



# Power in the Union

## Independent, Organised, Militant

Anna Pha

**The NSW ALP President stepped down from his post last week, forced out by an incredible ultimatum from Premier Kristina Keneally. Keneally had told Joe Riordan to quit as President or she would resign as Premier. Riordan is secretary of the NSW branch of the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) whose journal *Livewire* had advised members to support candidates that would support them, including non-Labor Party candidates.**

"In the interest of members, the ETU will support candidates but only if they support us," the union's December edition of *Livewire* advised members. "These candidates will include members from all political persuasions - including Labor, Liberal, Nationals, Greens and independents."

The assumption behind Keneally's ultimatum is that trade unions that are affiliated with the ALP or whose leadership is ALP are expected to deliver electoral support for the ALP. This is regardless of their democratic decision-making processes, policies or members' interests.

The Liberals and mass media continuously accuse Labor of being in the grip of the trade unions. Just last Friday the *Australian Financial Review* (3-12-2010) ran an editorial calling on Labor to change course, that "since Labor came to government in 2007 it has gone out of its way to look after its union mates."

As Keneally demonstrated, the reality is quite different: "its union mates" are expected to look after the ALP. The Rudd and Gillard governments, far from looking after trade unions, failed to tear up WorkChoices or abolish the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC). Gillard has no qualms about sending building workers to jail for refusing to attend interrogation sessions of the ABCC.

Unions poured millions of dollars and thousands of hours of campaigning into defeating the Howard government. The Rudd government did not live up to expectations on industrial relations, occupational health and safety, health or education funding and the Gillard government is even less promising. At the state level the ETU in NSW has given \$750,000 in the past two years (*Daily Telegraph*,

3-12-10) and its members are still fighting for the defence of public services and their jobs.

For too long the ALP has had a tight grip on the trade union movement. Prospective trade union leaders are routinely asked or even told to join the Labor Party. If they don't, then their development or election will not be supported, regardless of ability.

As the ALP fails to deliver, union officials become caught between the needs and demands of their members and the conflicting policies of Labor as it pursues neo-liberal economic policies in the interests of the big end of town.

Riordan is not the only trade union official to be stomped on for not toeing the line. The Victorian secretary of the ETU, Dean Mighell was forced to resign from the ALP by Kevin Rudd because of his militant defence of workers.

### Anti-privatisation

The NSW ETU has been fighting a long battle against privatisation of electricity assets, Sydney ferries and prisons. The various battles on the floor of state ALP conferences and within the parliamentary caucus have seen premiers come and go in rapid succession, one of the key issues being privatisation of electricity.

*Livewire* warns what the election of a Coalition government would mean for unions and their members, making references to what a former WA Liberal government did with individual contracts and public service cuts.

"Seventeen public sector unions will resist cuts to services. We will be collectively lobbying politicians from all political parties to support the Better Services for a Better State campaign in the lead up to the next election and we will hold the government to account over the next four years."

The union "will support individual candidates in individual seats that pledge to protect the working rights of members."

The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) is one of a number of other trade unions that have warned Labor that they can no longer be taken for granted. CFMEU Mining and Energy Division general secretary Andrew Vickers spoke out angrily about



the federal government's failure to implement the recommendations of a mine safety report that was handed down in 2007.

### Political alternative

A number of unions made donations to the Greens in the last federal elections. The Victorian branch of the ETU gave \$125,000 to the campaign to elect Adam Bandt in Melbourne and a further \$200,000 to help Richard Di Natale become the first Greens senator for Victoria. These donations were based on the industrial relations policies of the Greens, including the abolition of the ABCC. The ETU nationally donated millions of dollars to the ALP last year and as Mighell pointed out, it got them nothing.

No political party has the right to dictate trade union policy. Trade unions are independent organisations with their own democratic decision making structures. Trade union policy should reflect the interests of its members and their families. That is their

primary role in the class struggle in Australia.

For too long the ALP has had a tight grip on the trade union movement. As Labor fails to deliver, union officials are increasingly under pressure from their members to take action and take on governments pursuing neo-liberal economic policies and supporting the interests of the big end of town. To defend the interests of their members, trade unions must be able to determine their own policies, take independent action and support parliamentary candidates of their choosing.

Both the Liberals and Labor fear nothing more than a militant, independent, left and progressive voice in the workplace or the political arena. Witness how both parties rather preferred to see the other elected than a single Greens member in the lower house in the Victorian elections. (See Editorial page 2.)

Labor historically has played the role of a safe (for capitalism) alternative government that can deliver the

union movement, especially during tough economic times. The strident attacks on Riordan, on Mighell and on the building unions are evidence of Labor's unwillingness to tolerate militant, class struggle in defence of workers' interests.

Labor has taken union and working class support for granted for too long. If trade unions are to win back lost members and improve working conditions and living standards of their members, they must be independent in addition to opposing privatisation, defending Medicare, defending public education as well as act on workplace issues.

In March 2011, unions in NSW have a great opportunity to work with the Greens, to stand their own candidates, support other left and progressive political forces such as the Communist Alliance. The opportunity is there to exert their independence and take steps in the parliamentary struggle as well as on the ground to begin building a government of a new type. ★

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This is the final issue of *The Guardian* for 2010. The first issue for 2011 will be January 19.

# The Guardian

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## 2010 – Crisis year for the two-party system

It began with the election of the Rudd government. Australian voters were sick of the neo-liberal agenda forced down their throats during Howard's three terms as Prime Minister. Privatisation, the stripping of workers' rights in the workplace and confrontation with their unions, more US wars, the slashing of democratic rights, the callous treatment of asylum seekers, inaction on climate change, the further dispossession of Aboriginal people, a widening gap between the county's haves and have-nots – these were the trends working people entrusted Labor to turn around.

But voters were cheated all along the line. The same program was rolled out under Rudd with only slightly different "spin". The usual thing for the electorate to do in the circumstances is to punish the incumbents by returning the opposition to government – the so-called "revolving door" of Australian politics.

The results of the 2010 federal election broke with this pattern to a notable extent. The Coalition did not pick up the votes of electors fleeing Labor. Independents benefited but the big winners were the Greens. They got a member in the House of Representatives and will hold the balance of power in the Senate from next July.

This time the alternative major party did not ride the wave of disillusionment back into office. People's memories of the Howard years were too fresh and it was clear that recently installed Prime Minister Gillard and opposition leader Tony Abbott were both serving up a rehash of the same old neo-liberal recipe. The controlling hand of corporations over government was more visible than ever with the deposing of both Malcolm Turnbull and Kevin Rudd.

The two-party stranglehold was loosened and the Greens arrived as the third major force in federal parliamentary politics. Is the trend established and will the progressive parliamentary challenge continue to grow steadily? Will it be reinforced in the states? Only time will tell but the signs are positive. The Greens polled well in the recent state election in Victoria. Once again voters had to wait to know the fate of the government in a poll that did not show clear support for either of the two established parties of capital.

The threat to the century-old power sharing arrangement between the outright conservatives and their decreasingly social democratic alternative is clear. Panic has gripped some of the players. The ALP in Victoria may seek to damage the Greens at future polls by putting them last on the ballot paper – to the obvious benefit of the Liberals and Nationals. The message is plain. As Greens MP Greg Barber put it, "keeping the Greens out is more important than cutting the Coalition's majority." The Libs had already acted on their foreboding and preferenced Labor ahead of the Greens at this state election.

These developments at the parliamentary level arise out of the harsh realities facing working people today. The penny is beginning to drop that neither of the major parties is sincere in promising to defend the people's living standards, their services or security. If it was unclear before, it now obvious that they both serve monopoly interests. Voters are looking for alternatives in unprecedented numbers.

This shift is not reflected in the number of seats taken by representatives of this desire for change, for resistance to the diktat of the big corporations. Alongside the many campaigns taken up to defend peace, people's jobs, public services, democratic rights, the environment and so on, parliamentary reform has to become a priority for those seeking progressive political change.

A task for Communists is to explain to working people that the changes taking place reflect the current crisis of capitalism globally. Governments in capitalist countries like Australia are not free agents deciding independently how to meet the needs of the community.

They are bound to represent the interests of a small grouping of the super wealthy who want to privatise what remains of public property and to put the cost of systemic crises onto the backs of workers. This understanding is a vital to the success of a future alliance of left and progressive forces that will ultimately challenge capitalist domination. The building of a strong Communist Party of Australia is the guarantee of a final break with the cynical political process that has dominated Australia for over a century.

### PRESS FUND

The Victorian Liberals have once again used voting preferences to take power. The Greens won about 10 percent of the primary vote, but gained no seats, because of Liberal preferences and the electoral divisions. What a nice Christmas present for the people of Victoria! They will fight any move to recommence the conservative privatisation of public services, and we intend to back them up. Please keep sending your contributions during the break. We thank all our contributors and wish everyone a safe and happy festive season. Many thanks to the following, for their generous support this week, and to all our contributors this year.

JR Allan \$5, H and E Ewer \$100, H North \$90, "Round Figure" \$15, Mark Window \$10, J M Kiek \$50, June Ayres \$50.

This week's total: \$320 Progressive total: \$6,720

## Dear Comrades and Friends,

This has been a dramatic and challenging year for us all!

We celebrated the 90th anniversary of the founding of the communist movement in Australia, saw the mining conglomerates defeat the government's super profits tax proposal, and celebrated Ark Tribe's win in the struggle against the ABCC.

Debates over how to deal with climate change and save our environment continued and many of us were involved in campaigns opposing privatisation, to defend and improve the public health service, for women's rights, especially to pay equity, to win proper treatment of refugees, and to end the NT intervention.

The struggle to bring Australian troops home from Afghanistan continued despite Gillard government decisions to welcome more US warships, planes and troops into Australia.

