



Election 2010

Break the two-party stranglehold

Prime Minister Gillard has wasted no time calling a federal election to get endorsement for her leadership and the major cave-ins to the big mining and energy corporations. The PM and opposition leader Tony Abbott are both committed to cutbacks and privatisation, a tight noose on unions and an intolerant stance on asylum seekers. There is no question in either camp about support for the US's military strategy in Afghanistan and beyond. Both will sit on their hands on climate change. The language and the details vary but it is the neo-liberal agenda all the way from the major parties. The need to break this stranglehold on political office has never been more urgent. Australians must look elsewhere if they are to protect their living standards, working conditions, access to services, peace and environmental security.

Abbott's message is simple, blunt and crude. His "contract" with the voters will "end the waste, repay the debt, stop the taxes and stop the boats." A Coalition government would hack \$47 billion out of federal government spending and the people would simply have to wear the consequential loss of jobs and services. Super-profitable mining companies would be let off the revised, limited and reduced tax regime they have now said they are happy with. And, of course, asylum seekers arriving by boat would be towed back out to sea and left to their fate. There is no hiding the reactionary nature of the Libs platform.

Gillard's "moving forward" message needs some de-coding. She gave the public a foretaste of Labor's election campaign with her address to the National Press Club in Canberra last week. Media attention was distracted from the content by her answer to veteran journalist Laurie Oakes about the conversation she had with former PM Kevin Rudd prior to the recent coup. But the language she used and the emphasis she gave to neo-liberal macro and micro-management of the economy leave no doubt that Australian workers are about to pay heavily for an international economic crisis that was none of their making.

Work, work, work!

Gillard's Press Club address was her election manifesto. The notion of increased living standards through increased wages, even on condition of increased productivity, is not raised. "For both individuals and the nation, going

forward requires hard work, determination and smart choices," she said. "Getting a job, holding a job, developing skills and experience, getting the next, better job or starting your own business is what propels an individual's life forward and gives families security and choices."

There is a heavy emphasis on "access to work". Getting onto the first rung of the employment ladder is all that counts. There is no discussion of how low that rung might be. "We need active reforms to improve Australia's ability to compete, to make sure all our assets are utilised productively, and to make the most of our value-adding capacity." "Our" assets? "Our" value-adding capacity? Despite the inclusive language, she is talking about the profitability of business and enhancing it by restricting and driving down labour costs.

Gillard is proud of the heritage of Hawke and Keating and the current industrial relations system that she has overseen and which has perpetuated the stripping of awards carried out under Howard. She referred to it as the "Fair Work regime". She had other boasts for what Labor has done for the business community:

"My record includes big changes such as the introduction of uniform Occupational Health and Safety laws across the nation, a change that policy makers have been pursuing for a generation and which will create billions of dollars in benefit for Australian firms ..."

The savings, the billions of dollars of them, will come from the reduced standards being incorporated in this "harmonisation" of health and safety legislation. Company tax will come down, creating even more savings.

New challenges - more carnage

The PM has warned us - health and education are the next major targets for privatisation. "... We also need sustained and sometimes bold action to unblock the market failures, open up new opportunities, and make sure the interests of users and taxpayers are put first."

"Hospitals, aged care facilities, childcare centres, schools, and employment services - all services with a diverse range of providers from the public, private and non-government sectors, and services where competition and value is often held back by jurisdictional red tape and the lack of seamless national markets," Gillard said.



That is the aim - a "seamless national market" without any preference for taxpayer support for public provision.

"As far as I am concerned, there is no inherent superiority in a public sector or a private sector provider - certainly not on ideological grounds," the PM added. The lines between public and private facilities will be blurred and lost until the preservation of a public system becomes of little interest. If the public sector is to have a separate role, it will be to cater for those who simply cannot afford access to the more privileged private provider. Facilities like the MySchool website and the consequent league tables will direct the traffic out of the public sector.

Of course, Abbott agrees with this agenda. It is unfinished business for the neo-liberals.

Lean times

Gillard has got the message from big business. Workers' expectations must be lowered even further. Her government will return the budget to surplus even without a sector-wide 40 percent Resource Super Profits Tax. Real growth in federal spending will never be allowed

to go above two percent per annum. The aim is to deliver surpluses of at least one percent of GDP no matter how the people are hurting. You can be sure an exception will be made if the banks and other monopoly interests get into trouble. The tone of the PM's address was halfway between that of a fiscal conservative and a Calvinist preacher urging the congregation to work harder for their masters.

The neo-liberal agenda is anti-human and unsustainable. The Communist Party works for the strongest resistance possible to the coming attacks on workers' rights and living standards built up by working people through decades of struggle and hard work. The federal election is another opportunity to fight back. There must be big inroads made into the dominance of the major pro-capital parties. In the NSW Senate the CPA calls for a vote for the Communist Alliance. In all other states and in House of Representative seats the CPA recommends a vote for the Greens and other left and progressive candidates first. Labor should then be given preference with the Liberals, Nationals and ultra right candidates put last. ✪

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Struggle for Brisbane's public transport

The Guardian

Issue 1464

July 21, 2010

Education counter-revolution not waiting for the elections

Education Minister Simon Crean has announced the final terms of reference for a review to lay the basis for funding of schools beyond 2012. Rudd's "education revolution" was one of Labor's key policy points in the 2007 elections, along with the abolition of WorkChoices and climate change. The funding changes will complement the MySchool league tables for comparing school "performance" and the development of an education market. The whole process is geared towards the privatisation and commodification of education, facilitating the growth of non-secular church schools and the entry of big business – in the name of parental "choice".

The composition of the five-member review panel gives an indication of where the review is heading: The chair is David Gonski AC, "a businessman and philanthropist who is also the Chancellor of the University of NSW and chairman of the Australian Securities Exchange, Coca-Cola Amatil and Investec Bank." according to Crean's press release.

Ken Boston is an education bureaucrat with recent experience in the UK. Peter Tannock was the Vice-Chancellor of the private Catholic University of Notre Dame and former chairman of the National Catholic Education Commission of Australia, a consultant for the Ford Foundation, and worked for the OECD. Kathryn Greiner was deputy Chancellor of the private Bond University Council, is also known for her Liberal Party connections. Academic Carmen Lawrence is a former Labor Minister whose academic is in psychology.

Tannock is the only member whose curriculum vitae mentions teaching in schools; that was in 1961-66! There is no education union or any other trade union representation or even a teacher with current knowledge of the situation or needs in public schools.

It is 30 years since the last review and considerable changes have taken place in the government funding of schools since then. Successive federal governments, commencing with the Labor government in the 1980s have reduced the per capita funding of state schools in real terms. At the same time they have steadily increased the proportion going to private church and independent schools.

Thirty years ago state schools received more than half of federal government funding for schooling. By 2007-08, 72.1 percent of its school education funding went to private schools where there are around one third of students! This process continued with Gillard as Education Minister.

The ongoing under-funding and running down of state schools is a conscious, political process designed to drive students out of the public system. It is being pursued by state and federal governments. It has strong parallels with the attempts to force people into private hospitals by starving public hospitals of funds.

The past 30 years have also seen the undermining of education departments as centralised employers of teaching staff, given schools and their principals and councils greater autonomy over hiring of staff, maintenance of buildings etc. This varies from state to state, but all states are heading in a similar direction.

The boundaries between public and private schools are being blurred, the combined contribution of state and federal governments is moving towards the same amount per student regardless of the type of school. The ultimate aim is a voucher system where the same government payment is to be allocated per student (this may vary according to socio-economic status) is paid to the school of "choice". Parents top up the gap in fees and choice depends on their ability to pay the gap.

The federal government is also looking at a federal takeover along similar lines to the public hospital system, with states handing over another proportion of their GST takings.

The only way we can ensure all children have access to quality education is through a universal, secular public education system which is well funded, well staffed and resourced.

There is a public consultation period. It is important that as many people as possible make submissions. The terms of reference and more details about the funding review including consultation arrangements can be found at: www.deewr.gov.au/fundingreview

PRESS FUND

The federal government is now suffering from the emergence of major election issues - including the political execution of Kevin Rudd, which demonstrates the duplicity and dishonesty of the government leadership. Meanwhile, the two major parties are moving ever closer on policies regarding the treatment of asylum seekers, as the ALP fails to challenge the Liberals on this and other issues of crucial importance. *The Guardian* aims to point voters in a different and more principled direction. However, we really need your help to do so, by way of contributions to the Press Fund, which is the primary source of funding for the day-to-day expenses of producing the paper. So please, send us in something for the next issue, because we really need your help. Many thanks to this week's contributors, as follows:

JR Allen \$5, Brian Lowe \$20, Charly Maarbani \$12, P Noak \$20, "Round Figure" \$13, Mark Window: \$10

This week's total: \$80 Progressive total: \$2,820

Doing the rounds

This latest send-up of John Doyle and Brian Clarke says a lot about the phoney interviewing style of some Labor politicians.

TV: "Congratulations Prime Minister. Before we start, as we stand here on Thursday afternoon, do you accept that tomorrow will be Friday?"

PM: "We have always supported the standard structure of the calendar and acknowledge that the public expect a regular system that provides the rhythm necessary for everyday planning and life structures. We feel very strongly about this."

TV: "So you do agree that tomorrow is Friday?"

PM: "It isn't important whether it is Friday or Monday. What is important is that unexpected changes don't interfere with the normal expectations of the public - and this government has a solid record in supporting those expectations."

TV: "But as today is Thursday, surely you can confirm that tomorrow is Friday?"

PM: "Everything is relative and whether the next day is Wednesday or Sunday is dependent on where you stand at the time. We have never challenged the current system and have the full support of the unions on this. Most intelligent people agree that changes are not required."

TV: "Well then, what day is tomorrow?"

PM: "Tomorrow is the next day in our plan to further develop our marvellous country in many areas. We plan to continue providing better health care, reduced debt, reduced unemployment, controlled immigration and to be a world leader in controlling global warming."

TV: "Returning to the question, can you not confirm that Friday is tomorrow?"

PM: "Friday is always around. It has been around many times before and will be around again many more times. Which is why we need - as a responsible government - to plan and organise for the future. Not just for tomorrow, but for our children and their children."

TV: "Prime Minister, the viewers are waiting for your answer on what day you think tomorrow is?"

PM: "We are dealing with bigger issues here. The Friday, Saturday, Sunday thing is not important or relevant to the scheme of things. They need to understand the critical issues and focus on the matters of concern, such as the condition of our nation and how we can continue to develop it so that all may reap the benefit."

TV: "I'm sorry, we seem to have lost the point here again. Are you saying that it isn't Friday tomorrow?"

PM: "The reality is that it is not important what day it is. What is important is how we handle the situation - and my government is handling it with solid policies evolved from the mandate the people gave us."

TV: "But we just want to know if you agree that it will be Friday tomorrow?"

PM: "Let's remain focused here. It is the nation that is important and we stand fast and rock steady in our dedication to the job in hand. In closing, let me say this one more time - we are fully committed to the task and have commissioned a report that will enable us to develop the plans for the future. Thank you."

TV: "Prime Minister ??????????????"

SYDNEY

65th anniversary of the bombing of

HIROSHIMA

August 6 1945

Time to abolish Nuclear Weapons!
Australian troops out of Afghanistan!

Hiroshima Never Again

Candlelight procession and Rally

6pm Friday August 6 Belmore Park near Central Railway

Special Printer Appeal

The Communist Party of Australia and *The Guardian* are in need of a new printer/copier. The photocopier/printer is used for everyday work, printing of leaflets, booklets and other materials. We are urging readers, supporters and CPA members to make a contribution to this important appeal. Our warmest thanks go to the following for their generous support this week:

Eileen Whitehead \$25, CV \$20, S Katsineris \$10.

