



ACTU Congress

Some positives amongst consensus politics

Anna Pha

One of the underlying themes of the ACTU Congress held in Sydney from May 16-18 was fear of an Abbott government and what it would mean for trade unions, workers and their families in Australia. Congress was used very effectively to sell the historic relationship between the ALP and ACTU and the importance of the trade union movement in bringing about change. Incoming secretary Dave Oliver won support for a permanent political Campaign Fund. An observer could be forgiven for drawing the conclusion that it was the launch of the Gillard government's election campaign, a campaign that will be heavily dependent on the trade union movement bringing the community onside.

The 2012 Congress was a far cry from the Congresses of past eras with hotly contested battles between the Left and Right over leadership positions and policy. It followed the pattern of recent Congresses, firmly in the grip of right-wing Labor forces whose message of collaboration and cooperation was loud and clear.

Since the mid-80s there has been dampening of debate over key policy directions and a steady slide into "consensus politics" or class collaboration. Leadership positions have been largely divided up between the major factions in backroom deals. The 2012 Congress was no exception.

"I do not subscribe to the view that the union movement would seek conflict in the workplace, instead we would seek harmony, I believe. That is the Labor way," Workplace Relations Minister and former national secretary of the Australian Workers Union Bill Shorten told delegates.

"I know what we've accomplished and I also know what – working in tandem with a Labor government – can be accomplished. I don't believe – and perhaps some do, but I don't – I don't believe that the 'us and them' rhetoric is what describes the modern Australian workplace, or describes 98 to 99 percent of what Australian trade union representatives do. I also know that doesn't also describe the Australian Trade Union movement." Shorten said.

Job security

The main Congress slogan was "Secure Jobs, Better Future", reflecting the campaign being waged by the ACTU for workers to be given job security and their full leave, superannuation and other entitlements.



Photo: Anna Pha

The ACTU released a telling report, *Lives on Hold*, outlining the appalling conditions 40 percent of the workforce are currently subjected to in precarious employment situations. The report revealed that 25 percent of workers are denied the right to sick or paid leave, showing how far the employer attacks and anti-union laws have made inroads into winding back past gains.

ACTU president Ged Kearney reminded delegates of the past achievements of the union movement – from the eight-hour day battles, establishment of "fair wages", aged and disability pensions, through to superannuation and parental leave. "This is what we stand for".

Speaking of past struggles Kearney told delegates, "We also understood that change does not just happen, it has to be fought for." She said, "Deregulation, and the privatisation of government services are seen as the only way forward and the public service is not seen as an asset, just as an expense to be cut."

"... we must advocate for an economic alternative and to push a broader social agenda

based on equal opportunity for all. We need to fight for an alternative vision of how our society and economy can function.

"Where opportunity and reward for effort can be balanced with a strong safety net and a genuine compassion for the vulnerable."

Kearney does not refer to Labor or the government directly. Her speech was focused on trade unions and what they have achieved and what they do in the future and how. But other ACTU documents and speeches left no one in doubt that the "alternative vision" with a "strong safety net and genuine compassion for the vulnerable" would come from a Labor government.

Policies

The policy statements adopted by Congress are a mixed bag. Some are excellent and would serve the interests of the working class well. Others appear to be an unquestioning rehash of the Labor government's policies with perhaps a few additional demands or "motherhood"

statements. One of the big questions is which policies will be actively pursued and to what extent where they are contradict the Gillard government's position before the next federal elections.

The policy on asylum seekers and refugees, for example, strongly challenges the Labor government's actions. It calls for a more decent and humane treatment of asylum seekers and adherence to international law. It rejects the characterisation of asylum seekers as "illegal" and the use of the term "queue jumpers" which inaccurately represents the UN process for refugee settlement (see *The Guardian* next week).

In addition, the policy recognises the factors, such as war, that cause people to flee their home countries and calls for action to address them. It strongly opposes offshore processing, forced deportation and ongoing and indefinite detention of large numbers of asylum seekers, including children.

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Neo-liberalism's long losing streak

Incumbents are being ditched unceremoniously across the globe as people show their anger at austerity, privatisation and the rest of the neo-liberal agenda. We have the demise of the governments of Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Finland, Slovakia and Italy over the past two years. The administrations of the Netherlands and the Czech Republic look very shaky and France now has a new "socialist" president.

We've seen it happen in Australia with the comprehensive drubbing of the NSW and Queensland Labor governments and, with a massive turnaround of political fortunes looking unlikely, it will happen at the federal level, as well.

The problems driving voters to judge so harshly are the same here as with the headline-grabbing elections in France, Greece and elsewhere. People are sick of privatisation, the erosion of services and the rapid rise in their cost to households. They're tired of the lack of action to secure local jobs (especially manufacturing jobs); the unwillingness to extract decent rates of tax from transnational corporations and big business' thinly disguised control of the political process. They've had enough of war, corruption and the bosses' mantra that "the community is living beyond its means".

Overseas, there have been huge demonstrations but relatively low voter turnouts. The traditional political parties are on the nose. The whole bourgeois political apparatus is viewed with increasing scepticism. In Italy and Greece, caretaker "technocrats" had to be installed as the major parties lost all credibility.

Trade union leaderships that trail behind the old parties of capital are struggling. The circumstances should be ripe for the advance of the political alternative – socialism. But that development is not consistent across the countries suffering the devastating effects of the global capitalist crisis.

In Greece the Communist Party and other left parties rejecting austerity have made ground. But so, too, have groups from the extreme right like Golden Dawn. It is finding support for an essentially neo-Nazi program of expelling or imprisoning immigrants along with anti-capitalist sounding slogans based on the most jingoistic forms of nationalism. The world has seen it all before and suffered the consequences of the triumph of these reactionary ideas.

The danger in Australia

If voters in Australia turn on the Gillard government, it will be because they reject the reality of neo-liberalism. The deterioration of social conditions cannot be masked by the propaganda of a resource-led "boom". The major contradiction in such a defeat would be that a Coalition government threatens even greater attacks on the assets and wellbeing of the community.

The real alternative – one that will satisfy the genuine grievances of the people – is simply not cutting through. Even relatively established groups like the Greens find it difficult to get their message of modest reform across in the current conditions.

The fog of media misinformation and incessant anti-socialism and anti-Communism make progress extremely difficult. But that's not the only problem; disunity is the greatest enemy of left and progressive forces today as it has been for some time. The alternative simply does not look viable if it is presented incoherently by a divided and scattered opposition.

The Communist Party of Australia doesn't deny that it considers its ideological position and consequent analysis the most advanced and appropriate for the circumstances in which we find ourselves. It seeks to lead left and progressive forces to victory in establishing a government of a truly new type that will ultimately lead to socialism in Australia.

But these conclusions in no way indicate that we consider the Party too "pure" to unite in the broadest possible front of left and progressive groups to challenge the dominance of capitalist politics. Trade unions must be brought into this process, also.

Time is short and the capitalist crisis is deepening. It is only a matter of time before a desperate ruling class throws its support and resources behind more organisations like Golden Dawn. Australia is not immune from such a possibility. It doesn't advance the working class' interests to criticise from the sidelines and wait for what the capitalist ruling class serves up next.

PRESS FUND

Everyone makes mistakes now and then. Politicians dismiss families who live in certain city areas as not being "real". Others abuse the trust placed in them by supporters, or even inflict grievous bodily harm on opponents during heated arguments! *The Guardian* is determined to bring these matters to your attention. However, we ourselves are not beyond reproach. Last week we misspelt the name of one of our most consistent supporters, Pio Pagliuca. We extend our apologies to Pio, and our sincere thanks to the following for their generous contributions this week:

Donna and Terry \$100, Noel Hazard \$10, Mark Mannion \$5, "Round Figure" \$11.50, Sydney Central branch \$100.50

This week's total: \$227 Progressive total: \$2,527

Australia challenged at UN over racist laws

Statement of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegations to the United Nations

The United Nations has heard significant criticisms from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegations over race-based laws currently being considered by the Australian government.

The delegations are rejecting the argument of the Australian government that the race laws are "special measures" and are therefore not racially discriminatory.

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, which is currently in session at the UN Headquarters in New York, has been told that Australia is introducing new laws which treat Aboriginal people differently from all other Australians.

The Northern Territory "Stronger Futures" Bills will extend the five year Intervention laws, which were first enacted in 2007, for another 10 years.

The original laws drew strong criticisms from the international human rights treaty bodies, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Aboriginal people are being subjected to "blanket" prohibition of alcohol, "blanket" income management regimes and government takeover of their lands, while the non-Indigenous people around them are free from these very same laws.

The government promised in 2010 that all new laws introduced into the Parliament would be examined to ensure compliance with Australia's international human rights obligations.

However the government is refusing to respond to calls for scrutiny of the Bills or to be accountable for introducing these race-based laws.

Times have changed, and it is time for the Australian government to "move on".

Australia must stop the continuing "framework of dominance" over the first peoples and honour its commitment to comply with its international human rights obligations.

Statement issued by:

- National Congress of Australia's First Peoples
- Secretariat of the National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services
- National Native Title Council
- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations ☘

Correction

In the budget coverage in last week's *Guardian* (Issue 1547, 16/05/12) the section under the cross-head "Defence spending up" contained partially corrected text. *The Guardian* apologises for any inconvenience this may have caused. The text should have read:

Defence spending up

Military expenditure takes a pounding", declares John Kerin (*Financial Review* 09/05/2012). This was typical of the media headlines reporting \$5.5 billion in defence cuts as though the surplus came at the expense of military

spending. "Defence has suffered its biggest budget cuts since the Korean War with spending slashed by \$5.45 billion," Kerin continued. What a load of codswallop!

The item called "defence spending", in the detailed budget papers (as against those in the media kit) is set to rise from \$21.656 billion in 2011-12 to \$24.453 billion in 2015-16 – a total increase over four years is \$2.797 billion! Not a \$5.5 billion cut over four years! (Budget paper no 1, Statement 6)

The budget of the Defence Materiel Organisation which acquires and sustains equipment

for the Australian Defence Force (ADF), one component of the defence budget, is set rise by \$2.8 billion from \$9.976 billion to \$12.777 billion over the same period.

Looking further into the budget papers, when net capital expenditure as well as defence functions are included, defence spending is set to rise from \$24.063 billion to \$26.821 billion. These still only tell part of the story; other defence spending is tucked away in social security, Veterans Affairs, intelligence organisations, etc. ☘

ACTU Congress

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The international policy contains a number of important points, based on internationalism; peaceful resolution of conflict; higher levels of development assistance for the people of developing countries; pursuit of reform of international institutions, including strong global regulation and governance that puts people first; an independent Australian foreign policy; and the call for urgent action on climate change.

"Responding to the threats of climate change and the economic crises that are endemic under capitalism, the shape of a fair and sustainable globalisation will be influenced by our values, our activism and our unity through international unionism," the statement says.

But it falls short of what is required, especially on climate change, foreign policy and military spending, in effect accepting the status quo. For example, it does not question the government's plans to spend \$39 billion on the military in 2012-13, or Australia's involvement in US wars and its present war preparations. No mention is made of Australia's involvement in Afghanistan.

Its Better Bargaining Policy has similar strengths and weaknesses. It seeks some important reforms within the existing framework such as stronger right of entry provisions; extending the range of matters permitted

in enterprise bargaining agreement; allowing "protected action" without a secret ballot during a bargaining period; and in relation to "protected action", making it more difficult for employers to halt the action or bring in scab labour.

At the same time, the policy statement fails to address some of the largest barriers to trade union struggles and solidarity actions: it still leaves unions and their members exposed to massive fines and damages for strike action outside bargaining periods, in solidarity with other workers or around political demands.

