



May Day 2011

Growing struggle answering increased attacks

Bob Briton

May Day is not about nostalgia. While it is an occasion for celebration of the many gains made by the workers' movement internationally over the years, its central message is that workers are still struggling against capitalism for their just demands and that they won't stop until victory is theirs. This year we see this determination all around us – in Australia and internationally. The drive by employers and governments to force austerity and more suffering onto workers and communities is meeting stiff resistance. May Day 2011 is taking place amidst an awakening of awareness among workers that in order to preserve what they have gained and to press on to a brighter future, they must unite and fight.

The world has held its breath as democratic movements in the Middle East risked all to challenge decades of dictatorship. The stirrings were accompanied by a revival of vigorously repressed trade unions. The Tunisian General Trade Union overcame violent attacks to take up a crucial role in events in that country. The Egyptian trade unions have become some of the most insistent voices for real change in that country. A new Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions has been formed. They are striving to catch up with decades of losses for Egyptian workers. A strike of dockers in Port Said is demanding three year contracts for impoverished workers at the Maersk terminal and a 100 percent wage rise.

In Latin America, teachers and students are in the forefront of struggle. In Honduras, police met protesting teachers with clubs and tear gas. The teachers' union was demanding that the privatisation of education in the Central American country must stop. Youths supporting the movement were detained in "special installations" as pressure on the right-wing government of Porfirio Lobo mounts.

Ten reporters have been murdered. Striking teachers support the demands of the National Front on Popular Resistance for the removal of the coup makers' government and the restoration of democracy. A notice placed on highways and public institutions says, "Pardon the inconvenience. We are fighting to build a new country!"

Students in Puerto Rico are striking against cuts to education and a stiff increase in fees by right-wing governor Luis Fortuño. There have been clashes with police and over 150 arrests of militant but peaceful protestors. Arrested students have been abused by police. The students' protest is drawing support from the rest of the community. They are still reeling from the loss of thousands of public sector jobs and the cancellation of union contracts.

People in US, Europe fight back

In the US, 10,000 workers in Wisconsin occupied the state Capitol building in Madison recently in protest at union-busting legislation from Republican governor Scott Walker. The chants of the teachers, students and public sector employees included "Union busting is disgusting", "This is what democracy looks like" and "Recall Walker!" The spirit of this movement spread to other states suffering cuts and the scapegoating of the poor for the sharp economic downturn in the US.

On April 4, the anniversary of the assassination of Dr Martin Luther King, hundreds of thousands of American unionists and supporters participated in over 1,000 actions across the country in solidarity with embattled workers.

In Europe, massive protests continue in Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Hungary and elsewhere against cruel austerity measures being imposed by neo-liberal governments. In London, the anti-cuts protest called by Britain's Trade Union Congress last month brought half a million people onto the streets. Everywhere you look, people are being drawn into struggle in increasing numbers. Repression is failing to stifle their demands. The awareness that class interests are involved is growing and so is the insistence that workers and other exploited people will not pay for the economic crisis caused by their exploiters.

Australia not isolated

Australia is not isolated from this worldwide movement. The world economy has become more globalised in recent times and today, so has resistance. Australian governments and employers are pursuing the same tactics as their overseas counterparts to push the cost of the economic crisis onto workers and communities. Privatisation and public sector job cuts are the order of the day across the country. Employers are squeezing workers over enterprise bargaining agreements. Threats are flying that manufacturing jobs will move offshore.

The Australian Building and Construction Commission continues to hound unionists on construction sites. Its operations in the Pilbara in WA are being reinforced to help mining companies retain maximum profits. Legitimate wage claims are being rejected and "independent" contractors are being used to break the workers' resolve.

Wharfies are pitted in battle with Patrick Stevedores over their new enterprise agreement. The company is playing hardball over basic rights and matters of safety. Public sector workers in SA are about to take to the streets again over the Rann Government's plan to cut



May Day Adelaide 2005.

Photo: Avante Media Australia

services to the community, increase rents and charges, and axe over 3,700 public sector jobs. Queensland unions are locked in battle with the Bligh government over the privatisation of a range of public assets including railways, ports, motorways and forests.

In March a protest in Perth called for mining boom profits to be invested in local jobs. Around 8,000 people attended the protest called by the CFMEU, the AMWU and the MUA. Australia has been haemorrhaging manufacturing jobs for decades as transnationals go chasing lower wages abroad. In Australia, employers have sought to cut their wages bill and undermine unions with sham arrangements involving guest workers holding type 457 visas. Unions have led a number of magnificent struggles demanding justice for these workers and protection of local pay rates and conditions.

Undoubtedly, May Day 2011 is taking place against a backdrop of increased attack on workers' rights but also of stiffening resistance.

The words of socialist activist and martyr, Rosa Luxemburg, are not piling in their significance – they are increasing in their relevance:

"The first of May demanded the introduction of the eight-hour day. But even after this goal was reached, May Day was not given up. As long as the struggle of the workers against the bourgeoisie and the ruling class continues, as long as all demands are not met, May Day will be the yearly expression of these demands. And, when better days dawn, when the working class of the world has won its deliverance then, too, humanity will probably celebrate May Day in honour of the bitter struggles and the many sufferings of the past." ★

Due to the long weekend over Easter there will be no Guardian next week. The paper will resume publication on May 4.

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To Libya with God on our side

The Guardian

Issue 1498

April 20, 2011

False economies drive cuts to PBS

The government has sneaked through cuts to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), a scheme designed to make medications affordable to all Australians. The cuts could have a serious impact on the health and well being of thousands of people. The cuts make no sense economically, nor do they fit with all the hype about Labor's "health reforms" from Prime Minister Julia Gillard and her Health Minister Nicola Roxon.

The government has quietly changed the procedures for approving the listing of new medications on the PBS list of government-subsidised prescriptions. Governments used to automatically approve the listing of medications recommended by its independent Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC). The Howard government introduced a ruling that any medication recommended by the PBAC that was expected to cost more than \$10 million per year go to Cabinet for approval. This effectively politicised the process and was applied to socially contentious products. It also meant that politicians with no medical or pharmaceutical expertise were making decisions – sometimes life and death ones. Now, under Gillard, almost all new PBS listings must be approved by Cabinet.

Under the PBS, pharmaceuticals are subjected to an extensive examination by PBAC members who are experts in their field. They consider such things as medical benefits, whether there are other cheaper medications that are just as effective, their cost-effectiveness, etc. The government negotiates cheaper prices with the pharmaceutical companies for listed products. The aim is to make medicines affordable to all who need them.

Gillard hopes to save \$30 million in next month's budget by deferring new listings. "These medications will be reconsidered for listing when circumstances permit," Gillard said. Hopes of many patients seeking relief or prolongation of life have been dashed. The medications already on hold include treatment for leukaemia, prostate enlargement, immunisation of infants against pneumococcal disease and a new anti-psychotic medication which would assist with the management of schizophrenia.

This deferral of listing recommended medications flies in the face of a memorandum of understanding signed with Medicines Australia, the body representing pharmaceutical companies. The companies agreed to \$198 million of savings for the government during 2011-12 in return for certain guarantees regarding new listings. The result is that consumer organisations have been joined by Medicines Australia – an unholy alliance – in the fight to defend PBS processes!

The PBS plays a key role in keeping down the prices of prescriptions and making available cheaper generic medications. The pharmaceutical companies would dearly love to destroy it, as it places some limitations on their already astronomic profit-gouging. The Howard government tried to appoint representatives of Big Pharma onto the PBAC to sabotage its independence. Now it is under attack from a Labor government, albeit a less overt attack. The non-inclusion of medications serves to deregulate pricing and ultimately denies people access. It amounts to the destruction of the PBS by stealth.

Opposition leader Tony Abbott got stuck into Gillard. "There's an established process in place," he intoned, singing the praises of the PBAC and the "sophisticated" methods used in making recommendations.

This is Tony Abbott, Howard's Health Minister who set the precedent of sending PBAC recommendations to Cabinet. The Tony Abbott who tried to push up the cost of PBS scripts by 30 percent in 2002. Who politicised the PBS by trying to put the "morning-after pill" onto the PBS listing as a prescription-only drug. Who as Health Minister opposed the inclusion of the medication Altima on the PBS for use by mesothelioma sufferers who contracted the painful and terminal disease through exposure to asbestos in their workplace. A six-month course of Alimta cost around \$20,000.

There is absolutely no logic in the PBS cuts – they are political and ideological – straight out of the neo-liberal stable. They will result in preventable illness and suffering, shorten lives and increase pressure on medical services. Apart from the human cost, they will cost more in dollars than they save. The only people who stand to gain are to be found in the private health industry. Those who make their profits through the hospitalisation and medical procedures required by the victims of Gillard's cuts. And those who seek to make super profits out of medications.

PRESS FUND

Some very powerful billboard advertisements have begun appearing on Sydney railway stations, to promote understanding of the desperate plight of asylum seekers. The cost of this project must have been enormous, and it demonstrates the dedication of those who provided financial support for it. The Press Fund does the same thing. *The Guardian* has consistently campaigned for the humane treatment of asylum seekers, and each week the paper appears with the assistance of those who contribute to the Fund, and thus help us to meet the costs of production. So we ask that you also make a contribution – starting with the next edition! Meanwhile, many thanks to those who offered their generous support this week, as follows:

Bob & Joy Brown \$200, C Girvan \$10, Brian Griffin \$20, Brian Hawke \$25, Alice Johnson \$30, Brian McGee \$20, "Round Figure" \$15

This week's total: \$320 Progressive total: \$1,800

Research funding crucial

Letter to the Prime Minister from Universities Australia

Dear Prime Minister,

Vigorous national research and innovation effort is critical to the strength and dynamism of Australia's economy and society. Bold public and private investment in its innovative people and institutions is critical if Australia is to keep up with the accelerating pace of growth of new knowledge and its application around the world.

We should not limit our ambitions, but recognise, reward and build on our existing strengths - and develop new ones.

It is within this context that Universities Australia urges the government to affirm its commitment to public investment in research and innovation as a key plank in the 2011 Federal Budget to ensure maximum economic, social and environmental returns from that investment.

Australia will risk weakening its place in the global knowledge economy if we do not sustain and continue to grow investment in our research endeavours, and in improved granting opportunities, and incentives encouraging collaboration between educational disciplines and across sectors of the economy.

A plethora of formal evidentiary studies find that the real rate of return on publicly funded research has been conservatively estimated at 20 percent or more. The most recent assessment in this regard is provided by the US National Bureau of Economic Research.

It is also becoming clear that the transaction costs required to generate and evaluate grant applications is disproportionate to the number and

size of grants currently permitted by present funding.

We warmly acknowledge the significant gains in federal funding provided in the 2009 Federal Budget for university infrastructure, participation, and research block funding and competitive grants, including the Future Fellows scheme. Universities Australia believes, however, that maintaining that research investment is critically important.

There is a long queue of highly competitive, unfunded projects which have been formally assessed by government funding agencies as fully worthy of funding. Yet these projects essentially go unfunded, and Australia is the loser.

Australian university research is delivering real economic, social and environmental benefits through a wide range of activities including the education of graduates, research outcomes (including intellectual property and publications), consulting and contracting, and commercialisation of research (including start-up companies and technology licensing).

University social and cultural contributions to Australian society also involve innovation and help to make Australia an attractive country in which to live and work.

Australia's research and innovation system faces many challenges. It shares many of these challenges with other nations, including competing claims for public investment, and the increasing expense associated with fundamental research and development.