This week's total: \$55. Total so far: \$2,165.

Special Printer Appeal

Name/Organisation _____ Phone Contact: _____

Address _____ Contribution: \$ _____

Cheque/Money Order: make out to "Communist Party of Australia".

Credit card: sign, give name on card, card number & expiry date: Visa Mastercard

Name on the card _____ Signature: _____

Card Number: _____ Expiry Date: ____ / ____

I agree / I disagree to having my name published in *The Guardian*.

Send to: 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, NSW, 2010 or phone it through on: 02 9699 8844

Thank you for your support.

Asylum seeker policies: our national disgrace

Peter Mac

The pre-election debate concerning asylum seekers has taken some bizarre twists. Each of the two major parties has been forced to alter their policies, as they attempt to court the redneck vote while maintaining they are meeting their obligations to refugees under international law.

Xanana Gusmao, Prime Minister of East Timor, recently rejected the proposal of the Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard to establish a refugee processing centre in East Timor. Ms Gillard then declared that this had just been one of many ideas the government was considering.

The Foreign Minister Stephen Smith was absent at this time, and the East Timor government has yet to make a final decision on the proposal. However, the only other feasible off-shore alternative would be for the Australian government to accept the Nauru government's offer to reopen the detention centre constructed there during the Howard government era.

Rather than accept this humiliating move, Ms Gillard changed tack and insisted that discussions will still continue with the government of East Timor, even though the East Timor parliament had voted unanimously against her scheme to establish a refugee processing centre there. She argued that the parliamentary vote was not significant because not all the MPs were there, studiously ignoring the fact that the vote was unanimous and that 34 of the 65 MPs were present, which would have constituted a majority vote if all the MPs had been present.

Meanwhile, the opposition leader, Tony Abbott, was also forced into retreat over his avowed policy of towing boats carrying asylum seekers back to sea. If implemented, the policy would violate our obligations

to asylum seekers under the UN Refugee Convention. During a "press the flesh" election walkabout, Abbott was confronted by the wife of a Navy patrol boat sailor, who expressed her concern about the dangers presented by the policy. Abbott then declared, in a remarkable display of cowardice under fire, that he would let the Australian Navy make the decision in each case – don't blame me, blame the Navy!

Abbott has also stated that asylum seekers who have destroyed their identity papers will be sent back to their countries of origin. He will doubtless be forced into a retraction of this policy as well, since it is virtually impossible to prove that such documents have been destroyed and that such a move would be against international law.

A national disgrace

The off-shore asylum seeker detention policies of both the major Australian political parties constitute a national disgrace and embarrassment. The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre has recently pointed out that there are currently more than 2,000 asylum seekers from Afghanistan waiting in Indonesia for their refugee claims to be assessed. Australia has taken just 52 of these applicants per year recently, so on current conditions these desperate people will have to wait an average 37 years for processing.

The High Commissioner for Refugees has reported that the security situation after the civil war in Sri Lanka has stabilised. The Australian government has interpreted this as meaning that everything there is okay, and that applications for asylum from Sri Lankans should therefore be critically assessed.

However, this is nonsense. The UNHCR's report has made it clear that the situation is still very serious

for the Tamil minority. Reports of rape and sexual assault against Tamil women are commonplace, and particular groups of people, including journalists, human rights activists, gays, lawyers, people suspected of supporting the Tamil Tigers and anyone seeking to expose corruption are all at high risk. The European Union has now decided that Sri Lanka will lose its preferential trade access because it has refused to make written pledges to improve its human rights record.

Concerning the government's East Timor detention proposal, the Resource Centre has posed the following questions: "What happens once the UNHCR assesses a person as a refugee in East Timor? Will Australia take them or seek to hand-pass them off? Will they be held in detention centres that Australia funds?"

"Will this include families and unaccompanied children? Who will monitor the conditions in these centres to prevent human rights abuses? Will asylum seekers be left in limbo for years after being assessed as refugees if we don't take them? Will we be increasing our refugee and humanitarian quota to enable quick processing? Under which law will asylum seekers be assessed and processed?"

Governments break immigration laws

Last week barrister Richard Ackland pointed out that the policies and practices of both the government and the opposition violate Australia's international legal obligations.

Australia has, for example, signed the 1951 Refugee Convention. This document and its 1967 protocol oblige us to provide refugees (people with a well-founded fear of persecution in their country of origin) with the same rights as other foreign nationals,



Prime Minister of East Timor Xanana Gusmao – not consulted prior to Gillard's announcement.

including access to the courts, work, education and freedom of movement.

Under this convention's "non-refoulement" requirements a signatory nation cannot return a refugee to a country where their life and or freedom would be threatened. Only "necessary" restrictions on movement are to be imposed, and the assimilation and naturalisation of refugees should be facilitated.

The signing of this convention by the East Timor government has been cited as a justification for establishing an off-shore processing centre there. However, we have sponsored construction of a detention centre in Indonesia, which has not signed the convention and does not intend to. The current government and its predecessor have interpreted "necessary" restrictions on movement to the maximum rather than the minimum degree, and have imposed mandatory detention, turned back boats, excised Australian islands from the migration zone, and imposed temporary protection visas, which subvert the right of genuine refugees to permanent settlement.

We have also signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the

Child, which obliges signatory nations to provide children with health, education, development and social integration. Despite this, Australia has kept children in detention, often separated from one or both parents, with virtually no contact with Australian citizens, and often with poor medical care and little or no education opportunities.

The bleeding obvious solution

Despite the cynical right-wing opportunism of the major parties, more and more Australians are concluding that people seeking our protection should have their applications for asylum processed on shore.

As the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre has stated: "... as our policy was (implemented) for fifteen years peacefully and successfully before the introduction of the policy of Mandatory Detention in 1992, people arriving by boat can be processed in the community at a tenth of the cost to the taxpayer and without all the needless suffering that this new 'solution' will inevitably bring". ☘

Demo demands charges over death of Mr Ward

Richard Titilius

Late last month, the Director of Public Prosecutions in Western Australia, Joe Mc Grath, announced that, following a police investigation, there was not enough evidence to lay charges that had a reasonable possibility of securing a conviction over the death in custody of Mr Ward.

The Deaths in Custody Watch Committee organised a rally in the Supreme Court Gardens of Perth that was attended by over 500 people. They comprised a mixture of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people protesting this appallingly bad decision, which effectively rejects criminal culpability for the fateful events of January 2008 that led to Ngarluttjarra Elder Mr Ward

dying while being transported in custody.

Noongar elder Ben Taylor, co-chair of the Deaths in Custody Watch Committee (DICW), was the first speaker. He reminded the gathering that Mr Ward was only one of more recent examples of many Aboriginal people who had died in custody and followed on from the death of John Pat in

Roebourne in 1987 that led to the 1992 Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody.

Marc Newhouse, DICW Committee co-chair, thanked those local and international organisations that had publicly given their support to the fight for justice for Mr Ward, including the union movement, Amnesty International, the Greens and the First Nations Party.

Mr Newhouse said: "We will not rest until there is justice of some sort over the tragic and avoidable death in custody of Mr Ward and until this broken justice system is fixed!"

He called for support of the following demands:

- Criminal charges against all those responsible
- That the Coronial Inquest into Mr Ward's death be reopened
- That the evidence and advice that the Director of Public Prosecution's used to make the decision (that no criminal charges would be laid) be made public
- An independent review of the DPP's decision not to bring criminal charges
- The G4S Contract be terminated immediately and for prison transport to be returned to

Department of Corrective Services

- Bring in new criminal offences of corporate and custodial manslaughter
- Enforcement powers by Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services
- A Public Inquiry into institutionalised racism in the WA criminal justice system

There was a lack of seat belts in the prison van, the absence of anything to lessen the heat of sitting on a metal seat. It was an unqualified Justice of the Peace who placed Mr Ward in custody.

The Deaths in Custody Watch Committee have written to the Attorney General Christian Porter asking him to respond within 14 days to their demands as to why those people responsible for Mr Ward's death will not be charged. Marc Newhouse also said that if the Premier Colin Barnett did not respond within that time supporters would begin a program of low-level civil disobedience, as that was all the only recourse available.

"It would involve turning up to Parliament and making ourselves heard and other measures of non violent civil disobedience," Mr Newhouse said. ☘

Pete's Corner



Death at Appleton Dock

Work at all P&O Automotive and General Stevedoring (POAGS) wharves shut down nationwide in all 15 ports for 24 hours at midday last Thursday after the death of another waterside worker – the third this year, the second at POAGS operations and the third fatality at Appleton Dock in seven years.

A 41-year-old Melbourne waterside worker, Stephen Piper, was crushed to death last week during a pick up and delivery (R&D) operations at Appleton Dock. The man's name was withheld until his wife and two school age children were contacted.

"The industry is in crisis," said Paddy Crumlin, national secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA). "It's the third fatality on the wharves in five months – and we said last time we lost a worker in March we needed urgent action to overcome the lack of safety on the job.

"How can I assure partners and families, mothers of young families that they need not fear about their husbands going to work in the morning? The fact is that it's hard to make that promise and it makes me sick to the stomach that that is the truth."

Mr Crumlin said there was a yawning gap and inadequacies in state and federal safety legislation covering the nation's wharves, especially in bulk and general operations, after years of neglect and deregulation under the Howard government years.

"We're not copping inaction," he said. "The industry's safety record is appalling. We need national legislation. We need regulation, not guidelines. We need the federal government

to intervene. The industry has failed to regulate itself and urgent intervention is now required," he said.

Since the last two deaths the union has held national stevedoring conferences of workers to examine the safety issues and lobbied the government for national regulations.

The government supported the formation of a Safe Work Australia (SWA) Stevedoring Temporary Advisory Group (TAG) in May with government, employer, union and Safe Work Australia representatives. However the union had called for a strengthening of the current terms of reference of the group before today's tragedy.

The MUA says that the federal government needs to insist that Safe Work Australia gives the Stevedoring TAG the highest priority and that it be given a deadline of October 2010 to complete its work to ensure that any outcomes are included in the harmonised OHS regulations for implementation by 1 January 2012.

"The government also needs to convene the first meeting of the Safe Work Australia advisory group at the earliest possible time, preferably early next month, and that it is addressed by the Minister or his representative as an indication of the government's commitment to support improved OHS on the waterfront", Mr Crumlin said.

The objective is to achieve stevedoring-specific regulation to form part of the national harmonised OH&S regulations.

Meanwhile the union has ensured all workers at Appleton Dock and Melbourne officials are provided counselling. "On behalf of every wharfie and seafarer across the



Last weeks fatality is the third at Appleton Dock in seven years.

country we extend our sympathies. We will do whatever we can to assist the family in its grief", Paddy Crumlin said.

"Some co-workers either saw the accident or its aftermath and are not only shocked but angered and frustrated by the general lack of attention to safety on our wharves. A Work Cover investigation and a coronial and other inquiries will follow. But this was a death that could have been avoided with a better safety culture and application of safe working practices," Crumlin continued.

"Wharfies are constantly reminded about the importance of their work to the national interest, but the national interest doesn't seem to rate the importance of their lives. It's a disgrace". ☘

Refuellers to take action

Refuellers have threatened to proceed with a 24-hour strike at Sydney airport this week, potentially disrupting air travel. The Transport Workers Union said yesterday it would go ahead with the strike on Wednesday at Airport Fuel Services (AFS) over a proposed pay deal that would see casual employees employed on rates lower than permanent staff.

The industrial action could disrupt domestic and international flights at Sydney airport, and potentially affect passengers at other airports.