Many of us participated in solidarity campaigns with Cuba, to free the Cuban Five, in solidarity with the people of Palestine, with the government of Ecuador following the failed coup, with the people of Pakistan after appalling floods, and other solidarity movements. We all viewed with horror and outrage the

Israeli murder of activists on a peaceful flotilla trying to break the siege of Gaza.

Following the federal election, Australia has a minority Labor government reliant on support from the Greens and independents. The situation is bursting with potential for positive change but also for destabilisation by forces unhappy at the dent put in the old two-party system.

All this and more has required great efforts by progressive people. But now is the time when most workers traditionally celebrate with family and friends and take a holiday,

We send all CPA members and supporters and *Guardian* readers warm season's greetings and our best wishes for the New Year. We hope you all have an enjoyable and restful holiday season and return to the struggle refreshed and reinvigorated.

The New Year is full of promise, though we will also get a fair share of tough times. May 2011 be a year of advances for the working people here and around the world!

Hannah Middleton  
General Secretary

Vinnie Molina  
President

## No journey is too long when the destination is Freedom!

To all *Guardian* readers:

I would like to share an experience of a lifetime; a moving visit to Robben Island. Robben Island is the former Apartheid prison that held South African and other African political prisoners.

Nelson Mandela spent 18 of his long 27 years in prison in Robben Island. On a World Heritage list today, the former prison is a museum run by former political prisoners who take visitors through the many stories of endurance by those who dared to struggle against the fascist regime.

The three and a half hour experience is well worth the time spent to see what apartheid did to the people in South Africa. It is also a beautiful story of what international solidarity can do in support of the struggle for freedom. This right to dissent and solidarity must be defended today when there are attempts to criminalise it. A disturbing sight was to see a van with the logo of G4S doing some management work on the island. This is the same company who run the privatised prisoner transportation service in

Western Australia and was responsible for the death in custody of Mr Ward in 2009. (June 12, 2009) Apart from that I thought that the message of hope that no journey was too long when the destination is freedom could truly be felt here.

In solidarity,

Vinnie Molina  
CPA President

Ps: I am currently in South Africa attending the 12th meeting of Communist and Worker's parties, Johannesburg 2-5 December 2010. ☘

## Farewell to Max Watts (1928-2010)

Activists from a wide range of community and solidarity groups gathered recently in Sydney to farewell Max Watts who died on November 23 aged 82.

Described as an "all round stirrer and fighter for justice and humanity", Max was a left-wing freelance journalist and a solidarity activist with many national liberation struggles.

Born to Jewish parents in Germany in 1928, Max belonged to a family of anti-fascists, a political leaning he would maintain to the end. Along with his mother and sister, he survived the Holocaust, an experience which would shape his life.

Max made his name as a freelance journalist reporting war and conflict, notably in Bougainville, but also

in East Timor, Palestine, and South America. In addition to freelancing for a variety of local publications in Sydney, he wrote for German and French papers.

In the 1960s, he was a central activist in Europe working with soldier resistance to the Vietnam War within the US armed forces.

Max helped initiate RITA – Resistance Inside The Army – which became one of his great political passions.

One of his many contributions was co-authorship, with David Cortright, of the book *Left Face: Soldier Unions and Resistance Movements in Modern Armies*.

Max was Australian correspondent for Military Resistance newsletter,

sending in countless articles over the past seven years of publication, ranging from reports about organising anti-war outreach to Australian troops and US armed forces members visiting Australia to histories of work with anti-war US soldiers during the American war on Vietnam.

Max also worked for the Sydney bureau of Reporters Without Borders who said he sent them information about press freedom in Australia for more than 10 years as well as stories about Timor, Palestine and Papua New Guinea. He recently provided them with coverage of the inquest into the death of five journalists in Balibo at the hands of the Indonesian military in 1975. ☘

# NT: Bush battlers doing it tougher

Charlie Ward

**I recently travelled to several remote communities and small towns in the Northern Territory. In each place I spoke to the locals, and was told that “things are going backward now”, that “there is no work for us anymore”, and that “we can’t do anything, the shire does it all”. Without exception, the mood was bad, varying only between depressed and angry. The reason for this is that several large policy shifts and reversals by the Northern Territory and federal governments in the last few years are now starting to impact severely on remote Territorians.**

Both governments have rejected almost forty years of “self-determination” policy direction, and are now withdrawing funding and services, “mainstreaming” service provision to these areas, and leaving residents to take their employment chances with the real economy. Some of these policy shifts were implemented as part of the NT Emergency Response, aka the Intervention launched by the Howard government and perpetuated under Rudd and Gillard, though many were not. The national CDEP (Community Development Employment Projects) program has been one notable casualty, and this was causing the most despair among the Territorians I spoke to.

CDEP was created more than thirty years ago to provide subsidised employment opportunities where little work exists. CDEP has provided work activities and jobs to some 8,000 people in remote NT communities for decades. Over the last year up to 250 CDEP positions have been axed in each community, with a handful of “real jobs” to replace them. This has resulted in a direct, government-caused increase in unemployment of 80 percent. One old man I spoke with, a hard-working friend, was livid with frustration.

Similarly, in the past, government has funded the creation and maintenance of outstations – small housing clusters where about 15 percent of the NT’s Indigenous population live. The work required to maintain outstations has often been done using CDEP-funded labour. Funding to outstations outside selected areas is

now also a thing of the past, which in time will force residents to move elsewhere. On top of these changes, the Local Government Councils or Associations of each community have been absorbed into nine centralised Shires providing Local Government services – often to an area bigger than Tasmania – and 20 Territory Growth Towns have been named.

The fine print of the Growth Towns policy doesn’t actually include provision for their growth. Sixteen of the designated communities will receive a number of new houses from the huge SIHIP housing program if they sign over their land to the government to hold in 40 year leases. Most communities are receiving no new SIHIP (Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program) house funding. For the lucky ones that do, the shortfall of housing is so severe that at best the new SIHIP funded houses will merely reduce overcrowding a little, rather than provide for increasing populations.

From fifteen to ten people in a house, say. In most cases the money will be used merely upgrading neglected housing stock. Similarly, the Growth Towns policy only promises

Over the last year up to 250 CDEP positions have been axed in each community, with a handful of “real jobs” to replace them.

progress perhaps; but are we meant to applaud this?

What now, for the 8,000 unemployed former CDEP workers? There are many men and women in the bush who have worked their whole adult

was accommodation available. I was told to ring a town four hundred kilometres away, who now handle bookings. Admittedly, the Shires are a clear step towards accountability – this is commendable – but this is at

creation programs or housing developments catering to more than current levels of growth in Katherine, Tennant Creek or Alice Springs.

The new economic migrants from the bush and their descendants will end up in the same town camps that sprang up in the 1960s-70s, when thousands of workers and their families were laid off from the cattle stations. At that time, government failed to plan for the effect of equal wages and technological development in the pastoral industry. Unlike then, the population upheaval in the coming years will be entirely government created.

Reactive, populist, short-sighted policy shifts are the NT’s business-as-usual; social-engineering with L-plates; our perpetual groundhog day. These issues will affect the quality of life of all Territorians. The small-minded, harping critique offered by the Country Liberal Party’s Opposition does nothing at all to resolve these problems. Only divorcing the governance of remote Australia from the partisan three year (re)electoral cycle will create the conditions in which positive, sustainable economic and social development policies can be collectively reformulated and delivered in the Northern Territory. ☘

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to provide the services that are taken for granted in a town of the same size anywhere else in Australia. In both cases population growth due to economic migration (unemployment) is not being planned for; this is inexcusable when we also consider natural trends: in many remote NT communities, up to 50 percent of the population are under the age of 25 and numbers are set to go through the roof in the coming decades. To summarise: safe houses, reliable maps, working plumbing and internet connections for the lucky few. This is

lives; their anger at the indignity of their situation is real and justified. It will soon turn into toxic despair. At the same time as people have been hit with enforced unemployment, they have had their main means to proactively remedy the situation removed: direct involvement by the citizenry in the administration of their own affairs has dramatically diminished because they no longer have their own Council boards and many assets have been stripped by the Shires.

In one community I visited, I asked at the Shire office if there



Pete’s Corner



Without revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary practice.



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[cpasa.blogspot.com](http://cpasa.blogspot.com)

Official blog of the **CPA South Australia**

# Protect the Kimberley Rally

Richard Titelius

**The Kimberley region is one of the last handful of wilderness areas remaining in the world and it exists in the far north west of Australia – at least a two-day drive from the lawn outside the Cottesloe Civic Centre in the heart of Premier Colin Barnett's state electorate in coastal suburban Perth.**

The struggle to protect the rugged, beautiful Kimberley region is an issue that has ignited passionate interest amongst many people in the Western Australian capital of Perth. One thousand of these passionate people had turned up in the hot midday sun to hear speakers, musicians and other artists present their message of support for the wilderness against a proposal for the industrialisation of the Kimberley beginning with a gas processing hub at James Price Point.

The first speaker was Louise Morris from the Conservation Council who herself had grown up in the town of Port Hedland in the neighbouring region of the Pilbara – itself known for its ancient and rugged beauty. She recalled the trips to the Kimberley in her childhood to enjoy its unspoilt beauty.

World Wildlife Fund director Paul Gamblin said that this rally was only a beginning of the struggle to protect this wilderness icon, and recalled the thousands more who had turned up to the rally to save the Ningaloo Reef that was held at Fremantle just south of where this rally was being held.

However Gamblin reminded the rally that, "Decisions made for the

short-term gain for the balance sheet can leave us with a long-term blunder which will cost a lot more to repair." A new vision was needed instead of a race to the bottom which is what these projects will lead to. Instead of saying, "Take this development and we will give you these schools, hospitals, roads community facilities, there needed to be these services and infrastructure provided from other sustainable sources."