It maintains the pretence that the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC) has been abolished, whereas Labor has transferred it under the Fair Work umbrella, changed its name and made a few relatively minor changes. The ABCC is still the "strong cop on the block" trying to bankrupt unions and criminalise their officials and members for legitimate trade union activities.

Congress also adopted a number of resolutions on a range of topics including solidarity with current struggles, recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the constitution and international solidarity. (See page 4 for some of the resolutions.)

Political struggle

The details of the Fighting Fund are to be finalised at the June

Executive meeting. But from the comments made by different officials, it is clear that the aim of the Fund is to run a campaign to defeat the Coalition, an attempt to repeat the successful Your Rights @ Work campaign that saw the defeat of the Howard government in 2007.

It is also aimed at countering the anti-Labor campaigns being run by big business groups – the mining corporations against a new tax, the tobacco corporations opposed to plain packaging, the pubs and clubs against poker machine laws.

The name of the campaign and the key slogans are still to be revealed. But the model, based on winning support from the community through trade union campaigning is similar.

It is a political campaign to defeat the Coalition and re-elect Labor. There is nothing to indicate that it is aimed at building an alternative to the ALP, nor is it for fighting employers in the workplace. The use of the term "permanent" suggests it will be maintained following the elections, which the Coalition at present look set to win.

The union movement has a huge task ahead to defeat the current employer offensive and prevent further erosion of social spending and workers' entitlements.

Next week: Labor's agenda for the union movement as revealed at Congress. ☘

Senators adjourn debate until June Spotlight on Stronger Futures legislation

Darren Coyne

The Senate has adjourned its debate on the controversial NT Stronger Futures legislation, which would extend the Northern Territory intervention for up to another ten years.

The legislation was listed for debate but has now been deferred until at least June 18 after being overshadowed by the Federal Budget, which has earmarked more the \$3.4 billion over 10 years to fund health, education, justice and homelands services in the NT.

The deferral of the legislation follows intense lobbying in recent weeks from Indigenous groups and opponents of the legislation. Despite that opposition, opponents are fearful that the legislation will have bipartisan support, albeit with possible amendments from the Coalition and the Greens, when it next comes up.

The legislation includes alcohol restrictions and a controversial program that cuts the welfare payments of parents whose kids skip school, known as the student enrolment and attendance measure (SEAM).

The bills also include an expansion of income management for people on welfare, with trial sites in Bankstown, NSW, Playford in South Australia, Shepparton in Victoria, and Rockhampton and Logan in Queensland.

The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples said it would continue to oppose the proposed laws because they had not been tested for human rights violations, and were opposed by Aboriginal people across the NT.

Congress co-chairs Jody Broun and Les Malezer said more and more Aboriginal people were calling for the laws to be scrapped, most recently the Yolgnu Nations Assembly, which represents 8,000 traditional owners in west, central and east Arnhem Land.

"Here is another significant group of our peoples, directly affected by the laws, who are actually calling this

legislation 'racist' in their letter to the Prime Minister," Mr Malezer said.

Ms Broun said that while there had always been support for the government's commitment to additional services and infrastructure, the Congress would use domestic and international human rights forums to apply further pressure.

The Congress has established an electronic letter campaign to encourage Australians to protest federal government plans to extend the NT Intervention for a decade. The campaign (at www.nationalcongress.com.au) encourages people to write to their local federal parliamentarian to do what they can to have the bills withdrawn and Aboriginal people consulted properly.

Meanwhile, in the letter to the Prime Minister and other party leaders, the Yolngu Nations Assembly (YNA) warned that unless the laws were dumped they would refuse "participation in land lease negotiations with the federal government and approval for any exploration licences".

Signed by YNA spokesperson Reverend Djinyini Gondarra, the letter also called for a review of the relationship between land councils and government, and reform of local government to provide a more locally based and accessible form of government.

They called for homelands to be recognised as equal to communities that were former missions and government settlements, and for the scrapping of the NT government's compulsory teaching in English for the first four hours of the day policy.

They also called on other NT Aboriginal leaders to adopt the same tactic of refusing to negotiate leases, and approve exploration licences.

Mathew Dhulumburrk, a Gupapuyngu Elder from Ramingining, was part of the Yolngu Makarr Dhuni, YNA, which issued the statement against Stronger Futures.

"We do not want another decade of discrimination here at

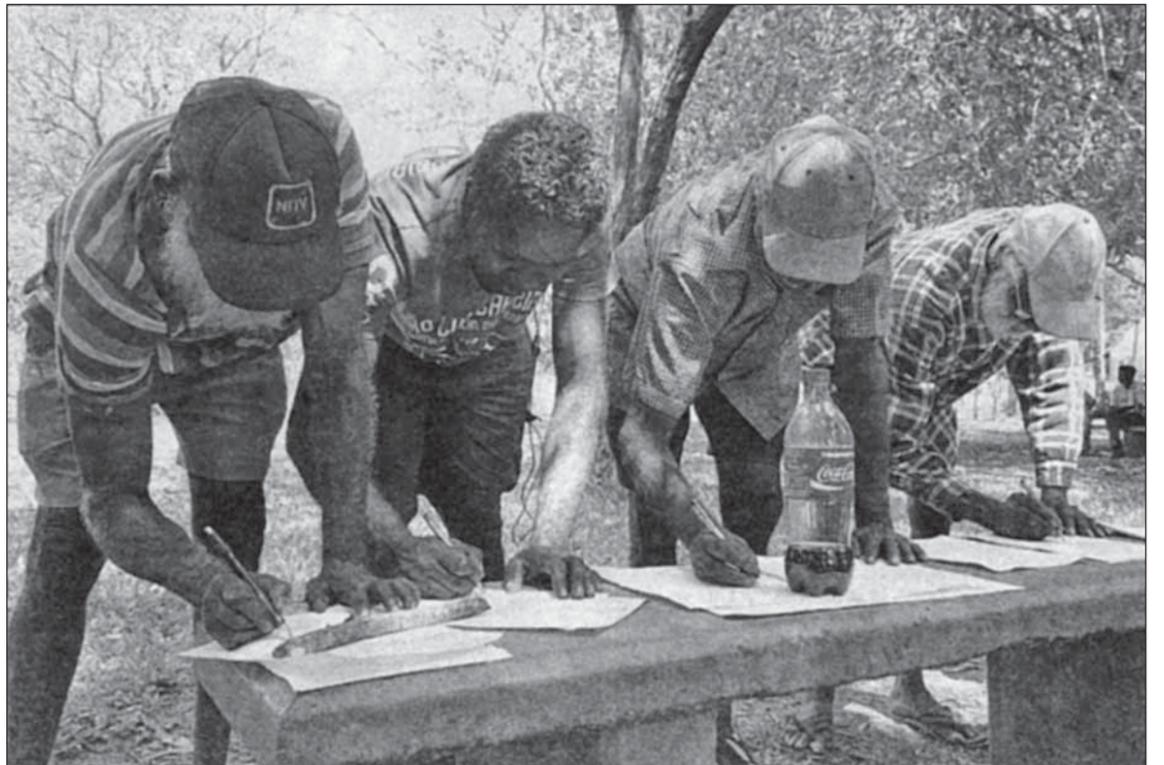


Photo: Koori Mail

Members of the Yolngu Nations Assembly have written to the Prime Minister, enclosing signatures from all over East Arnhem Land, calling for the Stronger Futures legislation to be scrapped.

Ramingining," he said. "After five years, it feels like the water level has climbed up to our neck. Another ten years will bring it way over our heads.

"The government is drowning us slowly and wonders why twice as many of our young people are attempting suicide. There is no valid reason to discriminate against Yolngu in this way."

Former Liberal prime minister Malcolm Fraser, the Catholic Church and the Uniting Church have also backed the Elder's stance, and more than 36,000 people have signed the Stand for Freedom campaign petition against the laws.

Aboriginal Catholic Ministry Sydney Diocese executive director Graeme Mundine said the statement by the YNA could not be any clearer.

"The Yolngu have consistently asked for partnership and self-determination, not intervention and discrimination," he said. "The Yolngu peoples do not want disempowering relationships with government."

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) also called on the government to listen to the concerns of the YNA.

PHAA vice-president Vanessa Lee said the lack of negotiations and the tight timeframe of community consultations demonstrated a lack of community ownership and a breakdown in government relationships with communities.

"There is no evidence of community ownership in the legislation," she said.

"This will make it difficult for the Australian government to achieve the Council of Australian Governments' broader objectives.

"There is also an underlying issue in relation to the ongoing abuse of trust by government services which continues to undermine community governance and create a sense of disempowerment amongst these people. The PHAA is concerned about the violations of human rights that are inherent in the proposed Stronger Futures legislation.

Strong evidence

"The legislation also contradicts the strong evidence that self-determination – and being fully engaged as partners in decision-making – are critical factors to improving the health of populations.

"In Australia, every major report

published in the last decade or more supports this approach. Even the latest Productivity Commission report has as its first finding and recommendation the need for the power to make decisions to be in Aboriginal hands.

"All the key reports have identified the importance of respectful partnerships.

"And there is strong evidence to support the relationship between these partnerships and improved health and well-being outcomes across all fields of social development."

As well, musicians including Paul Kelly, Archie Roach and Neil Murray rallied against the legislation at a memorial concert for singer Jimmy Little at Sydney's Opera House. They dedicated the song *Blackfella Whitefella* to the Stand for Freedom campaign.

Weeks before he died, Mr Little wrote an open letter to the government calling for the legislation to be scrapped.

"It is time for Australia to listen to the wisdom of Aboriginal Elders who best understand the needs of their community," Mr Little wrote.

He urged the government to go back to the drawing board and develop a respectful plan of action with Indigenous people.

Meanwhile, in Bankstown, the Say No to Government Income Management Campaign Coalition is organising a major seminar on May 26 to discuss strategies for stopping the implementation of income management.

Koori Mail

Pete's Corner



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ACTU CONGRESS 2012 RESOLUTIONS

TAFE

The TAFE sector in Australia is the pre-eminent provider of vocational education to students and workers across Australia. It delivers more than 80 percent of government funded vocational education in every major city and most regional and rural areas across the country.

TAFE provides high quality trades training in industries across the country and high level skills in a range of key industry sectors. TAFE offers opportunities for workers and students to access literacy and numeracy and second chance education. It is a highly valued public institution whose resources belong to the Australian community.

In the past 20 years, governments at state and federal level have neglected the TAFE system, despite the fact that it plays a crucial role in developing Australian industry, addressing skills shortages, building communities and in innovative responses to the future needs of the Australian economy.

Congress considers it disingenuous for governments to continue to profess their support for the important role that TAFE plays, while at the same time introducing and prosecuting policies that have the very effect of undermining its ability to provide quality, affordable training to Australians of all backgrounds.

Between 2004 and 2009 government recurrent expenditure per hour of training declined by 15.4% part of a longer term trend that has seen funding per hour decline by about 25.7% from 1997.

Government funding for TAFE has declined both because of the decline in recurrent public VET expenditure per hour, and because of the shift of government recurrent

funding away from the TAFE sector and towards private for-profit providers that has occurred under market-driven policies of contestable funding. If both expenditure per hour and TAFE's share of that expenditure had been maintained at even 2004 levels, TAFE's funding would have been about \$974 million (or 18.9 percent) greater in 2009 than it actually was.

Conditions in the recent COAG agreement will result in increased marketisation and competition. A number of state governments across the country are poised to introduce these so-called "reforms". Events in Victoria over the last three years should be a salutary lesson for the rest of Australia.