We must continue to:

- build an imaginative 'culture

of innovation': one which encourages, supports and rewards genuine flexibility, creative problem-solving, and risk-taking;

- raise Australian investment in research and innovation considerably, which would bring Australia into line with international trends;
- ensure that the level of public investment is sufficiently high to meet Australia's research needs;
- encourage industry and business to take up the challenge to be more collaborative (and hence innovative) by investing in research in Australian universities;
- build up national research capacity so that universities and publicly funded research agencies can continue to provide the research and innovation base necessary for future economic and social development, and meet the growing level of industry demand for research; and
- ensure a comprehensive research base such that Australia will be able to focus on priority areas and demonstrated successes while retaining a broad capacity to meet future needs.

Effective public investment in research and innovation through the 2011 Federal Budget and beyond will ensure optimal economic, social and environment returns on that investment, a critical point well understood by Australia's major trading partners and competitors.

Yours sincerely,
Professor Peter Coaldrake AO
Chair

World's first plain tobacco pack law will save lives

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) Australia and 41 organisations have welcomed the world's first proposed law mandating plain packaging of tobacco as a lifesaving policy and an end to marketing of tobacco diseases in glossy boxes.

Federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon released a public exposure draft of legislation to make plain packaging of all tobacco products mandatory by July 2012.

Says Anne Jones, ASH Chief Executive: "We congratulate Health Minister Nicola Roxon and the Gillard government for putting health ahead of the commercial interests of the tobacco industry."

"Research evidence shows plain packaging of tobacco products will

protect children and increase the effectiveness of health warnings. It will also prevent the use of misleading and deceptive claims and deglamourise tobacco packs and images."

Ms Jones said that plain packaging of tobacco is supported by the Protecting Children from Tobacco coalition of 41 health, child protection, parent, carer, teacher, Indigenous, disability, religious, social equity and research bodies – an indication of the broad base of community support for this measure.

"The tobacco industry is aggressively fighting this health policy by making legal threats, setting up front groups and trying to

manipulate smokers into protesting against plain packaging.

"This is the same industry that has misled smokers for decades, hiding tobacco health harm from them, secretly increasing the product's addictiveness, and resisting all efforts by smokers to hold tobacco companies accountable for the harm caused by their products.

"Tobacco industry supporters claim it's a 'legal product' - but so are guns and methadone and we don't allow them to be prominently sold in glossy packs in the faces of children at every street corner.

"We urge all parties to support plain packaging. It will save lives, protect children and has strong community support." ✪

Sydney

You are invited to a public meeting with

Ezequiel Morales

Cuban representative at the National Consultation of Friendship groups in Australia

Ezequiel is a pioneer of Cubas Literacy campaign and is a former Secretary General of the Union of Educators and an advisor to the Cuban Government on Education

Wednesday April 20 starting 6:00 pm at 74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills

Light refreshments available

Organised by the Sydney District Committee.

All pain, no gain budget

Anna Pha

Prime Minister Julia Gillard's speech to the Sydney Institute on April 13 has caused concern amongst Labor MPs over how far she has lurched to the Right. Called "The Dignity of Work", her speech forewarning of massive cuts to social welfare spending, is loaded with dog whistles, innuendo, political spin, warnings of a "formidable participation policy challenge" and "hard decisions". She avoids saying directly what she means. Its content sinks to new lows, to the depths of Tony Abbott and Pauline Hanson.

The choice of the Sydney Institute as her audience is quite fitting. It is an extreme Right think tank, led by Gerard Henderson and Anne Henderson – the latter is a strong preacher of budget surpluses and the evils of government debt. Gillard in her speech describes herself as being "among so many of my friends", in "a community of reason".

The underlying aim of these "hard decisions" is to boost private profits, slash government spending and privatisation. Profits will be increased by "cutting company tax ... and increasing tax breaks for small businesses...." Labor shortages will be overcome by importing more workers (cheap labour) on 457 visas with promises of training for Australian workers.

Gillard speaks confidently as though the mining boom will last for decades and the rest of Australia can feed off it. "Good decisions now can nurture the boom so that it lasts, while making the most of the boom for our future." Gillard is in total denial of the cyclical nature of mining booms, and ignores the serious global economic crisis which is still unfolding. The demand for mineral resources from China and India could be hit by cuts in imports to the recession-bound US and Europe. Demand from Japan will be high during the post-earthquake reconstruction period, but that will hardly last decades.

Neo-liberal myths

Gillard is obsessed with returning the federal budget to surplus by 2012-13 (ie within two years) regardless of the consequences. She uses two arguments to try and justify massive cuts:

1. adherence to Keynesian economics
2. the neo-liberal line of "crowding out the private sector".

On the Keynesian claim she says: "The government invested in jobs in

the downturn and it was absolutely the right call... If we are going to be Keynesians in the downturn, we have to be Keynesians on the way up again," as we enter "a period of record fiscal responsibility".

"So we will be making hard decisions in this Budget: to prevent greater pain in the long term.

"When the private sector was in retreat, the government stepped forward to fill the gap and over coming years as the private sector recovers strongly, it is the right time for the government to step back.

"If government doesn't step back when the private sector employs more people, spends more money and builds more projects, we will be chasing the same scarce resources, driving up prices and adding to the inflationary pressures arising from the investment boom." This is the so-called "crowding out the private sector". In reality it comes down to a choice between public provision or privatisation. The Gillard Labor government is opting for privatisation.

"The time for government to step back is in this Budget." The painful cuts during boom times are to social welfare, health, and other public services. The pain is suffered by ordinary working people. It is all gain for big business with tax cuts producing larger profits.

When the boom times are over and recession sets in, the government will "step forward" – not to restore the cuts and ease the pain – but to bail out the corporate sector, ensure its ongoing profitability.

Under neo-liberalism with its agenda of winding back the "welfare state", it is never the right time to boost social welfare benefits or to expand the public sector. The neo-liberal gospel of budget surpluses forces governments, strapped for cash, to retreat from their responsibilities, to step back and let the private sector in. It is a recipe for privatisation of welfare provision, of public housing, education, health services and public infrastructure. Privatisation brings sackings, job insecurity, lower wages, loss of working conditions, deunionisation, and more expensive and poorer quality services.

Enormity of cuts

Gillard says: "We have put in place cost offsets worth around \$85 billion across three years to meet the cost of key reforms. "Cost offsets" is spin for cuts - massive cuts - in people's services and welfare benefits of \$85 billion in three years. That

figure is based on optimistic budget forecasts. The economy as a whole – mining industry excluded – is still largely recessed and tax returns are not flowing in at the rate expected. The cuts could even be larger!

Some of the most painful cuts will be to welfare payments, the main theme of her speech to the Sydney Institute.

The unemployed, sole parents and those with disabilities are singled out for special treatment. "Income management, improving school enrolment and attendance, tighter eligibility and smarter employment services for adults with some disability..." Described as "extensive welfare reform", these are spin for the methods that will be used to throw thousands of Australians off benefits and force them to accept low paid jobs under the most appalling conditions – regardless of geographic location, availability of child care, transport, health or other limitations.

Gillard dishonestly draws on what she calls "our Labor values". She is not talking about organising workers in trade unions, fighting for better working conditions and higher wages or improving job security. Quite the contrary. The reference is a cynical and dishonest attempt to equate her attack on progressive reforms of past Labor eras with basic working class values. Gillard's values are not working class values.

Gillard, preparing the way for throwing tens of thousands of the most vulnerable people into the arms of philanthropists and unscrupulous exploitative employers, cynically claims that "everyone who can work should work...."

"Friends, believing in the benefits and dignity of work is a deep Labor conviction.

"The party I lead is – politically, spiritually, even literally – the party of work..." – attempting to translate the word "Labor" into "labour", meaning work.

"The social and economic reality of our country is that there are people who can work who do not."

This is an insulting dog whistle to the extreme Right, a play on the "dole bludger" line. "It's not fair for taxpayers to pay for someone who can support themselves," she says in a divisive appeal to the lowest and most reactionary elements in society.

"The party of work not welfare, the party of opportunity not exclusion, the party of responsibility not idleness", she continues, putting up straw men to knock down.

Behind the title of her speech,



By Leonard John Mathews

"The Dignity of Work", lies the message that the unemployed, carers, the sick and those with a disability who do not work lack dignity. The inference is that they can work but do not wish to work. Gillard ignores the fact that the overwhelming majority of these welfare recipients want desperately to have a job.

Instead of providing genuine assistance, providing the most vulnerable and disadvantaged with dignity, Gillard is going to cut the already inadequate services that so

many people on disability pensions, with mental illness or who are full-time carers, require. Genuine policy proposals to address the plight of the unemployed, the homeless, etc, are missing.

Gillard is a blind adherent to neo-liberalism; she is wedded to pleasing the likes of the financial markets, the International Monetary Fund, the big mining and other transnational corporations. Next month's budget will be all pain and no gain for the people of Australia. ✪

Pete's Corner



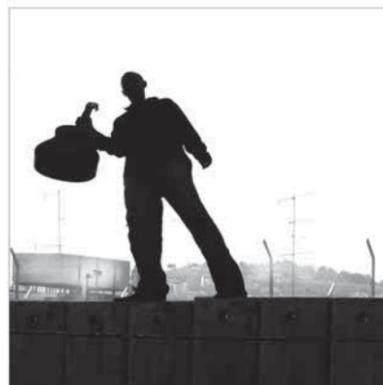
Sydney

FRIDAY FORUM

Friday May 6, 2011

Concert to support Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA

Featuring Brisbane singer/songwriter Phil Monsour



You are invited to attend a concert.

Phil Monsour, recently returned from Palestine and Lebanon, will recount his experiences with new songs and images taken during the Union Aid Abroad-APHEDA Middle East study tour.

All proceeds to go to Union Aid Abroad projects in the Middle East.

5.30-7pm

Teachers Federation Auditorium
37 Reservoir Street, Surry Hills
Join us from 5.30pm for drinks and nibbles

RSVP to the Library by Monday May 2
Telephone: (02) 9217 2113 Fax: (02) 9217 2481
Email: library@nswtf.org.au

Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

Little progress 20 years on from Royal Commission

Richard Titelius

In the northwest of Western Australia on September 28, 1983, a 16-year-old Aboriginal youth John Pat had been part of a group of people who had been drinking outside Roebourne's Victoria Hotel when the evening took a violent turn.

A brawl developed between Aboriginal youth and off-duty police officers resulting in a blow from one of the off-duty officers which knocked John Pat backwards causing him to fall and smash his head on the road.

The police officers involved in the death faced charges and all were acquitted. However, the death of John Pat helped to spark sufficient outrage in Australians that on August 10, 1987, Prime Minister Bob Hawke announced that there would be a Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

The final report was signed on April 15, 1991. It made 339 recommendations, mainly concerned with procedures for persons in custody, liaison with Aboriginal groups, police education and improved accessibility to information to people about to enter into custody.

It also noted that racism and Aboriginal health were problems and that for the situation to improve racism had to be addressed and Aboriginal health had to improve.

Since the Royal Commission presented its findings in 1991 there have

been more than 269 further deaths in custody. Each of these deaths was represented by a white cross that was carried from the Supreme Court Gardens to Parliament House as part of a remembrance and a call to action on April 15, in Perth.

The march and rally was organised by Deaths in Custody Watch Committee and Aboriginal Legal Aid and was attended by over 150 people. A number of people addressed the rally outside Parliament House including Ted Wilkes, a researcher at Curtin University and member of the National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee. Mr Wilkes said that poor access to and availability of education and health facilities were contributing factors to the high incidence of incarceration of Aboriginal people. "The Liberal government of Colin Barnett should spend money on improving access to health services rather than building a new prison in Kalgoorlie which would mostly be for locking up Aboriginal people," Mr Wilkes said.

Tammy Solonec, the Managing Solicitor of the Law and Advocacy Unit at the WA Aboriginal Service also spoke of the problems being faced by Aboriginal people in Kalgoorlie. Although they have the state's only Aboriginal Community Court, they still continued to experience high rates of Aboriginal offending and re-offending. Ms Solonec said, "One third of the deaths in custody examined by the Royal Commission

during the period of its mandate were from Western Australia and of these most were from Kalgoorlie." Ms Solonec added that Aboriginal rates of incarceration were increasing in the Magistrates Courts jurisdictions in WA which included the Children's Court. She said 73.8 percent of those incarcerated there were Aboriginal despite less than four percent of the population being Aboriginal.