The union, which has won a ballot for protected industrial action, intends to apply today to Fair Work Australia for a conciliation hearing. The union's federal secretary, Tony Sheldon, accused AFS of inflaming the dispute in the lead-up to the election in a bid to embarrass federal Labor and the union movement. "We believe it is a political and ideological agenda," he told The Australian.

AFS, which is owned by Qantas, BP, Caltex, and Mobil, had offered a 5 percent pay rise to 24 full-time employees but not to 19 workers who are casual employees. The union has instead proposed all 43 employees receive a 3.5 percent pay rise, but the offer has been rejected by the company.

"They are doing the same work, under the same conditions and under the same supervision," said the union's federal secretary Tony Sheldon.

"They're their workmates, their Aussie mates. It comes down to a minimalist cost to the companies when they are making tens of million of dollars out of this contract."

Mr Sheldon said the company had threatened the staff with a seven-day lockout, and he could not rule out further strikes if the dispute were not settled. ☘

Fight against health privatisation in WA

Mark Hayward

In March this year the WA government put out tenders to take over support services at the Albany health campus in the south west. This would have meant that over 100 jobs at the new health campus would have been privatised and no doubt a decimation of numbers and a corresponding decrease in the services provided to the citizens of Albany.

Orderlies, laundry workers, engineering and catering staff, in fact all services under the level of registered nurses would have been affected as well as some services such as occupational therapy and physio. There has been a huge fight back in the city of Albany conducted mainly by members of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union (LHMU) that represent many of these workers with the involvement of the broader community.

The streets and shopping areas of this small city were plastered with anti-privatisation leaflets and petitions outlining the attempts and effects that the government's policies of privatisation would have on this close knit community and the provision of health services in the region. The previous week news came through that the government's plans to privatise these essential services has been stopped and the services would remain in public hands.

This is very good news not

only for the people of that region of WA but for the metropolitan area also. It shows what can be achieved with community involvement in what are sometimes called 'union issues'. Accountability and service standards can now be maintained without the profit motive being foisted on these dedicated workers and the local community.

The fight against the WA government's privatisation agenda must also be carried to the metro area as tenders are out now for the privatisation of all our public health care system's essential services. The CPA urges all unionists and concerned citizens to be aware of these plans and to take a stand against this erosion of the public systems that serve the needs of hundreds of thousands of people in this state.

There are web sites such as the CPA site and inpublichands provided by the LHMU that give information on this threat to the vital services that is provided by your taxation as a service to all. It must be noted that the threat of privatisation not only comes at a state level. The federal government's National Health and Hospital Reform Commission set up by Kevin Rudd is chaired by Christine Bennett, who is an ex CEO of BUPA, the largest private health insurer in the UK and now a very large player internationally. Talk about putting Dracula in charge of the blood bank!

Why has such a person been appointed to oversee the provision of public health services and its future direction at a national level? There has been little debate amongst rank-and-file ALP members and even less community debate as to the agenda and direction of this Commission.

The parameters of its reference were pre-decided by the "kitchen cabinet" of Gillard, Roxon and Rudd to leave the massive private health subsidies in place and the maintaining of the ever growing private sector dominance in health.

Since the takeover of Gillard it appears that nothing has changed. So the scene is being set to attack our public systems on a federal level also. What is needed is to raise community awareness and to build the basis of a popular movement of citizens to oppose privatisation on whatever front it raises its head. Once our public systems are privatised it will take nothing short of revolution to return them to the public.

We urge working people to become involved in this fight to defend what is left of our public systems before we are all forced into the false and expensive "safe port" of private insurance and the disastrous US style of medicine and health care that politicians are determined to force on us on behalf of big business and its insatiable profit grab. ☘

Book Launch

Brisbane

Jim Sharp *Leftside*

A book of poetry
by an authentic
australian working class voice

Saturday 31st July 3:00pm - 5:00pm

Qld Council of Unions Building

16 Peel St., South Brisbane

Refreshments available (gold coin donation)

Program includes:

Lilla Watson:

Welcome

Humphrey McQueen:

Australian historian and social critic

Craig Buckley:

Rep from the meatworkers union, the AMIEU

Ray Hearne:

UK Folk and Labour Historian (Video presentation)

Jumping Fences:

Unique blend of politics and music

Ross Clark:

Well known Brisbane poet and performer

Read more about the book:
www.surplusvalue.org.au/Leftside.html
For more details, contact:
Ross Gwyther: 07 3366 5318



Book Review: Peter Mac

Radical Sydney

by Terry Irving & Rowan Cahill

Terry Irving and Rowan Cahill's recent book *Radical Sydney* deals with the political parties and individuals who have taken part in radical social movements since the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788.

A striking aspect of the book's study of early Sydney is the far-sightedness of those who formed the associations that predated today's unions and political parties. These included the Mutual Protection Association, which in the 1830s demanded self-government for NSW, universal suffrage, secret ballot voting, equal electoral districts (in terms of population), and no property qualifications for MPs.

The book also describes the appalling difficulties under which working people lived in early Sydney. The authors note: "Most (workers) could not vote because they paid less than 20 pounds a year in rent, and they could not stand for election because a member (of the Legislative Council) had to own 2,000 pounds of freehold property. A lucky tradesman in the (1842) depression might earn 100 pound a year; a bush worker might earn 12 pounds a year plus rations, say 50 pounds a year – the rations ... were of the poorest quality and the pay was often in the form of an 'order' which had to be cashed at a city bank or merchant's office, and even then might be dishonoured."

"... In Australia during the 1850s skilled workers in Sydney and Melbourne generally worked a 58-hour week: 10 hours per day Monday to Friday and 8 hours on Saturday. For other workers it was longer; shop assistants ... worked 12-14 hours per day ... in 1876 the NSW Coal Mines Act was passed to limit the working week for boys aged 13-18 to 50.5 hours and to ban the employment of girls or boys under the age of 13 in mines".

The book describes the end of convict transportation, the discovery of gold (which brought thousands of new workers to Australia), and the 1890s depression. It deals with the influence of the early radical bookshops, the growth of Australian nationalism in the arts and literature, the campaigns for women's rights, the early radical and union newspapers and the growth of anti-war organisations such as the Quakers.

War and depression

The authors discuss the WWI internment of political prisoners, including members of the Industrial Workers of the World, press censorship, the interception of mail, restrictions on public speaking, the 1917 soldiers' mutiny, and opposition to conscription.

The 1917 Russian Revolution and the formation of the Communist

Party of Australia in 1920 are also examined. During the 1920s and 1930s hundreds of unemployed workers slept in Sydney's Hyde Park, left-wingers struggled for influence in the unions and the State Labor Council, pitched battles were fought to prevent the eviction of destitute families, Egon Kisch jumped ship to warn Australians about fascism, and the fascist New Guard was formed.

The New Guard was organised and bankrolled by Major-General Sir Charles Rosenthal (the model for DH Lawrence's character in "Kangaroo"), as well as stevedoring tycoon Captain James Patrick and retailer Mark Foy.

The book contradicts the New Guard's widespread image as eccentric but essentially harmless, exposing it as a vicious paramilitary organisation with 40,000 members, including a force of 10,000 "shock troops", and top-level political and judicial connections. It describes the organisation's plans to kidnap union and political leaders during the 1929 seamen's strike and later to establish martial law in Sydney, in the event of serious civil or industrial disturbances.

Prior to WW2 Sydney business leaders developed plans with the Japanese for a post war government of Australia. Irving and Cahill note that charges of treason against them were dropped in 1946, with the onset of the cold war and moves by the US to forge a political alliance with Japan. The names of the collaborators were included in The Petrov commission's "Document J", which was not released to the public until 1984.

The book also deals with the struggle of Aboriginal people for recognition of their rights and cultural identity, a struggle that has endured to the present day. In the 19th century it drew its inspiration in part from the struggles of black people in the US, and was assisted and encouraged by sections of the union movement and the Communist Party. As the authors note it also received wonderful support from the US boxer Jack Johnson, who visited Sydney in 1907 and from US singer Paul Robeson in the 1960s.

The book also contains a vivid description of the post-war cultural activities of the Waterside Workers Union, which supported the production of Joris Ivens' anti-colonial film *Indonesia Calling*, and which organised art classes and the production of films, paintings and banners. It also describes the history of the New Theatre, the student anti-war movement, the 1950s red scare, the Vietnam War anti-conscription struggle, the quest for national Australian culture, and the green bans.

Important messages

Implicit in *Radical Sydney* are a number of very important messages.

The first is that the political and civil rights that Australian working people currently enjoy were not granted as a matter of fine principle by the political establishment, but were only gained after years of bitter struggle by unions and progressive organisations, in the teeth of opposition from conservative politicians and business leaders. Many objectives, for example the right of women to equal pay, and land rights for Aboriginal people, are still being pursued.

Another message is that the sort of organisations the book discusses must spell out their own history. Historical studies are always controversial, and some CPA members, for example, will probably wish to take issue over the authors' description and interpretation of events, and with the role of individuals associated with the Communist Party.

Irving and Cahill's book is certainly deficient in its treatment of the CPA because it fails to deal with the break-up of the former CPA, and its 1971 ideological reincarnation as the Socialist Party of Australia (which retook the name of the CPA several years after the original party was finally wound up in the 1980s).

On the other hand it would be entirely unreasonable to expect the authors of *Radical Sydney* to depict the history of the CPA. The primary responsibility for that task lies with the Party itself.

To read, or not to read

Radical Sydney is certainly not without fault. It largely ignores the impact of events and movements elsewhere in Australia. Its facile comment about the post-war challenging of "ancient shibboleths about class politics" is a grating contradiction of the book's description of working class struggle in previous periods. *Radical Sydney* is strongest in its treatment of Sydney's pre-war history, but weakest regarding the recent past.

The book's extensive scope precludes examination of historical events in great detail, which would require a work of encyclopaedic proportions. It succeeds as an overview of the struggle of various left-wing and progressive organisations and individuals in Sydney from the early colonial period – but only up to a point.

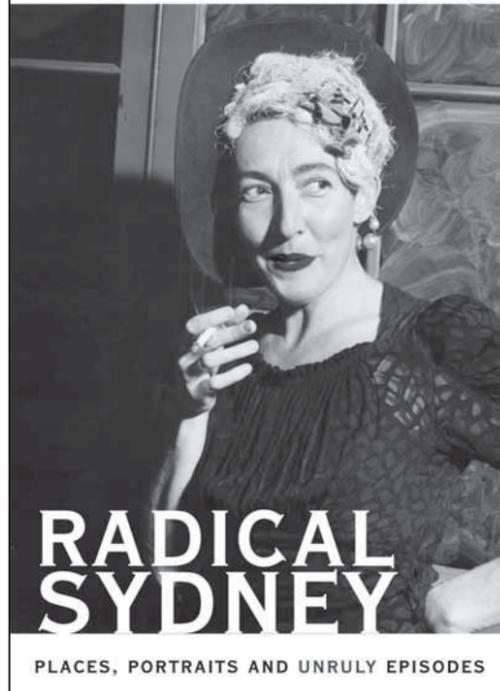
That point is the 1988 Australian bicentennial, the last major event dealt with in the book. But that was 22 years ago! The book fails to deal with the radicalising effect of subsequent events, including the US-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, or the climate change crisis.

It also acknowledges the Vietnam draft dodgers struggle, but overlooks the Vietnam Moratorium movement, which had a profound effect in raising public political consciousness in opposition to that war. The book also suffers from a lack of notes to the text. The inclusion of a bibliography for each chapter is welcome but inadequate as a source of reference.

Despite these shortcomings *Radical Sydney* is a very important work. It's well worth reading and is recommended.

