juvenile incarceration. This was evidenced most clearly in the amendments in the *Bail Act 1978* that made it more difficult for young people to be granted bail. This undermines the presumption of innocence before being tried and found guilty. Due to changes to bail requirements, the remand rate increased from 3,255 in 2003-2004 to 5,081 in 2007-2008.

Policing was disproportionately directed to young people. Children and young people make up 26% of all persons of interest (i.e. of all ages) proceeded against by NSW Police. The NSW Police effectively divert many of them from offending

behaviour through the use of the *Young Offenders Act 1997*. However, the use of diversionary options is not uniformly applied across all Local Area Commands.

There has been an increasing use of control orders (incarceration) by courts, and this coupled with a significant increase in the use of remand, has seen a significant increase in the numbers in detention. The evidence, both Australian and international, is that detention is counter productive by providing neither a deterrent or reducing re-offending. “Quite simply greater use of detention is not making NSW a safer place”.

The report found that young people who enter the juvenile justice system are likely to have family dysfunction, intellectual disability, poor mental health, dislocation from education, and homelessness. There is substantial evidence that intervening early in the lives of children at risk will divert them from entering the juvenile justice system. “Indigenous

overrepresentation is rooted in deep social disadvantage”.

In seeking to improve this situation the review recommends a fundamental rethink of the approach to addressing Indigenous disadvantage. Without new approaches to improving Indigenous social cohesion, overrepresentation will remain a feature of juvenile justice both in NSW and Australia more generally.”

### Recommendation for justice reinvestment

The review recommended “justice reinvestment” which involves diverting the \$348 million funding from building juvenile justice centres to evidence-based prevention and early intervention programs and services for local communities. The report refers to the experiences with justice reinvestment in a number of states in the US where prison rates have consequently dropped.

The initiatives are based on early intervention and preventative measures, which would have

significant long term benefits for the community. However, given that the report indicates that socio-economically disadvantaged communities have higher rates of juvenile incarceration, it is unlikely that justice reinvestment would be a silver bullet. Nonetheless, it provides a refreshing approach, away from the heavy-handed law and order ideology of governments over the past decade.

Not surprisingly, the NSW government has responded to the report that it commissioned by asserting that its current justice policy is consistent with preventing crime. It has ignored the findings of the steady rise in juvenile incarceration rates. The investment in detention centres is likely to continue, and with it a need to house young people between their walls.

The Noetic Group was commissioned by the NSW government to evaluate juvenile justice policy and practice. The report can be found at: [djj.nsw.gov.au/strategic\\_review.htm](http://djj.nsw.gov.au/strategic_review.htm) ★



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