Land rights and self-determination were also issues which the Royal Commission said needed to be addressed in the context of providing justice to the Aboriginal people of Australia. Little has been done to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission and racism was still evident in the actions of some police officers, in the prison system and the wider community.

One of the last speakers was Yamitji MLA Ben Wyatt who grew up in the Laverton area north of Kalgoorlie. He recalled the young men from his youth who had all now gone due in part to the short lifespan of most Aboriginal people, brought on by a lack of access to health services, to good nutrition, decent education and employment opportunities.

He posed a bigger picture question to the rally, "After so many Aboriginal people had died so young and so unnecessarily, how far have we come since the referendum of 1967 to include Aboriginal people as citizens?" ✪

Intervention a sham

Territory Elders tell of community destruction

Some of Australia's most prominent leaders and Elders from the Northern Territory have condemned the federal government for continuing with the Intervention (Northern Territory Emergency Response) program, labelling it a sham and a failure.

Seven prominent Northern Territory Elders have also released a heartfelt and powerful message to the people of Australia in which they say they "have lost our rights as human beings, as Australian citizens and as the First People of the Land" under the Intervention process.

The seven Elders who

signed the message were Rosalie Kunoth-Monks from Utopia, the Reverend Dr Djinyini Gondarra, from Galiwin'ku, Harry Nelson from Yuendumu, Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann from Nauiyu, Djapirri Mununggirritj, from Yirrkala, Dhanggal Gurruwiwi from Yirrkala and George Gaymarani Pascoe from Milingimbi.

Ms Kunoth-Monks left no doubt about the impact the Intervention was having on communities throughout the Northern Territory.

"It is destroying our communities," she said. "It has taken away our rights and it has failed to

deliver proper services. The pain of the whole thing has destroyed quite a large number of my family on Utopia.

"The destruction of the Intervention has left us with no functioning housing and with very little infrastructure".

Ms Kunoth-Monks also delivered a broadside to other Indigenous leaders for failing to stand up for the rights of the communities.

"Who are these leaders?" she asked. "They are almost house slaves to the masters who are committing horrendous punishment against our people," she said.

"These people have left us. They are academics in a white man's world. They are assimilated to such a degree they feel uncomfortable when they have to come and sit down in the dirt with us. Do they understand who we are? Do they understand what an Aboriginal person is today?"

In their statement, the Elders appealed to all Australians to help them convince the federal and Northern Territory governments to "end the nightmare" the Intervention was causing.

"The legislation under which we now live does not comply with international law. It is discriminatory. We are no longer equal to other Australians. We are no longer equal to you," the statement to the people of Australia said. ✪

May Day

The International Day for celebrating Workers' Rights.

Adelaide

Saturday April 30

Assemble 10:00am Victoria Square, March to Torres Parade Ground.
Family picnic from 11:00am with kids' entertainment, sausage sizzle and community stalls.
Speakers include author and commentator Humphrey McQueen

Brisbane

Sunday May 1

May Day Concert
6:00pm - 9:00pm ETU Hall 41 Peel St South Brisbane
Aboriginal Choir, Trade Union Choir, Jumping Fences, food & bar.

Monday May 2

May Day March: Assemble 9am Cnr Wharf and Turbot Streets.
March to RNA Showgrounds for BBQ, kids activities, MUA tent and more.
T-shirts at Branch for \$20

Melbourne

Thursday April 28

Wreath Laying Ceremony - 5:00pm at the 8-Hour Memorial

Thursday April 28

Multicultural Evening & Entertainment
Details to be announced
Celebrate May Day

Sunday May 1

May Day March - assemble 1:00pm
Further details to be announced

Sunday May 1

May Day Concert - after the March
Details to be announced

Perth

Friday April 29

May Day - Toast
6:00pm - 8:00pm Rosy O'Grady's (Upstairs) 205 James St Northbridge
Speakers: Dave Fox - CPA, Seamus Doherty, plus more TBA
More info: Dave 0410 410 592

Sunday May 1

Esplanade Reserve 12 noon
Entertainment, performances, food and activities for the whole family
12:00pm SHARP for March 1:00pm - 4:30pm - Free Live Entertainment and Performances,
Food, Rides and Activities for Everyone!
May Day Coordinator: Nicole Corbett (UnionsWA) 0421 751 404 / 08 6313 6000
ncorbett@unionswa.com.au www.unionswa.com.au

Sydney

Thursday April 28

Celebrate May Day toast and dinner
6:30pm - Cyprus Community Club 58-76 Stanmore Road Stanmore
Tickets \$35 - 3 course meal and drinks
MC: Charmaine O'Sheades, NSWTF, Mover: Mark Lennon, Unions NSW
Guest Speakers: Fiona Byrne, NSW Greens; Ezekiel Morales Cuba
Live Band
02 9265 8438 mayday@sydney.net

Sunday May 1

Assemble Hyde Park 12 noon for march to First Fleet Park, Circular Quay.
Speakers: Paul McAleer - MUA Sydney, Joan Lemaire - NSWTF,
Mal Tulloch - CFMEU, Cristian Cuevas - Chilean Copper Workers
0421 193 140 mayday@sydney.net

Sunday May 1

Multicultural music/buffet
6pm Greek Community Club 206 Lakemba Street, Lakemba
Join us in celebrating the international workers day. Cost: \$25
Organised by the Communist Party of Australia & fraternal organisations
cpa@cpa.org.au

Wollongong

Friday May 6

May Day Toast 6:30pm for 7:00pm Hellenic Club, Princes Highway Figtree
\$20/\$25 - All you can eat Greek Buffet
Toast to be given by Ghada Abu Ghalyoun, Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions
For Bookings please call: SCLC 02 4229 2888

Saturday May 7

May Day March: Assemble 9:30 for 10:00am march to Amphitheater Lowden Square
For info please call: Leanne 0425 201 828 or John 0405 335 926

Saturday May 28

May Day Party/Dinner: This year marks 100 years of May Day celebrations in Wollongong. To celebrate this we are organising a party/dinner.
Portafinos, Kenny Street Wollongong
Tickets are \$50 which includes a 3 course meal, free wine, champagne, juice or fizzy drink, tea, coffee and a gelato Bar. The Dave Reglar Quartet will be playing on the night and there will be a photo exhibition of May Days in Wollongong.
For more info contact Leanne: 0425 201 828 redallover11@hotmail.com

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Top seller competition



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To enter the competition send in your receipts from your local Branch Treasurer or send the money from your sales with details direct to:
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Government signals unwelcome shift in homelessness policy

Peter Mac

The organisation Homelessness Australia recently congratulated the federal government for the grudging reversal of its previous decision to cut the National Rental Affordability Scheme. The congratulations were doubtless a friendly gesture, aimed at encouraging the government to stay on the right path. Nevertheless it is loaded with irony, given that Homeless Australia vigorously opposed the cuts, which should never have been contemplated in the first place.

The situation facing homeless people is extremely serious and the figures are shocking. Every day 105,000 people (one in every 200 Australian citizens) live without a safe and secure home. Some 44 percent of them are staying temporarily with family or friends, 20 percent in boarding houses or temporary accommodation. The nation's homeless service organisations help 18 percent to find shelter, and the remaining 18 percent sleep rough on the streets.

At particular risk

About 56 percent of homeless people are male, 44 percent female. People under 25 comprise 43 percent of the total, and children under 12 years old 11 percent. Almost one in every 50 women aged 15 to 19 depend on homeless service organisations for accommodation.

One in every two homeless women with children, or 22 percent of the total, are the victims of domestic violence, which is the nation's largest single cause of homelessness. Other causes include mental illness, drug or alcohol abuse or financial difficulties.

People leaving child care, foster care, mental health institutions or prisons have a much higher chance of becoming homeless. The incidence of homelessness is very high in Aboriginal communities.

About 12,000 Australian children under 12 years old are homeless. Young people are at particular risk. Homeless youth have a higher chance of becoming homeless adults. Approximately 40 percent of homeless adults experienced homelessness in their youth.

Homeless young people comprise a large proportion of the "hidden homeless", i.e. people who do not appear in census statistics because they are sleeping rough or in squats, or are moving between accommodation with friends or relatives. Homelessness imposes crippling

burdens on young people, in terms of their education, economic and job prospects, and social relationships. As Narelle Clay, the chairperson of Homelessness Australia, has stated: "The costs of youth homelessness, both social and economic, are enormous. It is vital that the whole community takes action to reduce its impact."

Supporting the homeless

Service organisations that deal with homelessness help people find longer term accommodation, assist them with living and financial skills, and provide counselling and advocacy. They also work with other organisations that provide meals, legal advice or medical services.

The general objectives of Homelessness Australia, the national peak body of more than 1,500 service organisations, are as follows:

- 1 A holistic, comprehensive national action plan to prevent and respond to homelessness in Australia.
- 2 Realistic and sustainable funding models for homeless assistance services.
- 3 Children need to be recognised as users of homeless services in their own right, with services funded accordingly to provide appropriate care and support for minors. Although 1 in 3 of those who access homeless assistance services are children, this is not currently the case.

In particular, the service organisations are seeking funding for another 220,000 affordable homes by 2020, and an extension of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness for a further five years from 2013, with a minimum funding of \$849 million, as well as an increase in non-pension income support of \$45 per week, to be indexed. They also want an increase in funding for proven early intervention programs, and support for the homeless sector workforce.

What about the government?

The Gillard government's previous move to cut funding for affordable housing would have had a devastating impact on homeless people, by reducing their chances of finding permanent accommodation. Given the rising number of homeless people, it would also have increased the number of people who end up sleeping rough.



Photo: Avante Media Australia

Rather than receiving praise for having decided not to cut affordable housing funding, the government deserves criticism for having even considered the cuts in the first place.

Moreover, the government may include direct cuts in subsidies for homelessness service organisations in its forthcoming budget. The government has already indicated that it will clamp down on support for the long-term unemployed. This group includes not only those who currently find themselves homeless, but also those who are living on the very edge of financial catastrophe, and who are most likely to join the ranks of homeless people if their financial situation deteriorates.

It would be despicable for the government to claim that support for homeless people has to be cut because the nation is supposedly facing hard times. Australia is a rich nation, and extra funding for homeless services and for affordable housing could easily be derived, and should be, from the billions of dollars that are misallocated, for example funding for offensive military operations or for environmentally counterproductive initiatives such as "clean coal" research and development.

The very last thing the state or federal governments should be doing is to allow our support for homeless people, among the most vulnerable members of our community, to remain at its current level – or even worse, to take any action that would worsen their plight or their prospects. ☘



The 2009 NSW Young People in Custody Health Survey is a disturbing description of the juvenile detention system which fails our young people. About 450 young people are in juvenile detention at any given time. Many for a week or less, but over the course of a year there are about 5,000 admissions, according to the survey. More than half of these young people were abused as children, and nearly 40 percent of girls were sexually abused. The report notes high levels of mental disorders and intellectual disabilities among detainees. Almost 90 percent were found to have at least one psychological disorder. Among girls, 23 percent had attempted suicide and 28 percent had been admitted to a psychiatric unit. Between the last health study in 2003 and the 2009 survey, the proportion of incarcerated youngsters who are Aboriginal rose from 41.7 percent to 47.8 percent while they represent only 4 percent of the state's adolescent population. The survey is a damning indictment of the whole approach to juvenile justice, if you can call "justice" locking up sick and disturbed youngsters instead of providing them with support, proper medical treatment and diversion programs.