What was also needed to protect the region from the long-term effects of climate change, depletion of fisheries and biodiversity were the creation of terrestrial and marine reserves which would allow flora and fauna to thrive rather than the environment to become degraded and not allow the wildlife to proliferate and thrive.

Peter Robertson, campaign coordinator for the Wilderness Society, one of the organisers of the rally, said that as well as sending messages to Premier Barnett, citizens also needed to send messages to the Gas Hub project partners of Woodside, BHP/ Billiton, BP, Shell and Chevron.

The Premier, Robertson said, "Was prepared to ride roughshod over Aboriginal communities, environmental heritage imperatives – world heritage listing and the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community in Broome."

It was also people power that stopped the two dams going ahead in Tasmania in the early 1980s and it is that power in the hands of the people that can once again bring undemocratic, rapacious and greedy capitalism to heel. ☘



## WA hospital workers take action

Mark Hayward

**On December 2, 1,000 metro hospital workers took strike action and rallied with members of the public at the office of the WA Premier Colin Barnett. The strike and rally was in protest at the state government's intentions to privatise essential services at the new flagship Fiona Stanley public hospital due to open in 2014 and also the new Midland hospital and the planned hospital for children.**

Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Workers' Union assistant secretary Carolyn Smith joined nurses and hospital support workers in their condemnation of the governments plans citing previous privatisations and the effects they had on the quality of services and cleanliness in the WA public hospital system.

During those years of privatisation the public hospital system was struck with a series of dangerous infections that were attributed to the contractors cost-cutting

activities. It cost the state government almost \$3 million to eradicate these super bugs and forced it to bring back in-house those privatised services.

When catering services were privatised nurses were forced to complain to the contractors that the food portions were too small and patients were going hungry. Relatives were bringing in food for their loved ones to supplement their diets. At the rally there was support from several other unions involved with health and the broader union movement. UK multinational Serco is the government's choice to provide services that are currently provided by the state system.

These services include cleaning, catering, orderlies, engineers, gardeners, patient care assistants, medical records, in fact all services under nursing (for the time being).

Serco is better known for its running of immigration detention centres as well as private prisons,

traffic light cameras and they have a hand in the running of the nuclear weapons system in the UK as well as a number of other military contracts here and overseas.

They are fiercely anti-union and renowned for getting privatisation contracts at public facilities, particularly in the UK. Current wage differences between the public and private sectors in WA health institutions are as much as \$160 per week in favour of the public system and this may well become the benchmark that wages will be pushed down to.

Currently the public system's essential services are fully integrated and part of a team that provides patient-focused care. If they are privatised the focus will shift to a profit-driven system that will spell staff cuts and a health system pushed down to a price, not built up to a standard. Several members of the CPA attended and over 200 flyers were handed out and party flags were in full view and well received. ☘

## Denmark refuses to handle Australian toxic waste

**The Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) national secretary and president of the International Transport Workers' Federation, Paddy Crumlin, has congratulated the Danish government for refusing to accept toxic waste shipments from Australia after unions repeatedly voiced concern over the plan.**

Mr Crumlin said the Danish decision was a victory for common sense over the scheme to load the hazardous chemical waste from the Orica site at Port Botany and ship it for disposal in Denmark.

On behalf of the drivers at the Australian end of the operation, State secretary of the Transport Workers Union, Wayne Forno, said: "Ensuring that risk assessment is carried out on the driving route and risks associated with it for our drivers, we support the MUA in totality."

Mr Crumlin added: "There needs to be a long-term solution thought out for this issue. It is not good enough to ship hazardous chemical waste around the globe – there are enormous risks involved."

Mr Crumlin also said Orica had confirmed that it would be required to accept the return of the waste if

it was not destroyed for any reason. He said the *Beluga Fascination*, currently berthed at Port Botany, had been chartered to transport the waste to Denmark.

"First and foremost we need greater assurance that there is absolutely no risk to the health and safety of our members in loading this cargo, those transporting it and others unloading it at the conclusion of its journey," Mr Crumlin said.

"This is particularly important given we risk having to double handle the cargo. Dock workers in Denmark are currently exercising their right to refuse to unload the goods at the other end of the journey.

"MUA workers will not load the cargo if we risk having to unload it again in a few months time. A worse scenario still, the *Beluga Fascination* could face the prospect of sailing the globe searching in vain for a port that will accept the cargo."

Mr Crumlin said there had been numerous cases of ships laden with toxic material, traipsing the globe for a port that will accept their load in recent years. ☘

## MasterChef urged to chop Lilydale Chicken

MasterChef, Coles and Westpac are in the firing line as the National Union of Workers (NUW) stepped up its campaign against Australia's largest chicken processor, Baiada Poultry. NUW organiser, Dave Garland, said the union had written to the MasterChef, Coles Supermarkets and Westpac bosses after employees made allegations of racial discrimination and exploitative work practices at Baiada's Lilydale Chicken factory in Adelaide.

"We've asked Coles, MasterChef and Westpac to stop stocking, promoting and funding the Lilydale Chicken brand, until ethical employment

practices are guaranteed at Baiada," Mr Garland said. "Every day we hear new stories of exploitation and hardship from the mostly migrant Baiada work force. It has to stop."

Mr Garland said Lilydale Chicken stockist Coles, promoter MasterChef and financier Westpac needed to know what was going on at Baiada. "We believe Baiada may be in breach of several sections of Coles' Ethical Sourcing Code, including wages and benefits, freedom of association and the standard of sub-contractors," Mr Garland said.

The promotion of Lilydale Chicken on MasterChef also flies in

the face of the fun, healthy, family values represented by the program. "Lilydale chicken workers don't have fun and they work in sometimes unsafe and dangerous conditions," Mr Garland said. "Baiada has repeatedly refused to meet with the NUW to discuss these issues. Coles, MasterChef and Westpac should be concerned about Baiada's 'head in the sand' approach and its potential to damage their own brand."

The NUW's concerns have been reinforced by the Fair Work Ombudsman who sent 30 inspectors to raid five Baiada factories across Australia three weeks ago. ☘

DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY?

*Write a letter to the Editor*

# The Communist movement in the 21st century (Part 3)

## Impending systemic crisis

Sitaram Yechury

**Quite apart from the periodical crisis that will continuously erupt under neo-liberal globalisation, a much graver systemic crisis is impending. The USA, with its currency being the stipulated medium of wealth holding for the capitalist world as a whole occupies this superior position not only through its economic might but through its superior military and political dominance in the world.**

While we shall return to this aspect shortly, it must be noted that irrespective of such might, a crisis will, necessarily, follow because in order to maintain the stability of its currency, the USA accumulates a massive current account deficit vis-à-vis other major capitalist economies.

This is because the dollar is the stable medium of wealth holding.

**In Latin America, the sharp rise in the distress caused by neo-liberalism has led to big movements of resistance that have resulted in electoral victories of the anti-neo-liberal forces in at least eleven countries.**

This also happens because the USA, in order to maintain its leading position, necessarily, has to accommodate the products of other major capitalist economies within its own market. However, when it seeks to reduce this deficit, this would affect the exports of other capitalist economies leading to counter intensified protectionism and disruption of international monetary stability. As of October 16, 2009, the total deficit of the US economy reached US\$1.42 trillion. Its current account deficit was US\$726.6 billion in 2007 and US\$706 billion in 2008.

This is not an inherently stable situation because those holding the dollar would sooner than later wish to trade them for more lucrative US assets. This will, surely, invoke passions of patriotism that will oppose such foreign ownership of its assets. However, if the holders of dollars decide then to shift to some other currency, then the plunge in the dollar's standing and consequently of the US economy would send the entire capitalist system into a profound crisis.

The indications of this are already unfolding with the dollar having lost over 11 percent in recent months. In order to stabilise itself and the global capitalist economy, the US will now increase the pressures on countries which hold huge

amounts of its currency like China and other Asian economies to revalue their currencies upwards in order to cushion its own burgeoning current account deficits. This, in turn, if it were to happen, would lead to a slump in the latter economies. Even if the US were to insulate itself from such a slump, it would still bring the global capitalist system to the brink of a major crisis because of sharp deflation in the emerging economies whose currencies the USA is today seeking to revalue.

Therefore, irrespective of how the current crisis is overcome, a major systemic crisis for world capitalism is in the offing. The US would, however, seek to thwart such a crisis by transferring the burdens, that is, intensifying exploitation through its accompanying political and military might.

Marx had once remarked that the

control over dissemination of information through the corporate media is a salient feature of this period that seeks to continuously mount an ideological offensive against any critique or alternative to capitalism.

Viewed in terms of class hegemony, the culture of globalisation seeks to divorce people from their actual realities of day to day life. Culture here acts not as an appeal to the aesthetic, but as a distraction, diversion from pressing problems of poverty and misery.

Though imperialism has strengthened its hegemony and heightened its multifaceted offensive all across the globe, as we have discussed earlier, it is on the brink of a systemic crisis which could prove far graver and more encompassing than the current global recession.

However, irrespective of the intensity of the crisis, capitalism does not automatically collapse. It needs to be overthrown. An erroneous understanding only blunts the need to constantly sharpen and strengthen the revolutionary ideological struggle of the working class and its decisive intervention under the leadership of a party wedded to Marxism-Leninism – the subjective factor without which no revolutionary transformation is possible.

This period has also seen the rising resistance to such growing imperialist hegemonic efforts. But it must be noted that much of the struggles launched by the working class and the exploited sections have essentially been defensive in nature, i.e., defending their existing rights from greater encroachment by neo-liberalism. Resistance in the nature of mounting the assault on the rule of capital is yet to take a decisive shape.

In Latin America, the sharp rise in the distress caused by neo-liberalism has led to big movements of resistance that have resulted in electoral victories of the anti-neo-liberal forces in at least eleven countries. Some like Venezuela and Bolivia have adopted radical Left-wing programs. In Cyprus, Europe, for the first time in that country a communist was elected as a president.