Terry Irving and Rowan Cahill, *Radical Sydney*, University of NSW Press, 2010. ✪

TERRY IRVING | ROWAN CAHILL



The central Australian community of Mutitjulu was told by its shire council that it has no responsibility to provide services for its members. A large and impoverished community depended on the MacDonnell Shire Council for waste collection, building and housing maintenance and night patrols. National Parks provides other municipal services in Mutitjulu, such as sewerage. The shire justified its decision to make 11 staff members redundant and withdraw services by the fact that the community had signed a 99-year lease with the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service in 1985 and that there are some other agencies providing services. What is clear is that there is very little coordination between the agencies and instead of sorting out who does what in providing adequate services the shire had just withdrawn theirs.

There is new legislation in NSW which can declare the Hells Angels a "criminal organisation." The police said they would allege its 45 to 50 members had committed crimes from murder to drug trafficking. The police files have about 30 folders of intelligence about the members' activities but much of the information will remain unknown to the public. Similar legislation had been ruled illegal in South Australia (that was subject to High Court appeal, though). Lawyers and civil libertarians criticised the legislation and found it very troubling and "another giant leap backward for human rights and the separation of powers". The trouble with the legislation is that any organisation can be declared "criminal" with the secret police intelligence which could be hearsay and innuendo.

Climate change sceptics have been dealt another blow – scientists at the University of East Anglia emerged from the six-month inquiry with their integrity intact. Much fuss had been made from several mistakes made in their previous report into climate change which led to a chorus of climate change sceptics questioning the whole phenomenon of climate change. One of the big problems is the fact that sometimes scientists fail to translate their scientific knowledge and data into plain English, so to speak. A joint publication of the CSIRO and the Australian Bureau of Meteorology called "The State of the Climate" is a snapshot of climate changes over recent decades and an explanation for the changes.

First we had the Anglican Church frothing at the mouth over the introduction of ethics lessons for those who do not attend scripture classes in public schools; now we have a situation when a coalition of evangelical and Pentecostal churches strikes a deal with the NSW Department of Education to build a classroom for scripture lessons at a public high school. The Warners Bay High School has agreed to allow the churches to build a classroom on their land. The church groups are known for their support for creationism and the teaching of intelligent design in schools. Surely this decision violates the spirit of the Education Act and its commitment to non-sectarian and secular education. The Department of Education should be ashamed of its decision.

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There is no revolution without solidarity

Venezuela and the struggle for sovereignty

In this second part of his interview with Anna Pha of *The Guardian*, Venezuela's ambassador to Australia, Nelson Dávila, explains how the Bolivarian Revolution is being consolidated in his country. He describes the forces carrying the process forward and the vital importance of international solidarity for the survival of the revolution.

Solidarity is not unilateral but is mutual, for example, from country to country or people to people. We have been helping, for example, the people of Haiti and, at this very moment, in Brazil due to the floods. We have also helped in Colombia during national disasters. During the cyclone in the United States we went to help in New Orleans by giving cheap oil to the inhabitants of the zone.

Solidarity is not just at the economic or material level but also political solidarity, and for example, the political solidarity of the people of Venezuela for the people of Palestine during the invasion by Israel. It wasn't just in words, it was in deeds. In this case Venezuela broke diplomatic relations with Israel.

It also condemned the recent attack on the flotilla carrying humanitarian aid. Israel has developed into a criminal state. We also express our solidarity with those countries struggling for their freedom. For example, we condemned the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, we also condemned the attacks on Iran and Syria, and of course we are against the US blockade of Cuba.

So you can see that the Bolivarian Revolution is a very broad revolution. It does not just look after the internal necessities of our people but we also struggle for sovereignty – our own sovereignty and the sovereignty of others.

This is the same experience as that of the Cuban revolution. The Cuban revolution expresses solidarity with the independence of other countries, for example, the struggle of the Cuban soldiers in Angola. Cuba helped to defeat apartheid. A revolution that doesn't act in solidarity is not a revolution.

And for us it is a revolution that is both internal and external. And that is why we have achieved the millennium targets*. Our president got 65 percent of the vote because we have helped our own population in the fields of education and health. That is what gives us the confidence that we are going to win the elections on September 26. And we are also going to win the presidential elections in 2013 when our president goes again to face election.

Consolidating the revolution

I would like to make it clear that it is not at all about the image of one person. There are some allegations that there is some kind of idolatry of Hugo Chávez. In reality Chávez is a historical leader and that is difficult to negate. If the people want president Chávez to continue governing he has the right to face another election. That is also a guarantee that the process will continue until we feel that the revolution has been consolidated.

Because there are some aspects of the revolution that we need to strengthen. We need to consolidate the ideological consciousness. We need to make sure that the population understands the importance of socialism as a political model. So we consider international solidarity important as it will help us strengthen consciousness.

For example, every year there are several delegations visiting Venezuela from Europe to

other countries in Latin America, and of course from Australia different groups have visited Venezuela. And that is one of the reasons why our president has called for the construction of the Fifth International. If this is possible it would be a great advance ideologically and politically for the world.

Of course, we are aware of all the changes that are happening around the world, in the great international forums. For example, in Copenhagen, president Chávez, together with other Latin American presidents, united in alerting the world of a crisis in a system, which is the one that has created all these phenomena of climate change. Climate change is not an anarchical, capricious phenomena, did not happen by itself, humans have contributed to climate change.

For that reason, president Chávez has called on the people to show more humanity so we can stop devastating humanity, killing the rivers, continuing to destroy the forests, eliminating fauna and, of course, killing each other in wasteful wars. And we see the economic interests for which wars have been fomented around the world.

We have insisted that the Bolivarian Revolution is a peaceful revolution, but we will not allow for our revolution to be attacked. This, together with what we have discussed at the beginning, we will continue to link with our struggle of 200 years ago. Because Bolívar is alive. He is with us. And we need to continue his history and legacy until we finish this revolution. For some people here it is difficult to understand, although the process in Australia was also a colonial process. The difference is that there was not strong resistance here in Australia. In Mexico and Central America we have ancestors who gave their lives in the process. It is something that is authentic, that lives, that is present in our struggle from the past.

Today we are looking for trade relations with Australia, and in other countries in the Pacific area. For example, when we talk about solidarity, Venezuela has a program of solidarity with the Pacific Islands assisting them to prevent desertification, to protect the forests. There are countries in the Pacific that have problems with the degradation of the soil, with salination.

So Venezuela has an aid program with all the Pacific Islands. That is one of the reasons for the diplomatic work. Part of the diplomatic work is defence of the revolution and to strengthen solidarity work of groups in Australia. And of course among the political parties of the left, like the Communist Party of Australia which is an historical party here in Australia, which is not an improvised party that comes from nothing.

A party for the next stage

Guardian: Chávez was elected without the base of a political party, with a number of movements and people who rose against the regime, the poverty, the intolerable conditions. Now he has formed a party. Could you describe that process and the reasons behind it?

Nelson Dávila: That is part of the history of Venezuela – unity in disunity. Even during



President Chávez has called on the people to show more humanity so we can stop devastating humanity eliminating fauna and, of course, killing each other in wasteful wars.

the process of achieving independence, there was unity and division. When the Bolivarian project begins, with president Chávez and then the military insurrection, the Movement of the Fifth Republic was founded – “Fifth Republic” because the history of our country had been divided into republics, and nowadays we live in the fifth republic. That began in 1999 when president Chávez came to power.

When we talk about the fourth republic, we are talking about the supposed democratic past. The fifth republic party gave us the possibility of another political party, which is today the United Socialist Party of Venezuela. Perhaps at the beginning of the revolution that political party would not have been accepted by the population. Today it is.

For example, a month ago we re-opened applications and received 700,000 new members. Of course, there were other political parties that supported the revolution, but some of those political parties have been left behind. Because they know now that the ideology of Bolivarian process is against their interests.

At the beginning, they thought that process would give them similar privileges as during the fourth republic, and that is one of the reasons they have not continued supporting president Chávez. The only political party that continues affiliated to the Bolivarian process is the Communist Party of Venezuela. Despite there being some points that we do not have in common, we continue walking in the same direction. So we are not enemies.

We have the other political parties who jumped directly to the other side, and that is a very important ideological process that has to be made clear, and as the Bolivarian process gains strength in the population, in the same way we

are going to clarify the position politically and ideologically for the movement.

Of course, there will be people who will stay behind but there will be others that will come onboard.

G: So how would you characterise the current ideological position of the United Socialist Party – in a way you are saying that it is an evolving process?

ND: We have defined this period of 10 years of government as a transitional period, in which people have been left behind, there are political parties that have deserted, we have created the Socialist Party, and that party is in a process of consolidation and we expect that party to become a vanguard of revolutionary cadres.

The achievements and the challenges

G: Could you provide some detail on the achievements of the government to date in social and economic terms and describe what the situation was before the commencement of the Bolivarian Revolution?

ND: Prior to the Bolivarian Revolution we had a high level of illiteracy and we have been able to achieve a reduction in the numbers of those living in poverty of up to 32 percent – it was 50 percent. We have fulfilled the targets of the Millennium Goals and we have achieved food sovereignty. In the past the food distribution was in the private hands of the political opposition. For example, in health, with the help of Cuba, we created the mission Barrio Adentro (Inside the Neighbourhood).

The missions and programs were created by the revolution to directly look after the population. Because we are in a transition period, we pretty much invaded a capitalist state, we are living in a capitalist state, we are changing that state, and that capitalist state, like others, was not designed to help people. So the structure of the state did not allow resources to go to the people. And that is why we created the missions, in which the missions gathered the resources and distributed them directly to the people – food, health, education and so on.

In education we created several missions from primary schooling to the university. People from the third age, for example, who were unable to complete secondary school, through the missions were able to finalise their education. Education in Venezuela is free of charge

We need to consolidate the ideological consciousness. We need to make sure that the population understands the importance of socialism as a political model.

Equality

Part 2)



y, killing the rivers, continuing to destroy the forest,

from primary school to university. There are private universities but the government has created universities throughout the country and they are free of charge – technical colleges, as well, where we train technicians.

In the economy, one of the key issues is that we are opposed to privatisation. We prevented the sale of PDVSA (Venezuela's national oil company), which is the third largest company of its type in the world. The capitalist plan was to sell it.

Without the Bolivarian Revolution our economic situation would be critical. We prevented a flight of capital from the country and we managed to do that by controlling currency exchange. Previously, the capitalists were able to buy a huge amount of US dollars, but not the people.

But now the dollars are being put in the market by the government, and that is a problem for our international reserves. We put many US dollars in the market and the capitalists came and bought them, and then our international reserves were lowered, so we stabilised the situation by controlling the exchange rate. Now currency control is in the hands of the government. That allows for more economic stability.

In the political sphere, we have created new institutions to advance the elimination of the capitalist state. We have established an incentive to community media and, of course, in the process of Latin American integration there are all the instruments that we have created for that unity.

In Venezuela, we had a rail system, which was eliminated completely by the auto multinationals that wanted to sell more cars. Now we are building a new national rail system. We have got a metro network in Caracas.

Now we are continuing to build the revolution. Of course, there are many people who carry forward the vices of their past. We have to fight against the corruption and bureaucracy that still exist. There are some bureaucrats that don't fulfil their jobs.

*The Millennium Development Goals are eight international development goals that all 192 United Nations member states and at least 23 international organisations have agreed to achieve by the year 2015. They include reducing extreme poverty, reducing child mortality rates, fighting disease epidemics such as AIDS, and developing a global partnership for development. ★

The Shahram Affair



Justin Raimondo

Confronted with the accusation that Iranian nuclear scientist Shahram Amiri had been kidnapped by US and Saudi intelligence agencies while on a trip to Mecca, and brought to the US for interrogation, State Department spokesman PJ Crowley averred: "We are not in the habit of going around kidnapping people."