By the end of the Howard government's term in 2007, 44 federal anti-terrorism bills had been enacted, an average of one every seven weeks. They included a seven-year jail term for control orders, whereby people can be subject to house arrest without trial, and serious restrictions on media reporting of national security matters in the courts. This anti-terrorism law-making stopped for a time under the Rudd government but no attempts have been made to either review, wind back or discard them altogether. Last March a law was passed to establish an independent monitor of anti-terrorism laws. But strangely, that office has not been filled. This does not show the government's willingness to subject anti-terrorism laws to review. The anti-terrorism laws were put in place as an emergency response and were supposed to infringe on people's rights for a short time in response to the threat of terrorism in Australia. Now these laws are a permanent fixture on the statute books. They must be reviewed.

Many international students fall prey to unscrupulous landlords. With the cost of accommodation in Sydney what it is, they have to share the rent but the accommodation which is offered is often crowded, dirty and infested with vermin. Many landlords illegally partition rooms and rent out part of a room. There is no security, fire alarms not working and rubbish is not collected. Safety is a constant worry for students as they often do not know who shares the place. Some landlords try to push female students into pornography and demand sex. No wonder international students' intake is falling.

Fantastic Prize

This great photograph by Cuban photographer Brayan Collazo is the first prize for the annual Australia Cuba Friendship Society Perth raffle for 2011.

The raffle will be drawn on Saturday July 23, 2011 at the Santiago de Cuba Carnival to be held at Kulcha in Fremantle. A celebration has been organised with local band Latin Fusion at KULCHA from 8pm.

For more information visit: www.kulcha.com.au or send us an email to: acfsperth@gmail.com

Raffle tickets are \$5 each. Get as many as you can to increase your chances of owning this fantastic prize. Get your raffle tickets early to avoid disappointment. All proceeds go to support the oncology unit of Las Tunas provincial hospital in Cuba.



Military bases v independence

Pauline Mitchell*

Late last year the Australian government announced that a new agreement had been reached between the United States and Australia for a major build-up of United States military forces in Australia.

The first we heard of this was on the media on October 30 when we were told that Australia would become a key partner in the international battle for space supremacy and host a new multi-million dollar US defence base to spy on foreign satellites. The top-secret Harold Holt Naval Base at Exmouth Gulf in Western Australia would play a major role in the emerging Cold War in space.

This announcement is another alarm – because it severely restricts our own independent foreign and defence policy and ties us closer to the foreign and defence policy of the United States.

No doubt this announcement would be alarming to other countries as well – the United States makes no secret of the fact that they view China and its military with suspicion, so our relationship with China has been compromised as China cannot help thinking that our view must be similar. Foreign military bases in any country cannot help but have an effect on that country's foreign and defence policy.

During the time of the so-called “Cold War” and the existence of the Soviet Union, United States bases concentrated mainly on the European countries and were found around the Eastern Bloc. When the Soviet Union collapsed and that particular Cold War was over – these United States bases were not reduced in number but the push was on to establish bases in the former Eastern Bloc countries and bring them into the United States-led NATO.

In the year 2001, and after the terrorist attack on the United States, another re-alignment of US military forces began. This was for rapid projection of US military power all over the world to combat terrorism, hostile states and potential adversaries. Today there are between 700 and 900 United States military bases in the world – some quite small, others are gigantic, but all are extremely powerful.

Biggest base

The biggest base is Camp Bondsteel, established in Kosovo, previously a province of Yugoslavia. Camp Bondsteel is located close to vital oil pipelines and energy corridors that are now tapping the energy resources from the Caspian region. Immediately after the bombing of Yugoslavia, the United States seized 1,000 acres of farmland in Kosovo near the Macedonian border. Camp Bondsteel is not popular with the local population: as well as the farmland that has been confiscated, hills have been flattened and forests have been cut down. The whole province has been altered to cope with and protect the huge base. It is said that there are two things that can be seen from space – one is the Great Wall of China and the other is Camp Bondsteel!

United States military bases are expanding all over the world and all of them are meeting resistance by the local population of that country. The United States has always had military bases in South Korea, but now these bases are undergoing major expansion. Bruce Gagnon, the coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, visited the country last July and learned of these massive expansions. Several farming communities and fishing villages have been absorbed in the takeover for military purposes. The local population is resisting but their protests have been ignored by the right-wing South Korean government; scores of residents have been arrested for sit-ins and other non-violent protests which attempted to block construction equipment from beginning work.

The local people were doing all they could to protect their livelihood and the unique flora and fauna of their country. UNESCO had named part of the sea coast near Grangju – one of the villages – as one of the world's environmental jewels with its fishing and soft coral reefs, but the United States is building a naval base there to serve as a port for their Aegis destroyer fleet. The village of 2,000 people had held a referendum and 94 percent of the residents voted against the navy base. The United States wants

to deploy the Aegis destroyers there because of its proximity to China. It would also give the US the ability to control the vital shipping lane in the Yellow Sea through which China imports 80 percent of its oil.

Opposition in Japan

Then there is Japan where the United States bases are coming in for a lot of criticism by the Japanese population, especially those on the island of Okinawa where most of the US troops are stationed. The island of Okinawa makes up 0.6 percent of Japan's territory but hosts 75 percent of the US military bases there. The population of Okinawa has been trying to move the US bases for years to other parts of the island, but now they want them removed altogether. The Governor of Okinawa won the recent election with his promise to block a move to establish another Marine Corp air station and the previous prime minister of Japan was forced to resign over his inability to get rid of the bases in Okinawa. However, the present prime minister has not made any reference to the bases and seems to fall in with all the United States' wishes. There is a lot of resentment too about conditions.

The Status of Forces Agreement with Japan gives United States' servicemen extra privileges – it also stipulates that Japanese authorities cannot enter a US base without permission and the United States' authorities are not required to hand over their servicemen to Japan's authorities in cases of suspected criminal activities – and there have been numerous crimes, especially rape, committed by United States' servicemen.

Then there is the cost of maintaining the United States' military bases in Japan and the cost mainly falls to Japan. It costs about US\$4 billion a year in direct or indirect support!

There was talk about moving some of the US servicemen to Guam, but that has faded now and would not be welcomed by the people of Guam either. The ethnic Chamorro people who live on the US island of Guam are also protesting about the military build-up on their island. In October 2006, a coalition of Chamorros travelled to New York to address a special United Nations' summit on decolonisation and about their plight. This got a positive response by most countries but the United States refused to listen to the plea from the local population of Guam.

Bases being enlarged

The last year or two the United States has concentrated on their military presence in Asia. There are bases all around China and North Korea. There are also bases in the Middle East and circling Iran and in Central Europe and South America – and still the establishment of US bases continues – Yemen and Somalia, Sudan and Ghana are next. Also, many of the already established bases are being enlarged – the United States military base in Bahrain is doubling in size and is scheduled to be complete in 2012 – it will massively increase the military capabilities of the US Fifth Fleet which will oversee operations in the Gulf of Oman, Red Sea and parts of the Indian Ocean and probably a lot of bases in the Middle East are now on alert because of the people's uprisings.

When talking about military bases you can't help concentrating on United States' military bases because no other country in the world has so many bases and no other country in the world has bases in so many foreign countries. You also can't help noticing that nearly all the US military bases are located near key facilities. There is very little difference between the strategic security and the national interests of a country. The United States sees itself as waging a strategic and global war on terror but the world's natural resources are of vital importance to national security.

Natural resources targeted

The recent release of WikiLeaks diplomatic cables confirmed this – the list of installations whose loss would critically affect United States' national security included oil and gas pipelines, communications and transport hubs. Also listed were the cobalt mines in the Congo, pharmaceutical plants and medical facilities in Australia and Denmark and other industries. Iraq was no threat to anybody, but it had oil, and now that oil no longer belongs to the Iraqi people to fund their living standards, it has all been privatised.



Yokota Air Base-8 – a United States Air Force base located in the city of Fussa, Western Tokyo.

Afghanistan – after nine years of war, is no nearer to disengagement – but now Afghanistan has a vital oil pipeline through the country which the Taliban government wouldn't allow. Some weeks ago it was reported that the Taliban factions had agreed to unite to fight the foreign invaders! Perhaps that explains why the war seems to have no end, plus the fact that there has been the recent discovery of many more minerals.

The capitalist world is in deep financial crisis – and the United States is effectively bankrupt. It has lost some respect because of its actions, but it hasn't lost any of its military might. United States' spending in that area is extraordinary and accounts for roughly half of the global military outlay – and while traditional military threats against the United States have largely disappeared, the domination and concentration on the world's natural resources could be an added danger in these times. The cost of maintaining foreign military bases is a drain on a country's economy; also war exercises are a drain on a country's economy – and in Australia these have been expanding every year.

US bases and Australia

United States' bases in Australia have always been a major part of CICD's (Campaign for International Cooperation and Disarmament) work. One of our first leaflets on the bases was early in 1972. Then there were 39 foreign-owned and operated bases in Australia: 33 of them were United States bases and 25 of them under total US control – we were told – the others were supposed to be under “joint” control or “consultation” although these two terms were meaningless because the US had said in 1969 that “consultation” does not impinge on total US control and “joint control” did not mean access to all areas. The rest were Australian/UK bases.

Actually, I could read the whole leaflet out now because it is still up to date – nothing has changed – except that we now have more US military bases! For instance, part of the leaflet says that “The bases are part of an electronic communication network which can be likened to a nerve system stretching over the whole

world with the Pentagon as its head”. Today this nerve system has been added to and it has become more sophisticated and all embracing.

The November announcement last year of the new agreement for a major build-up of US military forces also said that one of the actions in West Australia would be for Very Low Frequency Radio Waves. This is a navigation system that allows submerged submarines to receive radio signals without having to break the surface with their periscopes. This reminds us of the Omega system which was proposed for Australia all those years ago and cited in the 1972 leaflet. It was to be the southern pivot of eight such stations throughout the world to aid the United States Navy.

In the '70s the campaign to “Stop Omega” was pursued by the CICD and was one of our biggest because the Omega station was to be built in Gippsland, Victoria. In 1968 the New Zealand government had rejected Omega after a critical report by the New Zealand Royal Society. So you see, things haven't changed. Military events are still very secretive and we probably won't hear very much more about the recent dangerous developments.

It was the bases issue that brought me into the peace movement and I had firsthand experience of their secrecy. In the decade of the '50s I lived in Alice Springs and worked for the government and later for the local paper the *Centralian Advocate*. I was there when a team of engineers attached to the United States Air Force came. They consisted mainly of technical and electronic personnel. They did not live in the town but established a camp to the north of Alice, somewhere off the Stuart Highway. They did not wear military uniforms or drive military vehicles. They had brought with them a large caravan bristling with electronic equipment. At first it was housed in the yard of the Department of Works and Housing. The caravan was “out of bounds” to Australian government employees. The townspeople were a bit curious as to why they were there but they didn't upset life too much, so the curiosity didn't take root.

I was curious though – and when Colonel Jackson came into the *Advocate* I asked him what they were doing here! He wouldn't tell me.



Photo: Kelvin Song

I was very naïve and admired the United States as everyone else did in those days, but I was a bit annoyed because he wouldn't tell me. When I kept asking him he told me it was a weather station but when I said I wanted to go over it and he said no, which annoyed me even more, I wondered why the United States was interested in our weather. One day he came in and ordered some rubber stamps to be made – the wording on the stamps was intriguing: "Top secret – to be opened by the Pentagon only – room 5 of the Pentagon", etc.

This word Pentagon kept cropping up and in the end I went in to the editor's office and asked him what the Pentagon was! He told me it was the American war office – which made me even more curious because we weren't at war. When the townspeople knew that I was interested they kept their eyes open and began to tell me lots of things. Employees at the Alice Springs airport told me when US planes landed. Sometimes, high ranking military men arrived. Other planes were huge Globemasters that unloaded heavy equipment, tractors and cranes, etc. The military personnel drove straight out to the base to the north of the town. Then there were the road gangs that told me that they had seen heavy equipment being driven along tracks in the outback.