It is the strengthening of the parties wedded to Marxism-Leninism along with the sharpening of class struggles through the mobilisation of popular masses under the leadership of the working class that the strength and success of the International Communist movement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be determined.

Sitaram Yechury is a member of the Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and editor the Party's newspaper, *People's Democracy*. ✪



Culture here acts not as an appeal to the aesthetic, but as a distraction, diversion from pressing problems of poverty and misery.



The United Nations Climate Change Conference took place in Cancun, Mexico last week. A Galaxy poll released in Australia to coincide with the opening of the conference has found that more than 86 percent of Australians believe that Australia should be doing more to support Pacific Islander communities deal with the impacts of climate change. In Tuvalu, for example there was a five-six millimetre annual sea level rise recorded – with the highest point on the islands less than four metres above the ground. One can see why the impact of climate change has become a matter of life and death for Pacific Islander communities.

Australia is a wealthy country and our leaders keep on reminding us that in economic terms it is "the envy of the world". However, Australia lags behind most other developed countries in looking after its most vulnerable children. According to a UNICEF report "The Children Left Behind" Australia was leaving behind children who fell in the bottom 10 percent of its socioeconomic make-up. Income inequality, teen suicide, immunisation and spending on childcare services were below average. The good news is that primary school enrolment, reading, mathematics and science literacy were above average compared to other OECD countries.

Opponents of a possible nuclear waste dump at Muckaty, north of Tennant Creek (NT) delivered more than 2,500 petitions to the Melbourne electorate office of Federal Resources Minister Martin Ferguson. Although some traditional owners backed by the Northern Land Council have nominated Muckaty for such a dump, others have joined forces with the Australian Conservation Foundation to lobby the federal government against it. They say they were not properly consulted about the site's nomination and have started legal action against the threat of such a dump on their land. The "Dump the Dump" campaign started before federal elections. The petition points out that key documents about the dump plan have been kept from the Aboriginal people, the NT government and community and the Australian Parliament. "It is not acceptable for dirty business like radioactive waste to also be secret business," the petition says.

There have been more than 800 Taser-related deaths around the world perpetrated by police. It has been argued that Tasers are not lethal weapons but as figures show they are. A man in WA was recently charged under the Weapons Act for being in possession of a Taser, a prohibited dangerous weapon. The maximum penalty for being in possession of a Taser is \$36,000 or three years jail. Sweden and Iceland have already banned them after careful evaluation and that is a good move because it gives the police more incentive to learn how to diffuse a tense situation without killing people.



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# Summer reading bargains

Looking for some reading over the holiday period or a few presents, the CPA has some great books on offer. Whether you are interested in history from a working class perspective, socialism, Marxist classics or just a good story, there is something for you.

*The Traeger Kid* is a delightful novel by Margaret Sharpe telling the story of an Aboriginal girl in Central Australia and her journey to Brisbane. It is revealing in its details, full of the warmth and joy of a child who gains pride in her own language, Aranda, and loves her country. There are a number of sub-themes about Aboriginal lifestyle and culture, differences between city and country life, the impact of land clearance by White settlers.

Written in the early 1980s, it is a trip down memory lane for older readers. Dr Sharpe knows her subject well. It is a book for children and adults alike. An enjoyable read.

Still in literary mode, many readers will know Vic Williams, a veteran comrade now in his 90s living in Western Australia. Vic is one of the best working class and communist poets of Australian literature. Vic's writing comes from a lifetime of struggle and experiences, in particular in industry and on the Fremantle waterfront.

Katharine Susannah Prichard wrote: "He fuses a passionate and sensuous vision of the earth he knows and loves with thought, direct and forceful, about everyday life and work of men and women. There is, I think, a high rare quality in Victor Williams' poetry."

Copies of *Three Golden Giants and other poems* contains some of his most popular poems. The lines: I do not live with a divided heart.

One love, one aim, once class my loyalty... from *The Undivided Heart* are illustrative of the direct and forceful approach. In all there are 21 poems in the booklet, including "Delegate"; "Speak for Us, Pablo Neruda"; "Along the Waterfront"; and "My Baby Cries".

*Ernesto Che Guevara* by I Lavretsky tells the story of the young Argentinian medical student who became a great revolutionary fighter for the liberation of the Latin American peoples. The author draws on numerous documents, press items, and notes of personal conversations with friends, relatives and comrades-in-arms of Che.

There is a wealth of photos, including a number taken in Moscow and Leningrad. The book gives great insight into many of the problems faced by Cuba following the revolution when Che was Minister of Industry and in the leadership of the Communist Party. It deals with relations with the former Soviet Union and takes the reader through to Che's murder in Bolivia in 1967 when leading a guerrilla unit fighting for the national liberation of Bolivia.

In *Choice: A doctor's experience with the abortion dilemma*, Dr Don Sloan with Paula Hartz draw on real cases to provide a much-needed source of understanding of the issues involved when women are faced with an unwanted pregnancy.

The book deals with social realities, the dilemmas facing women and the barriers to choice they face, such as what happens when they do not have the money to travel when their public hospital doesn't do abortions. "If we learn to see the aborting issue clearly – not religion but science, not ethics but rights, not sexism but equality for women – we can begin to work on the dilemma," the book concludes.

*Cuba beyond our dreams* by Silvia Martínez Puentes, gives a comprehensive overview of the development of the Cuban socialist revolution. The publication of the book in 2005 was sponsored by the CFMEU in solidarity with the Cuban Federation of Workers (CTC).

The book starts with the Revolution and an overview of its first three decades. It covers a range of topics under the theme "Unity in Society" including the trade union movement, international solidarity, mass participation in the taking of decisions.

There are other chapters on science, employment, social security, health, education, culture, sports, women, the electoral system, human rights and much more.

It covers the young socialist state's amazing achievements under difficult conditions following the demise of the socialist Soviet Union Eastern Europe and the ongoing illegal US blockade. There are detailed tables and photos on Cuba's achievements.

The book is much more than facts and figures, raising important questions about the development of socialism, the battle of ideas, the involvement of the people in the defence of the Revolution. Culture, for example, is treated as an expression of sovereignty. It deals with the lies and aggression of the enemy, and the changes taking place in Latin America.

*Reader in Marxist Philosophy* is a selection of writings from Marx, Engels and Lenin selected and edited with introductions and notes by Howard Selsam and Harry Martel. The book is devoted to selections from philosophical writings.

It covers materialism versus idealism; dialectics and the dialectical method; theory of knowledge and philosophy of science; the materialist interpretation of history; religion; and ethics. It draws on many well known writings of Marx, Engels and Lenin, is well referenced and has a bibliographical index with useful notes to anyone who is not well versed in the classics.

*On Imperialism and Imperialists* is a collection of writings from Lenin on one of the burning issues of the day. It includes "Impoverishment in capitalist society", "Armaments and capitalism", "The growth of capitalist wealth", extracts from "Socialism and war" and "Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism."

The selected pieces were written between 1912 and 1920. While the specific details have changed, the essence of Lenin's definition of imperialism remains as valid today as then. The book makes a great introduction to political economy and the historical development of imperialism and its wars.

Coffee table book, *Frederick Engels: His Life and Work*, offers over 400 pages of historic photos and graphics accompanied by an explanatory text. As Lenin said, "The name and life of Engels should be known to every worker..." And what better starting point than such a great volume of rich material. Would make an excellent gift.

"The Communist Manifesto" by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels is one of three pieces by outstanding revolutionaries in *Manifesto: Three classic essays to change the world*. There is a preface by Adrienne Rich on Karl Marx, Rosa Luxemburg and Che Guevara followed by an introduction from Armando Hart.

The other two historic essays are "Reform or Revolution" by Rosa Luxemburg and "Socialism and Man in Cuba" by Ernesto Che Guevara.

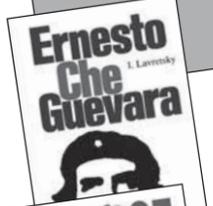
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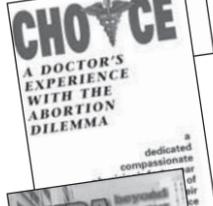
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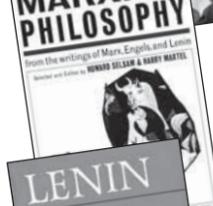
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I Lavretsky  
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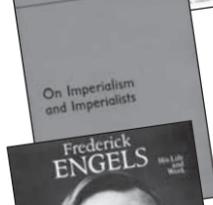
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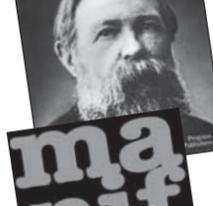
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Silvia Martínez Puentes  
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**Reader in Marxist Philosophy**  
editors Howard Selsam and  
Harry Martel, International Publishers,  
NY, pb, 384 pages, \$15 plus \$4 p&p.



**On Imperialism and Imperialists**  
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Progress Publishers, pb,  
174 pages, \$5 plus \$2.00 p&p.



**Frederick Engels: His Life and Work**  
Progress Publishers, hc,  
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# "History Will Win"

## Julian Assange answers people's questions

### Fwoggie

I'll start the ball rolling with a question. You're an Australian passport holder - would you want return to your own country or is this now out of the question due to potentially being arrested on arrival for releasing cables relating to Australian diplomats and polices?

### Julian Assange

I am an Australian citizen and I miss my country a great deal. However, during the last weeks the Australian prime minister, Julia Gillard, and the attorney general, Robert McClelland, have made it clear that not only is my return impossible but that they are actively working to assist the United States government in its attacks on myself and our people. This brings into question what does it mean to be an Australian citizen - does that mean anything at all? Or are we all to be treated like David Hicks at the first possible opportunity merely so that Australian politicians and diplomats can be invited to the best US embassy cocktail parties.



### girish89

How do you think you have changed world affairs? And if you call all the attention you've been given-credit ... shouldn't the mole or source receive a word of praise from you?