To which the only proper response is: Oh, really?

Given the numerous instances of extraordinary rendition in which our government has been engaged, and no doubt continues to be engaged, one wonders how Senator Crowley can say that with a straight face. But then again, being an official spokesman for the US Department of State no doubt requires some sort of facial surgery – or, perhaps, an industrial-strength shot of Botox – to achieve the desired results.

Now that Shahram has shown up at the Iranian interests section of the Pakistani Embassy in Washington, DC, claiming to have been abducted by the US and Saudi intelligence services, and tortured, Crowley may want to review his knowledge of US habits.

In March, ABC News released an "exclusive" report hailing Shahram's "defection" as a great US "intelligence coup," the missing link in the puzzle piecing together a picture of Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program. Shahram is said to have worked for the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, and news of his "defection" appeared alongside reports of an Iranian "secret" nuclear facility on the outskirts of the city of Qom.

As it was, the Iranians themselves revealed the existence of the Qom facility and opened it up to inspection by the IAEA, but the matter of Shahram's disappearance appeared to throw a shadow over their efforts at openness – which was, of course, the whole point.

Our spooks had a narrative ready made. We were to be told that the defector had brought with him a laptop which contained all the secrets of Iran's nukes, and this was to be touted as yet more evidence – as if this administration needed any – Iran was harbouring nuclear ambitions in defiance of the "international community."

"According to the people briefed on the intelligence operation," ABC reported, "Amiri's disappearance was part of a long-planned CIA operation to get him to defect. The CIA reportedly approached the scientist in Iran through an intermediary who made an offer of resettlement on behalf of the United States."

That, at least, was the official story, dutifully relayed to the world by ABC "News": Shahram, however, upended their neat little narrative, months later, with a YouTube video – that indispensable weapon of counter-propaganda – in which he told us:

"I was kidnapped last year (2009) in the holy city of Medina on 3 June in a joint operation by the terror and abduction units of the American CIA and Saudi Arabia's Istikhbarat [intelligence agency]. They took me to a house located somewhere that I didn't know. They gave me an anaesthetic injection. When I became conscious I was in a big [voice interrupted] towards America.

"During the eight months that I was kept in America, I was subject to the most severe tortures and psychological pressures by the American intelligence investigation groups.

"And the main aim behind these investigation teams and the pressure imposed on me was to make me take part in an interview conducted by an American media source and claim that I was an important figure in Iran's nuclear program and I had sought asylum in America at my own will. And (to say) while seeking asylum I took some very important documents and a laptop with classified information on Iran's military nuclear program in it to America from my country."

This was followed, hours later, by yet another video, in which someone claiming to be Shahram – and looking, admittedly, just like him – said he wanted to clear up "rumours," denied having any political views or that he had betrayed his country, and stated: "I am in America and intend to continue my education here. I am free here and I assure everyone that I am safe."

Gee, it's a good thing the CIA has their own YouTube channel: now *there's* a solid investment of the US taxpayers' money. But Shahram wasn't done with them quite yet.

On June 29, a third video cropped up, which was played by Iranian television, in which the real Shahram cleared up the mystery:

"I, Shahram Amiri, am a national of the Islamic Republic of Iran and a few minutes ago I succeeded in escaping US security agents in Virginia. Presently, I am producing this video in a safe place. I could be re-arrested at any time."

After appealing to Western human rights organisations to intervene on his behalf – fat chance! – he continued:

"The second video which was published on YouTube by the US government, where I have said that I am free and want to

continue my education here, is not true and is a complete fabrication. If something happens and I do not return home alive, the US government will be responsible."

All this time Washington had refused to acknowledge Shahram's presence in the US, but when he showed up at the Pakistani embassy an official who refused to be named told the media: "He came to this country freely, he lived here freely, and he has chosen freely to return to Iran."

Such evidence as we have indicates only the last of those three assertions bears any resemblance to the facts. Aside from Shahram's testimony, and his presence at the embassy, the high quality of the second video, and the relatively poor quality of the first and third, is suggestive of an effort by US intelligence to cover up a badly botched job.

What's interesting about this story isn't only the scandal of a kidnapping carried out by our spooks – after all, we should be inured to that by now – but the role the US media was slated to play if Shahram had gone along for the ride. I wonder which "American media source" was tasked with interviewing him. Could it be ABC "News", the outlet given the "exclusive" story of his alleged "defection" just before the Qom story broke? Just guessing there, but amid all the controversy over media folk partying with administration movers-and-shakers, this kind of beach party ought to make us stop and think about the degree to which the media is functioning as an arm of government.

Let no one berate us libertarians for describing the US government as a criminal enterprise: it isn't disloyalty to the country, or even a penchant for overstatement, that drives us to such rhetorical excesses. It's the story of what happened to Shahram Amiri: it's the lies, the thuggery and hubris of a ruling elite that believes it can get away with anything. Such is their contempt for the American people – and the peoples of the world – that they think we'll swallow any tall tale, no matter how crudely fabricated, because we're just not as smart as their cunning selves.

The whole scheme backfired, and, rather than making the case for war with Iran, the Shahram affair has confirmed what some of us knew already: that the US government is a criminal enterprise with no morals, no credibility.

Justin Raimondo is the editorial director of Antiwar.com. He is the author of, among other works, *Into the Bosnian Quagmire: The Case Against US Intervention in the Balkans* (1996). *Anti-War* ★

Cuba releases prisoners, will US reciprocate?

Emile Schepers

Last week, the Cuban government first announced and then began the process of releasing 52 individuals who had been in prison since a 2003 crackdown on people who received money from US government and private funds aimed at destabilising the 51-year-old socialist government. It now remains to be seen whether, or how, the United States might respond with a reciprocal gesture that could begin to thaw the long-frozen relations between the two governments.

The release of the prisoners was negotiated with the Roman Catholic Church and the Spanish government. The 52 individuals had been arrested and convicted when Cuban undercover agents presented evidence in court that those involved had received money and other material considerations to further their work against the socialist government. In the US and international corporate media, they have been portrayed as "dissidents" whose only crime was to express disagreement with the Cuban government.

The Cuban government, for its part, points out that merely dissenting does not get you hard time; these people violated a specific Cuban law which prohibits Cuban citizens from taking money from specific US agencies whose purpose is openly stated to be the destabilisation of Cuba.

The original number of people convicted in the case was 75, but since 2003 some have been released for health and other reasons. Of the group of 52 whose release was promised, some, but not all, are expected to emigrate to Spain and other countries.

Last week, an initial group of seven arrived in Spain.

In response to the release announcement, Cuban dissident Guillermo Fariñas announced the end of a 134-day hunger strike which had become life-threatening.

Now Cuba-watchers of all political persuasions are waiting to see what the Obama administration will do. Since Obama was elected, Cuban President Raul Castro has been broadly hinting that his government would be willing to negotiate reciprocal exchanges of prisoners, meaning Cuban "dissidents" versus the Miami Five (also known internationally as the Cuban Five), as a first step in the direction of thawing US-Cuban relations.

The initial response by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was to characterise the release announcement as a positive step. However, in a talk to Jewish groups, Clinton added to the mix the case of Alan Gross, a US citizen under arrest in Cuba for actions similar to those of the 2003 arrestees.

Gross was arrested as he was leaving Cuba in December 2009. Although he has not yet been formally charged, the offence of which the Cubans suspect him was that of acting as a courier for a US State Department contractor, Development Alternatives Inc, bringing in sophisticated electronic equipment which the island's government suspects was designed to help internal destabilisation efforts. The suspicions are partly grounded in the surreptitious way that Gross was working, but also in the fact that the money that was paying for his work appears to have come from funds allocated to support dissident groups in Cuba to destabilise the government.

Gross claims he was merely trying to help Jewish groups in Cuba with basic communications equipment, but there are problems with that story: He entered Cuba on a tourist visa without coordinating his visit with Cuban authorities, and some major Jewish leaders in Cuba say they have never heard of him. To do what the Cuban government accuses Gross of doing would be a violation of specific Cuban laws, and would entail a jail sentence of three to eight years. However, he has not yet been charged.

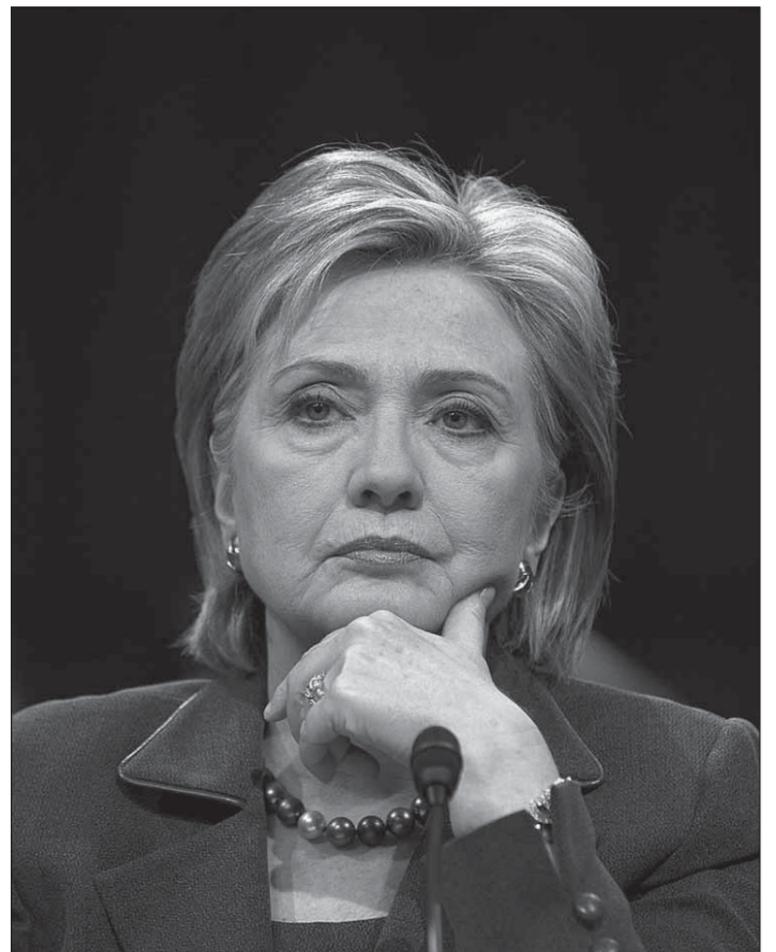
At any rate, Clinton called for Jewish organisations in the US to pressure the Cuban government to release Gross.

The US corporate-controlled media are, as one might expect, doing their best to muddle the situation. For example, a hunger striker who died in February of this year, Orlando Zapata Tamayo, is regularly portrayed as having been imprisoned for dissident activities, but in fact he was imprisoned for hitting a fellow citizen over the head with a machete and similar actions, and only became a "dissident" once in prison.

On the other hand, hunger striker Fariñas was portrayed as a prisoner; in fact he is not in prison and has been carrying out his hunger strike at his home. Now Gross is being depicted as a victim of Cuban anti-Semitic persecution.

The media "forget to mention" that in the United States, anybody who distributes or accepts money or other material resources from the Cuban government without US government permission would also be subjected to fines and possible jail terms.

People's World ♣



Hillary Clinton called for Jewish organisations in the US to pressure the Cuban government to release Gross.

Two workers killed in clashes in Panama

Emile Schepers

Clashes between police and workers' groups in Panama have been suppressed with tear gas, leaving at least two workers dead. Protests against the policies of rightwing President Ricardo Martinelli have been building since the end of June, when Martinelli's legislative allies rammed through new legislation that sharply restricts labour rights in this geopolitically key Central American country.