A friend of mine, a leading hand in the Department of Works and Housing, told me that he was blindfolded one day and taken out to the US base to fix some equipment, then blindfolded and brought back to town again. Some girls in the town that had dates with the young Americans complained to me on occasions that their boyfriends couldn't keep their date because they had to stand guard duty. Others told me that when they were travelling up the Stuart Highway and happened to be following an American jeep it would break down and stop – and, of course, the following car had to pass it, so no one ever found the turnoff to the US camp. This, of course, was many years before the Pine Gap base, which is at the south of the town.

When I came down from Alice in the late '50s, I could not find any reference in any paper about the presence of the American military in

Australia. In fact, I did not see anything questioning or critical of the US at all. One day, coming out of Flinders Street Station, I saw a street seller selling the *Guardian* newspaper, and it had a headline that was a bit critical of the US – I bought a paper and read the article and agreed with it. It was a communist paper so I rang up the Communist Party and asked them if they wanted to know about the United States' bases in Alice Springs!

Well, it was greeted with a bit of silence at first. They were very polite, but not very enthusiastic and I didn't get invited to their office to tell them about it. It was a bit of a disappointment. Of course now I realise why – this was when the Cold War was getting into its stride and they must have thought that I was a plant or a spy! Eventually, though, I did get the story out and actually it was at the Melbourne Unitarian Church.

The Reverend Victor James had called a meeting of peace activists. It was a big meeting and a friend had taken me along. During the meeting she said to me to get up and tell them about the bases in Alice Springs. But I was too shy and wouldn't. Then we broke for a cup of tea and after we resumed the meeting another woman from across the room got up and said that "her sister had just come back from Alice Springs and there were American soldiers there and the local people weren't saying anything and just accepted them". That was like the proverbial red rag to a bull. I got up and must have spoken for 10 minutes or more!

So there was secrecy in the '50s and there is secrecy now, and with all our military bases and all the United States' military bases, the frequent military exercises, and the bombing ranges and airfields, etc, the extent of the militarisation of our country would be enormous; and it would be very difficult for us to find out exactly the area involved in military pursuits because of that secrecy and our sparse population, and now the scandal about security – or the lack of it – revealed yesterday, adds to all the danger of the military bases.

*Pauline Mitchell is Secretary of the Campaign for International Cooperation and Disarmament (CICD) ★

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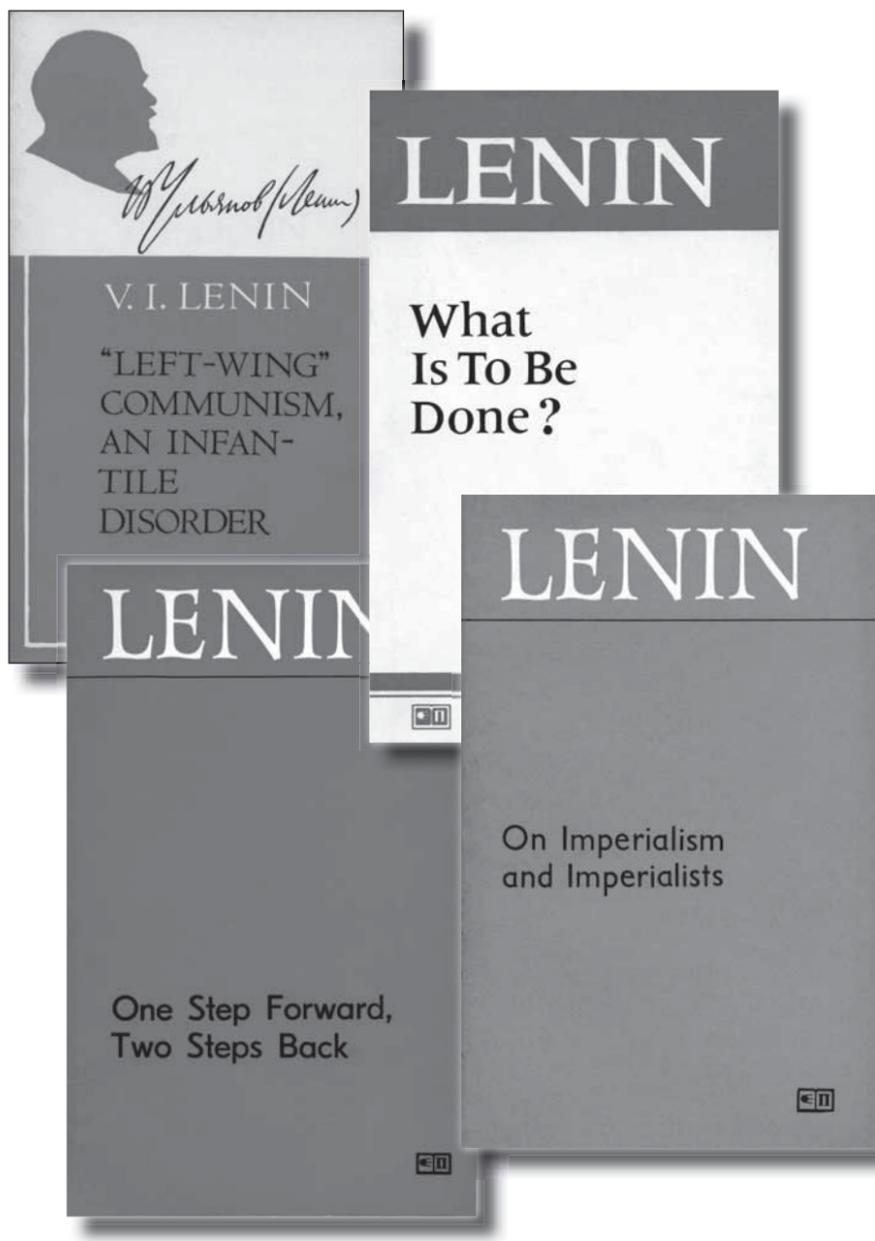
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Union leaders:

World climate meet must include green, decent jobs

International trade union leaders meeting on April 12 in Madrid with the UN Panel on Sustainability and Business and NGO representatives called for decisive and ambitious climate action in the lead-up to the Durban climate summit at the end of this year, and the "RIO+20" meeting in 2012. The union proposals are centred on a tax on financial transactions, a universal social protection floor, doubling the number of green and decent jobs and ensuring a just transition to a greener future.

RIO+20 is the nickname for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development that will take place in Brazil, June 4-6, 2012, marking the 20th anniversary of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro.

"This dialogue is a first step in the mobilisation of the trade union movement towards RIO+20," said International Trade Union Confederation general secretary Sharan Burrow. "We share with the Panel the responsibility of ensuring the Rio Summit delivers on concrete actions which will reduce inequalities, create decent jobs, save the climate and protect the environment."

Burrow's organisation is an international organisation of national labour federations.

"The current economic model is heading us towards more crises,

unemployment and environmental degradation," said Zwelizima Vavi, General Secretary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions, which is a member of South Africa's governing three-party alliance. "If we are serious about addressing the vulnerability of poor workers and communities, RIO+20 needs to shift from piecemeal commitments and deliver a universal social protection floor, which will ensure dignified livelihoods for all. The climate negotiations in Durban must support this effort through the protection of the poorest from a climate perspective: with ambition in terms of emission reductions and climate finance."

At the Madrid meeting, organised by Sustainlabour, an international labour-based organisation pushing for sustainable development, trade union leaders are meeting the "Sherpas" of the UN sustainability panel, CEOs from Oxfam, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, the International Wind Energy Council and the UN agencies ILO and UNEP.

"Workers in Brazil and around the world will be proactive in the preparations for the Summit in Brazil," said Artur Henrique, president of the CUT Brazil labour federation. "Even if we could guarantee our national government commits to prosperity, equality and environmental protection, this will not suffice for ensuring sustainable development. We need to transform



the development and growth paradigm, and this can only be done at the international level; the Summit is an opportunity to make it happen."

"When we look at the situation today in the UK and in Europe, we realise that fiscal consolidation is being used to introduce more unfair taxation systems and undermining public services," said Frances O'Grady, deputy general secretary of Britain's Trade Union Congress. "RIO+20 can make a difference in

the path towards a new fair and green taxation policy, notably at the international level, through the creation of a tax on financial transactions, or Robin Hood Tax, which could generate revenue for the transition towards a green economy."

"A green economy based on rights, sustainability principles and decent work can meet the challenge of our societies," said Ambet Yuson, general secretary of the Building and Woodworkers International. "We need the investments for these jobs to be created, and we need the regulations to ensure they are a first step towards the transformation of our societies. A just transition, as the ... unions are calling for, needs to be based on the

transformation of all jobs into sustainable ones, and workers in all sectors, including construction and forestry, will support them."

"The UN Panel has made clear that the inputs from labour leaders are necessary to build a sustainable world, and we are glad to convene these dialogues," said Laura Martin, Director of Sustainlabour. "The inclusion of the concrete proposals just mentioned in the panel's work will influence the capacity of the RIO+20 Summit to decide on 'out of the box' ideas. We will maintain our commitment to this process and do our utmost to ensure union's voices are loud and clear in the run up to Durban and RIO+20." *People's World* ☘

Japan:

Govt refuses public workers' right to strike

The government on April 5 decided not to grant the right to strike to national government workers, rejecting repeated recommendations by the International Labour Organisation. The government, however, approved the right of public workers, with the exception of the police, to bargain collectively.

The reform of the civil servant system is aimed at slashing the number of government employees. This will lead to an erosion of their neutrality and fairness.

Under the reform, a Cabinet personnel bureau will be established to replace the present National Personnel Authority. The planned Cabinet personnel bureau will supervise executive officials of the ministries and various government

agencies in order to create a mechanism to ensure that personnel will be obedient to the government.

What is required in a progressive reform of the public workers' system is: guarantee of fundamental labour rights, including the right to strike; the right to collective bargaining to prison guards and firefighters; guarantee of political and civil liberties; and promotion of neutrality and fairness for public workers.

However, this so-called reform only allows the right to negotiation between the Cabinet personnel bureau and public workers regarding working conditions and salary. Without the right to strike, negotiations will obviously favour the employer. Although workers ostensibly have the right to collective

bargaining, this right may turn out to be on paper only.

The Democratic Party of Japan-led government is seeking an increase in the consumption tax rate in return for major cutbacks in the number of government workers to convince the public that it is cutting government waste.

Personnel cuts in the public sector, however, will undermine the quality and integrity of public services. Given that many people now understand that a sufficient number of government workers are necessary to deal with public needs such as the recent example of providing proper disaster relief, the structural reform that has promoted cuts in the number of public workers is understood to be wrong. *Japan Press Weekly* ☘

Open, democratic, class-oriented, internationalist

The 16th World Trade Union Congress of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) was concluded with the election of the President and the Presidential Council. Brother Muhammad Shaaban Azzouz was re-elected in the position of the President for the next five years. Moreover, an electoral procedure took place for the voting of the Presidential Council where 598 representatives and 213 observers (advisory vote) voted for the new Presidential Council.

"We had nothing to fear, and this is why we managed to organise an open, democratic Congress." WFTU General Secretary George Mavrikos made clear that the WFTU has to make more progress regarding its work in the sectors, for women, for young workers, with the progressive artists. With collectivity and internal democracy in the lines of WFTU we have to construct a front against bureaucracy and opportunism.

"We have two enemies to face in our struggles: the employers and the leadership of the compromised

and sold-out trade unions who both aim to the dissolution of the class-oriented trade union movement. Internationalism must be strengthened and so does labour solidarity in an organisation that has to ensure the unity in its base, the social alliance of the workers, the self-employed, the indigenous, the unemployed, poor farmers. All this has to target the radicalisation of their consciousness and their evacuation from ephemeral struggles.