The Victorian government has been at the forefront of market reforms of the TAFE sector. Between 2008 and 2011, TAFE "market" share in Victoria dropped from 75% to 48%. At the same time, private provider market share trebled from 14% to 40%. At the end of 2011, as a result of a massive budget blowout, TAFE funding was cut and this led to 300 permanent teacher redundancies, and the loss of many casual and contract positions in the sector.

In the 2012 budget on May 1, the Victorian government slashed a further \$300 million from TAFEs. This will result in further massive job losses, campus and course closures and will deny Victorian students and workers access to high quality vocational education.

Congress condemns the Victoria government for slashing the TAFE budget, and calls for an immediate re-instatement of TAFE funding in that state.

Congress calls on the federal

government to properly scrutinise the implementation of the National Partnership Agreement with all States and Territories, but particularly with Victoria, ensuring that funding from the Federal government does not flow to any State or Territory, but particularly to Victoria until it has met condition 29 (b) in the agreement requiring the development and implementation of strategies: "which enable public providers to operate effectively in an environment of greater competition, recognising their important function in servicing the training needs of industry, regions and local communities, and their role that spans high level training and workforce development for industries and improved skill and job outcomes for disadvantaged learners and communities."

Congress calls on State and Territory governments to demonstrate their support for TAFE by requiring that the entitlement to a guaranteed



training place is offered only at TAFE, as they are entitled to do under the terms of the National Partnership Agreement.

Moved: Pat Forward, AEU
Seconded: Andrew Dettmer, AMWU ☘

Restoring balance in our retail markets

Congress notes that distortions in markets have detrimental implications for Australian industry, businesses, employment and working conditions. Congress agrees that where markets fail as a consequence of a concentration of power by one or a few corporations or companies becoming so dominant that they form monopolies, duopolies or oligopolies and commence exercising unfair market power on competitors, suppliers and/or customers, then government must intervene to ensure fair practices.

Congress notes that the retail food and grocery market is highly concentrated in Australia. Similar high levels of market concentration is being reached in the liquor retailing market and is also increasing in the fuel retailing market. The market dominance means that major retailers are in a position to dictate prices and terms to suppliers.

The excessive market power exercised by the major retailers results in Australian producers and manufacturers of food and

grocery products facing increased and unsustainable pressures to meet the retailer's demands. The result is that many of Australia's producers and manufacturers of food, groceries and household goods face unsustainable pressure on margins and are responding by reducing their workforce, reduce working conditions or closing their Australian operations and/or moving their operations offshore.

For primary producers and growers, the distortions mean that many cannot get their goods to market while maintaining a reasonable return on their business. All other workers and businesses in the supply chain, including, print and packaging, storage, logistics and transport workers face unsustainable pressures that threaten employment security and health and welfare.

Congress notes that in food and grocery manufacturing, the major retailers are more than retailers. They manufacture, or contract the manufacturing of their own brand products in direct competition with

independent suppliers and manufacturers. Their own brand grocery range is often sourced from off-shore producers or manufacturers further undermining local producers, industry and employment.

Congress notes with concern that the commercial practices of the major retailers has the potential to threaten Australia's food security.

Congress agrees that the potential for inappropriate abuse of power by large retailers requires immediate and strong responses from regulators to ensure that such market power is not being exercised against suppliers to the detriment of Australian industry, employment, workers' health and safety and Australia's capacity to produce, manufacture, and supply its population with sustainably produced food and goods.

Congress urges the Australian government to sufficiently empower and equip regulators with the appropriate mechanisms to regulate the potential for inappropriate abuse of power by large retailers. ☘

Chevron Campaign

The 2012 ACTU Congress recognises the work of the Maritime Union of Australia and the Construction unions on the Chevron campaign and fully endorses a National and International campaign against Chevron.

The ACTU recognises that multinational companies like Chevron and its contractors are exploiting loopholes in Australia's Migration Act – loopholes which mean that Australia's offshore resources projects are often not classified as being in Australia's territory.

Because of this, companies such as Chevron are bringing in foreign labour to do work that could and should be done by Australian workers. In addition, they are contributing little or no training to Australians in these sectors.

This affects workers in the marine, construction, resource and transport industries.

The Chevron campaign is fighting to secure the protection of Australian jobs, the right of Australian workers to work in their own country on union wages and conditions and for the creation of jobs and opportunities for young and indigenous workers.

The ACTU supports this campaign, and encourages all affiliates associated with these industries to get involved and work together to secure outcomes for workers in these industries.

Moved: Chris Cain, MUA
Seconded: Paddy Crumlin, MUA ☘

Musgrave Park, Queensland, Peaceful assembly and protest

The ACTU Congress stands in solidarity with the unionists and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander activists at the culturally significant site at Musgrave Park, Brisbane.

Congress expresses its concern about the apparent return to negative tactics used by the Queensland government in the 1970s and 1980s against citizens of Queensland.

Campbell Newman has been elected to govern for all Queenslanders, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, and this Congress calls on the Newman government and the Brisbane City Council to respect the rights of freedom of speech, peaceful assembly and protest.

Moved: Dave Matters, RTBU Qld
Seconded: Allen Hicks, ETU ☘

BHP dispute

This ACTU Congress declares its full support for the 4,000 mine-workers who have been attempting to negotiate a new Enterprise Agreement at BHP's seven Central Queensland coal mines for over 18-months now.

We note that the while the CFMEU, AMWU and the ETU have been negotiating in good faith BHP has refused to do so, a point made clear by its chief of global coal operations Marcus Randolph who declared in an email to staff leaked to the media that the company's demands were "not negotiable now, next month or next year". This is not in the spirit of good faith bargaining.

We fully support the mineworkers in their campaign to protect their rights at work and defend vital safety, workplace and other conditions such

as rosters and accommodation that would damage families and hurt mining communities if BHP has its way.

We condemn BHP's pursuit of safety deregulation that would transfer vital safety roles from qualified workers on the job to management. We note that this was the key factor that led to the recent Pike River Disaster in New Zealand in which 29 coal miners perished. We further note that the last three big coal mine disasters in Australia all occurred at BHP mines.

We condemn BHP's insistence on clinging to WorkChoices provisions imposed on BHP coal mineworkers in the last enterprise agreement reached in the Howard era in 2007, particularly the provision that stripped contract and labour hire workers of equal pay and conditions and have allowed them to become a source of

cheap labour to undermine permanent employees.

We note that this dispute has occurred in a period when BHP has made the greatest profit in the history of Australia – \$23 billion and find it repugnant that at a time when the company has never had more it has never done less.

We call on BHP to start listening to its workforce and respect their right to bargain.

We declare the full support of the ACTU for the BHP mineworkers. In the event that the company continues to refuse to negotiate in good faith and inflicts further harm on its workers, their families, mining communities and investors in its coal operations, we will mobilise support throughout the trade union movement in Australia and internationally. ☘

Taking Issue – Peter Mac

The real class war

In response to Julia Gillard's recent declaration that Tony Abbott should leave his electorate in Sydney's north shore, and visit some "real" families elsewhere, he declared that she had launched a class war.

Gillard's statement was unbelievably insulting and stupid. There are probably a million people living on the north shore. Gillard ignored the fact that many of the families living there are working class (and in many cases struggling), that the resident population also includes those who could be classed as allies of the working class, and that in any case all families, rich or poor, are real and deserve fundamental respect as human beings.

Moreover, people's class allegiance can change or contradict the norm. Even the richest families have members who have rebelled against the greed and injustice of their relatives' behaviour, and taken up a progressive, left-wing, or even Marxist-Leninist political position.

The conservative press has been quick to publicise the angry reaction of families living on the north shore to Gillard's remarks. Her tactic has now virtually guaranteed the return of conservative candidates in north shore electorates.

For his part, Abbott continues to delight in having TV cameras film his visits to factories and other workplaces. His appearances often include patronising but inept attempts at carrying out the work of employees. After Gillard's statement he declared that his own origins were working class, implying that this makes him a defender of the rights of ordinary working people.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Abbott's stage-managed interaction with working people is solely intended to achieve power for his party in the federal government, in order to serve the interests of the ruling class, in particular the owners of the major corporations.

Class distinctions

Abbott's reference to class war has stimulated a wide range of comments on the same subject, many of them inaccurate or deliberately

deceptive. Some notable examples were included in an article written by Jac Nasser, chairman of BHP-Billiton.

Referring to the conflict between the government and the mining companies over the resources rent tax, as well as the current industrial relations system, Nasser commented: "It's ... personally disappointing to me that part of this debate has become one based on class divisions".

However, he then revealed his own class allegiance very clearly by declaring: "Generally, the people who have done well in Australia have done so by their own toil. They have created great companies, thousands of jobs and often led the world in what they've done – people like Lindsay Fox, Frank Lowy ... and yes, so have Gina Rinehart, Andrew Forrest and Clive Palmer."

Well no, actually those people have "done well" by exploiting the geologists, miners, truck drivers, builders, mechanics, engineers, mine-workers and all their other employees whose work has created the wealth of these companies – i.e. the working class.

Nasser declared that the government should deregulate the industrial relations system and alter the taxation regime in order to improve the "competitiveness" (i.e. profitability) of Australian corporations. Repeating the recent tactic of mining magnate Clive Palmer, he then alluded to his father's participation in the Second World War alongside Australian soldiers. Who was it who said: "Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel"?

Opening a barrage

BHP-Billiton and Mitsubishi are engaged in a series of titanic struggles with employees over pay and working conditions in their jointly-owned giant coal mining operation in Queensland. It's a classic battle between two opposing classes. However, BHP-Billiton representatives blame the antagonism not on class antagonism, but on the current industrial relations system, which they hope to change for their advantage.

Nasser commented: "An IR system that pits labour against capital can never lead to an efficient and productive workplace. ... The government's



review of the Fair Work Act is an opportunity to move the pendulum back to a more appropriate balance."

BHP-Billiton is campaigning for a return to an industrial relations system under which they would be able to negotiate directly with employees. The company believes this would give it a better chance of brow-beating its employees into submission.

However, blaming the current IR system for class conflict is a total red herring. The antagonistic relations between working people and the owners of capital are built into the political-economic system we know as capitalism. Businesses will always be intent on handing back as little as possible of the wealth created by their employees, and labour will be constantly pitted against capital because of their opposing interests.

The greed that drives BHP-Billiton and all the giant minerals companies operating in Australia is evident in their bitter resentment over the minerals resource rent tax. They refuse to accept the principle that they should pay the people of Australia for the minerals they rip out of the soil.

The company has recently threatened to cancel major mining operations and has even hinted at moving its operations off-shore. This is nonsense. The company may change the sequence under which it launches new projects, in order to increase profits and/or to exert pressure on the government, but that alone would not justify abandoning the projects, nor moving the company off-shore.

It's true that other companies have moved off-shore, but their situation was entirely different. James Hardie's relocation to Holland was an attempt to avoid the potentially massive financial impact of legal action by asbestos disease sufferers.

Australian manufacturers of clothing and other commodities have moved off-shore, but the resources they require may easily be obtained overseas. In contrast, the resources on which BHP-Billiton depends are located in vast quantities beneath Australia's ancient soil. The company is hardly likely to relocate from the landmass that contains its most enormous source of wealth.

BHP-Billiton's threats are intended to pressure its employees and the government into accepting a series of changes that would maximise the company's profit line.