"Ley 30" establishes that companies can fire striking workers and bring in replacements (scabs), and they do not have to deduct union dues, under the law called "optional" from wages and deliver them to union treasuries.

Another piece of legislation passed at the same time eliminates the need for environmental impact

studies for many development projects.

Objections against the new labour law, seen as intended to destroy Panamanian unions completely, have been raised by the National Front for the Defence of Economic and Social Rights (Frenadeso), and by the Banana Industry Workers' Union. The latter organisation began a strike and protests against the law and the Bocas Fruit Company in Bocas del Toro, in Western Panama.

On July 8, the banana workers clashed with police in the town of Changuinola in Bocas del Toro. According to reports in the Venezuelan based news agency Telesur, at least two workers were killed and dozens wounded, some seriously.

At the same time, construction workers employed in expanding the

Panama Canal were fired for going on strike, and six of the workers were arrested for not showing up for work. Other demonstrations are going on in Panama City and other places.

President Martinelli, of the right-wing Democratic Change Party, has been in power since 2009, having won that year's election on a program stressing fighting crime. He is currently angling to get a Free Trade Agreement with the United States. Changes in labour and environmental laws appear to be aimed at attracting more foreign investment. But the events may arouse opposition from US organised labour, which has been opposing a similar treaty with Colombia out of concern for that country's horrible record on workers' rights.

People's World ♣

Japan: "Structural reform" policy revived

Imposing heavier burdens on the general public is openly called for by Prime Minister Kan Naoto, who used to criticise the "structural reform" policies promoted by the Koizumi Cabinet under the former Liberal Democratic-Komei coalition government.

The ruling Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) fought the House of Representatives election last August with the slogan of "politics for the people's living conditions" and claimed that it would improve public services in order to boost domestic demand: childcare, education, pension, and medical care.

However, in the DPJ's latest manifesto for the House of Councillors election, the main slogan calls for a "strong economy". Compared with the last election platform, its list of policy priorities lowered the rank of "childcare and education" from second to fourth, "pension and medical care" from the third to fifth, and "employment" from the fifth to sixth.

On the contrary, "foreign affairs and security" moved up from seventh position to third on the list, showing the DPJ's favourable stance to the US government. The top of this year's list is the "eradication of the wasteful use of tax money", the same as last year. The purpose of the proposal, however, is "fiscal recovery" by increasing

the consumption tax rate while last year it was to "secure budgets for measures to improve people's living conditions".

In order to build a "strong economy", the ruling party proposes promotion of deregulation, corporate tax cuts, and imposition of an inflation target. These are almost identical to the Koizumi Cabinet's "structural reform" policies. The only thing that is different is that reduction in corporate taxes has been added by the Kan Cabinet. Although Prime Minister Kan Naoto explains that the revenue from the consumption tax rate hike will be used for social services, this explanation is not on the DPJ's manifesto. His true intention is to use the revenue as a means to further lower corporate tax obligations.

The Kan Cabinet is following in the footsteps of the Koizumi Cabinet by representing the interests of major corporations and the US government while forcing the public to shoulder heavier burdens. However, relying on foreign demand for Japan's exports is no longer effective at a time when major countries are launching austerity measures. Levying more taxes on the public will further contract the Japanese economy, making it more difficult to achieve fiscal restoration.

Akahata ♣

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G-20 fails on jobs: global labour

Mark Gruenberg

TORONTO: The world's top political leaders are failing to meet the global job creation challenge resulting from the Great Recession, and instead seem to be inclined to listen to deficit-cutting policies pushed by the business elite, international union leaders say. And those policies could put the world back into another slump.

Speaking after representatives from the International Trades Union Congress met (ITUC) German Chancellor Angela Merkel during the G-20 summit in Toronto, new ITUC General secretary Sharan Burrow added such a choice risks sleepwalking the world back into a double-dip recession "due to their haste to halve fiscal deficits by 2013 or even sooner."

"Jobs and better wages are at the heart of economic recovery, and last year G20 Leaders seemed to have recognised that" when they met in Pittsburgh last year, Burrow added. "This year they are sending mixed and ambiguous signals that risk is undermining the weak shoots of recovery."

The G-20 leaders, including Democratic President Barack Obama, leaders of major European nations, plus South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Australia, Brazil, Japan and several others, pledged to try to cut deficits in future years, especially in the most-developed countries, such as the US.

"The leaders' communiqué frequently contradicts itself, speaking of cutting deficits by 2013 yet welcoming recommendations from their own

labour ministers that say jobs should be a priority," said top British trade union leader John Evans.

"This is the wrong communiqué at the wrong time – an essentially descriptive text bespeaking unacceptable complacency in the face of a worsening jobs crisis, at a time when unemployment risks surging again as a result of premature deficit reduction measures," added Burrow.

In the US, Obama faces similar pressures to cut the deficit and not take further "stimulus" spending measures. A Senate Republican filibuster successfully trashed a jobs bill, the day before he left for Toronto. That measure would have further extended jobless benefits, at a time of 9.7 percent unemployment – and when half of the jobless had already exhausted their benefits. Economists calculate millions more people could lose aid.

But even that measure was watered down in an unsuccessful effort to get votes and appease financial conservatives: COBRA health insurance extensions for the jobless were dumped, as was a prior \$25-per-week increase in jobless benefits – aid that was particularly useful in low-benefit states such as Mississippi and Arkansas.

ITUC said it was pleased that Merkel, who met the union delegation in Toronto on June 26 "supported union demands to reference the recent G-20 labour ministers meeting in Washington in the final statement." Merkel also said Germany is ready



Protestors in Toronto during the G-20.

to host a labour ministers meeting "during the next year."

Neither Merkel nor the ITUC said what that "reference" would include. The labour ministers, in their DC meeting earlier this year, presented a set of recommendations to Obama and the other leaders that included support for workers' rights.

"At least the leaders endorsed the G-20 labour ministers' recommendations," stated Evans. "However, they failed to set dates for a follow-up

labour ministerial, or to establish a mechanism to consult with unions and implement urgently needed employment-intensive solutions to the crisis."

And the union leaders were also irked that the presidents, prime ministers and other leaders of the G-20 nations listened to the business elite – and not to workers hurt by the Great Recession.

"The Canadian and Korean hosts of this year's G-20" summits "seem to consider it more important to rub shoulders with their 'B-20' and 'B-100' groups of business leaders, than to include trade unions in the process," stated Burrow. The next G-20 summit, later this year, will be in Seoul, South Korea.

"They should take care: Working people around the world are getting angry at the assumption they will meekly pay the price for the crisis.

On the streets and through the ballot boxes, politicians can expect them to make their feelings known," Burrow warned.

The ITUC declared that world leaders should reverse that course of listening to business, and start listening to the workers, on everything from creating jobs to fixing the banking system to foreign aid to alleviate poverty and controlling climate change.

"The G-20 set up a 'Framework for Strong Sustainable and Balanced Growth,' yet decisions they have taken could drive the world in the opposite direction," said Evans. Burrow added, "The International Labour Organisation must be given the task of writing the recommendations on employment and social protection, central to all economic and social policy, for the G-20 framework." But the ILO has no enforcement power. *People's World* ☘

Calls to overturn Arizona law get louder

Vivian Weinstein

SAN ANTONIO, Texas: Some 30,000 participants turned out for the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) annual conference here last week, where a major theme was the struggle to overturn Arizona's anti-immigrant SB 1070 law. The four-day event was open to the public.

The NCLR gives voice to Latino interests, needs and culture, and the conference was a big opportunity for the two Texas gubernatorial candidates to try to win Latino support. Advertisers spent money to reach the Latino community, which is approximately half the population here.

A major workshop called "What's the Matter with Arizona?" drew over 500 people. Daniel Ortega, who is leading the legal fight for NCLR, explained the Arizona law in clear detail. Its provision forcing police to act as immigration agents was denounced. Even the Arizona organisation of police chiefs opposes it. Ortega said that stopping someone who looks "suspicious" (wearing the wrong kind of shoes?) is outside the calling of local police.

Here in San Antonio, Police Chief William McManus has also spoken against this new role, saying it will harm police officers' relationships in the Latino community. Police also complain the law allows

the public to sue officers for "not doing their job." Arizonans who might want to give safe harbour, food and water to undocumented workers could be arrested.

Panelists and NCLR President Janet Murguia passionately spoke about the work of NCLR on different fronts, including legal action in defence of immigrant rights. On July 22, there will be a hearing to get an injunction that would stop the law from going into effect on July 29. Murguia stressed unity with other groups. Emphasising Latinos' enormous economic impact, she called for "flexing our economic muscle using boycotts." The panel stressed calling, writing and texting Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig to stop the 2011 All Star game from being held in Phoenix.

A workshop attended by over 200 youth emphasised that the effect of the law has already been felt. The majority of them expressed fear of going outside. Over half said they had already been stopped, sometimes repeatedly, and by the same police officer.

Addressing the convention, Mary Henry, president of the Service Employees Union (SEIU), spoke strongly against the Arizona law, the detaining of people and orphaning of millions of children.

At a spirited "Wise Latina" luncheon attended by about 1,000 people, Murguia energised the crowd by exploding in anger at

members of Congress and candidates who try to out-do each other in bashing immigrants for political gain.

"Not one Republican has expressed concern for our civil rights, and they have stood in the way of comprehensive immigration reform," she charged.

Henry Cisneros, former San Antonio mayor and Clinton administration housing secretary, well known and loved in Texas, said Arizona has gone over the line. He was given a standing ovation.

Republican Governor Rick Perry spoke on the first day. He disappointed most of the crowd, who were interested in a more humane immigration law. Perry stressed militarisation of the border. Opposing Perry, Democratic candidate Bill White drew cheers by emphasising that, if he becomes governor, he will absolutely veto any copycat of Arizona's law.

On the last day, the main speaker was Major General Angela Salinas. She was the first Hispanic woman to become a Marine Corps general. She was honoured along with Latinos who have given their lives to defend the country. It was made clear that an inordinately higher percentage of Latino soldiers have died and been injured in the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

People's World ☘

PAME block Israeli airline EL-AL

On July 14, early in the morning trade unions of PAME blocked the counter of the Israeli airline EL-AL in the Eleftherios Venizelos airport of Athens for two hours, causing a delay to flight 542 from Athens to Tel Aviv.

This action was a part of the international campaign of the World Federation of Trade Unions against the continuous blockade of Gaza by the government of Israel which has the support of American and European Imperialists.

During our stay at the airport we condemned the government of Israel for its assassinations and inhuman attitude towards the people of Palestine. We also condemned the hypocrisy of the Greek government and the other governments of the EU.

We expressed our solidarity with the struggle of the working class and the people of Palestine for a free and independent state, having east Jerusalem as its capital.

The Executive Secretariat Communist Part of Greece ☘

Sydney film screening

FIVE CORNERS

A quirky movie made in the '80s but set in the '60s, about Bronx teenagers coping with violence and non-violence, love and death, and riding on the top of elevators. Meanwhile two idiosyncratic cops puzzle over whether there are Red Indians in the Bronx. John Turturro gives a performance of riveting intensity, backed up by Jodie Foster and Tim Robbins and a moody score by James Newton Howard.

**3:00pm this Sunday July 25
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All welcome – entrance by donation – enquiries 02 4355 1463

Letters to the Editor
The Guardian
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email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

On patents and penicillin

Many thanks to Tony Kushelev for his comments regarding the origins of penicillin (letters July 14) in regard to my article (*Guardian* June 30). The correction was very important because the two characters involved in its development were in many ways polar opposites. Despite having dismissed as a curiosity the evidence of penicillin's effects, and despite having remained aloof from Fleming's extremely hard-working team, which finally achieved mass production of the chemical, Fleming had no hesitation in later accepting credit for its development.