"The central target of our struggle should be the contemporary needs of working families, the environmental problems, health and security, the major drug problem, the mass media that manipulates consciousness, the ensuring of democratic rights.

"Solidarity to the working class of all countries, to those who struggle for the life and the rights, for the abolition of exploitation, to all of those who struggle we are standing on their side. You should know that this struggle will be a victorious struggle."

The Congress ended with the "International". ☘

Adelaide

1500th issue of the CPA's newspaper *The Guardian*

Everybody is welcome to come to a celebration of the 1500th issue of *The Guardian*.

6pm on Monday May 16 at the Semaphore Workers Club, 93 Esplanade, Semaphore

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For further information contact Bob on 0418 894 366.

Endless war and Empire: Your tax dollars at work

Medea Benjamin &
Charles Davis

While US fiscal woes have led Congress to slash food aid this year to the world's poor – rest assured, fellow Americans – the US government will keep using your tax dollars to kill them. For while John Boehner and Barack Obama might disagree on some things, there's one area they can agree on: War. And the need for more of it.

"Money for bombs, not bread," might be a good bipartisan slogan.

And when it comes to dropping its citizens' tax dollars on flying killer robots and foreign military occupations, no country comes close to the United States. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the cost of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq – more than \$150 billion in direct spending this year alone – exceeds what China, the US's closest military rival, spends altogether on its armed forces. Overall, the Obama administration will spend more than \$700 billion next year on the military.

That's more than George W Bush ever spent. And figures released this week by SIPRI show that since Obama took office, the US has been almost entirely responsible for the global rise in military spending: \$19.6 billion of \$20.6 billion since 2008. What a difference a Nobel laureate makes.

And the actual figure spent on war – the fighting of it, the preparation for it and the consequences of it – is substantially higher than acknowledged, with spending on military programs often buried in places like the Department of Energy, which oversees the US's massive stash of nuclear weapons. Counting those hidden costs, including veterans' benefits, aid to foreign militaries and interest payments on defence-related debt, economist Robert Higgs estimates the US government spends more than \$1 trillion a year on empire.

But you wouldn't grasp the enormity of the US's commitment to militarism if you listened to its

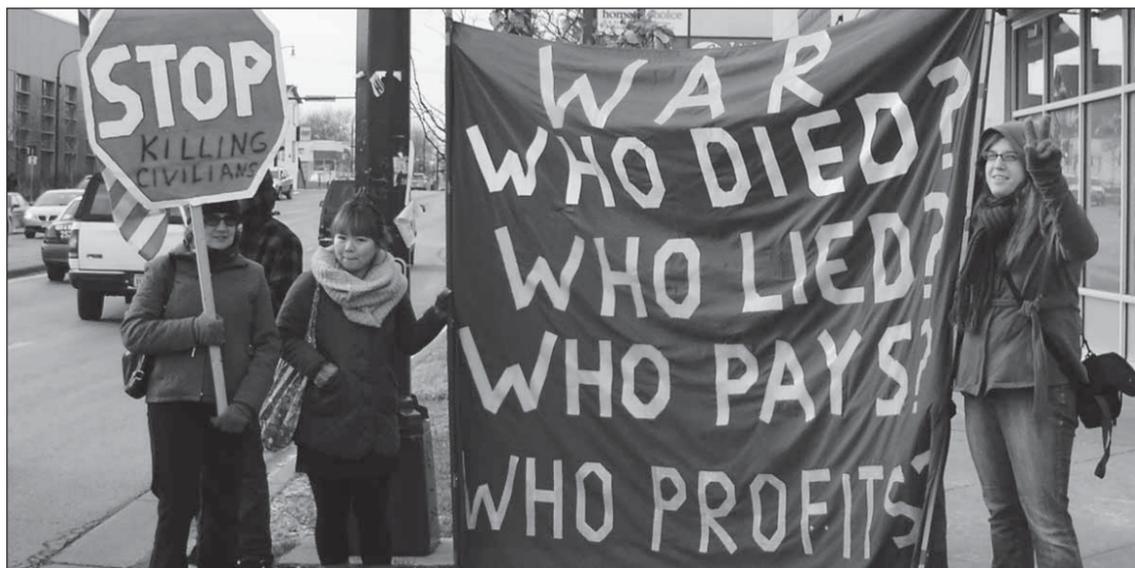
politicians. Remarking last week on the deal he struck that slashes \$38.5 billion in federal spending, President Obama said the agreement "between Democrats and Republicans, on behalf of all Americans, is on a budget that invests in our future while making the largest annual spending cut in our history."

Sounds lovely. But the reality, not the rhetoric, is that Obama and his allies in Congress aren't cutting Pentagon waste and investing in rainbows and unicorns – unless, perhaps, there's some way to harness their power for weapons. Rather, they're investing in war at the cost of community health centres, local development projects and Medicare. In Washington, you see, money for killing people is safe from the cutting board; it's the money that actually helps them that's not.

"We will all need to make sacrifices," Obama reiterated in his speech on the national debt – just not the Pentagon, which is guaranteed more money every year under this president's watch. "I will never accept cuts that compromise our ability to defend our homeland or America's interests around the world," Obama said. As for cuts to domestic spending, including to "programs that I care deeply about"? Well, that's a different story.

And if you're a US taxpayer, forget welfare programs: bombing and occupying countries that pose no credible threat to America – Obama has so far authorised attacks in at least six countries since taking office, including Yemen, Somalia and the latest and greatest \$8.3 – million-a-day war for peace, Libya – is your single greatest expense as a citizen. Indeed, over half of federal discretionary spending – what Americans will pay for with their incomes taxes on April 18 – goes to the armed forces and their legion of private contractors.

Now imagine what that money could do if it went to something more productive. Imagine if, instead of paying for bombs to be dropped around the world, those tax dollars went toward fulfilling actual human needs – toward creating friends, not enemies.



For the cost of just one minute of war we could build 16 new schools in Afghanistan. For 60 seconds of peace, we could fund 36 elementary school teachers here at home. This year's funding for the endless wars in Iraq and Afghanistan – \$172.4 billion – could provide health care for 88.4 million poor American children.

The obvious wastefulness of war has even some politicians beginning to talk of investing in America instead of arms manufacturers. Congressmen Barney Frank and Ron Paul recently convened a task force that produced a detailed report with specific recommendations for cutting Pentagon spending by approximately \$1 trillion over the next decade.

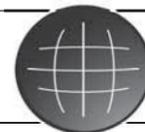
But lawmakers – all of whom have military contractors in their districts – rarely do anything good of their own volition. Rather, they have to be forced into action by those they purport to represent. At the local level, communities are doing just that by pressuring mayors to sign a resolution calling on Congress to redirect military spending to domestic priorities. A similar resolution, spearheaded by Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, will be considered at the June meeting of the US Conference of Mayors.

Pressuring politicians is not the only route to affect change, of course. The War Resisters League, for instance, suggests principled civil disobedience: refusing to pay taxes to fund unjust wars. That route is fraught with risk, including the prospect of jail time, but it's one that would have made great Americans like Martin Luther King proud.

Not everyone can accept those risks, especially for those with families to worry about. But another option, living simply and reducing one's taxable income, has the added benefit of not just starving the warfare state, but curbing one's contribution to mindless consumerism and global climate change. And forgoing a new iPhone is a small price to pay to save a life.

Be it refusing to pay for war or speaking out against the injustice of bombing and killing poor people on the other side of the globe, the important thing is to recognise one's role in the war machine and commit to doing something about it – to quit complacently accepting the world as it is and to work toward making it what it should be. The greatest enabler of the military-industrial complex isn't really taxes: it's apathy.

Information Clearing House ✪



Global Briefs

INDIA: Local police in Chhattisgarh state engaged Salwa Judum, a police-trained tribal vigilante group, to assist them in attacking Maoist insurgents. The result, say the police, was 36 Maoists and three of their own killed over five days beginning on March 11. Civilians were killed and wounded in three villages. Also, three women were raped, and 300 buildings burned, according to <Hindu.com>. Venerable social activist Swami Agnivesh, who retrieved five police officers from Maoist captivity in February, charged "torture and mayhem." Agnivesh declared, "The police have created a Frankenstein's monster that they cannot control."

HUNGARY: Over 600 members of the fascist Jobbik party marched on April 2 in Hejoszalonta village, north of Budapest. Weeks earlier, 2,000 had marched through Gyongyospata. In both instances, paramilitary demonstrators were claiming to protect Hungarians against Roma criminals. Jobbik gained 17.5 percent of the vote in last year's general elections. Right wing ferment was on display also as the European Greens met on March 31-April 3 in Budapest. Anti-Semitic outbursts proliferated on YouTube and in emails the Greens received. The trigger, says the EU Observer, was the presence of Green European Parliament leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit, who is of Jewish heritage.

BRITAIN: The London based Bretton Woods Project joined 60 international "civil society organisations" in releasing a joint statement on April 4 that called upon the International Monetary Fund to apply \$2.8 billion derived from gold sales to cancelling poor countries' debts. The IMF Executive Board meets in mid April. The IMF, which began selling gold in 2008, has realised \$3.5 billion in unanticipated profits, due to rising gold prices. The organisations ask that \$2.8 billion be paid into the "Post-Catastrophe Debt Relief Trust Fund" for use in cancelling debts.

IRAQ: Speaking with reporters on April 1, Ambassador James Jeffrey outlined plans to double staff assigned to the US embassy to 16,000 persons within two years. US troops will make up "only a very small part of that number." Personnel based at the Embassy, by far the largest in the world, will include 5,500 private security troops, up from 2,700 at present. Jeffrey, quoted by the UK Telegraph, indicated that in 2012 "the American presence in Iraq will consist of up to 20,000 civilians at sites that include two embassy branches, two consulates, and three police training centres."

GUATEMALA: Some 3,000 Mayan peasants had lived and farmed in the Polochic Valley for thirty years when 1,000 soldiers and police arrived on March 15 to evict them from their small land holdings. The action, backed by the current centre-left government, left one farmer killed and many wounded. On March 24, a private brigade hired by a nearby sugar mill company destroyed their remaining crops. Since 2005, transnational corporations intent upon producing biofuels have amassed land in order to grow African palm and sugar cane. Presently, sugarcane is grown on 28 percent of Guatemala's farmland, 80 percent of which is owned by five percent of the population.

Sydney

The Fight for Workers' Rights in Chile

The Construction Forestry Mining Energy Union, Amigos de Cuba and the Pablo Neruda Cultural Association are organising a tour to Sydney of Cristian Cuevas, President of the Confederation of Copper Workers in Chile.



Cristian is also a member of the Executive of the CUT – Confederation of Workers of Chile (equivalent of the ACTU) and a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Chile. He led the 2007 strike of sub-contract workers at Codelco.

Sunday April 24
Casa Latina, Hut 47,
142 Addison Road, Marrickville
12.30pm Concert and BBQ
3pm Forum, *Workers' Rights and the Challenge for the Left in Chile*

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



email: tpearson@cpa.org.au

Gorbachev's 80th

Isn't it so telling where Gorbachev celebrated his 80th birthday, in the den of the imperialist heartland-Britain. The imperialist multinationals such as BP have made a financial killing in the old soviet societies and so it is no mistake that Britain seems to be where all the ex-soviet billionaires meet to celebrate the theft of the peoples assets.

But even Gorbachev still needs to be surrounded by his permanent security guards because he knows that the mass poverty he and his foul mates are responsible for might mean that one day someone will shoot them. However from a socialist perspective, it is better that the people try them for crimes against humanity.

H Patterson
Vic

Why kids in adult prisons?