And that involves screwing as much as possible out of BHP-Billiton employees, who are all members of the working class. Like it or lump it, the political system under which we live is all about class warfare. ✪

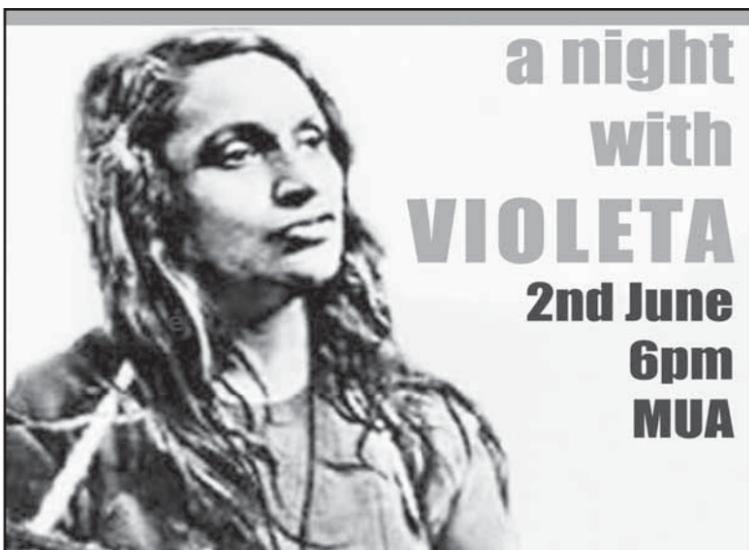


Dozens of societies, across many centuries, have recognised same-sex marriage. Recently in Britain the Coalition for Marriage got 500,000 signatures on a petition that denied this history: "Throughout history and in virtually all human societies marriage has always been the union of a man and a woman," said the petition. Such is the myth-making by cultural conservatives about past relationships, including the myth-making about the Christian nuclear family. They are followers of a man born out of wedlock and allegedly sired by someone other than the mother's partner. Jesus issued no injunction against homosexuality: indeed the threat he perceived was heterosexual and familial love, which he saw as competing with the love of God.

In this month's federal budget Indigenous affairs appeared to go under the radar, but in fact, as the *Koori Mail* newspaper makes clear funding and cuts to Indigenous programs was there. The funding increases are all relatively minor. For example, \$48.6 million for health care services in 10 regional and remote areas and \$21.2 million for infrastructure projects in the Torres Strait. The cuts are cruel: \$145 million gone from existing Indigenous education, youth, law and justice, festivals and substance abuse programs. The money is to be used to fund an extended program of welfare quarantine in the NT, the notorious Stronger Futures program. And funding meant for the Indigenous Sport and Recreation Program has instead been handed to the peak Australian netball body to build a new headquarters.

Exploitation takes particular forms under varying circumstances in capitalism. In rugby league for example, in the upcoming State of Origin series. The next broadcasting deal for Origin could be more than \$10 million a season. Combined with other revenues, including \$2 million for jersey sponsorship and 200,000 spectators for the three matches, the revenue will exceed \$20 million. Combined, the players receive around 10 percent. Rugby League Professional Association spokesman David Garnsey summed it up in arguing for a bigger slice of the cake for the players: "[The players] are the ones providing the entertainment, they are attracting the sponsors, driving the television ratings and generally being ambassadors for that particular event. Then there's a strong argument they should be paid on the basis of what the event draws."

The power of the gambling lobby is pervasive. The GetUp activist group has put together an ad campaign exposing Coles and Woolworths' poker machine interests and calls to adopt \$1 bet limits on pokies. But the main free-to-air stations, Seven, Nine and Ten have refused to air them. Channel Nine said it would "be illogical to ruin relationships with valued, long-standing clients" to run GetUp's ads. The ads say that "Coles (3,000) and Woolworths (12,000) own more dangerous poker machines than the five largest Las Vegas casinos. Tell Coles and Woolworths to put communities first with \$1 maximum bets."



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Yes I can!

First Aboriginal graduates in Cuban literacy Campaign

Anna Pha

"I don't think there is any greater gift that you can give to a person than to assist them in becoming literate. I think it is one of the greatest gifts you can pass onto people," Jack Beetsen told *The Guardian*. Beetsen is local project leader for an Aboriginal adult literacy Campaign being piloted in the NSW town Wilcannia, using the Cuban, Yes I Can (Yo Si Puedo) model. Tuesday May 8 was an exciting day for the local community when the first 10 students proudly graduated after 13 weeks of study.

Cuban Ambassador Pedro Monzón came to Wilcannia for the graduation. In a short speech he spoke about the achievements in literacy following the Cuban Revolution in 1959, "One of the many measures to bring justice to our people was the campaign for literacy of around 40 percent of the population in 1961.

"Then, we, professors, workers and primary and secondary students all went voluntarily to the countryside or workplaces in the city, in order to teach peasants and workers. I had the opportunity of being one of them when I was still a kid, as the majority of the literacy teachers then," Monzón said.

"The principle was to live and work with the peasants and at the same time teach them amid difficult living conditions which us, children from the cities, never knew before."

During that year, Cuba achieved almost 100 percent literacy and has since then assisted millions of people in other countries to gain not only literacy but medical and other training.

Monzón outlined the basic principles that have made the program so successful. These include the Cuban advisers mixing with the local population as equals, training of local facilitators, sharing living conditions and culture with local communities, and giving of individualised care.

All of these principles are central to the Yes I Can Campaign in Wilcannia. Cuban adviser José Chala "fitted in really well out here and the community took him into their hearts pretty quickly. He spends a lot of time with the local community, the students, the facilitators. It has been a pretty big learning experience for him, but he has a lot of support. People are looking after him pretty well," Beetsen told *The Guardian*.

Wilcannia is a community of about 500 people in the relatively remote north west of NSW. Around 80-90 percent of its population are Aboriginal. "Literacy is probably no more or less an issue here than in most other Aboriginal communities. Generally speaking you will find that in many Aboriginal communities, there's up to 40 or 50 percent of adults who are functionally illiterate."

Bob Boughton, from the University of New

England, is the overall project manager. He was involved in monitoring and evaluating the Yes I Can adult literacy Campaign in Timor-Leste with Beetsen which has had great results. So they began investigating the feasibility of a national Aboriginal literacy campaign in Australia, Boughton told *The Guardian*. "The model is quite different to the usual education model. It is a campaign approach mobilising the community."

A national Aboriginal Adult Literacy Commission to oversee the Campaign Pilot Project was established with Donna Ah Chee (CEO of National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation) appointed as the Chairperson. After many months of discussion they were successful in gaining support for a pilot project from the federal government with financial assistance from several government departments, namely Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

Beetsen is a member of the National Aboriginal Adult Literacy Commission and acting CEO of the local Aboriginal Land Council, both of which are involved in facilitating the program. Chala, who was brought to Australia by the University of New England, is presently on secondment to the Campaign.

Mobilising the community

"Almost every house with an Aboriginal person living in it was surveyed to see how people felt and what their literacy needs were. So we determined that there was a need for it, people became part of it and took ownership of it," Beetsen said.

"You deal with any issues or prejudices that people might have, before you begin doing what you do. Otherwise it doesn't work. It's certainly not sustainable if you just come in with a caravan and say we are here to do this. That simply doesn't work."

Beetsen, who has had considerable experience as an Aboriginal educator, including at Tranby Aboriginal College in Glebe, Sydney, emphasised the importance of mobilising the community and their ownership of the Campaign.

"In terms of accepting someone in, the whole Campaign is about mobilising the community and that was all done prior to anything happening. It was about mobilising the community about the importance of having a literate adult population. So at the end of the day, it was a real community development approach which has been lacking in terms of Aboriginal communities for a long time.

"When we launched the Campaign there were over 300 people in the park celebrating the launch of it. So it wasn't about having speeches.... The whole idea was about celebrating the

start of the Campaign. The whole community was behind it to begin with.

"Right from the very beginning the community knew it would be local people that would be employed mostly – a minimum of five local people got jobs as facilitators and another four or five got jobs on a casual basis. So at the end of the day it brought quite a lot of employment to the town as well...."

Local women are playing a large role in the Campaign. The literacy campaign co-ordinator Jennelle King is a local; in fact two of the facilitators are women. Wilcannia Central School under the leadership of its principal Michelle Nicholson, is a partner in the Campaign, along with the Lowitja Institute and its chair Pat Anderson. A majority of the students in the first intake were also women.

Ownership of program

"When you go to TAFE, you go on your own, there is no community encouraging you and supporting you to keep going. The success of the program, I believe of any program, is how strongly you can mobilise the community behind the idea.

"If you don't, they don't own it. It's somebody else, whether it's me or somebody else bringing it to town, if you actually don't mobilise the community behind it, then the minute you leave it just dies."

They spent three months doing the groundwork before the Campaign launch and start of classes.

"Chala basically works with the local facilitators; we'd rather use the word facilitators than teachers. He trained them. We'd work with them on the kind of language that should be used so that it was familiar to them." Yes I Can uses videos, handbooks and other materials.

As the Cuban Ambassador said in his speech at the graduation ceremony: "The advisors give training to facilitators of the local community and rely on them as monitors of the program and as promoters, capable of maintaining the retention of students and give individualised care to all of them. It is an authentic social work."

When the first class started the four local facilitators "had taken ownership, they were in control," Beetsen said. "That's what makes it work. They had forgotten that we were part of the program, they had already taken ownership of it.

"As a community development worker, I guess that's your lifelong dream to be able to do that."

The Ambassador emphasised that Yes I Can is not limited to teaching reading and writing. "It integrates educational, social and cultural components with the learning process of reading and writing, and the framework of the teachings is referred to the cultural and social interest of the local people. The system is adapted to local needs and idiosyncrasy." This is certainly an important feature of the Wilcannia pilot.

The students attended classes for two hours a day Monday to Wednesday for 13 weeks. Technically the teaching model uses a simple method moving from letters to words to sentences and draws on the numeracy skills of students by making associations between numbers and words.

Post literacy activities

The students gave a variety of reasons for taking part in the Campaign. Some wanted to be able to help their kids, one wanted to be an activist, to have a better understanding to do this, and some just wanted to be able to read.

"The thing with this program, the key to its success, is the post-literacy activities after they do their 13 weeks. This is where you pull on all your partners in town, every agency, the police, all the government and non-government agencies in the town, signed up supporters of



Group graduation: students, Facilitators, and Literacy Advisors



Kevin Bates (student) Ambassador Monzon & Valda Bates

the Campaign. We literally have got almost everybody backing it, supporting it, encouraging people into it.

"They will probably be going on to different levels of literacy at least to begin with. Some have chosen that they want to do stuff with computers and get an email address and do some training in that as part of their post-literacy program.

"Some are going to work experience in government agency offices as receptionists. Anything that causes them to use what they have learnt. The only places in the world where this has not worked is where post-literacy was not part of the Campaign."

Importance of literacy

The Cuban model has been used in around 30 countries with a phenomenal rate of success. "If you have literate adult communities, truancy will become less, it might not totally diminish but the kids will go to school once adults understand the benefits of literacy and education, they are more inclined to encourage their kids to

"It was a real community development approach which has been lacking in terms of Aboriginal communities for a long time."

Rothamsted GM trial: cow genes on toast, anyone?

Hazel Healy

Genetically modified (GM) foods have been off the shelves and out of British fields for many years now. But the biotech lull appears to be over as scientists launch trial crops of GM wheat, adjusted to repel aphids, in Hertfordshire, England.

Researchers at the Rothamsted Research station have billed the strain as “eco-friendly GM”. Their experimental crop has been engineered to produce hormonal chemicals that scare aphids away with a pheromone. It sounds harmless enough on first reading, but campaigners highlight that synthetic gene sequences similar to those found in peppermint and cows are involved in this pheromone’s production process.