### Julian Assange:

For the past four years one of our goals has been to lionise the source who take the real risks in nearly every journalistic disclosure and without whose efforts, journalists would be nothing. If indeed it is the case, as alleged by the Pentagon, that the young soldier - Bradley Manning - is behind some of our recent disclosures, then he is without doubt an unparalleled hero.

### Daithi

Have you released, or will you release, cables (either in the last few days or with the Afghan and Iraq war logs) with the names of Afghan informants or anything else like so? Are you willing to censor (sorry for using the term) any names that you feel might land people in danger from reprisals? By the way, I think history will absolve you. Well done!!!

### Julian Assange:

WikiLeaks has a four-year publishing history. During that time there has been no credible allegation, even by organisations like the Pentagon that even a single person has come to harm as a result of our activities. This is despite much-attempted manipulation and spin trying to lead people to a counter-factual conclusion. We do not expect any change in this regard.

### distort

The State Dept is mulling over the issue of whether you are a journalist or not. Are you a journalist? As far as delivering information that someone [anyone] does not want seen is concerned, does it matter if you are a 'journalist' or not?

### Julian Assange:

I co-authored my first non-fiction book by the time I was 25. I have been involved in non-fiction documentaries, newspapers, TV and internet since that time. However, it is not necessary to debate whether I am a journalist, or how our people mysteriously are alleged to cease to be journalists when they start writing for our organisation. Although I still write, research and investigate my role is primarily that of a publisher and editor-in-chief who organises and directs other journalists.

### achanth

Mr Assange, Have there ever been documents forwarded to you which deal with the topic of UFOs or extraterrestrials?

### Julian Assange:

Many weirdos email us about UFOs or how they discovered that they were the anti-Christ whilst talking with their ex-wife at a garden party over a pot-plant. However, as yet they have not satisfied two of our publishing rules. 1) that the documents not be self-authored;

2) that they be original. However, it is worth noting that in yet-to-be-published parts of the cablegate archive there are indeed references to UFOs.

### gnosticheresy

What happened to all the other documents that were on WikiLeaks prior to these series of "megaleaks"? Will you put them back online at some stage ("technical difficulties" permitting)?

### Julian Assange:

Many of these are still available at mirrorwikileaks.info and the rest will be returning as soon as we can find a moment to address the engineering complexities. Since April of this year our timetable has not been our own, rather it has been one that has centred on the moves of abusive elements of the United States government against us. But rest assured I am deeply unhappy that the three-and-a-half years of my work and others is not easily available or searchable by the general public.

### CrisShutlar

Have you expected this level of impact all over the world? Do you fear for your security?

### Julian Assange:

I always believed that WikiLeaks as a concept would perform a global role and to some degree it was clear that it was doing that as far back as 2007 when it changed the result of the Kenyan general election. I thought it would

take two years instead of four to be recognised by others as having this important role, so we are still a little behind schedule and have much more work to do. The threats against our lives are a matter of public record, however, we are taking the appropriate precautions to the degree that we are able when dealing with a super power.

### rajiv1857

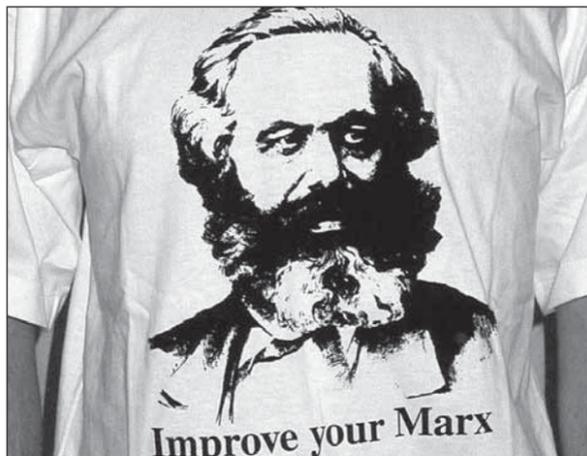
Hi, Is the game that you are caught up in winnable? Technically, can you keep playing hide and seek with the powers that be when services and service providers are directly or indirectly under government control or vulnerable to pressure - like Amazon? Also, if you get "taken out" - and that could be technical, not necessarily physical - what are the alternatives for your cache of material? Is there a "second line" of activists in place that would continue the campaign? Is your material "dispersed" so that taking out one cache would not necessarily mean the end of the game?

### Julian Assange:

The Cable Gate archive has been spread, along with significant material from the US and other countries to over 100,000 people in encrypted form. If something happens to us, the key parts will be released automatically. Further, the Cable Gate archives are in the hands of multiple news organisations. History will win. The world will be elevated to a better place. Will we survive? That depends on you. The Guardian (UK) Abridged

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# Obama and Republicans worked together to kill Bush torture probe

David Corn

**In its first months in office, the Obama administration sought to protect Bush administration officials facing criminal investigation overseas for their involvement in establishing policies that governed interrogations of detained terrorist suspects. A "confidential" April 17, 2009, cable sent from the US embassy in Madrid to the State Department – one of the 251,287 cables obtained by WikiLeaks – details how the Obama administration, working with Republicans, leaned on Spain to derail this potential prosecution.**

The previous month, a Spanish human rights group called the Association for the Dignity of Spanish Prisoners had requested that Spain's National Court indict six former Bush officials for, as the cable describes it, "creating a legal framework that allegedly permitted torture."

The six were former Attorney General Alberto Gonzales; David Addington, former chief of staff and legal adviser to Vice President Dick Cheney; William Haynes, the Pentagon's former general counsel; Douglas Feith, former undersecretary of defence for policy; Jay Bybee, former head of the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel; and John Yoo, a former official in the Office of Legal Counsel.

The human rights group contended that Spain had a duty to open an investigation under the nation's "universal jurisdiction" law, which permits its legal system to prosecute overseas human rights crimes involving Spanish citizens and residents. Five Guantánamo detainees, the group maintained, fit that criteria.

Soon after the request was made, the US embassy in Madrid began tracking the matter. On April 1, embassy officials spoke with chief prosecutor Javier Zaragoza, who indicated that he was not pleased to have been handed this case, but he believed that the complaint appeared to be well-documented and he'd have

to pursue it. Around that time, the acting deputy chief of the US embassy talked to the chief of staff for Spain's foreign minister and a senior official in the Spanish Ministry of Justice to convey, as the cable says, "that this was a very serious matter for the US government." The two Spaniards "expressed their concern at the case but stressed the independence of the Spanish judiciary."

Two weeks later, Republican Senator Judd Gregg and the embassy's chargé d'affaires "raised the issue" with another official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The next day, Zaragoza informed the US embassy that the complaint might not be legally sound. He noted he would ask Cándido Conde-Pumpido, Spain's attorney general, to review whether Spain had jurisdiction.

On April 15, Republican Senator Mel Martinez, who'd recently been chairman of the Republican Party, and the US embassy's chargé d'affaires met with the acting Spanish foreign minister, Angel Lossada.

The Americans, according to this cable, "underscored that the prosecutions would not be understood or accepted in the US and would have an enormous impact on the bilateral relationship" between Spain and the

**The Obama administration essentially got what it wanted. The case of the Bush Six went away.**

United States. Here was a former head of the Republican Party and a representative of a new Democratic administration (headed by a president who had decried the Bush-Cheney administration's use of torture) jointly applying pressure on Spain to kill the investigation of the former Bush officials.

Judge Baltasar Garzon – a world-renowned jurist who had initiated previous prosecutions of war crimes and had publicly said that former President George W Bush ought to be tried for war crimes.



Lossada replied that the independence of the Spanish judiciary had to be respected, but he added that the government would send a message to the attorney general that it did not favour prosecuting this case.

The next day, April 16, 2009, Attorney General Conde-Pumpido

the April 17 cable, the American embassy in Madrid claimed some credit for Conde-Pumpido's opposition, noting that "Conde-Pumpido's public announcement follows outreach to [government of Spain] officials to raise US government's deep concerns on the implications of this case."

Still, this did not end the matter. It would still be up to investigating Judge Baltasar Garzon – a world-renowned jurist who had initiated previous prosecutions of war crimes and had publicly said that former President George W Bush ought to be tried for war crimes – to decide whether to pursue the case against the six former Bush officials. That June – coincidentally or not – the Spanish Parliament passed legislation narrowing the use of "universal jurisdiction." Still, in September 2009, Judge Garzon pushed ahead with the case.

The case eventually came to be overseen by another judge who last spring asked the parties behind the complaint to explain why the investigation should continue. Several

human rights groups filed a brief urging this judge to keep the case alive, citing the Obama administration's failure to prosecute the Bush officials. Since then, there's been no action. The Obama administration essentially got what it wanted. The case of the Bush Six went away.

Back when it seemed that this case could become a major international issue, during an April 14, 2009, White House briefing, I asked press secretary Robert Gibbs if the Obama administration would cooperate with any request from the Spaniards for information and documents related to the Bush Six.

He said, "I don't want to get involved in hypotheticals." What he didn't disclose was that the Obama administration, working with Republicans, was actively pressuring the Spaniards to drop the investigation. Those efforts apparently paid off, and, as this WikiLeaks-released cable shows, Gonzales, Haynes, Feith, Bybee, Addington, and Yoo owed Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton thank-you notes.

*Mother Jones* ☼

## Haitian elections a source of new conflict

Emile Schepers

**The November 28 general elections in Haiti are over, and the votes will probably be counted by December 7. But as many predicted, the task of carrying out a national election may have proved too much for Haiti's administrative infrastructure, in a shambles due to the January 12 earthquake which killed as many as 250,000 people (including government officials), destroyed most public buildings in the country, and forced massive numbers into unsanitary squatter camps.**

To the woes of the earthquake have been added those of Hurricane Tomas and a cholera epidemic. Moreover, only a small proportion of promised international aid has actually arrived.