In the whole asylum seekers debate we don't discuss "people smugglers". Who are the "people smugglers"? Are they the poorest of the poorest who for a few dollars for their impoverished families crew an unseaworthy boat and steer desperate asylum seekers in the last leg of the perilous journey from persecution to our shores?

Many Asylum Seekers have told me that they consider "people smugglers" as their only hope, as heroes who ensure their passages across continents and seas. Much of the money the actual "people smugglers" are paid is invested in bribing officials to ensure safe passage.

However I have met in detention centres and in our jails Indonesian youth accused of crewing and cooking on the boats. Recently, I discovered a 16 year old Indonesian youth in WA's Hakea Prison, an adult facility, who is accused of people smuggling. The People Smugglers Act has no prescription to charge minors in relation to people smuggling. Bone scans are completed on these youths to ascertain their age. All of a sudden someone claiming to be 15 or 16 is 18 or 19.

The Commonwealth should ensure that the Indonesian Consulate is notified of its nationals on our

shores even if a treaty does not exist to oblige this. The Consul or Vice Consul should be required to provide the date of birth of their nationals rather than a bone scan that is not failsafe. One 16-year-old youth spent twelve months in a WA adult prison. There are others languishing in Australia's mandatory detention centres who if kept there long enough will turn 18. However, they should be allowed to return home, to their poorest of poor villages.

Last year in a visit to Hakea to push educational opportunities to some of the incarcerated folk in the prison I came across 20 Indonesians in an English literacy class. They had been sentenced to five years for such "crimes" as cooking on or steering the boats. What horrific criminality! They were to be moved on to Albany jail to do the five years and after this stretch to be deported. I have never forgotten the fact that some of them did not look in the least anywhere near 18.

One thing for sure, kids should not be in adult prisons – end of story.

Gerry Georgatos
The Human Rights Alliance

CIA at play in Libya

There is confusion on the Left concerning Libya. I think the cause of that confusion is that the Left

including the CPA has been far too quick to condemn Gaddafi. Also the Left appears to be taking the narrow view that any revolt must be right, This simply isn't true.

A case in point is the progressive regime that existed in Afghanistan during the 1980s, that the United States invented the Taliban to put down, and the then Soviet Union, with its own internal problems was not able to adequately defend.

Today just as then I see the hand of the CIA behind the revolt in Libya.

It is true that Gaddafi has made many mistakes, but what progressive forces exist to take his place? It appears to me that the only alternative is a compliant government that will hand over the Libyan people and resources to international imperialism. With this in mind the Left should give Gaddafi all the support that it possibly can.

Ron Barrett
Sydney

At stake: life on Earth

There are people who say our climate's not changing and therefore humanity doesn't need to alter our behavior towards the earth. Unfortunately, even if it was the case that climate change was not happening, our earth is still in

dire environmental trouble from human impact.

Our demands on the planet are excessive and the viability of life on earth is at stake. Since 1966, a human demand on the planet's natural resources has doubled. These days we are using the equivalent of 1.5 planets to support our way of life and other human activities. And Australian's consumption of natural resources is even higher. If the rest of the world lived like us, humanity would need nearly four planets to continue to survive. Clearly, this depletion of the Earth's finite resources is unsustainable and we cannot keep going on in this careless way.

As additional livable planets are not easy to find, we have to change our lifestyle, to learn to live more simply, so that humanity and other life forms (and the Earth itself) can simply go on living. And with each passing year of inaction the problem grows worse. We need to stop our over consumption of natural assets, use our resources more sensibly and begin to repair the damage done to the ecosystems. It is now urgent that we change our attitudes and act to save the Earth from looming disaster.

Steven Katsineris
Vic

Culture & Life

by

Rob Gowland

The First Man In Space

The year 1961 was a turbulent one for imperialism (but then, what year isn't?).

The year began with the murder of the man who had led the Congo to independence from Belgium, Patrice Lumumba. He had been treacherously seized by soldiers in the pay of the CIA and handed over to the forces of Moise Tshombe, an imperialist stooge intent on breaking away the mineral-rich province of Katanga.

A couple of months later the CIA launched an invasion of the revolutionary island of Cuba, landing a force of 1,500 CIA-trained and armed anti-Communist Cuban mercenaries at the Bay of Pigs. The invaders were assured their task would be a doddle: news of the invasion would be greeted by a general uprising and life in Cuba could go back to the good old days of vice, gambling and gangsters.

To the CIA's evident surprise, the people took up arms against the invaders and in defence of their revolution. The invasion was crushed in two days.

On the whole, it had been a bad week for the CIA. Only five days before, the Soviet Union had excited the whole world by sending a human being into orbit around the Earth.

The first man in space, Yuri Gagarin, had taken off from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan at 9.07am Moscow time on April 12, 1961, orbiting the Earth in one hour

and 29 minutes and landing in Russia at 10.55am.

Gagarin was the son of a carpenter on a collective farm. He trained as a moulder at a trade school near Moscow then went on to an industrial college at Saratov. While there, he also took flying lessons. After graduation he joined the Soviet air force.

His 4.75 ton Vostok 1 spacecraft was only 2.58 metres in diameter. His flight proved that humans could survive the rapid acceleration and deceleration of take-off and landing and paved the way for all subsequent flights into space.

Gagarin's flight brought him immediate world-wide fame. He received the Order of Lenin and the USSR's highest decoration for valour, the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

Across the Soviet Union, monuments were raised to him and streets named in his honour. He was never sent into space again but took an active part in training the cosmonauts who followed him.

He became a deputy to the Supreme Soviet in 1962 and was a frequent good will ambassador to other countries. In 1968 he was killed, together with another pilot, in the crash of a two-seater jet aircraft on

a training flight. He received a state funeral and his ashes were interred in an honoured place in the Kremlin wall.

A worker, and the son of a worker, through the achievements of Soviet science and technology Gagarin literally scaled heights never previously achieved by any human being.

After his death, the town of Gzhatsk was renamed Gagarin.

Also after his death, the propaganda mills of imperialism tried to besmirch his name with baseless claims implying that he was "secretly anti-Soviet". That a dead cosmonaut would be made the subject of this kind of innuendo and rumour-spreading testifies to the stature of his reputation in the world.

However, despite the best efforts of the rumour-mongers of imperialism, Yuri Gagarin's reputation stands unscathed, a true son of the Soviet Union.

It may seem strange now, but prior to Gagarin's flight, many people doubted whether humans could actually travel into space other than in science fiction. That was why his flight was so important.

Sputnik had put an object into space but Gagarin's flight blasted man

into space. The way to the stars had truly been opened.

The political effects were curious. My cousin Larry, an auto mechanic, was working on a Czech-built Skoda at the time and a passer by in the street plucked up the courage to ask him "That's from over there, isn't it?"

"Over where?" said Larry. "You know, from where they make the Sputnicks."

Larry had an interesting chat with him about different social systems.

Not all that long afterwards, I walked into the home of the parents of a university friend. They were democratically minded but certainly not left-wing. They were watching the news and my friend's father looked at us triumphantly and declared: "They've got three of them up there!"

No need to ask who "they" were or where "up there" was. It was the first multi-cosmonaut flight (another Soviet first, like the first woman in space).

In May of 1961, subsequent to Gagarin's fully orbital space flight, the US sent their astronaut Alan Shepard in a successful sub-orbital flight. Later in 1961, the socialist GDR surprised imperialism by building a 45 kilometre wall across Berlin in less than

a week to seal its previously open border with the West, a running sore for espionage and sabotage, especially economic sabotage. After the Wall was built the economy of the GDR went ahead by leaps and bounds.

And a month later, in September 1961, Dag Hammarskjöld the Secretary General of the UN was killed when his plane blew up and crashed in Rhodesia. Hammarskjöld had approved the use of UN forces to prevent Moise Tshombe from establishing an "independent" puppet state of Katanga in the Congo.

The assassination of the Swedish diplomat was widely held to be the work of the CIA.

The assassination plots and other dirty tricks of imperialism that have been revealed over the years make the security precautions undertaken by the USSR seem only too necessary.

Think what might have been achieved if such precautions and secrecy had not been necessary. But imperialism dreamed then of world domination – and still does.

The working class and their allies dream of a world at peace, but they need at all times to carry the where-withal to defend their dream – if necessary. ☛





Sun April 24 -
Sat April 30

The '70s was a typically turbulent decade. It began with the spread of the Vietnam War into Cambodia by Richard Nixon. Two years later the world recoiled in horror from Huynh Cong Ut's photo of two Vietnamese children running down a road in terror, one of them a girl, Phan Thi Kim Phuc, who had torn all her clothes off to escape burning napalm jelly.

By 1975 students at Kent State University in Ohio had been shot dead for protesting the war in Vietnam, Nixon had had to resign over the Watergate scandal and the victorious Vietnamese liberation forces had taken Saigon and reunited their country.

Other anti-imperialist successes of the decade included the overthrow of fascism in Portugal after forty years and the ousting of the Shah from Iran and General Somoza from Nicaragua. Bangladesh achieved its independence despite bloody repression by Pakistan's dictator Mohammed Yahya Khan.

Greenpeace was established in Canada to protest planned US nuclear tests in the Canadian wilderness and Irish civil rights demonstrators were massacred in Bogside. Turkey invaded Cyprus.

The Royal Jordanian Army attacked Palestinians who had previously been given sanctuary in Jordan, Khomeini subverted the national revolution in Iran, and the United States armed and funded the feudals in Afghanistan, creating what would become Al-Qaeda.

In short, there was a lot of significant stuff happening in the 1970s. But don't expect it to impinge significantly (if at all) on the ABC's "hot new series" from CBS Paramount, *Swingtown* (ABC2 Mondays from April 2 at 8.30 pm).

This insubstantial tosh purports to show us life in '70s America. Or as the ABC describes it, the series is concerned with "peeking into the shag-carpeted suburban homes of couples revelling in the sexual and social revolution" that apparently is what the '70s were really all about.

This week's instalment of the *Warehouse Comedy Festival* is *Tom Ballard Is What He Is* (ABC2 Tuesday April 26 at 9.00 pm). Ballard is a young comedian whose self-deprecating monologue here is entirely devoted to his being gay.

He won the award for Best Newcomer at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival and is a regular on Triple j and *The 7pm Project*.

He can be very funny and obviously has talent. Hopefully he will broaden the range of his material as he gets more experience of life and realises that not everyone cares whether he is gay.

The technical strengths and social weaknesses of the American health care system are very much on display in *OMG Sextuplets!* (ABC2 Wednesday April 27 at 10.30 pm).

(This being an American program for mainstream Americans, the title is actually clarified for us near the beginning of the program as "Oh My



Warehouse Comedy Festival - Tom Ballard Is What He Is (ABC2 Tuesday April 26 at 9.00pm).

Gosh Sextuplets!" May Gosh have mercy on the television executives responsible for that.)

The program documents the experience of a young white-bread US couple Jenny and Bryan Masche. Their efforts to start a family on their own were unsuccessful, so they sought medical help.

Bryan's sperm was injected directly into Jenny's uterus, which his sperm apparently found very congenial. Jenny not only became pregnant, but when a later scan sought out the baby's heartbeat, the technician found no less than six tiny hearts.

This revelation necessitated Jenny moving to another city to be near the hospital with the specialist in multiple births. Then, as her belly became huge and her overall health needed

careful monitoring, Jenny was put to bed for months.

Despite their outward calm about the forthcoming multiple birth, the Masches are understandably perturbed. They calculate that the cost of nappies alone will be staggering let alone all the other things they will need.

And you can only imagine what their hospital bill would be like, with weeks of treatment, the constant care of a top specialist and all the ancillary services under the sun.

But never fear: capitalism is not insensitive to the plight of the poor, especially if they are white and god-fearing. And particularly if they are high-profile with a strong human interest angle, like giving birth to sextuplets.