Anna Thompson of the Community Food Growers Network says genes like these “should not be used in a food crop without a full public consultation”. She is part of an anti-GM group which argues that the crop trial employs technology that is haphazard and poorly understood. Organising under the banner “Take the Flour Back!”, it is planning a mass action for May 27.

GM foods were seen off in Britain by vigorous campaigning back in the 1990s. But ever-rising food prices and tightening food security worldwide means they are staging a comeback. The idea of a technological fix to feed the estimated one billion people who go hungry has never sounded so seductive, with a rising world population and dwindling resources.

But Thompson insists that GM foods will not feed the world. “We need solutions that work with nature rather than against it, such as predator strips and companion planting – all of which have been used for generations,” she says, adding that contamination of non-GM crops would destroy Britain’s valuable wheat export market. “And if it’s allowed to flower, it may be here to stay. Successive consultations and polls have shown that people simply do not want to eat GM foods.”

This is a measure of the success that anti-GM activists have had in tapping into consumer fears of “frankenfoods”. Historically they’ve generated consistent media hits with protesters clad in de-contamination suits and the iconic grim reaper charging through fields pulling up GM crops in acts of non-violent direct action.



Genetically Modified Wheat Open air UK trials- what’s going on?

But Rothamsted Research is hitting back with a PR campaign of its own. A video played on *Newsnight* showed a group of distressed, down-to-earth scientists begging protesters not to destroy years’ worth of research.

Rothamsted, one of the leading agricultural research institutions in Britain, is a far cry from Monsanto, or any of the other major biotech conglomerates faced down by activists in the past. But the institute is very supportive of GM technology and has carried out GM trials before. Its director, Professor Maurice Maloney, has spent his entire career working in GM technology, according to campaign group GM Freeze.

In its detailed rejection of Rothamsted’s application to sow the crop outdoors, GM

Freeze highlights that the GM wheat is built to tolerate glufosinate ammonium-based herbicides (similar to Monsanto’s RoundUp), which could open the door to an upsurge in the use of a chemical associated with cancer, birth defects and neurological illnesses.

GM Freeze calls the crop “a step backwards for farming”. Consumer unwillingness to touch GM foods makes the test a waste of time – and US\$1.5 million of public money, it points out.

Instead, it argues, Rothamsted should re-visit its own research into promoting predators of aphids such as ladybirds (which can put away 33 aphids a day) and spiders, which flourish in complex, biodiverse landscapes.

New Internationalist ✪



Photos: Jeremy Ng

Chala.



(student).

go to school. Crime rates dropped, health rates improved, around the world,” Beetsen said.

“No matter where you have an adult literacy campaign all of those things that are so measurable just stand out. So the data is there to back all of this up.”

Beetsen pointed to the success of the Cuban Campaign, 50 years ago. “For a longitudinal study, you can’t do much better than that.

“The key for this program is the model of literacy; it makes illiteracy the problem of the literate, not the illiterate.... It certainly works.

“What you would hope is that the consequence of the program being a success that it won’t have to continue. The parents will encourage the kids. You are really avoiding another generation or generations of illiterate. That’s why I mentioned Cuba 50 years ago.”

“If a program like this can work in Wilcannia, the hope is that it will be rolled out in other Aboriginal communities... hopefully going a long way towards reducing illiteracy in the Aboriginal adult population or in fact wiping it out,” Beetsen concluded. ✪

Privatising schools is madness

Chris Brazier

Education policy in England and Wales descends deeper into the abyss with almost every passing day. The chief inspector of schools has said: “If anyone says to you that ‘staff morale is at an all-time low’, you know you are doing something right”. The bullying once found only in the playground is now being actively promoted as the key attribute of a successful head teacher.

The education secretary Michael Gove, meanwhile, laments the dominance of privately educated people in key professions but the conclusion he draws from this is that teachers in state schools are not good enough. With analytical skills like that, you have to wonder about the deficiencies in his own education.

Let us for a few months swap state teachers – who cope with large class sizes, huge ranges of ability and inadequate infrastructure – with private school teachers in their privileged enclaves and then see who is considered “good enough”.

The program to convert as many

successful schools as possible into academies is being rolled out all over England and Wales – though without any apparent forethought.

The local comprehensive school here in East Oxford – the school my children went to – is currently debating whether to become an academy. Almost everybody involved in the process, including the governing body, is against the government’s academy program on principle. There is a burgeoning, articulate and highly effective campaign among parents opposing the change in status. Yet many governors seem to be arguing that there is no alternative but to go with the tide.

The idea that this is privatisation in all but name is no longer just a charge by leftwing critics but is being openly embraced. Schools are being overtly told to behave as and model themselves on businesses rather than public institutions.

They will be able to set their own pay scales and alter the terms and conditions of staff – which effectively sounds the death knell for collective national protection of those employees by trade unions. The

announcement that Swindon’s flagship academy is seeking to shed 30 classroom assistants and six other support staff along with an unspecified number of teaching posts should be a salutary warning.

Academies will also be able to control their own admissions. In a society where schools are judged by their exam results, any individual school has a vested interest in refusing admission to students likely to be problematic in terms of behaviour or low in attainment.

In the absence of oversight by a local education authority, who will stand up for the most disadvantaged children if individual academies put their own “business interests” before their social responsibility?

It is an experiment driven by ideology and bearing no relation to common sense. As with the privatisation of the National Health Service, we are walking into a wilderness without realising it – and it will, as ever, be the poorest and most vulnerable who will wind up stranded.

New Internationalist ✪

Bradley Manning, not gay marriage, is the issue

John Pilger

In the week Barack Obama received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009, he ordered bombing attacks on Yemen, killing a reported 63 people, 28 of them children. When Obama recently announced he supported same-sex marriage, American planes had not long blown 14 Afghan civilians to bits. In both cases, the mass murder was barely news. What mattered were the cynical vacuities of a political celebrity, the product of a zeitgeist driven by the forces of consumerism and the media with the aim of diverting the struggle for social and economic justice.

The award of the Nobel Prize to the first black president because he "offered hope" was both absurd and an authentic expression of the lifestyle liberalism that controls much of political debate in the west. Same-sex marriage is one such distraction.

No "issue" diverts attention as successfully as this: not the free vote in Britain's Parliament on lowering the age of gay consent promoted by the noted libertarian and war criminal Tony Blair: not the cracks in "glass ceilings" that contribute nothing to women's liberation and merely amplify the demands of bourgeois privilege.

Legal obstacles should not prevent people marrying each other, regardless of gender. But this is a civil and private matter; bourgeois acceptability is not yet a human right. The rights historically associated with marriage are those of property: capitalism itself. Elevating the "right" of marriage above the right to life and real justice is as profane as seeking allies among those who deny life and justice to so many, from Afghanistan to Palestine.

On May 9, hours before his Damascene declaration on same-sex marriage, Obama sent out messages to campaign donors making his new position clear. He asked for money. In

response, according to the *Washington Post*, his campaign received a "massive surge of contributions". The following evening, with the news now dominated by his "conversion", he attended a fundraising party at the Los Angeles home of the actor George Clooney. "Hollywood," reported the Associated Press, "is home to some of the most high-profile backers of gay marriage, and the 150 donors who are paying \$40,000 to attend Clooney's dinner will no doubt feel invigorated by Obama's watershed announcement the day before." The Clooney party is expected to raise a record US\$15 million for Obama's re-election and will be followed by "yet another fundraiser in New York sponsored by gay and Latino Obama supporters".

The width of a cigarette paper separates the Democratic and Republican parties on economic and foreign policies. Both represent the super rich and the impoverishment of a nation from which trillions of tax dollars have been transferred to a permanent war industry and banks that are little more than criminal enterprises.

Obama is as reactionary and violent as George W Bush, and in some ways he is worse. His personal speciality is the use of Hellfire missile-armed drones against defenceless people. Under cover of a partial withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, he has sent US special forces to 120 countries where death squads are trained. He has revived the old cold war on two fronts: against China in Asia and with a "shield" of missiles aimed at Russia.

The first black president has presided over the incarceration and surveillance of greater numbers of black people than were enslaved in 1850. He has prosecuted more whistleblowers – truth-tellers – than any of his predecessors. His vice-president, Joe Biden, a zealous warmonger, has called WikiLeaks editor Julian Assange a "hi-tech terrorist".

Biden has also converted to the cause of gay marriage.

One of America's true heroes is the gay soldier Bradley Manning, the whistleblower alleged to have provided WikiLeaks with the epic evidence of American carnage in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was the Obama administration that smeared his homosexuality as weird, and it was Obama himself who declared a man convicted of no crime to be guilty.

Who among the fawners and luvvies at Clooney's Hollywood moneyfest shouted, "Remember Bradley Manning"? To my knowledge, no prominent spokesperson for gay rights has spoken against Obama's and Biden's hypocrisy in claiming to support same-sex marriage while terrorising a gay man whose courage should be an inspiration to all, regardless of sexual preference.

Obama's historic achievement as president of the United States has been to silence the anti-war and social justice movement associated with the Democratic Party. Such deference to an extremism disguised by and embodied in a clever, amoral operator, betrays the rich tradition of popular protest in the US. Perhaps the Occupy movement is said to be in this tradition; perhaps not.

The truth is that what matters to those who aspire to control our lives is not skin pigment or gender, or whether or not we are gay, but the class we serve. The goals are to ensure that we look inward on ourselves, not outward to others and never comprehend the sheer scale of undemocratic power, and to that we collaborate in isolating those who resist. This attrition of criminalising, brutalising and banning protest can too easily turn western democracies into states of fear.

On May 12, in Sydney, Australia, home of the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, a protest parade in support of gay marriage filled the city centre. The police looked on benignly. It was a showcase of liberalism. Three



Bradley Manning.

days later, there was to be a march to commemorate the Nakba ("The Catastrophe"), the day of mourning when Israel expelled Palestinians from their land. A police ban had to be overturned by the Supreme Court.

That is why the people of Greece ought to be our inspiration. By their own painful experience they know their freedom can only be regained by standing up to the German Central

Bank, the International Monetary Fund and their own quislings in Athens. People across Latin America have achieved this: the indignados of Bolivia who saw off the water privatizers and the Argentinians who told the IMF what to do with their debt.

The courage of disobedience was their weapon. Remember Bradley Manning. Information Clearing House ☸

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G8 meets in attempt to stop meltdown

Ben Chaco

Leaders of the Group of 8 countries of the world's largest economies are meeting at Camp David, Maryland, to begin talks on the global financial crisis.

European leaders were expected to come under pressure from the United States and Japan to moderate their savage spending cuts and adopt policies for growth - but ahead of the summit there were few signs of fresh thinking from EU mandarins.

Debt levels as a percentage of the EU economy have actually risen over the past year as pressure from Germany to lay off workers, cut pay and reduce spending has shrunk economies.

But at a stormy meeting of the UN general assembly in New York last week European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso claimed that the EU was "on the right track" and "making good

progress" despite the contracting economies of Britain, Italy and Spain and the catastrophe engulfing Greece.

He dismissed the idea that new elections could change the Greek government's disastrous austerity course, saying: "We expect the Greek government, current and future, to fulfil the jointly agreed conditions for financial assistance."

Barroso hailed the EU's dictation of Greek economic policy as an example of "unprecedented solidarity to member states."

But US economist Joseph Stiglitz hit back that "austerity has not worked and will not work," pointing out that no large economy has ever recovered from recession through an austerity program.

"This decade will be the lost decade for Europe and America," he warned.

And UN secretary-general Ban Ki Moon urged G8 leaders to "face the facts - the old model is broken.

We need to create a new model for dynamic growth."

Mr Ban said since the world economic crisis took hold 200 million people have lost their jobs and that poverty and inequality were on the rise globally.