The election was held to choose a new president, 10 of the 30 senators and the entire 99-person lower house of the national legislature. It was originally scheduled for February 28, but was delayed because of the earthquake.

Toward the end of 2009, the Provisional Election Council, CEP, had refused to certify the candidates of the largest party in the country, Fanmi Lavalas, which is headed by former president Jean Bertrand Aristide. From his forced exile in South Africa, Aristide sent in a faxed document with his signature endorsing the list of Fanmi Lavalas candidates, but the CEP refused to accept it, saying that Aristide would have had to come to Haiti personally to sign the document. So no Fanmi Lavalas candidates appeared on the ballot, which led to early

charges that the election was illegitimate and unrepresentative.

The major powers that impact Haiti economically (the United States, France and Canada) want to see a strategy based on direct foreign investment, which means that Haiti should continue to be the location of runaway industry attracted by low wages and taxes.

However, there is an alternative strategy, which would entail integrating Haiti into one or several of the regional multinational bodies which have been developed as a counterweight to US economic and political influence, including the ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative for the People of Our America).

When in power, Aristide had demanded that France reimburse Haiti for the billions it had extorted at gunpoint in the 19th century, an

action that arguably led to his overthrow with French and US support. For some the name of the game is to stop any force that might return Haiti to such radical stances.

On election day there was massive frustration for as many as hundreds of thousands of Haitians who showed up to vote and were turned away because their names were not on polling lists. There were some complaints of intimidation and ballot stuffing, plus street protests and disturbances leading to at least two deaths.

Later on election day, 12 of the 18 candidates listed on the presidential ballot held a news conference in which they denounced the elections as rigged and demanded the results be invalidated. To cheers from the audience, they accused the incumbent president, Rene Preval,

of deliberate fraud in favour of his Inite (Unity) Party's candidate, construction executive Jude Celestin.

Election authorities indignantly denied that there had been more than minor problems.

Preval is highly unpopular because of his perceived mishandling of the earthquake disaster response among other things. Even more unpopular is MINUSTAH, the United Nations military and civilian force which has been in Haiti since Aristide was overthrown for the second time in 2004, and which has had many violent clashes with slum residents.

If, as is probable, candidates for any office, including the presidency, do not get 50 percent of the vote, there will be a runoff on January 16.

*People's World* ☼

# Where to go from WikiLeaks?

## The peace movement responds

Cindy Sheehan

**While only a tiny fraction of the US diplomatic cables scheduled for publication by WikiLeaks have thus far been made available, some conclusions can already be drawn. These cables and the Iraq and Afghan War Diaries provide an opportunity for Americans to see our government for what it is.**

Our government is seen here as controlling a global military and espionage empire that impacts every region of the globe and deceives its own population. Secrecy, spying, and hostility have infected our entire government, turning the diplomatic corps into an arm of the CIA and the military, just as the civilian efforts in Afghanistan are described by Richard Holbrooke, who heads them up, as "support for the military".

Secret war planning, secret wars, and lies about wars have become routine. The United States is secretly and illegally engaged in a war in Yemen and has persuaded that nation's government to lie about it. The United States has supported a coup in Honduras and lied about it.

We have long known that the war on terrorism was increasing, rather than diminishing, terrorism. These leaks show Saudi Arabia to be the greatest sponsor of terrorism, and show that nation's dictator, King Abdullah, to be very close to our own government in its treatment of prisoners.

He has urged the United States to implant microchips in prisoners released from Guantánamo. And he has urged the United States to illegally and aggressively attack Iran. Congress should immediately block what would be the largest weapons sale in US history, selling this country US\$60 billion in weapons. And Congress should drop any idea of "updating" the 2001 Authorisation to Use Military Force to permit presidents to unconstitutionally launch more wars. We see what sort of wars our allies urge on our presidents.

We learn that while dictators urge war, other branches of the same government, the people, and the evidence weigh against it. We learn from a cable from last February that Russia has refuted US claims that Iran has missiles that could target Europe.

We learn from September 2009 that the United States and Britain planned to pressure Yukiya Amano, the then incoming head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, to produce reports suggesting Iranian nuclear developments, whether or not merited by the facts, and that National Security Adviser General Jim Jones proposed the propaganda strategy of baselessly tying Iran's nuclear program to North Korea's.

Much of the pressure for war appears to come from within the United States, whose representatives treat the entire world as a hostile enemy to be spied on, lied to, and exploited. The secrecy that permits

*The secrecy must be broken if the United States' approach to the world is to change.*



Julian Assange.

this behaviour must be broken if the United States' approach to the world is to change. Those who have helped to fulfil President Obama's campaign promise of transparency must be protected from his vengeance, while those who have abused positions of diplomatic trust to advance agendas of espionage and war planning must be held accountable.

While other countries may offer residency and protection to WikiLeaks' Julian Assange, it is the United States that has most benefited from his work. We encourage US cities to offer him sanctuary.

Our Department of Justice has granted immunity for aggressive war, kidnapping, torture, assassination, and warrantless spying, while pursuing the criminal prosecution of Bradley Manning for allegedly leaking materials to WikiLeaks. Were our government to indict Assange or support the extradition or rendition of Assange from anywhere in the world to Sweden, while maintaining that his work and not the Pentagon's has endangered us, our nation's moral standing would reach a new low.

Our government should cease any actions it is taking to prosecute

Julian Assange for absurd criminal charges, to pressure Sweden to do so, or to sabotage WikiLeaks' servers. Cover-ups of leaks have a history in Washington of backfiring in the form of larger leaks and scandals. Our State Department should focus on diplomacy and mutually beneficial partnerships with the world community.

We demand an end to all overt and covert wars, a ban on the use of State Department employees and contractors in spying or warfare, and a full investigation of the facts revealed in the WikiLeaks cables.

Information Clearing House

## General strike in Portugal against austerity measures

Emile Schepers

**A massive one-day general strike paralysed Portugal on November 24, as major labour federations united to denounce austerity measures being imposed by the Socialist Party (social democrat) Prime Minister, Jose Socrates.**

The unions claim the strike was 80 percent effective. Media reported complete shutdowns in many areas of airlines, public transportation, government administrative offices, schools and health care facilities, throughout Portugal and in the autonomous island territories of the Azores and Madeira. Although the backbone of the strike consisted of government workers, there were reports of bank and factory closings as well. Between a million and a half and three million workers may have stayed home in this country of barely 10 million.

Portugal is the "P" in the "PIIGS" group of poorer Western European nations that are members of the European Union and share the Euro currency. The others are Ireland, Italy, Greece and Spain. All of these countries have been hit by debt crises, with budget deficits far beyond what the European Union rules allow, as well as national debt close to or exceeding the annual Gross Domestic Product (in Portugal, more than 80 percent).

This is leading to sharp increases in the cost of borrowing. In spite of differences in the political composition of their current governments, they have all responded by imposing austerity measures, designed to reassure the financial

markets that hit workers and the poor especially hard.

Several of the countries have been negotiating bailouts with the Council of Europe, the European Central Bank and even the International Monetary Fund. PM Socrates says that Portugal will not need such a bailout, though this is what the Irish government was saying just before it went hat in hand to seek just such help.

Portugal already saw massive protests against the austerity program back in May. Now the government, still faced with large budget deficits, has decided to impose a new austerity program, including a one percentage point rise in the regressive value added tax (from 20 percent to 21 percent), a hike in income taxes, cuts in pensions and the pay (of up to 5 percent annually) of civil servants, and cutbacks in public services in general. A vote on these measures took place in the Portuguese parliament November 26.

The two major union federations in Portugal united to oppose and protest the cuts through the general strike. They are the General Confederation of Portuguese Workers (CGTP), which is the largest union federation in the country and which is close to the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), and the General Union of Workers, UGT, which is close to the governing Socialist Party.

This unity between communist and social democrat-led unions is a first in 22 years, and is especially significant because the Prime Minister is from the Socialist

Party. So a large proportion of his social base is in fact repudiating his policies.

The PCP and labour see the government as trying to resolve the crisis on the backs of workers, small farmers and the poor. They demand that the government rather impose a sharp increase in taxes on the rich, who they consider to have caused the problem in the first place.

In a statement on its website, the Communist Party of Portugal hailed the striking workers for their courage in adversity: This was "a success all the more outstanding given how many hundreds of thousands of workers are confronted by situations of indebtedness and with the worsening of the cost of living. [These are] workers for whom a one day strike implies a loss of a day's wages".

Meanwhile in Ireland, Prime Minister Brian Cowan of the Fianna Fail party is seeing his house of cards nearer to collapse. His coalition partner, the Green Party, has pulled out of the governing coalition and there is a rebellion in the ranks of Fianna Fail in the Dail (the lower house of the Irish parliament). Also, while swearing that there would be no need to ask for a bailout from the European Union, Cowan is now forced to negotiate for just such help.

Now all eyes are on Spain, with 35 million people the second largest of the PIIGS countries after Italy. If Spain should catch the Greek-Irish-Portuguese disease, the survival of the Euro currency will be severely threatened.

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## Stalin's Wars review stirs response

**Congratulations to Bob Treasure for his very interesting review of *Stalin's Wars* by G Roberts (*The Guardian* November 24). As Bob clearly points out the real betrayal of the 1930s was not the Soviet's agreement to the Non-aggression Pact with Germany, but the constant series of betrayals by the Western Powers, (mainly England and France) which culminated in the infamous appeasement of Nazi Germany at Munich on September 29, 1938.**

Manchuria, Ethiopia, Spain, the Saar, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Albania and a large portion of China, were all swallowed up by Fascist armies, while the Western leaders (including our very own "Pig-Iron Bob" Menzies) aided and abetted these fascists take-overs.

Let us look a little closer at that

precise period when the German-Soviet Pact was signed, and take note of that date – August 23, 1939.