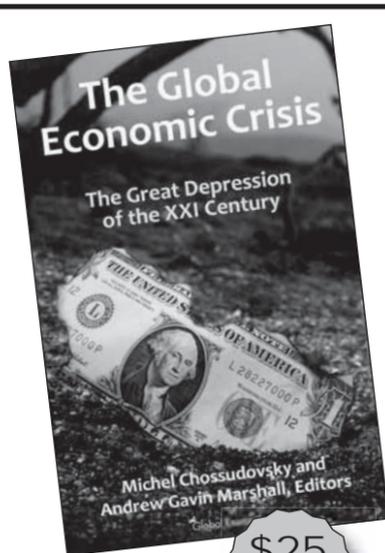
Not long after the birth, Jenny was invited to be a contestant on Deal Or No Deal. And Gee Golly Gosh, she won a lot of money. Capitalism works! Aren't they lucky they didn't have common old triplets?

Being hospitalised - whether as

the result of illness, injury or giving birth - should not threaten your livelihood, it certainly should not put you at risk of financial ruin. The huge debts that usually accompany a stay in hospital in the US was a key reason why Barak Obama was elected President: he promised a universal health care system.

But capitalism had no intention of giving up such a lucrative milch cow as the private for-profit health care system. A grossly misleading and heavily funded campaign of lies, innuendo and dire warnings about having truck with socialism led to Obama's health care plan being voted down in Congress.

There is no indication in this program as to what kind of health care system Jenny and Bryan would support. But why would they support a state-run health system. After all, if people are landed with really big hospital bills, they can always go on Deal Or No Deal and win the money they need. Can't they? It's the American way. *



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The Global Economic Crisis The Great Depression of the XXI Century

Editors: Michel Chossudovsky and Andres Gavin Marshall
Publisher: Global Research, 390 pages

This just published compilation of articles by 16 researchers, authors and others on the left gives a comprehensive analysis of the present economic crisis. The book is divided into five parts: The Global Economic Crisis; Global Poverty; War, National Security and World Government; The Global Monetary System; and The Shadow Banking System.

The book is rich with detailed information that digs beneath the surface and exposes the lies and distortions of media, politicians and bourgeois economists. The language is very accessible, technical terms are explained clearly. Links are made between the economic, political, military and social developments. It exposes the myth of economic recovery, who was behind the crisis, who benefits and the horrendous impact it has had on millions of people around the world.

It is a must read for political activists, trade unionists, peace activists and anyone else wishing to learn more about the global economic crisis and 21st century imperialism.

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POLITICS in the pub

April 22
NO MEETING
Easter

April 29
THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL SYSTEM - WHAT IS HAPPENING
AND HOW WILL IT AFFECT AUSTRALIA?
Stephen Long, ABC economic correspondent;
Gerard Minack, Morgan Stanley/Research.

May 6
THE FUTURE OF THE ALP
Doug Cameron, Labor Senator NSW;
Shaun Wilson, Dr, Sociology Macquarie Uni

May 13
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS & THE POWER OF COALITION
BUILDING: UNIONS & COMMUNITY CAMPAIGNS
Amanda Tatterstall, Director Sydney Alliance & author *Power in Coalition*;
Peter Murphy, Search Foundation

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To Libya with God on our side

Saul Landau & Nelson Valdes

"The United States ... should not try or be widely perceived as trying to manipulate religion in pursuit of narrowly drawn interests." The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, February 22, 2011 Task Force report [Engaging Religious Communities Abroad: A New Imperative for US Foreign Policy].

"I will never hesitate to use our military swiftly, decisively, and unilaterally when necessary to defend our people, our homeland, our allies and our core interests. That's why we're going after al-Qaida wherever they seek a foothold... God Bless you, and may God Bless the United States of America." – Obama speech on Libya, March 28, 2011.

"If the president orders assassination, it must be legal... If the president orders torture, it must be legal." – Condoleezza Rice.

Grabbing other people's land and interfering in their affairs became as American as apple pie before the annexation of Texas, and "Manifest Destiny" as the engine of US foreign policy.

In 17th Century inspirational moments God sent His chosen from England to found the "city on a hill" (Boston). He had dispatched other select British subjects to settle "the promised land" (Virginia).

According to John L O'Sullivan in 1839, God intended "the fulfilment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions."

See how Americans talked to God before Pat Robertson – before God punished us with Hurricanes for allowing homosexuals to cavort.

In 1898, God, doubling as President McKinley's National Security Adviser while simultaneously suggesting headlines for William Randolph Hearst, answered McKinley's prayers for advice. The Big Guy "told me to take the Philippines," McKinley explained to the press as he launched the Spanish American War.

Secretary of War Elihu Root extolled the virtues of that war because "The American soldier is different from all other soldiers of all other countries since the world began. He is the advance guard of liberty and justice, of law and order, and of peace and happiness." (Peter Maguire, *Law and War: An American Story*, Columbia University Press, 2002, pp.53-54)

Root omitted discussion of US troops' involvement in massacring suspected Philippine resisters. Our vanguard soldiers killed some 600,000 before President Herbert Hoover ended the US occupation in January 1933. (Howard Zinn, *Common Dreams*, June 6, 2007)

Woodrow Wilson fought a holy war for democracy. Harry Truman to stop an atheist Communist dictator in North Korea and prop up a Christian fascist one in South Korea. And Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon all invoked His name.

Reagan invaded Grenada, but didn't recall who advised him and Bush 1 ordered the hit on Panama after his third lunchtime martini. The born-again Bush 2 knew his direction came from above. The Iraqis and Afghans will remain ever grateful for those wars.

Making war without congressional declaration has become traditional. Some thought the Nobel Peace Prize winner would challenge that behaviour. But, he explained, he had to kill (he used euphemisms) bad Libyans to save good ones. "God bless us all," he added at the end of his speech.

Was the photo of smiling Obama shaking hands with President Gaddafi taken before or after Obama knew he was a bad Libyan? Did Obama's smile come from constipation, or did God only recently inform him after prayer that Gaddafi was evil? Did Divine consultation convince Obama not to save rebels' lives in Bahrain and Yemen? He did nothing when their nasty leaders murdered them for protesting.

Or did God, again as national security adviser, explain the important religious functions of Bahrain's King (hosting the US fleet) and Yemen's President (torturing Washington's Al-Qaida suspects). GIs with cell phone cameras might send email photos of naked prisoners to loved ones and thus reveal national security secrets as they did in Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo!

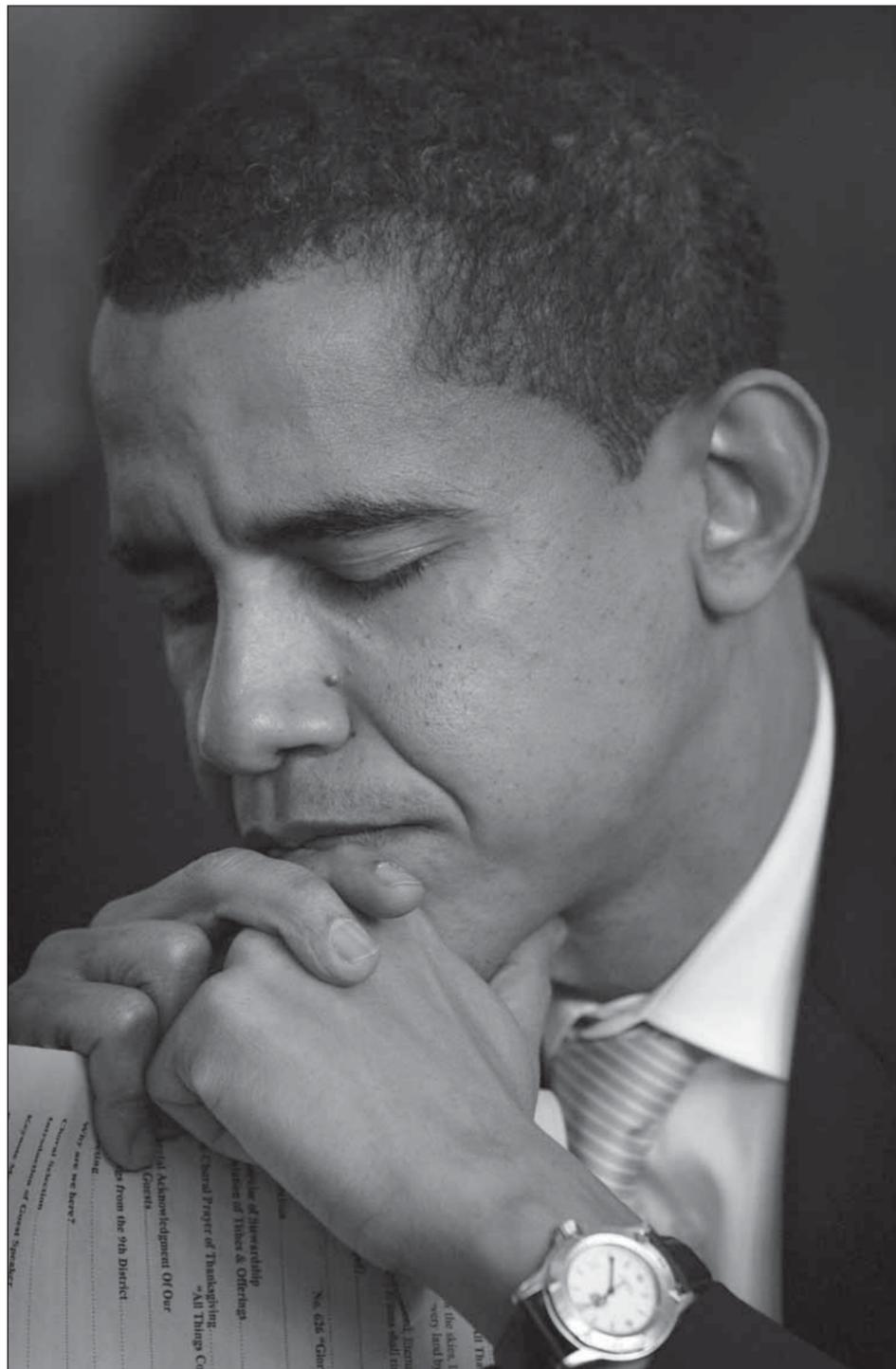
Obama couldn't let all the despots that obeyed the US kill their people with impunity; so with NATO allies he launched a "humanitarian" intervention. Warplanes and ships fired missiles against Libyan targets, speculating correctly that the mainstream media would not inquire whether these impressive explosive displays killed civilians. Well, even if some died, it wasn't intentional.

Later their families might even collect compensation. We're generous in war spending. By calling the mission "humanitarian" we distinguish it from older missions when Belgians in 1911 massacred about 12 million Congolese. Germans between 1903-1906 killed 60,000 Hereros in Namibia.

In 1964, the CIA provided names of some one million plus suspected atheist-communists in Indonesia. Our anti-communist friends in that obedient Muslim nation wiped them out – humanely.

Our soldiers killed some four million (mostly civilians) in Vietnam – hard to remember why. And our zealous Latin American friend General Rios Montt (a religious Christian) exterminated about 70,000 Guatemalan peasants (1965-77) – and so on.

The United States claims authority to kill people in Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen, without formal accusations – forget due process – if the President (after praying) decides they might be enemies. So, US Kill Teams (ah, cooperation!) and drones (hi-tech is super!) waste suspected



enemies (God's enemies, of course). Do these newly named entities kill more than that G. damned Gadhafi? Oops. Almost used God's name in vain – a sin. But we not need worry, the weapons Obama instructed the CIA to deliver to "free Libyans" will carry Jesus' blessing. God Bless America!

Saul Landau's new film *Will the Real Terrorist Please Stand Up* is available through cinemalibrestudio.com. Nelson Valdes is Professor Emeritus at the University of New Mexico. Information Clearing House ✪



May Day Guessing Competition 2011

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