I've often wondered whether he was influenced by stories about the Crusaders, who are said to have used the mould from rotting biscuits to cure infections when they invaded the Middle East, and may thus have discovered penicillin and its beneficial effects.

Florey, on the other hand, was highly principled, but also highly naive in believing that by refusing to patent the drug he would release it free for use throughout the world. The US corporation that grabbed the patent and made vast profits over decades was a lot smarter, in the way that capitalism respects – i.e. without any sense of moral obligation whatsoever. Florey should have taken out a patent, and then refused to prosecute anyone who produced penicillin without paying the licence fee.

The same issue still faces those who seek to use discoveries or inventions for the benefit of humankind. On a recent program of the ABC TV series *The New Inventors*, two men demonstrated a new invention that combined LCD lighting with solar power to produce a brilliant new desk light, which could eliminate the use of dangerous kerosene lanterns throughout the developing world.

They have, however, refused to take out a patent, for exactly the same reason as Florey used to justify his decision regarding penicillin. How shocking it would be for some corporation to snatch a patent on their invention, thus blocking the realisation of their fine ambition to quite literally lighten up the developing world! That would be a terrible way to gain a lesson in the way that capitalism works. Let's hope those two fine young men do the right thing to prevent this happening.

Peter Mac
Sydney

Equality – be in it

There is nothing like a bit of housework – you never know what you'll find. What I found the other day was an old leaflet from the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Union launching a campaign to promote equality. Remember Norma, a blob of a bloke who was the hero of "Life, Be In It" campaign? The union used the then well-known advertisement to create a mythical Norma. Norma is a 38 year old shop assistant married, with three children, a husband who can't cook, and an economic need to work. Here we're back in 1978 "Equality – Be In It" campaign lists the following 10 points for women:

1. Assert your best natural talent.
2. Take an adult education course.
3. Take an active interest in your union, and become a shop steward.
4. Learn to drive.
5. Teach your husband to cook.
6. Teach your children to housekeep.
7. Apply for promotion at work.
8. Join a political party.
9. Be informed on current affairs.
10. Good-time it once a fortnight – no matter what.

Most points do make you smile and realise how much has already changed. But full equality is still something to achieve as recent rallies proved.

Mati English
Sydney

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Culture & Life

by David S Pena

You might be a Marxist if ... you want to end the exploitation of workers

Capitalism exploits workers. Since the vast majority of people in our capitalist society have to work for a living, it's no exaggeration to say that the majority of people in our country, and throughout the world, are exploited workers.

What does it mean to say that workers are exploited? In Marxist theory, exploitation means that workers are literally robbed by capitalists. Of course the capitalists never admit this. They claim that they pay their workers a fair day's pay for a fair day's work; that you're paid for what you produce, no less and no more. But Marxists say that's not what really happens.

The capitalists have set up a system in which they (the minority) own the machinery, factories, farms and other means of production needed to produce the necessities of life such as food, clothing, and shelter. The workers (the majority) usually have no other way to make a living than to sell but their ability to work. They have to sell this ability (their labour power) to the capitalists in order to earn wages. In other words, they have to get jobs. Wages are then used by workers to buy the products necessary to sustain their lives.

What is the value of your ability

to labour? According to Marx, your labour power is worth whatever amount of money (or commodities) is necessary to keep you alive and working. That doesn't sound like much of a life, but let's go with that assumption and see what happens.

Imagine that you need to make \$50 per day in order to feed, house, and clothe yourself. You find a job at an auto parts factory owned by a capitalist who agrees to pay you \$50 per 8-hour day, or \$6.25 an hour. Your day is spent making parts that the capitalist sells to one of the big automakers for \$100 a piece, and you manage to produce 100 parts per day.

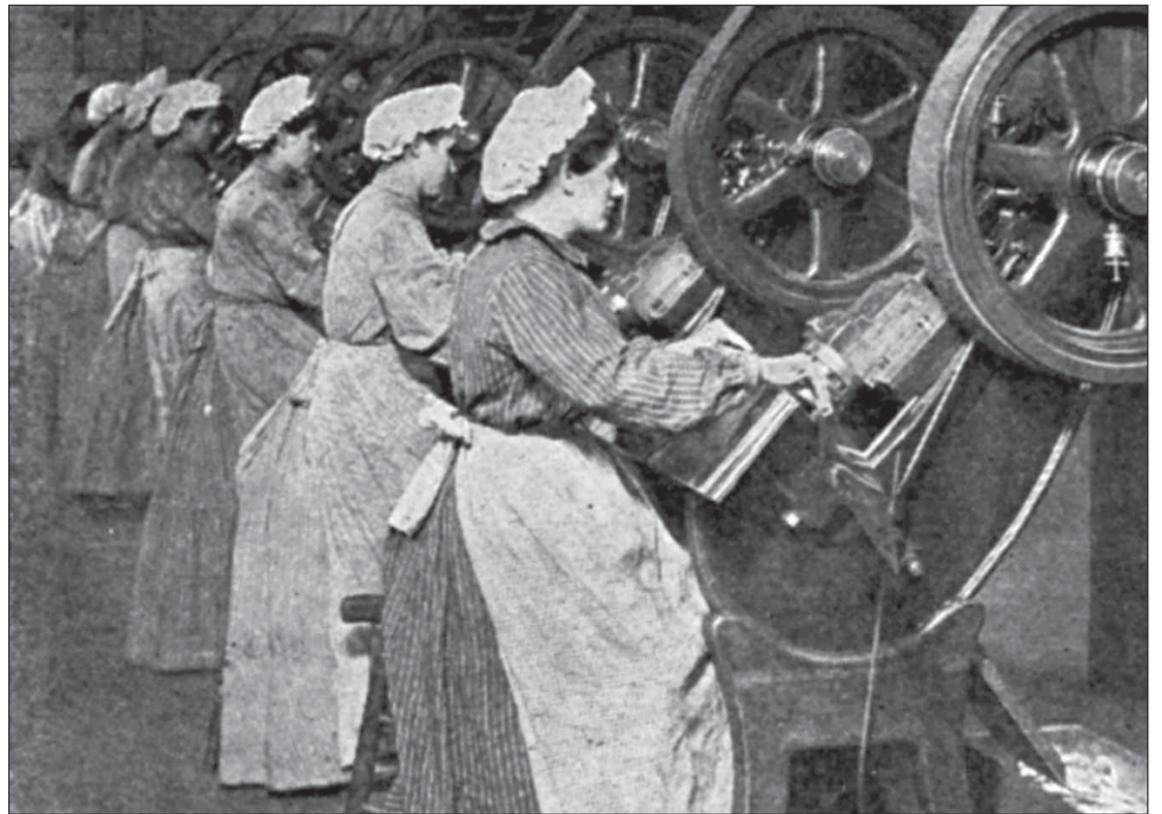
Think about it – you are producing \$1,250 worth of product per hour, \$10,000 worth per day and \$80,000 worth in a 40-hour week! Amazing isn't it? You, the worker, have the ability to create a tremendous amount of value where there was none before. And it's in the capitalist's interest to get you to produce as much as humanly possible either by forcing you to work more hours in a day or making you work faster – preferably, for the capitalist, both.

But we need to get clear about something you might not have noticed. Remember that you are producing \$1,250 worth of value every hour, which boils down to about \$20.83 cents per minute. Is it really important to know that? Absolutely.

Here's why it's important. At \$20.83 per minute, it takes about 2 minutes and 40 seconds for you to produce \$50 worth of value. In other words, you have to work less than 3 minutes to produce the \$50 that covers your salary. At this point, everything seems fair and square. You do \$50 worth of work, and that's exactly what you're going to be paid.

But don't forget that you have to work 8 hours to get the \$50 that it takes you less than 3 minutes to produce. That's the catch, and that's how you get robbed. In order for the privilege of working in that capitalist's factory to get a measly \$50, you have to agree to stay 8 hours and produce over \$1,000 worth of value, value that is stolen from you by the capitalist – literally stolen because the capitalist takes it without paying for it.

Capitalists constantly tell you



that you're getting paid for what you produce, that you're compensated fairly for the time you put in, but in reality the capitalist can pay you for less than 3 minutes of work and force you to work over 7 hours of unpaid labour just to get that tiny paycheck. In our example, if you had been paid for what you produced, you would have made \$1,250 that day. Think about your own situation at work and how it fits this example.

That 7-plus hours of unpaid labour time is called surplus labour, and it produced \$1,200 in surplus value – surplus for the capitalist, not the worker! It's as if you are paying the capitalist more than the capitalist is paying you. You are giving him un-paid labour time.

The entire capitalist society is set up to make this look normal and fair, and the police, courts, and army set up to enforce capitalists' ability to exploit labour. Surplus labour, and the surplus value that it produces, is the source of capitalist profit. Thus the wealth

of capitalist societies is based on the robbery of workers through forced, surplus labour.

Here's a brief look at how exploitation was explained in some of the Marxist classics, which are still the best sources to read for a deeper understanding of this issue and other aspects of the conflict between capitalism and socialism. In chapter II of *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, Frederick Engels wrote:

"The appropriation of unpaid labour is the basis of the capitalist mode of production and of the exploitation of the worker that occurs under it; that even if the capitalist buys the labour power of his labourer at its full value as a commodity on the market, he yet extracts more value from it than he paid for; and that in the ultimate analysis this surplus value forms those sums of value from which are heaped up the constantly increasing masses of capital in the hands of the possessing classes".

Karl Marx's *Capital* is the best source for an in-depth, technical explanation of labour exploitation under capitalism.

In *Capital*, v. 1, chapter 9, Marx used the term "necessary labour-time" to designate the part of the day during which workers labour to cover their own wages. He called the rest of the day, "the second period of the labour process," in which the worker produces surplus value which, for the capitalist, has all the charms of something created out of nothing.

"This part of the working day I call surplus labour time, and to the labour expended during that time I give the name of surplus labour.... What distinguishes the various economic formations of society – the distinction between for example a society based on slave-labour and a society based on wage-labour – is the form in which this surplus labour is in each case extorted from the immediate producer, the worker."

Political Affairs ☪



Sun 25 July –
Sat 31 July

Alan Davies appears in two programs this week: firstly as the one permanent panel member on the witty and informative panel game *Qi* (ABC1 Tuesdays at 9.30pm) – Davies is the chap who is regularly shot down in flames for giving the answers we would have given if we thought we were reasonably well-informed.

First up, however, he appears as the title character, illusionist and investigator of mysteries in *Jonathan Creek – The Judas Tree* (ABC1 Sunday July 25 at 8.30pm). I quite liked the *Jonathan Creek* series, but I cannot tell you if this feature-length program, which co-stars Natalie Walter, is better or worse than usual because the packet of preview discs I got from the ABC did not include it.

We'll just have to watch it on air and see, won't we?

David Attenborough's new series of ten half-hour wildlife documentaries, *Life*, starts this week (ABC1 Sundays from July 25 at 7.30pm). This first episode, *The Challenge Of Life*, shows (thanks to some remarkable cinematography) the extraordinary lengths that some living things have to go to in order to survive and reproduce.

As usual with such programs, the emphasis on showing nature "red in beak and claw" can make for downright unpleasant viewing at times, but overall – and in the later episodes in particular – this series will I think be a minor landmark in wildlife programs. We have certainly come a long way from the days of *On Safari* with Armand and Michaela Denis!