Readers and students of that particular period of history would do well to read *Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1941* by George F Kennan (a former American Ambassador to the Soviet Union) and *Reminiscences and Reflections* by Georgi Zhukov, Marshall of the Soviet Union.

In these books, both authors refer to an undeclared war, "The Battle of Khalkhin Goly", in late August of 1939.

In June 1939 Zhukov was sent to the Mongolian-Chinese border to investigate and supervise the Mongolian Soviet Republic's defences against an invading Japanese force. Bitter skirmishes ensued and although the invasion was stemmed Japanese reinforcements were continually brought in until the entire Japanese Sixth Army was involved.

The major battle, the Battle of Khalkhin Goly, began on August 20, 1939 and bitter fighting continued until August 31, 1939 by which time Zhukov's forces had completely destroyed the invaders.

Thus, at the same time that negotiations were going on between Germany and the Soviet Union, the latter was engaged in a major war on its Eastern frontier. Every proposal put forward by the Soviet Union throughout the 1930s, for peaceful co-existence and for collective security

against aggressive states, was either rejected or totally ignored by the procrastinating Western powers.

Therefore the Soviet Union had little option but to secure its western borders by signing the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact.

**Tom Salisbury  
Sydney**

## Get priorities right

**We are crying about not getting the FIFA nod for soccer down under in 2022. Why aren't we crying about ending homelessness, which is growing, child poverty, Aboriginal disparity, or about fixing the ailing mental health system? Why aren't we crying for a national inquiry into all Australian deaths in custody, one of the world's worst records, almost 2,300 deaths from 1982 to present, and at an increased current rate of 77 per year?**

WA Premier Barnett is prepared to guide \$700 million to a billion to a sports stadium. Jesus Christ! If we've got a spare billion to tap into why isn't it being used once again for the elimination of homelessness, child poverty, Aboriginal disparity, or the ailing mental health system? Who determines our priorities? Do we go by triage, by moral propriety, by an ethos of care or by the utter

and senseless greed procured by the ignorance of excessive self-interest stakeholders?

Sometimes, for a moment, I feel like giving up. We're always fighting tooth and nail for social justice while the goals of the self-regarding come so much easier. And then some of them parade around as philanthropists and social justice agents, therefore hoodwinking some of the people.

**Gerry Georgatos  
WA**

## Sabre rattling on the Korean Peninsula

**Is the sabre rattling which has flared up again on the Korean Peninsula merely the result of the irrational actions of the so-called "Communist Dictatorship" of North Korea? As was seen by the incident involving the sinking of the *Cheonan* patrol boat in March this year, there were also at the time loud noises by South Korea and its ally the United States that it could only have been its irascible neighbour North Korea.**

However, in the end even though the South Korean government and its ally would have liked to have blamed the North Korean government entirely for the incident, the South Korean people were more circumspect than their own government. That is why in the provincial elections which

followed in May, after the raising of the *Cheonan* patrol boat, the incumbent government which played the war card while trying to gloss over domestic social and economic issues lost several seats.

The governments of South Korea and the US would do well to take a couple of Prozac pills and have a lie down instead of making the region jittery with their imperialist war-mongering.

If one remembers what happened at the start of these latest hostilities it was when South Korea was rattling the cage of its northern neighbour by conducting military exercises in the proximity of North Korea's border.

Therefore as much as South Korean President Lee Myung Bak may say, "We should not let our guard down in preparation for another possible North Korean provocation", the North Korean government is only protecting its sovereignty when it retaliates – and is not the provocateur in this international flashpoint.

The only winners in any conflict would be the industrial military complexes of the US, China and South Korea who make the expensive hardware for modern war – instead of spending the money on much needed public infrastructure, health, education and housing – they choose to piss it up against the wall of these long running conflicts.

**Richard Titelius  
WA**

# Culture & Life

by

Rob Gowland

## Of dynamite and royalty

**This is the last *Culture And Life* for the year, so I will catch up on a few things that I have omitted to comment on recently.**

Alfred Nobel was a Swedish chemist with an interest in explosives. He was the first to use nitro-glycerine as an explosive agent, incorporating it into his invention, dynamite, which he developed in the 1860s.

Although intended for use in mining, the military potential of his invention was recognised immediately and he became very rich, as capitalist powers of Europe and the USA waged wars with each other and with colonial countries.

When Nobel died in 1896, he provided in his will for five prizes to be awarded annually for the most outstanding work in physics, chemistry, medicine, literature and peace – this last presumably included to ease his conscience.

Nobel wrote in his will that the Peace Prize should be awarded to "the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses".

The Nobel Peace Prize for this year was awarded in October to Liu Xiaobo, a Chinese "dissident" who wants to replace socialism in China with capitalism and bourgeois democracy.

Not surprisingly, ruling class spokespersons in Washington and London welcomed the award, but there was a wave of criticism from around the world saying the award to Liu was a crude attempt to politicise the Nobel Peace Prize.

US intelligence agencies in particular have long recognised the propaganda value of the Literature Prize, and have worked hard to subvert it for their own Cold War purposes (as when it was awarded to that stodgy piece of anti-Sovietism *Dr Zhivago*, for example).

Unlike the other awards, whose recipients are selected by Swedish learned committees, the Peace Prize is decided by the Norwegian parliament. Professor Arnulf Kolstad of the Norwegian

University of Science and Technology labels the award to Liu "a big mistake".

He notes that "Liu Xiaobo has, as far as I know, never contributed in any conflict-reducing activity or taken part in peace-related activities." He explicitly rejects the argument of the Norwegian Parliament that Liu's struggle for "human rights", especially freedom of speech and a Western-style parliament in China, is a "prerequisite" for world peace.

Tell that to the inhabitants of all the countries around the world that have suffered aggression just in the last half-century from "parliamentary democracies"!

Taking a swipe at the Anglo-US model, Professor Kolstad reminds us that "the parliamentary system with more parties is not the only way to give people influence on political decisions and the future of their country. ... I do not know if it is more democratic to have a system where presidential candidates have to be extremely rich to run for President."

I see that the boss of London's Metropolitan Police Sir Paul Stephenson has called for the British government to make it harder for people to sue the police over wrongful arrest or police brutality, actions which he labels "wasteful speculative claims".

Sir Paul's reactionary attitude has no doubt been emboldened by the new Conservative-Liberal Democrats coalition government in Britain, the so-called "Con-Dem" government, which is looking for ways to cut public services by at least 25 percent.

But London's top cop doesn't stop there. He wants the government to load higher costs on police and civilian staff seeking redress at employment tribunals and he also wants to charge a fee for freedom of information requests, which runs directly counter to the concept behind Britain's Freedom of Information Act.

With the Con-Dem government pursuing an aggressively anti-union policy, Sir Paul's police – as well as the other police forces in Britain – will no doubt be deployed as they were under Margaret Thatcher, to assault strikers and crush any manifestations of dissent.

Sir Paul will obviously be OK with that.

Here's some twisted ruling class logic for you. The Queen has decided to cancel the biennial staff Christmas party this year because of the "difficult financial circumstances" facing the country.

It seems that, under normal conditions, the Queen hosts a Christmas party for her 600 household staff (600!) every two years. Why only every two years? I don't know. Perhaps she can't stand being convivial with so many



**Nelson Mandela was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with Frederik Willem de Klerk for their work in the peaceful termination of the apartheid regime in South Africa.**

commoners more often. Or perhaps she fears they might get ideas "above their station".

Most puzzling however is how denying the staff of Buck House a Christmas party will help the nation's finances. Doesn't Liz pay for the party herself? She's certainly got more than enough in the bank to do it.

Or has she been asked not to throw even a modestly lavish bash when the new Con-Dem government is slashing social services in all directions and condemning a lot of British people to a very lean Christmas with the prospect of worse to come?

Yeah, that's what I think too.

The aristocrats of Russia used to lord it over the common people too. But they maintained their position with repression, and eventually the people rose up and took their privileges away from them.

The British ruling class has been at it longer than most and certainly with more

finesse. But like the US ruling class, the capitalists of Britain and their aristocratic allies keep the anger of the masses in check through a masterful use of the mass media (which they control, of course).

The recent orchestrated hysteria over a "royal engagement" showed how successful they have been. The sleeping arrangements of titled parasites is much more worthy in the eyes of capitalism than any serious consideration of the war in Afghanistan.

The engagement was skilfully used to distract people from thinking about war and poverty, about unemployment and cuts to health care, and all those other things that have come with the Con-Dem government. It succeeded, but only temporarily: those social ills remain and as they make themselves increasingly felt, the British working class will have to face the question of just how much longer they will put up with being bossed around by this small clique of the rich and titled.

That will be an interesting time. ★



Sun 19 Dec -  
Sat 1 Jan  
(Second part of end of year break)

**The Nutcracker Story (ABC2 Sunday December 19 at 6.00 pm)** presents itself as a documentary about Hoffman's fairy tale and especially Tchaikovsky's ballet based on it. But it is not a documentary.

It is in fact a piece of advance publicity for the new film by Andrei Konchalovsky, *The Nutcracker in 3D*, starring John Turturo, Alex Lane and Elle Fanning. Making a pretend documentary, with no critical comment and no tough questions asked of anybody, is a popular way of getting what is essentially a lengthy if indirect advertisement on prime time television.

As a documentary, the present film is a largely superficial puff piece, although the comments of Valery Gergiev, Artistic Director of the Mariinsky Theatre, are worth hearing.

Konchalovsky's film has just been released in the US to a less than ecstatic critical response: "a bizarre concoction, confounding yet fascinating, an odd mixture of children's fantasy and Nazi nightmares".

Rowan Atkinson first appeared as the ingenious but disaster-prone Mr Bean 20 years ago. Extracts from some of his funniest appearances

make up the compilation film *The Best Of Mr Bean* (ABC1 Sunday December 19 at 7.30 pm, repeated ABC2 Friday December 24 at 6.00 pm), straddling another episode of his adventures, *Merry Christmas Mr Bean* (ABC2 Thursday December 23 at 8.00 pm).