Even US Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner has urged European leaders "to invest in public works projects, like roads and schools" and called for "a better balance between growth and austerity, a more gradual, softer path to restoring fiscal sustainability."

But economist Jacob Kierkegaard said the G8 meeting was unlikely to make a "breakthrough," especially as the group does not include growing economies such as China, India or Brazil.

"There will be nothing here that tackles the fundamental key questions looming over the global economy," he predicted.

Morning Star ☸

Spain's prime minister banking on failed past

Tom Gill

Six months ago Mariano Rajoy pledged not to give "a single euro of public money" to the banks. But this promise went the same way as his pledges on not raising tax – in the shredder.

Spain's right-wing prime minister this month announced yet another (fourth) bailout of the country's banks since the onset of the financial crisis in 2008.

Just weeks after he unveiled US\$10 billion cuts to education and health in what was supposedly an unavoidable requirement to restore health to the country's finances, Rajoy has miraculously found US\$15 billion to help out his friends in banking. That includes a huge chunk of public money that the government has put into Spain's fourth-largest lender Bankia, which has more of the country's now "toxic" properties on its books than any other bank.

State aid to Spain's private banks provided over the past four years in various forms now totals US\$150 billion – and that excludes over US\$200 billion in one percent interest rate loans from the European Central Bank.

Yet within minutes of the Spanish government's announcement pundits were saying that this latest corporate welfare cheque was not enough and another US\$40 billion was needed. The ostensible reason for Spanish bankers' insatiable demands for cash is their exposure to "problematic" property loans of as much as \$170 billion, equivalent to 17 percent of

the country's GDP. This exposure was down to bankers' gambling on the property casino that led to a bubble that burst in 2007, sending the economy into meltdown.

This obsession with bricks and mortar has not only done lasting damage to the environment in large parts of Spain's coastal regions but it has created a massively lopsided economy, starving other sectors of investment.

And it has left millions up to their necks in debt or out on the streets after their homes have been repossessed.

The Bankia operation has been labelled a "nationalisation" as the rescue includes the state taking a 45 percent stake in the company. However, as with bank nationalisations elsewhere, the government will be a passive shareholder, leaving the bank to continue its drive for short-term profits, and the government will seek to sell its stake back to privateers as soon as possible – that is, after its "toxic" property assets have been dumped in a "bad" bank. A royal rip-off for the public.

For Socialist Party opposition leader Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba the priority seems to be that this is a time-limited operation that leads to "no losses for the government" and full recovery of the investment.

But Tomas Gomez, leader of the socialists in Madrid, argues instead that the party should reject the government's banking-sector rescue, which he deems "against the interests of the Spanish people," and instead of relinquishing its stake in Bankia the government should use

Mariano Rajoy – Spain's right-wing prime minister



it to convert the financial institution into a "strong public bank" to help tackle the crisis.

Gomez argues that using money that isn't available for health and education to save a bank which will then be sold off at a "knockdown price to private banks" is "immoral."

The Spanish people, as the owners, should get the long-term benefit of their investment.

Gomez's position appears close to that of the Communist-led United Left, which is calling for full-blown public ownership and control of Bankia and all the other Spanish banks in receipt of public money.

United Left's economic spokesman Alberto Garzon argues that this would allow for the maintenance of the original "social" function of the

savings banks, seven of which were merged to form Bankia two years ago.

Priority could then be given to extending loans to families and small and medium-sized businesses. And the empty properties on the banks' books would constitute a stock of "affordable rental accommodation" for those who need it.

Last week the Spanish stock market had its biggest surge of the year as the government unveiled this latest move to socialise the losses of the banking crisis in order to later privatise the gains.

The state largesse for this most protected of sectors means many a top banker, unlike the millions of ordinary Spaniards thrown onto the scrapheap in the name of austerity, will now keep his job.

And even Rodrigo Rato, who has been fired as Bankia chief, has little to complain about.

A historic senior figure in Rajoy's Popular Party, former finance minister and IMF managing director, Rato was in line for a tidy US\$2.34 million last year, or 260 times the minimum wage. This is now reduced to a mere US\$600,000 under new rules on executives of banks receiving state subsidies. But Rato is still in line for a US\$1.2 million leaving present.

A paltry US\$600,000 is presumably what his replacement Jose Ignacio Goirigolzarri will be earning. Just as well Goirigolzarri already has a pension of US\$68.7 million from his former employer, BBVA bank. Otherwise, just how would he get by? *Morning Star* ☘

Florida fire, journalist harassment reflect US rules for Cuba

WT Whitney

Early on April 27, fire destroyed the Coral Gables, Florida, offices of Airline Brokers, a charter flight provider servicing Cuba and other countries. The Fire Department blamed arson.

A US embassy official in Spain a week later was at the Madrid airport to enforce US-imposed "no-fly" rules. The two incidents point to difficulties in applying the US war on terror to Cuba.

Operating for 30 years, Airline Brokers arranges for seven charter flights a week from Miami and Fort Lauderdale to Cuba. The company limits Cuba travel to "persons who are generally or specifically

licensed to travel to Cuba." Cuban Americans last year made 400,000 trips to the island, reports Andres Gomez of Miami's Alianza Martiana. "The criminal action that destroyed the offices of Airline Brokers is a terrorist act," he adds, "not only against this company but even more important, it's an act of terrorism against the right of all US citizens to travel to Cuba."

Company owner Vivian Mannerud pointed out that as of May 2 public officials in Florida hadn't condemned the arson attack. Local observers see Airline Brokers as singled out because of its role in Cuba travel and because of arrangements it made for 340 Florida residents to be in Cuba on the occasion

of Pope Benedict XV's recent visit there.

Terror applied to Cuba and people elsewhere working for decent US-Cuban relations is not new. Earlier, bombings and shoot-ups were endemic on the island. Blame fell on violent counter-revolutionaries there allied to the CIA and on Cuban-American private military groups. Perpetrator and ex-CIA operative Luis Posada found refuge in Florida. Florida bias and flawed court proceedings led to long prison terms for the Cuban Five, Cuban defenders against terror. The recent incendiary attack recalls earlier attacks on Floridians and Puerto Ricans trying to re-connect with Cuba. An atmosphere stemming from hatred and violent ideology has contributed to impunity.

A signature US policy is thus marked by contradiction: war is waged on terrorism, while violence against Cuba or US friends of Cuba gets a blind eye.

Journalist Hernando Calvo Ospina is familiar with this skewed approach to anti-terrorism. The Colombian native living in French exile fled from Paris to the Madrid-Barajas airport on May 5. There he learned from a US embassy official that his name was "on a list of persons dangerous to the security of his country" and that his Air Europa flight to Havana would leave without him. He learned that "for a

few minutes" the flight enters US airspace.

In 2009, Calvo Ospina flew on Air France from Paris to Mexico City. Over the Atlantic, the plane detoured to Martinique unexpectedly to refuel. On arrival five hours late in Mexico City, he learned his presence on the plane had caused the detour. The flight was to have passed over US soil, and he was "unwelcome for reasons of (US) national security."

As a Colombian journalism student in 1985, Calvo Ospina was captured and nearly killed during a joint Ecuadorian-Colombian military operation. First accused and then cleared of links to leftist Colombian insurgents, he remained imprisoned in an Ecuador prison until worldwide pressure forced his release. Reports of guerrilla associations may still resonate with the US government.

His books may also be worrisome to some. In *Cuban Exile Movement, Dissidents or Mercenaries*, released in 2000, Calvo Ospina and colleague Katlijn Declercq interviewed Cuban-American leaders. They demonstrated that foreign intelligence agencies paid for anti-Cuban terror actions. The book highlights US-European cooperative attempts to destabilise the Cuban government.

Two years later, in *Bacardi, The*

Hidden War, Calvo Ospina accused rum company owners of funding US government and Cuban-American efforts to overthrow Cuba's government. He highlighted Barcardi payoffs to secure passage of the 1996 US Helms Burton Law and fund assassination attempts against Cuban government leaders.

In 2010 Calvo Ospina wrote *The CIA Shock Team*. According to analyst Pascual Serrano, the author surveys "crimes, coups, conspiracies, invasions, and occupations organised by the CIA [since 1954]. Its great merit is naming the criminals."

Since 1982 the US government has identified Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism. Yet Cuban support for Colombian leftist guerrillas, as claimed, is unproven, Basque insurgents were in Cuba at the request of the Spanish government, and sanctuary for a couple of US Black liberation activists from the 1970s is surely small potatoes.

This policy, as with other regrettable consequences of the US anti-terror war – civilian deaths, funds diverted from social programs, and assaults on constitutional rights – unfolds almost automatically. However the US approach to Cuba is grounded upon stark contradiction, plus a pervasive spirit of vindictiveness.

People's World ☘

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cuts was that demand for vocational degrees had ballooned in recent years! So instead of that being cause for celebration the government has opportunistically begun destroying the sector.

The government will increase overall funding to the vocational by \$1 billion, but most of recent funding increases have been to the private training sector. Public TAFES will miss out on the \$1 billion.

University of Melbourne associate professor Leesa Wheelahan pointed out that many certificate IV TAFE courses, which can lead to a diploma and then a university degree, will be wiped out. A disgrace.

T Southern
Brisbane

Surplus, but who is paying?

Homelessness Australia (HA) the peak body for homelessness welcomes the delivery of the final instalments of the affordable housing and homelessness agreements and finds cuts to social spending are not as great as they could have been.

We are pleased to see that the final instalments in funding for the National Affordable Housing Agreement and the National Partnership Agreement

on Homelessness have been quarantined from budget cuts. However we need to see evidence of a commitment to the next instalment of these initiatives and the provision of growth funding to ensure we meet the target of halving homelessness by 2020 and begin to seriously address Australia's housing affordability crisis.

Homelessness Australia welcomes:

- The \$1 billion commitment over 4 years for a National Disability Insurance Scheme.
- The \$3.7 billion aged care package.
- Homelessness Australia is disappointed by the following:
 - Grandfathering people from the single parenting payment to the lower Newstart Allowance when their child turns 8 leaving them almost \$60 per week worse off.
 - The failure to increase allowance payments or Commonwealth Rent Assistance.

We have for a number of years been lobbying with other community sector peaks for an increase of \$50 per week in income support payments such as Newstart and Youth Allowance and 30 percent to the maximum rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance to help vulnerable Australians manage cost of living pressures.

It is substandard that these

measures have not been reflected in the 2012-13 Federal Budget. People in poverty are being asked to pay a disproportionate share of the burden to bring the budget back to surplus.

With the budget back in surplus on paper, Homelessness Australia remains expectant that some of our pre-budget requests not adopted will be given due consideration in the near future.

Liz Fritz
Homelessness Australia

"Fair go" budget less fair for some

The nation's budget is now in the black but unfortunately more single parent families are in the red. There are some small but significant gains in the Budget for people made redundant and for those currently looking for work, studying or/and caring for children.

In particular, the doubling of the amount of savings a single retrenched worker can have to \$5,000 before they have to wait for the Newstart Allowance will provide some relief for people experiencing the stress of an unexpected job loss.

The new annual Supplementary Allowance, worth \$210 per annum for a single person, is a sign that

finally the government recognises that unemployed people, young people and students are under considerable cost of living pressures. 45,000 single parents currently on Newstart Allowance, 100,000 parents pushed onto it from July 2013 and unemployed people generally will be very disappointed that the government has failed to increase the Allowance by \$50 a week.