For no apparent reason, an episode of the 1970s comedy series *The Goodies* is seemingly being revived for one screening (on ABC2 on Monday July 26 at 8.00pm). It is the famous "Kitten Kong" episode, in which a giant kitten terrorises London thanks to one of Graeme Garden's experiments having gone wrong.

Made in 1971, this episode won the *Silver Rose of Montreux* the following year at the prestigious annual Swiss television festival held there. According to the ABC's publicity sheet, they are running the *Kitten Kong Special* "based on" the *Kitten Kong* episode, but the disc sent for preview is the *Kitten Kong* episode.

So, whether ABC2 will be running a 38-year-old half-hour sitcom or something based on it, I do not know. I am not sure I really care.

There is no doubt that the British Isles have some beautiful scenery to offer the traveller, but there do seem to have been rather a lot of travellers traipsing (or sailing, canoeing, or otherwise journeying) around the place lately accompanied by a camera crew.

The latest is Nicholas Crane – described as a "British geo-historian, cartographer, explorer, writer and broadcaster". He had what should have been a good idea for a travel series about Britain: retrace the journey of William Camden, the Elizabethan scholar and adventurer who wrote the first geographical encyclopaedia of the UK, in 1586.

Alan Davies in *Jonathan Creek – The Judas Tree* (ABC1 Sunday July 25 at 8.30pm).



Crane says Camden's book, *Britannia*, is a masterpiece, and it probably is, but Crane's retracing of Camden's steps in *Nicholas Crane's Britannia* (ABC1 Tuesday July 27 at 8.30pm) is not.

The scenery of course is often splendid, but too much of the time we are watching Crane walking – up, down, roundabout – and for variety, paddling a canoe. He is a dull host who makes you long for Gryff Rhys Jones, or even for Gryff's dog.

And his interviews with experts along the way are even duller.

The six-part Australian-made travel series *The Trail of Genghis Khan* (ABC2 Wednesdays at 8.00pm from July 28) follows self-proclaimed "adventurer" Tim Cope as he rides on horseback from Mongolia to Hungary, relying on the kindness of strangers to keep him safe and alive.

Naïve and ignorant, Cope is an uninspiring guide and host. The people of Kazakhstan have been trying to restore some of the benefits of the Soviet period, but Cope dismisses socialism with "Kazakhstan was devastated by years of Soviet rule".

Again, it's a film with great scenery, but one wishes for more substance.

I saw a UFO once: I was idly looking at the night sky, hoping to spot a satellite (in the days before geostationary orbits became routine, it was relatively easy to spot satellites at night as they jerkily made their way across the sky), when this very large star moved across the sky above me – in total silence – from the south to the north and just before it reached the horizon made a sudden loop and shot off to the east.

I had never seen the like, but I did not for one moment think it was a space ship or a secret government "project". It was simply something that I did not have adequate data to explain, but whatever the explanation it would have to comply with science and common sense (NASA was trying to launch the space shuttle at the time and being hampered by bad weather – we wondered if what I saw was the shuttle finally getting up).

People who reject scientific method in favour of fanciful

"mysteries" or even conspiracies are prone to embellish their observations with details that do not stand up to close scrutiny.

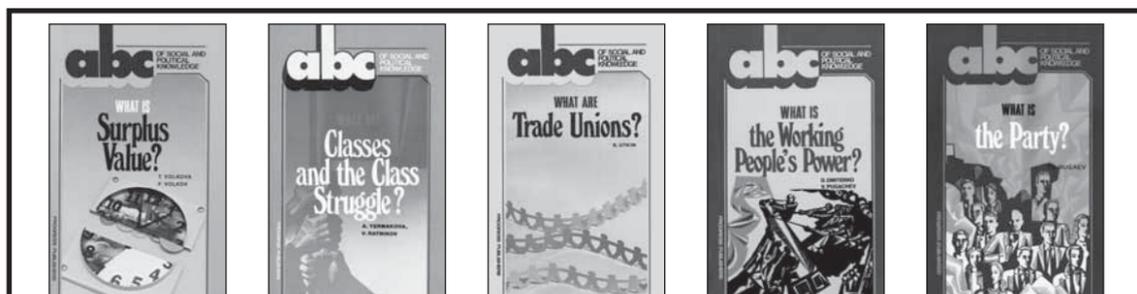
As our knowledge of space technology grew in the second half of the 20th century, so our understanding of what a space ship might actually look like changed – and so did the things people saw. Flying saucers became cigar-shaped, then (after *Close Encounters*) they became invested with all sorts of lights.

I Know What I Saw (ABC2 Wednesday July 28 at 9.30pm) is by James Fox, described as a "UFO researcher". It purports to reveal "shocking proof of a behind the scenes government cover-up".

To which the rest of the world surely responds with a pitying shake of the head: "Only in America!"

The short series *The Botany Of Desire* (ABC1 Thursdays at 9.30pm from July 29) is an interesting examination of the symbiotic relationship between plants and humans, an examination that is flawed only by its tendency to anthropomorphise the plants, ascribing motives to them, an act that belittles the majestic achievements of evolution.

Nevertheless, it is worth watching, if only to discover more than you ever needed to know about apples. ★



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Sydney
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July 23

WILL THE CURRENT FLOODS SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF THE MURRAY-DARLING BASIN?

Richard Kingsford, Prof, UNSW;
Bruce Thom, Prof, Wentworth Group

July 30

AFGHAN WOMEN SPEAK OUT

Gary Cagaroff, filmmaker *Garden at the End of the World*;
Rosemary Morrow and Mahobar, aid workers and teachers to Afghan women and children

August 6

POPULATION GROWTH – PROMISE OR THREAT?

Mark O'Connor, author *Overland Australia*;
James Arvanitakis, UWS

August 13

WHAT NEXT FOR LABOR-PROGRESSIVE IDEAS

Ben Eltham, writer *New Matilda*;
Miriam Lyons, Executive Director, Centre Policy Development

August 20

IS THE GREATER SYDNEY REGION SUSTAINABLE?

Geoff Evans, Mineral Policy Institute,
Arthur Rorris, General Secretary, South Coast Labor Council

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The struggle for Brisbane's urban transport

Part 4

David Matters*

In the previous parts of this occasional series we ended at the point where the struggle was about to get very difficult for Brisbane's urban public transport workers, in particular bus drivers. We had painted the picture of developments in the industry that had placed privatisation high on the agenda of most governments.

What was happening in urban transport was not isolated to that industry but was part of an overall development that was connected to the whole.

The 1980s had seen the most fundamental change in the nature and form of the trade union movement, the Communist Parties were divided and in the trade union movement there was in part a decline in militancy brought on by the adherence to the class collaboration theory of the Accord with the Labor government of Hawke and Keating. (The Accord was a social contract based on wage restraint and co-operation with employers in return for some social reforms.)

Significant figures who had been legendary communist leaders of the Australian working class now lent their support to the tri-partite arrangements of the unions, government and employers. Leaders from the old Communist Party such as Laurie Carmichael, John Halfpenny and Julius Rowe and renegades Tom McDonald, Pat Clancy and Stan Sharkey, former members of the Socialist Party, added their ideological interpretation of "modern unionism".

Public ownership was getting a battering from the federal government as the Hawke-Keating government set about privatising the airlines, telecommunications, ports and shipping. Some state governments, such as in South Australia, also began privatising electricity, water and other utilities and services.

The Keating government introduced its National Competition

Policy. The policy had been developed from an Industry Commission report commissioned by the Prime Minister's office. The inquiry had been tasked with tackling "monopolies" (public assets and services) and finding ways to introduce "competition" (private sector handed the profitable parts of public assets and services).

So the inquiry came up with the outcome that the monopoly that had to be combated was government monopoly and that competition had to be introduced in all areas of government services. National Competition was built around the notion that governments should not provide services but purchase them.

It led to the absurd notion that cross subsidies should be declared illegal. Cross subsidies are where one part of a government service actually makes a profit and the profit is used to provide for a less profitable service. An example was the coal carrying business of Queensland Rail which subsidised the freight and passenger operations. Australia Post is another example, where cross-subsidisation meant the highly profitable urban services subsidised the more costly deliveries to regional and rural addresses.

Under National Competition and later the state equivalents, all government businesses had to be separated from the government body, corporatised and new departments created to purchase the same services. In Brisbane City Council this became known as "Purchaser Provider Split". Council departments were then split into these arrangements. It was thus that the trading entity Brisbane Transport came into being as a Brisbane City Council-owned business. More on this later.

The common misconception in this period was that the different levels of government operated on completely different agendas. The reality of National Competition policy is that it was an agenda driven by the finance section of capital, in particular Macquarie Bank, as a



Brisbane tram crossing the Fiveways at Woolloongabba during the early 1960's. The hut to the right houses the controller.

way of securing a return on finance capital. The dark suits were making their move and no sector of industry was safe.

The most significant change to capitalism in the late 20th century was the growth of parasitic capital, that is money seeking a return, huge amounts of fictitious capital created to keep the capitalist system afloat and this capital seeking out real assets to strip and turn into real profits. The stock markets and capital growth funds are the place where this exchange occurs.

In Australia, this has led to the most massive privatisation of government assets. Like a Biblical plague of locusts the capitalist system is devouring its own institutions. In a country like Australia with such a vast continent, transport and communications are highly problematic and need to be under government control to ensure even development of industry.

The privatisation of the

telecommunications industry has seen that capital converted to stock on a the share market driven by short-term profit generating with the result, an advanced communications system has now lagged behind. Not one of the new providers or the former government telecommunications provider Telstra is prepared to fund the digital broadband network needed to keep Australia developing. They insist that the capital has to come from the government.

These are the results of privatisation in telecommunications; in public transport the experience similar. The Melbourne transport system is a shadow of itself and the government has to provide the capital to update the infrastructure and ensure private operators turn a profit.

As previously stated the Graham Review was carried out in all states and this resulted in a further drive for privatisations (Roger Graham was the representative of the Bus and Coach Association in NSW. He

was commissioned to do reviews by all state governments into public bus services).

In Brisbane this meant that the reform of the bus system was high on the agenda of the Treasury and we had under the Labor governments at State level been resisting the change to private ownership with some success. The agenda was about to get worse with the election of the Federal Liberal government under Howard. This meant a further increase in pressure towards privatisation and a change in industrial laws to push down the rights of workers even further. Less money was forthcoming for urban renewal and the reform agenda intensified.

Next week: *Resistance against privatisation*

*David has been secretary of the Bus Division of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union and before that Bus Union in Brisbane for over 20 years. ✪

Who Rules Australia?

PUBLIC MEETING

5-9 pm Saturday August 7
Kurilpa Hall, West End Brisbane

Gold Coin admittance

3,376km

a long haul for nuclear waste

Muckaty Traditional Owners speak out against the nuclear waste dump
Wednesday 28th July at 6:30pm: Illawarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre, 22 Kenny Street Wollongong

The Federal Government is planning to transport radioactive waste from the Sydney nuclear reactor and impose a dump at Muckaty Station, Northern Territory, without consent from the local community or those affected along the transport route.

"We want them to stop it. We don't want them to come back and ask again. They should have done it right the first time and we would have said no in the beginning... People from the Muckaty Land Trust are saying no to the nuclear waste dump." Dianne Stokes

Speakers include:
Muckaty Traditional Owners Dianne Stokes, Mark Chungaloo, Gladys Brown and Mark Lane
Uncle Dootch Kennedy, Chairman of Illawarra Local Aboriginal Land Council, Ambassador to the Sandon Point Aboriginal Tent Embassy, Original Sovereign Native Custodian
Arthur Rorris, Secretary of the South Coast Labour Council
Maritime Union of Australia spokesperson

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