The killer visual gag from the last-named program also appears among the extracts in the other program, which blunts its effect somewhat.

There is a similar doubling up in the two *My Family* specials screening over Christmas. The first (and better) of these is *My Family Ho Ho No* (ABC1 Sunday December 20 at 6.00 pm). Made in 2007, this is in the mould of classic farce: mistaken identity, frantic attempts to hide from other characters, ridiculous complications that turn simple plans into chaos, and in this one even a bit of fantasy (pleasingly not explained away).

I'd seen it before, but I still enjoyed the expertise and timing of the farce, the clever visual humour.

By comparison, the *My Family Christmas Special* (ABC1 Saturday December 25 at 7.30 pm) seems weak and forced. Set thirty years into the future, the family reminisces about past Christmas disasters: cue extracts from previous shows, including one from *Ho Ho No*.

By including only segments of shows, the build-up of comic timing is lost and much of the humour goes with it. If you're in the mood for farce, watch the first one, forget about the second one.

**Tim Minchin: Ready For This? (ABC2 Tuesday December 21 at 8.30 pm)** was filmed at Sydney's Enmore Theatre. I must come right out and say it: I am not a fan of Tim Minchin. His peculiar combination of rock star image (the fly-away hair, bare feet and bare chest,



*My Family Ho Ho No* (ABC1 Sunday December 20 at 6.00 pm) - Robert Lindsay as Ben Harper, Zoe Wanamaker as Susan Harper, Daniela Denby-Ashe as Janey Harper, Keiron Self as Roger, Tayler Marshall as Kenzo, Gabriel Thomson as Michael Harper, Siobhan Hayes as Abi Harper.

and multi-storey stage set) with his gauche little-boy-lost presentations of his monologues might be endearing to some, but I find it very resistible.

However, he redeems himself with his rants about the USA and war. There he is spot on, and his young audience know it, too.

I liked the first *Shrek* movie: it had charm and wit, and cleverly geyed traditional fairy tales. The later movies however were just sequels, and much of the inventiveness was missing - or misguided.

**Scared Shrekless (ABC1 Friday December 24 at 6.00 pm)** continues the downward slide. It's technically quite competent, but its "let's all tell a scary story" format is tired and unimaginative from the outset.

I found it lifeless and forgettable. Children are its main audience and they deserve better-written shows than this.

Films about writers are up against it: their subjects might write exciting or romantic stories, but they themselves seldom lead exciting or romantic lives. To criticise a film about a writer for not being "exciting" surely indicates that the reviewer is thick as a brick. But that is just what half the reviewers of the film about the life of Beatrix Potter did.

The film, *Miss Potter* (ABC1 Saturday December 25 at 8.30 pm), is a sensitive account of the developing relationship between the 32 year old author of *The Tale Of Peter Rabbit* and other children's books and her publisher Norman Warne.

The story is truer than most screen biopics, and it is both well directed and well acted. Ren'ee Zellweger makes a very believable Beatrix Potter and the film is well worth watching. But not everybody thought so. The *New Yorker* called it "a grave disappointment", and some other critics were even more dismissive.

*Urban Cinefile*, however, typifies the other critics' views: "This enchanting biopic about the world of the creator of Peter Rabbit is warm and funny, revealing and moving ... Zellweger imbues Potter with a mix of childlike wonder and independent strength of mind, as she battles against the attitude of the times, when women are expected to marry and stay at home."

**Skellig (ABC1 Sunday December 26 at 8.30 pm)** is a feature-length adaptation of David Almond's 1998 novel, which won both the Carnegie Medal and the Whitbread Children's Book of the Year Award.

The deliberately ambiguous story is about Michael, a young boy who moves into a new house and finds a smelly, crotchety homeless man living in the tumbledown garden shed. Something about the apparent tramp makes the boy help him, especially after he discovers the man has wings.

He is helped by Mina, a girl who lives nearby. We never do find out what the man, Skellig, is, other than that he can fly, has an affinity with owls, and can cure people.

Directed by AJ Jankel, *Skellig* is an adult fantasy, which treats its fantasy element with full seriousness, as befits its unreal but hope-filled theme.

By Boxing Day, many folk are thoroughly fed up with Christmas. *The Grumpy Guide To Christmas* (ABC1 Sunday December 26 at 10.00 pm) would seem to have been made especially for them.

It is narrated by Geoffrey Palmer, as also is the new six-part series *The Grumpy Guide To* (ABC1 Mondays at 8.00 pm from January 3). They are all a mixture of comments and opinions that are funny if you agree with them and totally off the mark if you don't.

I like Alistair McGowan's comment that "a lot of youngsters don't know the true meaning of Christmas. They genuinely don't know that it's the time we celebrate the birth, and the life and work, of Morecambe and Wise."

On the other hand, as someone who loves Christmas pudding, the vehement dismissal of the delectable boiled fruit pudding by most of those taking part in the program is a bit much to take.

All in all, though, it will probably raise a smile after what have probably been a couple of tiring days of cooking, eating, visiting and exchanging presents.

*The Grumpy Guide To Class*, the first of the new six-part series on the other hand, is really a guide to snobbery, being concerned not with class as we understand it but with very English perceptions of class.

As one of their interviewees says "You don't see, anywhere in the world, the same obsession with class. I don't think there's another country in the world where ... you can tell the moment they open their mouth where their father went to school."

"Only in Britain would you do that, and only in Britain does anybody think it's remotely important."

After a year of hard work, seen in three earlier programs, English entrepreneur Willie Harcourt-Cooze has finally got his chocolate bars onto the shelves of some of the country's top stores. Now, in *Willie's Perfect Chocolate Christmas* (ABC1 Monday December 27 at 9.30 pm) he can take some time off and make Christmas dinner for his family and about thirty guests.

Continues on page 12

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Continued from page 11

What he cooks and how he cooks it actually makes an interesting program. Everything of course has some chocolate in it, but the complexity of the main course (lamb cooked in the ground for 24 hours) adds some drama.

New Orleans has been a melting pot of Spanish, English, French, African-American and Native American peoples. Mardi Gras itself is derived from the festivals of the Mardi Gras Indians.

**Make It Funky! (ABC2 Wednesday December 29 at 8.30pm)** looks at the history and the current state of New Orleans music. The program is like a New Orleans funeral: raucous, joyous and all rapt in the music.

Directly under the North Pole, a giant Russian submarine with a crew of engineers is secretly drilling for oil in an international exclusion zone. A British researcher has discovered a microbe in the sludge around the site that could provide a clean alternative to oil and the US oil companies want to bury her research. Everyone has secrets, everyone

is cynical and murderous, but the Russians are especially cold-blooded. Despite a good cast, the two-part series *The Deep* (ABC1 Thursdays at 8.30pm from December 30) is crass.

The writer's only idea of how to increase the drama is to up the body count, while the director tries to make certain moments more dramatic by having the characters behave ludicrously: "You have to get out of their now" screams the intercom, so the lovers go on standing their like a pair of logs gazing fervently into one another's eyes for what seems like forever, and everyone watching the program is surely screaming "Oh, give us a break!"

Cold war propaganda, and rotten direction and writing do not make a good combination.

Usually like Aardman Animation's plasticine characters Wallace and his intelligent dog Gromit. But *Wallace And Gromit's World Of Invention* (ABC1 Sundays at 6.30pm from January 2) is actually a live action documentary about inventions from all over the world, introduced by Wallace with Gromit's help.

The idea is presumably to make children want to watch documentary material, but it is neither fish nor fowl. If you want to watch Wallace and Gromit, it doesn't satisfy, and if you want to see the factual stuff then Wallace and his dog just get in the way.

The South Pacific is one ocean but it contains 25,000 islands and a quarter of all the water on Earth. The six-part BBC documentary series *South Pacific* (ABC1 Sundays at



*Collision* (ABC1 Fridays at 8.30pm from January 7).

7.30pm from January 2) is beautifully photographed, although the commentary is a little pedestrian.

Unlike the "nature" programs which it inevitably resembles, this series also covers human populations, placing the peoples and cultures of the South Pacific in the context of their place in nature.

The creator and co-writer of *Collision* (ABC1 Fridays at 8.30pm from January 7) is Anthony Horowitz, creator of *Foyle's War*. Horowitz takes an old format, the story of a major accident (a multi-car pile-up on an English motorway) and tells the stories of all those involved.

It's a clever cluster of interlocking stories with crime, murder, mystery, romance and tragedy mixed in. It is a tribute to Horowitz's abilities as a writer that these elements are not

only credible, they are engaging and dramatic.

It's an old format, but it has seldom been done better.

When you think of bank fraud (and who doesn't?), you do not usually think of violence, brutality, murder and thugs, other than in a metaphorical sense. Bank fraud is much more likely to be quiet, secretive and discrete white collar crime, devoid of violence.

But in the new three-part thriller *Wired* (ABC2 Fridays at 8.30pm from January 7), it seems that violence and melodrama are the very stuff of bank fraud. Or just the stuff of thrillers on the British commercial network ITV, perhaps?

It has a good cast, so if melodrama is your thing, then this will probably be very acceptable.

Finally, we have the beginning of the multi-episode series *The Tudors* (ABC2 Fridays at 9.30pm from January 7). The costumes and settings have an authentic look about them, the dialogue and the performances do not.

When Cardinal Wolsey explains his plan for peace between England and France to the Pope's representative, he says it is a "collective security treaty". How anachronistic can you get?

Being a modern show about the bawdy Tudors it is full of lustful kings and busty wenches, but it perpetuates the myth that Henry VIII was memorable only for his many wives and mistresses. The real history of the time is passed over in favour of easy "drama".

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