This budget lays the important foundations for a National Disability Insurance Scheme and a comprehensive dental health scheme. The government has ensured that Australians on high incomes also contribute to the surplus bottom line by reducing unfair superannuation tax breaks and cutting tax breaks for "golden handshakes" and the living away from home allowance. These are good first steps in making our tax system both fairer and more sustainable.

Essential frontline services at Centrelink may deteriorate, with longer waiting times and the quality of decision-making further compromised, as more staff are cut to meet the demands of the efficiency dividend. With the Ombudsman's office losing 15 percent of its staff (23), there may be less scrutiny of government services, at a time when standards are falling.

Maree O'Halloran
National Welfare Rights Network

Culture & Life

by

Rob Gowland

NATO moves to surround China

At an international conference of Communist and Workers' parties some years ago, I was taken to task by two young guys from one of the countries on the fringe of Europe. They vehemently objected to my depiction of imperialism, especially US imperialism, as trying to encircle China.

"That's the same nonsense the USSR was always saying", they complained. "America would rather trade with China than fight with her!"

That flabbergasted me for the moment. This was long after Gorbachev had supervised the overthrow of socialism in the USSR and Eastern Europe, to universal acclaim from imperialist quarters, and yet here was pure Gorbachevism being spouted by a Party claiming to be "Marxist" (but not, significantly, "Marxist-Leninist").

The notion that imperialism "would rather trade with a country than fight with it" ignores the basic realities of capitalist economics. Trade may give a capitalist power a share of the cake, true. But when was capitalism (let alone capitalism in its imperialist stage) ever content to settle for part of the cake, when what it always covets is the whole cake?

The notion also ignores the extremely profitable role played in capitalism by war and war preparations. We know that if the US military-industrial complex went out of business, the rest of the US economy would be able to function much better and for the benefit of all the people of the US, but the corporations that make up the military-industrial complex would not fare very well at all.



And while those US corporations (and others like them in the other imperialist countries) control the reins of government under capitalism, they will continue to intrigue and conspire to make it possible for them to seize the whole cake for themselves.

Wishful thinking that when they talk about peace and friendship they actually mean it will avail the people nothing except disappointment. Look at the chaos and travail that has befallen the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe since the overthrow of socialism.

Gorbachev, held up by the West as a "great statesman" is reviled and derided in Russia, only occasionally quoted by even the Western media that once hung on his every word. His co-conspirator Shevardnadze went back to Georgia to be President but got the heave from there and vanished into well-deserved obscurity.

Meanwhile, the people of the countries they helped to "liberate" from socialism, are having to cope with the effects of the pillaging of public property by upstart "entrepreneurs" eager to make their very own fortunes, and the wholesale plundering of enterprises and industry by predatory international capital seeking to improve their bottom line by adding the fruits of 50 years of socialist construction to their asset base.

While this process of robbery and neo-colonialism chugs merrily along, imperialism's leaders are pursuing their long-term military goals. British PM David Cameron was in Japan last month to close an "unprecedented" arms deal with Japan, a deal clearly aimed at

"containing" China, a perennial theme of Anglo-US diplomacy.

After Japan, Cameron went to Indonesia, which he described glowingly (and unrecognisably) as "one of the world's great democracies". He was there to sell the "great democracy" more weapons. More than ten years ago, the then Labour government in Britain ceased all arms sales to Indonesia after British-supplied aircraft were used to bomb the people of East Timor. But now, Tory leader Cameron wants to enlist Indonesia into the ring of countries opposing China.

This is in line with Barack Obama's assertion that "this region is of great strategic importance to us" and his boast that "we will make sure that we are able to fulfil our leadership role in the Asia-Pacific region".

With its economy in tatters and its bloated military spread all over the world, the notion that the US has a "leadership role" to play anywhere is fast becoming an illusion. Nevertheless, the Gillard government has signed us up for a role in this costly farce, with 2,500 US troops and accompanying weapons to be stationed in the north of our country.

They are not there to protect us – no one is threatening us – they are there as part of the encirclement of China, declaring our main trading partner to be our enemy. Clever, eh?

At the same time, the US has plans in the pipeline to build a new military base in South Korea (that'll help lessen tension on the Korean peninsula, won't it?), to station four combat vessels in Singapore, and station more US forces in the Philippines.

Along with the new missile sites being set up along Russia's European borders and attempts by the US to get a toehold in the former republics of Soviet Central Asia, one can well understand why Moscow and Beijing both perceive themselves as in the process of being surrounded. It's not make-believe, it's not paranoia, it's a simple statement of self-evident truth.

To think otherwise is to ignore reality. The US economy is faltering badly, in the grip of the kind of crisis in fact that capitalism usually resolves with a war to eliminate overproduction that the chaotic capitalist economy cannot profitably absorb or dispose of. The imperialist economies of Western Europe (primarily France and Germany) are eagerly joining in the military adventures of NATO, in Asia and in North Africa.

Meanwhile, in the face of this growing militarism and bellicosity, the people of the world are clamouring for sanity and a new deal. The signs are everywhere: the Occupy movement in the USA, aimed squarely at the big banks and Wall Street. The protests in Europe, especially in Greece, rejecting the European bankers' solution to the crisis – make the workers bear the brunt of it through cuts to pensions, health care and wages – and above all the growing recognition that capitalism as a system has no answer to the increasingly frequent economic crises.

The power brokers of capitalism, the great imperialist concerns, can also read the signs. They are preparing for war to keep the masses in line. As usual, it is up to the people to stop them. ☸



Sun 27 May -
Sat 2 Jun

It was a US general who famously declared, "War is Hell", and as anyone will know who has watched the *PBS Newshour's* weekly parade of young US soldiers killed in Afghanistan, the American people are paying with their lives for their government's imperial adventure on India's northwest frontier.

However, the US death toll pales into insignificance compared to the death toll among the people of the region, and even more so when compared to the toll in wounded and maimed. Thousands of US military personnel have been wounded, often severely, in the course of US efforts to gain dominance over the oil fields and oil pipeline routes of the region and to deny China physical access to them.

That is not the reason US (and Australian) politicians give for their military forces being deployed there – defending Afghanistan from terrorism sounds so much better – but the reality is inescapable.

In the meantime, patriotic young Americans, having joined the armed forces often because other job opportunities were scarce, and trusting that their government would not lie to them about such a life and death issue as war, are posted all over the world, including to the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Fighting For Life (ABC2 Sunday May 27 at 8.30pm) is a

feature-length documentary about the massive investment in military medicine that the US has had to make to support its constant involvement in wars. The film focuses in particular on the education and training of military doctors and nurses at Washington's military university, USU, the "West Point of military medicine".

Terry Sanders' film looks at these trainee doctors and nurses in normal classes and also in training under combat conditions. He interviews doctors, teachers and patients, and follows both students and patients. One particular wounded female soldier, whose brother is also a marine, has lost a leg in a roadside bomb explosion. We follow her progress from Iraq to Germany where US wounded are sent for treatment, then back to the US for rehabilitation.

The film is clearly meant to be a study in the practice of humanity in the face of war, but it shies away from the obvious question: why doesn't the US leave? If it hadn't armed the feudals in the first place (to fight the USSR) none of this would be happening. Losing your life – or even your leg – in the service of US oil companies seems a very poor deal.

Religious fundamentalists won't care for the new three-part scientific series **Origins Of Us (ABC1 Tuesdays at 8.30pm from May 29)**. It's all about evolution. The presenter, Dr Alice Roberts, is an anatomist and she approaches evolution in terms of how it changed the human body, and how the use of tools that our altered bodies were now able to make and utilise in turn changed our bodies further.

The first episode concentrates on human bones, especially compared to those of our nearest living relative, the chimpanzee, and how they were affected by our adoption of walking upright as a means of locomotion, and why we might have done that as a response to the changing climate of Africa.

It is all very interesting, but the



The Truth About Child Brides (ABC2 Wednesday May 30 at 9.30pm).

series is rather long drawn out and a tad repetitive.

The Truth About Child Brides (ABC2 Wednesday May 30 at 9.30pm) may seem like an esoteric subject, but across the world, a girl under the age of 18 is married every three seconds.

Child marriage is a function of poverty as well as ignorance. Even in regions like Rajasthan, where the practice is nominally banned by the government, it is continued by families in rural areas, mainly for economic reasons.

Child brides, married before their bodies are fully developed, frequently become pregnant early leading to painful, life-threatening labour. Giving birth before their bodies are fully developed can result in horrific medical disfigurement.

But there are signs of a change: the program talks to girls who have defied their families' attempts to marry them off, and a growing

number of rural girls insist on staying in school and gaining an education.

Coca-Cola is not one brand. The company actually owns hundreds (yes, hundreds) of brands. And it sells billions of drinks every day. And it plans to double – or is it triple – its sales in the next few years. Its vision is that every time a person anywhere takes a drink to hydrate themselves, it will be a Coke product.

In **Food**, the final episode of **Secrets Of The Superbrands (ABC1 Thursday May 31 at 9.30pm)**, British TV journalist Alex Riley checks out the nature, methods and approach of such iconic food brands as Macdonalds, Heinz, Red Bull, Coke and Starbucks.

He finds that Red Bull, for example, manufactures nothing. It is purely a marketing company. The drink it markets is from Thailand. Its sales pitch is to identify the brand with exciting sporting events. Starbucks on the other hand, seeks to

present itself as part of the community (your community) when in fact it is actually just a marketing tool of a multinational company.

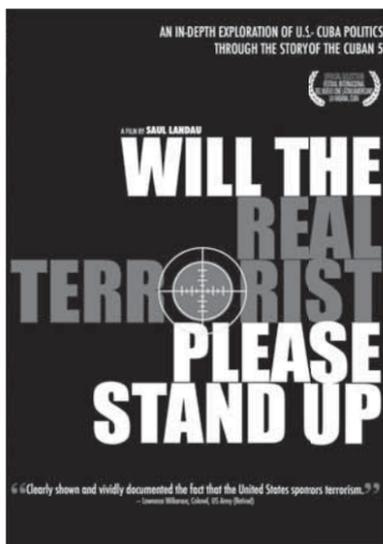
English researchers are interviewed who point out that "brand recognition" targets the same part of our brain that enables us to recognise friends and relatives. Isn't that a cosy thought? Identifying Coca-Cola or Starbucks as though they were family members!

Riley also fills two identical Thermos flasks with baked beans (from the one tin) and labels the two flasks with different "brand" names. He tries them out on a selection of people in the street and although they are filled with the same beans, only one person says they taste identical (which of course they must).

According to an expert he talks to, a brand's logo alone has the power to change our tastebuds so we actually "prefer" that brand of beans. Ain't capitalism clever? ☘

Perth Film screening – Will the Real Terrorist Please Stand Up?

4pm Saturday July 7 – The Activist Centre 15/5 Aberdeen St. East Perth (Near McIver Station)



A cutting edge film by Saul Landau exploring in-depth US-Cuba politics through the story of the Cuban 5, Landau is an Emmy-winning, internationally-known scholar, author, commentator and filmmaker. His film *Will the Real Terrorist Please Stand Up* documents a history involving the CIA, violence, and the five Cubans now serving long sentences in US prisons.

The film features an interview with Gerardo Hernandez, one of the Cuban Five, who is currently serving life imprisonment in Victorville Maximum Security Prison for "conspiracy to commit espionage." Landau also interviews Luis Posada Carriles, Orlando Bosch, and others who have acknowledged perpetrating acts of terrorism in Cuba.

Delightful surprises are appearances in the film by Fidel Castro and Danny Glover.

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POLITICS
in the pub

May 25
QUEENSLAND'S LABOR WIPE-OUT – CAUSE & NATIONAL CONSEQUENCES
Luke Foley, M.L.C, Leader ALP NSW Legislative Council;
Sally McManus, Secretary Australian Services Union (NSW & ACT)

June 1
SYRIA – THE DILEMMA OF INTERVENTION
Ahmed Shboul, Prof, Department of Arab & Semitic Studies Sydney Uni;
Nijmeh Hajjar, Dr, Chair of same department (to be confirmed)

June 8
NO MEETING – Holiday Weekend

June 15
RESERVE BANK – IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST, OR THE PRIVATE INTEREST, OR THEIRS?
Joe Nagy, Finance & Economic Coach;
Michael Janda, ABC

June 22
AUSTRALIAN POLICE CULTURE – TASERS, GUNS, DEATHS
Michael Kennedy, Dr, Head of Policing Policy Programme, UWS;
Cameron Murphy, President Council Civil Liberties

June 29
ISRAEL & IRAN – WARMONGERING, NUCLEAR THREATS & HYPOCRISY
Noah Bassil, Dr, Macquarie Uni;
Antony Loewenstein, freelance journalist, author *My Israel Question*

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Bush and associates guilty of torture

A solid case for the prosecution of Bush, Blair, Rumsfeld, Cheney, their legal counsel and others, for war crimes, crimes against peace, torture, and crimes against humanity has been established at the Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Tribunal with a guilty verdict on day five of the third major session of the Tribunal.

The Tribunal recommends to the War Crimes Commission to give the widest international publicity to this conviction and granting of reparations, as these are universal crimes for which there is a responsibility upon nations to institute prosecutions if any of these accused persons may enter their jurisdictions.

Global Research Director Michel Chossudovsky is a member of the Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Commission and was present throughout the Tribunal hearings.

Global Research is committed to making this historic judgment known far and wide, with a view to eventually prosecuting the war criminals.

The five-panel tribunal unanimously delivered a guilty verdict against former United States President George W Bush and his associates at the Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Tribunal hearing that had started on May 7.

On the charge of Crime of Torture and War Crimes, the tribunal finds the accused persons, former US President George W Bush and his associates namely Richard Cheney, former US Vice President, Donald Rumsfeld, former Defence Secretary, Alberto Gonzales, then Counsel to President Bush, David Addington, then General Counsel to the Vice-President, William Haynes II, then General Counsel to Secretary of Defence, Jay Bybee, then Assistant Attorney General, and John Choon Yoo, former Deputy Assistant Attorney-General guilty as charged and convicted as war criminals for Torture and Cruel, Inhumane and Degrading Treatment of the Complainant War Crime Victims.

Earlier in the week, the tribunal heard the testimonies of three witnesses namely Abbas Abid, Moazzam Begg and Jameelah Hameedi. They related the horrific tortures they had faced during their incarceration. The tribunal also heard two other Statutory Declarations of Iraqi citizen Ali Shalal and Rhuheh Ahmed, a British citizen.

Testimony showed that Abbas Abid, a 48-year-old chief engineer in the Science and Technology Ministry had his fingernails removed by pliers. Ali Shalal was attached with bare electrical wires and electrocuted and hung from the wall. Moazzam Begg was beaten

and put in solitary confinement. Jameelah was almost nude and humiliated, used as a human shield whilst being transported by helicopter. All these witnesses have residual injuries till today.

These witnesses were taken prisoner and held in prisons in Afghanistan (Bagram), in Iraq (Abu Gharib, Baghdad International Airport) and two of them namely Moazzam Begg and Rhuheh Ahmed were transported to Guantanamo Bay.

In a submission that lasted a day, the prosecution showed in an in-depth submission how the decision-makers at the highest level, President Bush, Vice-President Cheney, Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld, aided and abetted by the lawyers and the other commanders and CIA officials – all acted in concert. Torture was systematically applied and became an accepted norm.

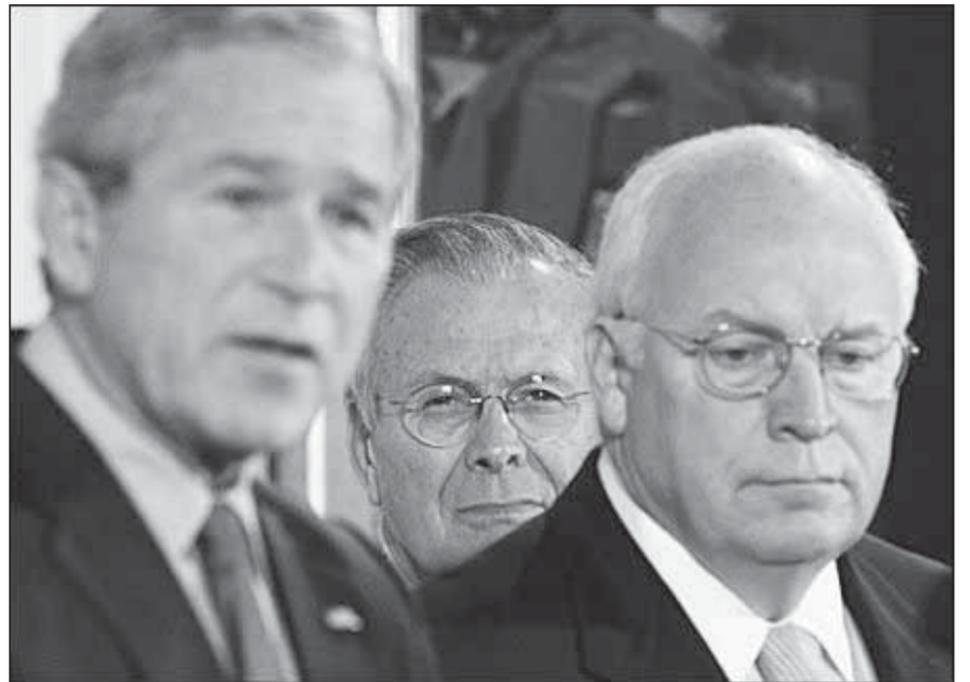
According to the prosecution, the testimony of all the witnesses shows a sustained perpetration of brutal, barbaric, cruel and dehumanising course of conduct against them. These acts of crimes were applied cumulatively to inflict the worst possible pain and suffering.

The tribunal ruled unanimously that there was a prima facie case made out by the prosecution.

After hours of deliberation, the tribunal, in the verdict that was read out by the president of the tribunal Tan Sri Dato Lamin bin Haji Mohd Yunus Lamin, found that the prosecution had established beyond a reasonable doubt that the accused persons, former President George Bush and his co-conspirators engaged in a web of instructions, memos, directives, legal advice and action that established a common plan and purpose, joint enterprise and/or conspiracy to commit the crimes of Torture and War Crimes, including and not limited to a common plan and purpose to commit the following crimes in relation to the "War on Terror" and the wars launched by the US and others in Afghanistan and Iraq:

(a) Torture; (b) Creating, authorising and implementing a regime of Cruel, Inhumane, and Degrading Treatment; (c) Violating Customary International Law; (d) Violating the Convention Against Torture 1984; (e) Violating the Geneva Convention III and IV 1949; (f) Violating the Common Article 3 of the Geneva Convention of 1949. (g) Violating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Charter.

The Tribunal finds that the prosecution has established beyond a reasonable doubt that the accused persons are individually and jointly liable for all crimes committed in pursuit of



Then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, centre, and Vice President Dick Cheney listen as President Bush speaks before signing the Military Commissions Act of 2006.

their common plan and purpose under principles established by Article 6 of the Charter of the International Military Tribunal (the Nuremberg Charter), which states, *inter alia*, "Leaders, organisers, instigators and accomplices participating in the formulation or execution of a common plan or conspiracy to commit war crimes are responsible for all acts performed by any person in execution of such plan."

Customary international law

The Principles of the Nuremberg Charter and the Nuremberg Decision have been adopted as customary international law by the United Nations. The government of the United States is subject to customary international law and to the Principles of the Nuremberg Charter and the Nuremberg Decision.

The Tribunal finds that the prosecution has proven beyond reasonable doubt that the accused lawyers, gave "advice" that "the Geneva Conventions did not apply (to suspected Al-Qaeda and Taliban detainees); that there was no torture occurring within the meaning of the Torture Convention, and that enhanced interrogations techniques, (constituting cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment,) were permissible."

The prosecution has also established beyond a reasonable doubt that the accused lawyers "knew full well their advice was being sought to be acted upon, and in fact was acted upon, and such advice paved the way for violations of international law, the Geneva Conventions and the Torture Convention."

The accused lawyers' advice was binding on the accused Bush, Rumsfeld and Cheney, each of whom relied on the accused lawyers' advice. Others, such as CIA Director George Tenet and Diane Beaver, officer in charge at Guantanamo, relied on the accused lawyers' advice. The prosecution had established beyond a reasonable doubt that the accused lawyers are criminally liable for their acts, and for participating in a joint criminal enterprise.

The president read that the Tribunal orders that reparations commensurate with the

irreparable harm and injury, pain and suffering undergone by the Complainant War Crime Victims be paid to the Complainant War Crime Victims. While it is constantly mindful of its stature as merely a tribunal of conscience with no real power of enforcement, the Tribunal finds that the witnesses in this case are entitled *ex justitia* to the payment of reparations by the eight convicted persons and their government.

It is the Tribunal's hope that armed with the findings of this Tribunal, the witnesses will, in the near future, find a state or an international judicial entity able and willing to exercise jurisdiction and to enforce the verdict of this Tribunal against the eight convicted persons and their government. The Tribunal's award of reparations shall be submitted to the War Crimes Commission to facilitate the determination and collection of reparations by the Complainant War Crime Victims.

President Lamin read, "As a tribunal of conscience, the Tribunal is fully aware that its verdict is merely declaratory in nature. The tribunal has no power of enforcement, no power to impose any custodial sentence on any one or more of the eight convicted persons. What we can do, under Article 31 of Chapter VI of Part 2 of the Charter is to recommend to the Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Commission to submit this finding of conviction by the Tribunal, together with a record of these proceedings, to the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, as well as the United Nations and the Security Council."

The Tribunal also recommends to the Kuala Lumpur War Crimes Commission that the names of all the eight convicted persons be entered and included in the Commission's Register of War Criminals and be publicised accordingly.

The Tribunal recommends to the War Crimes Commission to give the widest international publicity to this conviction and grant of reparations, as these are universal crimes for which there is a responsibility upon nations to institute prosecutions if any of these accused persons may enter their jurisdictions.

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Central Committee:
General Secretary: Dr Hannah Middleton
Party President: Vinnie Molina
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010
Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833
Sydney District Committee:
Brian McGee
74 Buckingham St, Surry Hills, 2010
Ph: 02 9699 8844 Fax: 02 9699 9833

Newcastle Branch:
PO Box 367
Hamilton NSW 2303
Ph: 02 4023 8540 / 0401 824 386
newcastle@cpa.org.au
Riverina Branch:
Allan Hamilton
2/57 Cooper St
Cootamundra 2590

Melbourne Branch:
Andrew Irving viccpa@netspace.net.au
PO Box 3 Room 0 Trades Hall
Lygon St Carlton Sth 3053
Ph: 03 9639 1550 Fax: 03 9639 4199
West Australian Branch:
Vinnie Molina perth@cpa.org.au
PO Box 98 North Perth WA 6906
Ph: 0419 812 872

Brisbane Branch:
PO Box 33, Camp Hill, Qld 4152
Ph: 0449 202 189
cpabris@live.com.au
South Australian State Committee:
Bob Briton, PO Box 612, Port Adelaide BC,
SA 5015 Ph: 0418 894 366
www.cpasas.blogspot.com
Email: sa@cpa.org.au

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Website: www.cpa.org.au/guardian
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